

Helping Teachers Handle Challenging Behaviour

Concerns about behaviour in schools is nothing new. The severity and frequency, however, does seem to have increased. Team-teach Ltd., the national training award winner 2006, describe their approach to supporting teachers with managing challenging behaviour.

INTRODUCTION - THE CONTEXT

Challenging behaviour from children, especially when they have special educational needs or live in Children's Homes can present significant problems to teachers and care professionals. When there is a need for physical restraint this can be doubly difficult and specific skills are needed in order to 'de-escalate' these tense situations.

In order to address these problems it was clear, during the 1990's, that there was a need for an accredited training system which would combine non-verbal, verbal and physical responses so as to reduce the risk of injuries both in training and in operational practice.

In October 1996 George Matthews, a teacher, was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to investigate the systems used in Europe and the U.S. to respond to challenging behaviour. On his return to England he took what he had learned and began to develop it into a training programme. Working with a range of legal, technical and medical experts together with school staff and students he refined the techniques and specialist knowledge that staff would require in order to manage behaviour and apply restraint.



Subsequently Mr Matthews set up Team-Teach Ltd as a training and learning consultancy to take his methodology to a wider audience within special schools and Children's Homes. He also began working with government departments, national associations and Trade Unions to establish an independent Code of Practice and an accreditation scheme. Team-Teach is now accredited by the British Institute of Learning Disability.

START-UP PHASE AND SETTING OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the training programme was that participants would learn and be able to apply (in an operational context) the Team-Teach positive handling and restraint strategies whilst minimising the risk of injury.

The first training course was delivered in April 1997 for five participants. This was a success and as demand increased it became evident that the most effective form of delivery would be to cascade the training via a "train the trainer" system.

Best value could be achieved through the development of "in house" trainers who would then train their colleagues. Cost would also be cut through the use of the schools and Children's Homes' own facilities (such as school halls, media equipment and so on).

ABOUT THE TRAINING

A training programme was devised for trainers which lasted for five days and included a wide variety of learning methods including:

- a team-building warm up.
- PowerPoint delivery of information
- media clips
- role play
- group activities around set tasks

These were designed to promote teamwork, be enjoyable, engaging and adaptable to a range of working environments. A standardised course and text book was also issued.

At the end of the programme participants undertake an assessment to measure their knowledge and theoretical understanding. A pass mark of 70% is required on the theory test together with the ability to demonstrate competence with regard to the physical skills (i.e. being able to perform the skills without being prompted by the tutor).

Individually numbered certificates are issued on completion of the course which enable individuals to access the website containing a library of video files of the taught techniques.

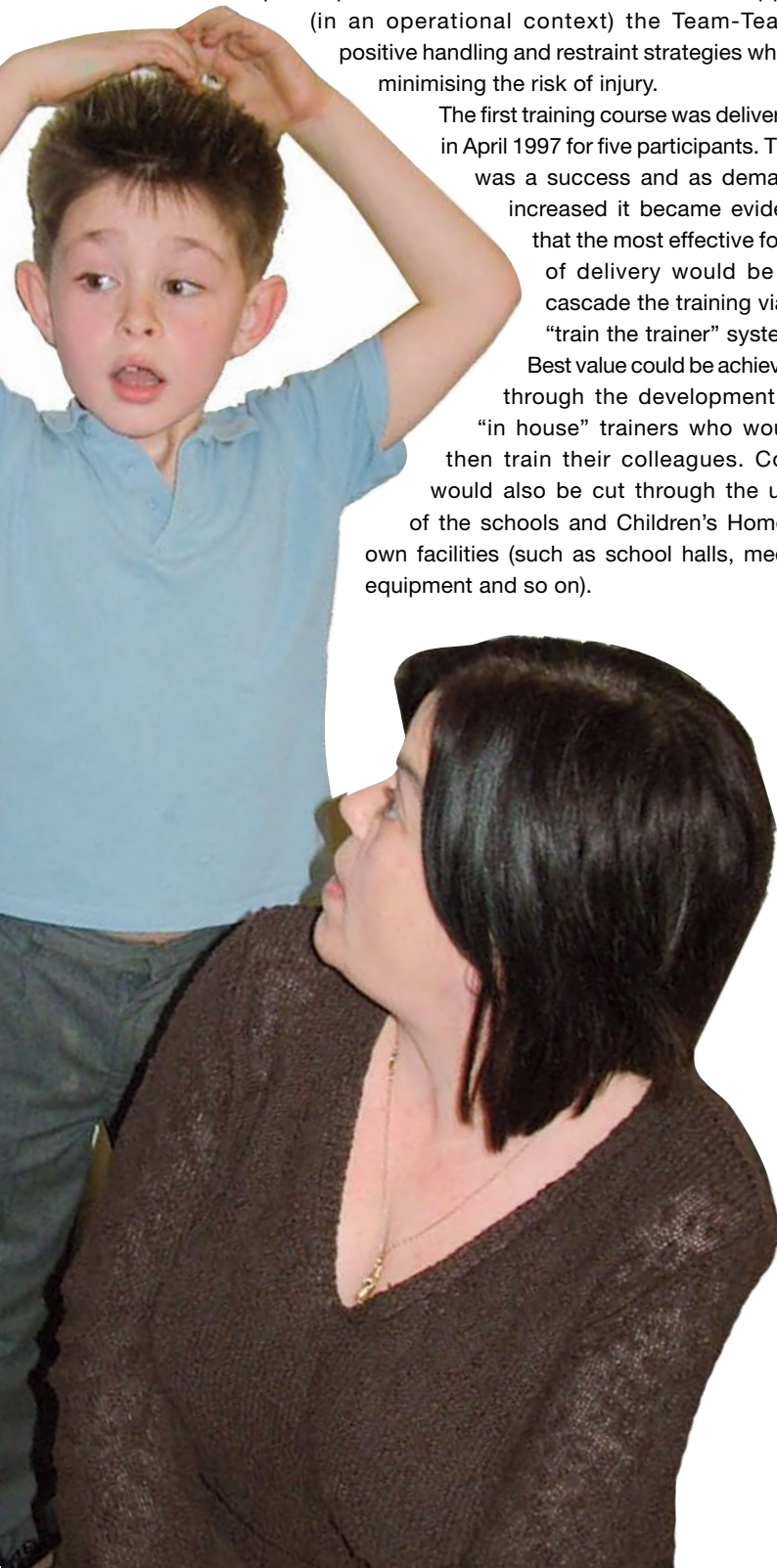
All elements of the individual's learning are recorded and this is linked to National Vocational Qualifications and other awards. Those who do not complete the course successfully are provided with additional support and follow up as appropriate.

Over time a number of innovations and updates have been made both to the programme and to the course workbooks, texts and certificates in order to ensure that they continue to be up-to-date in legal and medical terms. Account is also taken of feedback from participants and trainers. A Steering Group of senior managers across the U.K. was also established.

Included amongst these changes has been the introduction of a 'core and option' curriculum (which allows organisations to select the modules most relevant to the risks in their particular setting). Also in-built into the training framework is a requirement for all tutors and course participants to attend refresher courses at which updates are provided and tutors are re-assessed and re-motivated.

Standardised course materials have been published in order to reduce the workload for the trainers, and the published course workbooks, CD Roms and set PowerPoint programmes are an effective resource for all trainers. Meanwhile, the website-based reference material on physical skills has proved very reassuring in terms of subsequent progress. Trainers can access the web site and access their password protected area, downloading the latest resources, viewing the video files. This has proved to be a very effective conduit for teaching and learning.

The web site www.team-teach.co.uk now provides a total resource and information area and an email alert system has meant that over 2,500 trainers have registered to receive instant alerts.



THE OUTCOMES

At the point of the National Training Award application there were over 2,800 registered trainers who are able to deliver “in house” 6 and 12 hour courses to colleagues. Experience has shown that a pattern of intensive 12 hour ‘whole staff’ training conducted over consecutive days and dedicated to specific staff groups is particularly effective (as opposed to a more fragmented programme).

The results have been highly impressive with the Team Teach strategy being commended by Ofsted inspections for its effectiveness in work with children with autism and more complex needs who react positively to the assistance and direction from adults using Teach-Teach methods. The benefits are also acknowledged by parents who have seen considerable improvements in the behaviour of their children.

The training has led to a reduction in the frequency of restraint and a greater use of non verbal and verbal responses. It also means that life for staff is made easier because they have the skills to deal with these very difficult situations.

KEY ELEMENTS AND CRITICAL FACTORS

Team-Teach’s approach to training has been successful because

- the methodologies which are taught are highly effective
- the cascade model, of “in house” employer-led trainer delivery, has provided best value and has promoted rapid take-up
- the training uses a variety of delivery methods and is based

on good team work and an engaged and enjoyable approach

- there have been regular reviews in order to keep the programme up-to-date.
- there is extensive back-up available in terms of the course textbook and subsequent access to the website and video library
- there is a requirement for refresher training
- e-mail alerts keep participants aware of the latest developments.
- there is regular consultation with the Users’ group.

In a nutshell

George Matthews began to develop the team-teach approach in the 1990s as a response to the difficulties which teachers were facing with increasingly challenging behaviour. Team-Teach Ltd. is a training and learning consultancy which provides a training programme to help teachers in situations where there is a need for positive handling and restraint strategies.

The programme has developed since 1997 into its current form. The training promotes teamwork and intends to be enjoyable and adaptable. Trainers are given an intense preparation for delivery of the materials which are then cascaded to colleagues in blocks of 6 and 12 hour courses.

The training has led to a reduction in the frequency of restraint being used.

