



CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR IN SCHOOLS
An evaluation of Team-Teach: a whole setting holistic
approach to behaviour management

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The approach to behaviour management

Team-Teach was devised in 1997 to help address the fact that none of a wide range of approaches to managing challenging behaviour at that time had been specifically developed for children's services. It is a whole setting holistic approach to behaviour management that aims to provide a supportive infrastructure so that service settings can become safe places for teaching, learning and (in the case of residential establishments) living. All staff in an institution are recommended to have Team-Teach training – including lunch time staff, administrators and people who transport children around. Team-Teach is used in children's residential care settings, special schools and mainstream schools. Informing and involving children & young people, parents and governors is thought to be essential as is the active support of senior management and leadership.

Positive handling is a concept confirming a commitment by organisations and individuals within organisations to a framework of risk reduction strategies (non verbal, verbal and, where absolutely necessary, physical). These strategies are embedded within a whole setting holistic approach to behaviour supports and interventions.

Positive handling plans are agreed strategies (non verbal, verbal and physical) that aim to

- support the individual,
- provide a sense of security, safety and acceptance,
- allow for recovery and repair, and
- facilitate learning and growth.

Team-Teach courses

There are five types of course provided by Team-Teach. Built into the approach is the training of instructors who will be able to cascade training within their own service settings.

- **The foundation course** is designed for low risk settings, such as mainstream schools, nurseries and children's hospitals. It covers personal safety, risk reduction strategies and positive handling, together with documentation and legal guidance. Team-Teach recommend that this **6-hour** (one day) course should be repeated every two years although re-accreditation with Team-Teach is only required after three years. Approximately four hours of the course comprise 'core activities', two hours are activities that are decided upon with the service setting at the initial Team-Teach visit.
- **The basic practitioners' course** is designed for medium to elevated risk settings, such as special schools, PRUs (Pupil Referral Units) and children's homes. It covers personal safety, risk reduction strategies and a range of positive handling and interventions, together with a focus on policy, documentation and legal guidance. Team-Teach recommend that this **12-hour** (2 day) course is repeated every year although re-accreditation with Team-Teach is every two years. Approximately four hours comprise 'core activities', eight hours are optional activities that are decided upon with the service setting at the initial Team-Teach visit.
- **The intermediate instructors' course** provides trainees with the necessary skills to teach the foundation and basic practitioners' courses to fellow employees of their own employer. That is, instructors are able to cascade training within their own plus other service settings belonging to their employer. During the **5-day course** trainees will learn a

wide range of positive handling and intervention strategies and legal knowledge. Although re-accreditation is recommended every twelve months, only one annual re-accreditation is required after which they are asked for every two years plus a four month grace period during which they can only assist in training.

- **The advanced tutor course** will also enable participants to cascade training within their own service setting. Successful participants will be licensed to deliver a range of advanced modules to fellow employees of their own employer. This **4-day** intensive course will provide tutors with a wide of risk reduction strategies and accompanying knowledge to deliver the aforementioned modules. Advanced tutors are not licensed to train others to intermediate instructor level. They will, however, be able to teach the more restrictive techniques and the content of the advanced tutor course to staff in their own plus other service settings managed by their employer.
- The content of the **advanced practitioner course** is flexible and suitable for elevated risk service settings, such as special schools, PRUs, secure units. Advanced tutors select the skills required by their staff and allocate time according to risk assessment in their service setting. The advanced skills are provided through set modules. Participants will learn the more restrictive ground recovery holds in the continuum of responses and will be offered risk reduction strategies concerning objects that may be used intentionally or otherwise as weapons in the workplace, transport issues, debriefing, litigation and liability and recording and reporting issues.

The evaluation

The literature review centres on the broader evidence, policy and practice setting in which Team-Teach operates as a training programme. It argues that there is a need for a clear framework to manage the competing pressures facing schools and children in order to provide them with the support they need.

This evaluation of Team-Teach focuses on the use of this approach within mainstream and special school settings.

Key data was collected from:

- course participants' evaluations of over 500 courses administered by Team-Teach tutors between 2000 - 2003 (over 10,000 trainees);
- participant observations of three Team-Teach courses attended by the researcher;
- the responses of 32 trainees (three-quarters of whom worked in special schools or pupil referral units) to questionnaires administered directly after the observed courses;
- the responses of 25 course participants during follow up telephone interviews three months after the observed courses;
- LEA officers who were also Team-Teach tutors from 17 Local Education Authorities across the UK were asked about behaviour management training; policies and documentation relating to positive handling including their evaluation of Team-Teach; and LEA assistance to schools in respect of behaviour and monitoring;
- four case study schools: staff from a mainstream secondary school, a mainstream primary school, a special secondary school and a primary behaviour support service operating through three pupil referral units who all received Team-Teach training programmes between January and March 2003.

Case study data was collected through:

- nearly 200 questionnaires utilising Likert style attitudinal scales administered directly *before* the Team-Teach training;
- nearly 200 questionnaires utilising Likert style attitudinal scales administered directly *after* the Team-Teach training;
- questionnaires and focus groups administered two to three months after the training with 39 of the trainees;
- questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with the head teachers or deputy head teachers of the four participatory schools;
- semi-structured interviews with 18 children who had experienced difficulties with their behaviour in the case study schools;
- postal questionnaires completed by parents of six of the children interviewed;
- the collation of key institutional data from the two mainstream schools relating to exclusions, incident reports and incidents of positive handling three months before and three months after the Team-Teach training.

Key findings

At least eight out of ten respondents who completed the evaluations administered at the end of the **Team-Teach courses** between the years **2000 and 2003** rated the trainers' knowledge, attention to safety, approach, organisation and preparation and encouragement of individuals as '**excellent**'.

Over half of the **32 trainees** who attended the courses observed by the researcher **had used both the de-escalation and positive handling techniques at the three-month follow up**. Following the training nearly all the respondents said they would recommend Team-Teach to colleagues. They reported increased levels of confidence but identified the need for refresher training.

The **seventeen LEA officers** indicated their belief that Team-Teach could make a **positive** contribution to:

- the feelings of safety experienced by students and staff in schools;
- staff confidence in their ability to manage challenging behaviour; and
- the number of staff suspensions, assaults on staff and exclusions from school.

This would, however, be more likely if all LEAs issued standardised forms for schools to report and record incidents involving physical intervention, monitored the number of such incidents and used the information collected. Other issues that would be helpful include:

- an adequate infrastructure to co-ordinate training in behaviour management in schools;
- a budget for training instructors to keep up with demand; and
- Team-Teach style positive handling strategies to be firmly embedded in teacher training.

Before the training a sizeable proportion of staff at the **case study schools** admitted that they

- did not know how they would like to respond to challenging behaviour;
- wished they could respond to challenging behaviour more calmly;
- felt, after being faced with extremely challenging behaviour, that if they had behaved differently the outcome might have been better; and/or
- physically intervened on a daily or weekly basis despite not being trained in the use of positive handling strategies.

After the training they reported feeling better prepared to cope with difficult behaviour and more knowledgeable about the guidelines under which they were operating. Concerns surrounding the positive handling strategies still remained with one in five staff immediately after training though. The need for regular practice and refresher training was evident although the follow up questionnaire showed some residual learning after three months that would enable members of school staff to keep themselves and the children in their care safe. Mainstream schools reported only one incident (in the secondary school) where physical strategies were used in the three months following training.

The majority of **the children** in this evaluation started the school day feeling 'ok' or 'great' and those who did not, seemed to be less concerned with socialising once at school. The emotion they predominantly reported feeling when they lost control of their behaviour was 'anger'. Three-quarters of the children thought there was nothing staff could do to help them with their behaviour. Three of the six **parents** who responded said school staff had physically restrained their children.

Conclusion

Overall the evaluation provides a **positive endorsement** of the Team-Teach approach especially in relation to staff confidence and their sense of safety and security, as well as knowledge of the legal framework for physical interventions. The impact of the training was more pronounced in the special school and pupil referral units, as they also experienced more empathy with the children and were more likely to use risk assessment. The most frequently suggested improvements in Team-Teach were the inclusion of further work in de-escalation skills and additional information on how to deal with fights. Additional funding at LEA level would enable LEAs to support schools in their use of the Team-Teach approach more effectively. Including Team-Teach style strategies into teacher training would equip new teachers with more effective behaviour management skills at the outset.

Importantly Team-Teach provides a clear framework for staff to refresh their skills and keep up to date with the latest advice on behaviour management – through refresher training and re-accreditation. The recent introduction of video clips on their website will also enable participants to remind themselves of the positive handling techniques when necessary.