

# **An Evaluation of the Team Teach Model (*a whole setting holistic approach to behaviour supports and interventions*) in Northern Ireland.**

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## **Abstract**

This paper reports on an evaluation of the implementation of the Team Teach Model in 52 schools / settings in Northern Ireland.

The introduction explains how Team Teach, a holistic approach to behaviour management, was chosen as a suitable training model to address a range of inappropriate and sometimes challenging behaviour through positive handling strategies including de-escalation skills and physical interventions.

The findings which were representative of a range of schools / settings throughout Northern Ireland revealed that the quality of training was excellent and provided consistency and confidence for staff. The main techniques used to manage inappropriate behaviour were de-escalation, with supportive holds being the most used and physical interventions to manage more challenging behaviour.

Following the evaluation, a number of recommendations were forwarded to the Department of Education in Northern Ireland for consideration in relation to the continued use of Team Teach as the chosen provider for safe handling techniques and to increase the number of tutors to include two tutors in each of the special schools / settings in Northern Ireland.

## **Introduction**

Managing behaviour in schools is not a new phenomenon; rather an ongoing controversial issue which has raised many issues both at a classroom and whole school level.

In the past much inappropriate behaviour was dealt with through employing methods which may have used corporal punishment. Following changes in the legislation in the UK and the abolition of corporal punishment in the 1980s, the media reported an increase in unacceptable behaviour in schools. These concerns initiated the setting up of the Elton Committee led by Lord Elton to examine behaviour in schools in England. The Elton Report of 1989 found that the majority of behaviour in schools was 'high frequency, low intensity' rather than the more challenging behaviours such as assault on teachers that had been reported in the press. Managing all levels of behaviour however, was still recognised by the Elton Report, as a challenge for many schools and described as a complex problem which does not lend itself to simple solutions (Elton 1989). Whilst the Elton Report reported on the situation in England, a need was also identified in Northern Ireland to address the problem of inappropriate behaviour in schools and to develop a strategy to promote and sustain good behaviour through early intervention and remediation of behavioural problems with the aim of preventing them from escalating to the stage where exclusion becomes necessary. Northern Ireland therefore introduced the School Improvement Programme of 1998, which addressed behaviour management through the publication of the booklet 'Promoting and Sustaining Good Behaviour.' This new discipline strategy promoted the idea of 'improvement for all in all types of school', and identified 39 schools as having 5% of pupils as 'unmanageable' and a further 32 schools as having 3%-5% in this category. It also stated that additional resources would be made available to all schools in all Education and Library Board (ELB) areas and that Behaviour Support Teams (BSTs) (multi disciplinary teams with teachers, Educational Psychologists and Educational Welfare Officers working together) would be established in each ELB area to support its implementation.

Following the introduction of the School Improvement Programme, there has been ongoing development of policies and practice in schools in Northern Ireland with the advice and assistance of the BSTs. There is no shortage of training packages for Behaviour Management and BSTs across the ELBs have been using a variety of approaches and strategies and have acknowledged the work of authors such as Canter, 2010, Mosley, 2002, Rogers 2007; 2010 to promote and sustain good behaviour. According to Hayden and Pike (2005, 174) however, "good quality evidence about the effectiveness of school based programmes is generally lacking in the UK", which means that the 'high frequency, low intensity' behaviour in schools continues to be the main challenge for staff. There is also a minority of pupils who present with more serious behaviour where high level behaviour management skills are required and where staff may need to use physical interventions in order to safeguard people or property. In Northern Ireland this is especially true for the special schools and settings and this has been apparent during school inspections (ETI, 2004).

More recently, behaviour management has been identified by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), as being a complex and sensitive pastoral issue for Northern Ireland. An estimated 3-4% of the school population has been identified as having social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, which present significant barriers to learning. (ETI, 2009).

Department of Education (DE) research (DE, 2010a; DE, 2010b) also suggests that the level and nature of challenging behaviour is increasing. The need therefore increases for schools to develop robust behaviour management systems where staff have high level behaviour management skills and can operate within the legislative framework and agreed consistent procedures.

## **Legislation**

Legislation regarding the use of reasonable force in Northern Ireland (The Education (NI) Order 1998 part II Article 4 (I)) clarifies powers which already existed under common law regarding the use of reasonable force (Lundy, 2000). This legislation provided a legal framework for physical contact and clarified the powers of members of staff regarding the use of reasonable force. The DE Circular, 1999/9, on the use of reasonable force, which followed on from the Education (NI) Order, 1998, provided further clarification and more detailed guidance for schools.

In 2003, following the publication of further guidance for schools (DE, 2001; DE, 2002), ELBs in Northern Ireland identified a need for schools to adopt a holistic approach to behaviour management including dealing with challenging behaviour. It was also agreed that there was a need for training for school staff in the use of reasonable force/safe handling.

If reasonable force/safe handling was to be used as part of the management of challenging behaviour then there was a need to consider what was meant by the term 'challenging behaviour' in a Northern Ireland school context.

## **Definition of challenging behaviour**

Research from the literature demonstrates that the definition of challenging behaviour is ever changing (Emerson 1987; Emerson 1995; Harris, Cook and Upton 1996 and the Mental Health Foundation 1997; Lyon and Pimor 2004).

In Northern Ireland, ETI (2004) accepted Emerson's earlier definition of challenging behaviour (1987);

*“behaviour of such an intensity, frequency or duration that the physical safety of the person or others is placed in serious jeopardy, or behaviour which is likely to seriously limit or deny access to the use of community facilities. Ordinarily it will be expected that the person would have shown the pattern of behaviour that presents such a challenge to services for a considerable period of time. Severely challenging behaviour is not a transient phenomenon”.*  
(Emerson, 1987, as cited in Lyon and Pimor, 2004, 263).

ETI added the following from Harris, Cook and Upton, (1996):

- “Criteria for considering behaviour to be challenging:*
- *It prevents participation in educational activities;*

- *It isolates the pupil from their peers;*
- *It affects the learning of other pupils;*
- *It drastically reduces the pupil's opportunities for involvement in ordinary community activities;*
- *It makes excessive demands on staff and other resources and*
- *It threatens the prospects of future placements.” (ETI, 2004 1-2)*

Following an agreement of what was accepted as a definition of challenging behaviour in NI, ETI (2004) also identified areas of need and recommended:

- The development of a greater strategic and corporate view of provision to meet challenging behaviours;
- The promotion of consistent practice across the ELBs and schools and
- The creation of a training programme designed to develop the competences of staff working with pupils.

Interestingly, at the same time as ETI (2004) were agreeing a definition of challenging behaviour and agreeing a strategy to manage the challenging behaviour of pupils in special schools in Northern Ireland, DE and the ELBs were also developing a strategic approach towards Risk Management and Safe Handling which would involve a decision to formulate policy and practice for all schools. This would also involve training for school staff on appropriate responses to challenging behaviour.

The DE publication, “Pastoral Care in Schools: Promoting Positive Behaviour” (2001) defined policy for all schools and suggested that it may be necessary to use physical restraint on a pupil, in order to protect all concerned, including the pupil and to avoid damage to school property.

In May 2004 a further document entitled “Regional Policy Framework on the Use of Reasonable Force/Safe Handling”, was issued by DE.

In its Training and Development section this guidance stated that all staff will have regular awareness raising of issues relating to the use of reasonable force/safe handling, procedures and practices relating to behaviour management and child protection policy and procedures. All staff will receive appropriate training and development, in line with the school's staff development policy, in the use of preventative strategies and approaches for managing difficult situations when they may arise. Training will be provided by accredited trainers. (DE 2004). DE also determined the members of the BST across the 5 ELBs would receive training. Having agreed this as a strategy, plans were put in place to identify an appropriate training model.

DE/ELB's considered several providers of training in the use of reasonable force/safe handling, all accredited by the British Institute for Learning Disabilities (BILD). After detailed analysis and much discussion, Team Teach was selected as the most suitable model.

## **Team Teach**

Team Teach is a whole setting holistic training approach to behaviour supports and interventions and is the largest provider of training of this kind within the UK. The Team Teach approach evolved from education, health and residential care backgrounds and was developed by George Matthews, a practitioner with over 20 years experience in schools and child care settings.

There are now over 1,500 Team Teach tutors registered, and over 350,000 people across a wide range of education and health service settings have been trained. In 2006 Team Teach was awarded National Trainer of the Year award. The emphasis of the approach is “about the way people relate to each other” (Allen and Matthews 2003, 11).

The Team Teach approach is distinct from most other behaviour programmes in 3 main ways:

1. It provides a consistent framework and has the potential to develop consistency across all ELBs throughout Northern Ireland for children in all types of school / settings.
2. It includes training in physical interventions which are part of a whole positive handling strategy.
3. There is a support structure with the emphasis on updating skills and the reaccreditation of trainers and practitioners.

Team Teach employs a whole staff holistic approach with a follow up post repair, reflect & debrief response for both staff and service users. Physical responses are underpinned by values and principles that fit within an ethos of positive educative care, the key message being that 95% OR MORE of all challenging incidents should be managed without recourse to physical interventions.

It stresses the importance of documentation, preferred de-escalation strategies, behaviour plans involving positive handling, incident reports, risk assessment forms, concerns and complaints forms, recording, monitoring and evaluating as well as being accepted by the British Institute of Learning Disabilities as a registered training provider on their database. Team Teach is a member of the B.I.L.D. trainers and advisory panel actively involved in establishing a code of practice for all training providers.

Team Teach provides: a 6 hour Foundation Course (Low risk), a 12 hour Basic Course (Medium risk) and Advanced Modules (High risk). The preferred training model is for all staff within special schools to undertake a minimum of a 2-day basic course (12 hours). School staff must be reaccredited every 2-3 years.

Subsequently the first cohort of eleven Team Teach tutors, mainly members of the BSTs along with some school / unit teachers, was trained in October 2003. A steering group of Team Teach tutors from the ELB's Behaviour Support Teams (BSTs) was then established to monitor training and inform practice. One member of the Team Teach Tutor Group was invited to represent the Northern Ireland ELBs on the Team Teach Steering Group. Following this, tutors began to deliver Team Teach training, initially to special schools and settings across the five ELBs in Northern Ireland. Further cohorts

of tutors have since been trained to meet levels of need, with a current total of 36 tutors in Northern Ireland made up of ELB officers and teachers from special schools.

Between October 2003 and February 2006, 1579 school staff had been trained in Team Teach. At the end of June 2009, 52 schools/services across all 5 ELBs had received Team Teach training.

Following Team Teach protocols, participants at every Team Teach course complete an evaluation, the results of which are forwarded to and are held by Team Teach.

Evaluations of the training courses delivered have indicated a high level of satisfaction with over 90% of all participants ranking the training as excellent and finding it to be pertinent to their work roles. Follow up training has proven useful to ensure skills enhancement and increase confidence.

## Evaluation

In 2009, following a request from DE, the Team Teach Steering Group carried out a longer term evaluation of the implementation of the Team Teach Model in Northern Ireland including the impact and strategies after the programme had been in use for a period of time.

Members of the steering group considered possible ways to undertake an evaluation and based on the research that a questionnaire is perhaps the most commonly used descriptive method used in educational research (Cohen and Manion 1989) and the quickest way of collecting data (Kumar 1996), designed an appropriate questionnaire to gather responses efficiently and hopefully remain objective and increase validity by reducing researcher bias.

After piloting it with the members of the steering group, each school/setting received five questionnaires along with a covering letter requesting that, in order to obtain a cross-section of opinion, one was to be filled in by the Principal, one by the Vice Principal, one by a senior manager, one by a class teacher and one by a classroom assistant.

By the end of the agreed period for responding, 134 out of 245 were returned giving a 55% response. This is represented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Number of schools/settings surveyed**

	Schools / settings	Questionnaires	Returns	% Return
ELB 1	15	60	37	62
ELB 2	11	55	24	44
ELB 3	11	55	33	60
ELB 4	7	35	32	91
ELB 5	8	40	8	20
TOTAL	52	245	134	55

Following receipt of the completed questionnaires the data were analysed as is set out in the next section.

**Results / Findings**

This section presents the findings and analysis of the research which will be presented under two headings:

- General information about schools and respondents
- Current position and impact of Team Teach

**General information about schools and respondents** (Questions 1-8 in the questionnaire)

Out of the 134 returns from a variety of schools and settings, there were **19** (15%) from Principals, **17** (13%) from Vice-Principals, **23** (17%) from senior managers, **49** (37%) from class teachers and **24** (18%) from classroom assistants.

Returns were recorded from all of the following types of settings, with the majority coming from Special S, Special M and EBD:

- Special Emotional and Behaviour Difficulties
- Special M (Moderate Learning Difficulties)
- Special S (Severe Learning Difficulties)
- Alternative Education Provision/Education Other than at School
- Sensory Impairment
- Physical disability
- Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- Speech and Language
- Specific Learning Difficulties
- Mainstream Primary
- Nurture Centre

As the findings are reported, a number of qualitative terms will be used to ensure consistency of interpretation of percentages. These terms should be interpreted as presented in table 2:

**Table 2: Qualitative Terms to represent the Percentage Range**

Percentage Range	Qualitative Description
More than 90%	Almost/nearly all
75 – 89%	Most
50 – 74%	A majority
30 – 49%	A minority
10 – 29%	A small minority
Less than 10%	Very few/a small number

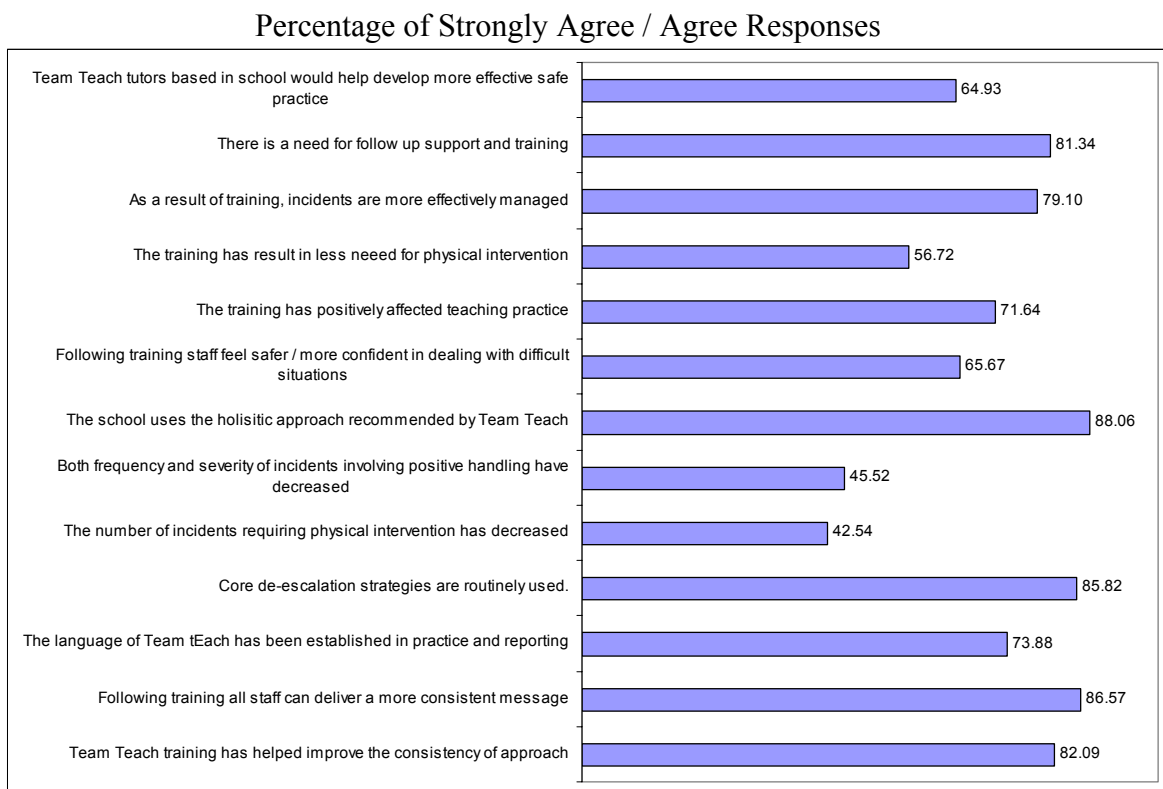
Across the schools which returned questionnaires most (81%) staff are currently trained in Team Teach and a small minority (19%) are not trained. This 19% includes new teachers and some non teaching staff.

The Team Teach database records that there are currently 18+ tutors in the schools; 12 schools have one tutor and 4 schools have two tutors. However the research indicates that most (75%) of the respondents would like to have one or more tutors in their schools. A majority (69%) of these respondents indicated that their school would benefit from two or more tutors and a minority (31%) would like one tutor.

The next section of this paper presents the findings and analysis of the current position and impact of Team Teach within the special schools / settings in Northern Ireland.

The quantitative data are represented in tables 3 – 6 complemented with qualitative data.

**Table 3: Current Position and Impact of Team Teach**



Analysis of these questions highlighted the following:

Overall the quality of the training was rated very highly. Most respondents indicated:

*“A consistency of approach”*

*“A consistency of message to staff”*

*“Core de-escalation strategies routinely used”*

*“The holistic approach is in place as a result of training”*

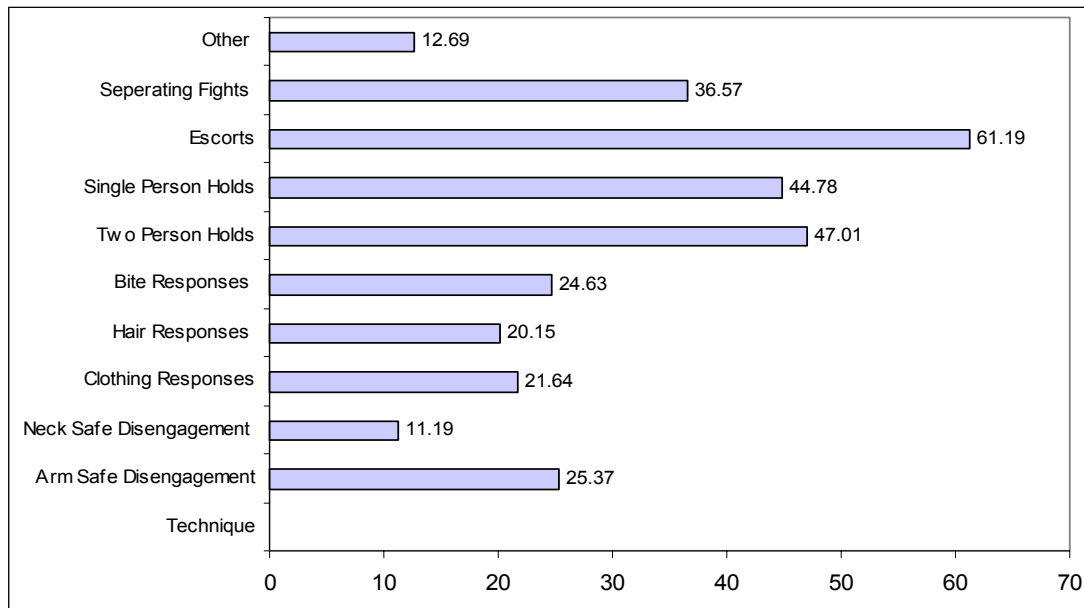
*“Incidents are more effectively managed”*

Almost half (44%) agreed that the frequency, number and severity of incidents requiring physical intervention had decreased as a result of training.

Most respondents agreed that “there was a need for follow up support and training” with a majority stating that Team Teach tutors based in school would help develop more effective safe practice.

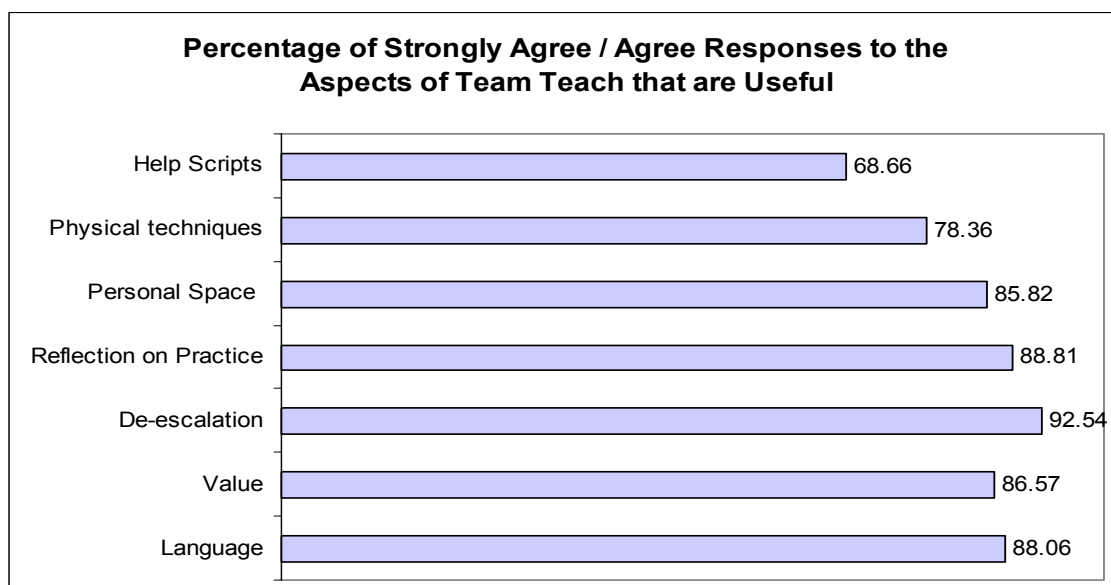
**Table 4: Positive Handling Techniques Used – Physical**

Percentage of Strongly Agree / Agree Statements



Respondents indicated that a whole range of techniques have been implemented following training with a majority (51%) identifying escorts and holds (safe handling techniques) as most frequently used and a small minority (23%) only ever having to use disengagement techniques.

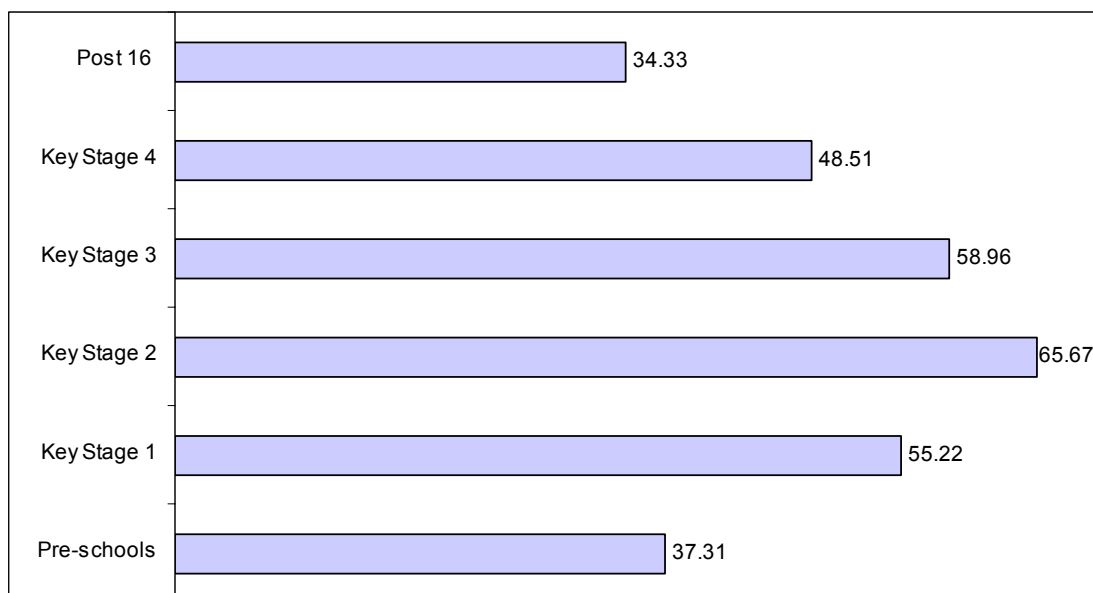
**Table 5: Positive Handling Techniques Used – Non Physical**



Most respondents (85%) indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that the non physical approaches used in Team Teach are useful, with de-escalation techniques proving most effective. A majority of the respondents also agreed that de-escalation techniques are suitable for most children at all key stages.

**Table 6: Suitability of Team Teach Physical Techniques for Children by Key Stage**

Percentage of Strongly Agree / Agree Responses



The above results show that a majority (57%) of respondents highlighted that Team Teach techniques are suitable for most pupils of compulsory school age and most suitable at key stages 1, 2 and 3.

In addition to the quantitative results the qualitative comments were categorised under the following 3 headings:

### **The Need for Regular Training**

The need for on-going advice, guidance and support was identified by a number of respondents:

*“all staff need refresher courses to ensure a consistency of approach”*

*“follow up training on a more regular basis”*

*“retraining is required at least once an academic year”*

*“mentoring support when things go through a bad cycle”*

*“to help see clearly a way forward for staff, child and managers”*

## **The Need for Further Training on De-escalation**

De-escalation strategies were highlighted as important:

*“the emphasis on de-escalation is very important and needs more thrust”*

*“whole school agreement on de-escalation strategies”*

*“would welcome additional training on de-escalation strategies”*

## **The Benefits of having School Based Team Teach Tutors**

The benefits of having Team Teach tutors in school were recognised:

*“Team Teach tutors in school would be useful in supporting teachers with their approach towards individual pupils”*

*“more tutors - sometimes have to wait for training due to there only being two tutors”*

*“regular reinforcement of training in physical aspects would be beneficial”*

Other areas identified for further development included requests for specific individual situations. Some respondents saw the need for email or telephone responses *“someone to call for advice if necessary”*. Again the need for specialist trained tutors in each school was identified. Group, in-house support was suggested. An area for further development was the need to develop techniques for:

*“significantly larger or smaller individuals”*

*“younger children who can wriggle out of situations as they are smaller”*

On a scale of 1 – 10, when 1 is poor and 10 is excellent, the Team Teach programme achieved a score of 7.2. This was based on responses from 126 respondents.

Other comments included:

*“The Team Teach programme does give some consistency and confidence to staff when dealing with the majority of pupils”*

*“I really enjoyed the Team Teach course but I strongly believe that the positive handling techniques would need to be shown / practised on a monthly / ongoing basis”*

*“The course is well run and enjoyable. I feel, however, unless the techniques are being frequently used they are difficult to recall and remember”*

*“I found the programme very helpful. It also gave me confidence to know that in most situations I was reacting properly”*

*“Enjoyed Team Teach training, thank you”*

*“Regular refresher courses required. Team Teach I feel gives staff confidence to deal with challenging situations”*

*“I found the training package excellent and it gave me greater confidence to work in a very challenging environment”*

*“There is a need to develop Team Teach through regular practise / discussions”*

*“Continuous need for refresher training in-house or otherwise”*

ETI (2006) noted that “Across the ELBs, there are differences in the protocols and procedures for accessing support and in the structures and types of provision available to schools. These variations need to be addressed in order to promote a more consistent, co-ordinated and equitable Behaviour Support Service for Northern Ireland,” and therefore Team Teach addresses some of ETI’s concerns.

## **Recommendations**

Following analysis of the evaluations the following recommendations were forwarded to DE:

- Team Teach should continue to be the chosen provider for safe handling techniques in all special schools and settings throughout Northern Ireland as appropriate and this would necessitate recurrent funding and the training of sufficient numbers of tutors.
- There remains a need for a regional co-ordinated approach for Team Teach
  - to ensure a continued planned regional strategy;
  - to liaise with Team Teach, the Regional Social Emotional and Behaviour Difficulties Group and the schools and educational settings across Northern Ireland to monitor future needs and
  - to continue to have representation on the UK Team Teach Steering Group.
- All special schools and special settings should at all times have at least one, ideally two accredited Team Teach Tutors.
- ELBs should at all times have accredited Team Teach tutors to work with the school Team Teach tutors to continue to provide whole staff training.

## **Conclusion**

From the percentage response from a variety of personnel and types of settings the following conclusions were drawn.

The quality of the training was rated highly in most evaluations immediately post training and after a period of implementation and practise, there is a holistic consistency of approach with incidents now more effectively managed and a decrease in the

frequency and severity of incidents. This reflects the theme of the 2010 BILD Conference on 'Restraint Reduction', where a variety of settings were demonstrating success in restraint reduction.

The main techniques used were de-escalation and non physical interventions and where there was a need for physical intervention mainly supportive holds were used.

Team Teach techniques are suitable for all age groups but mainly for key stages 1, 2 and 3. Participants have indicated that the training package is excellent, provides consistency and confidence for staff and is enjoyable. However, the results showed a perceived need for regular refresher training and increased practise with follow up training on a more regular basis to help staff maintain skills and standards.

Most respondents agreed that there was a need for follow up support and training to further develop effective and safe practise and this reflects the Team Teach protocols for ongoing reaccreditation.

Based on the results of this survey, the Team Teach Training Model appears to be effectively meeting the majority of needs in the Special Schools and Settings across the ELBs in Northern Ireland.

### **Concluding thoughts**

The authors of this paper are aware of the importance of reflecting on the limitation of any study; the methodological approach employed to enhance the reliability and validity, the design of the questionnaire, the size of the sample, the analysis and interpretation of data, the reporting methodology and researcher bias, especially since the authors are all Team Teach trainers.

Following the recommendations, it would be the wish of the authors of this paper that Team Teach will continue to be the main provider of training with plans to increase the number of intermediate tutors to include two tutors in each of the special schools / settings and to have Advanced Team Teach tutors in each of the five ELBs in Northern Ireland.

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