

The background of the entire page is a light blue color with a white network pattern of interconnected lines and dots. A solid blue horizontal band spans the middle of the page, containing the title and authors. In the bottom right corner, there is a dark blue rectangular box containing the word 'TONIC' in white.

Hertfordshire 'Teach Me Too' Evaluation

Final Report | May 2023

Dr Amanda Carr and Holly Harris

TONIC

Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
Introduction	5
Learn and Thrive	5
Teach Me Too Evaluation.....	5
TONIC	5
Methodology.....	6
Design	6
Participants.....	6
Teach Me Too Materials.....	7
Analysis	7
Findings	8
Baseline knowledge, experience and confidence.....	8
Child characteristics	9
Use of Teach Me Too across the study	11
Impact on practice.....	14
Sharing with parents	17
Key Challenges.....	18
Discussion and Recommendations	20
Summary.....	20
Key Insights.....	20
Recommendations	21

Executive Summary

Overview

Learn and Thrive is a charity supporting learners with Down's syndrome to access specialist support to help them to learn and thrive. During COVID-19 the charity developed "Teach Me Too" - a free online library of videos and learning resources designed originally to support children's learning at home. In 2022 Learn and Thrive piloted "Teach Me Too" in mainstream and special early years settings across Hertfordshire and commissioned TONIC, an independent social research and consultation company, to evaluate the impact of these specialist resources on educators' practice. This executive summary is a report on the results of this evaluation of the Teach Me Too pilot.

Study Design

TONIC ran the evaluation from September 2022 to March 2023. To measure the impact of the Teach Me Too resources, data was collected from a baseline (pre-trial) survey, a follow-up (post-trial) survey, and depth interviews. 25 settings across Hertfordshire completed the pre-trial survey, 14 settings completed both surveys and 10 in-depth interviews were conducted with staff who had used "Teach Me Too" during the pilot period.

What is Teach Me Too?

Teach Me Too is a suite of materials that were produced by specialist teachers and speech and language therapists to deliver key early cognitive and communication skills across five key domains of the Early Years and Key Stage 1 Curriculum. Organised under five topic areas - Literacy, Mathematics, Language through Play, Exploring Language and the Wider Curriculum - the videos and accompanying downloadable resources provide fun, engaging activities using Makaton as well as speech to support learning in the classroom. Designed to be used with adult support, they can be used alongside the curriculum or as standalone activities.

How did educators use the materials?

The materials were used in 1-1 sessions delivered by a SENCO, Learning Support Assistant or Teaching Assistant. Settings also used the videos in small groups with children who had special educational needs other than Down's syndrome. All topic areas were accessed and activities used on a weekly and sometimes daily basis. Regular sessions at the same time were reported as being most effective in engaging children and in facilitating learning as the children came to anticipate the songs and activities in their favourite topics. 'Language through Play' and 'Mathematics' were cited as two particular favourites of the children.

Key Findings

The Teach Me Too suite of materials was highly rated and valued by the settings who participated in the trial. Staff were positive about the impact the programme had on their practice, their confidence in supporting children with Down's syndrome, and on the children they were supporting. Key areas of change reported by staff were in their ability to use signing/Makaton more effectively and in feeling

more confident in adapting activities to meet the individual needs of the children they were supporting:

'I've learnt a lot – for me to follow it, it has given me new skills in Makaton. I'm getting more confident over time'. (SENCO, Nursery)

"Overall, a great tool to steer content which we could take further. It gave us ideas..."
(SENCO, Primary)

Key Insights:

- The content, structure and organisation of the materials was reported as engaging for pupils and helpful to staff
- Teach Me Too provides a specialist, and already made set of activities and resources which staff appreciated
- The materials gave staff greater knowledge of how to use Makaton in practice, increasing their confidence and communication skills.
- The benefits of this resource extended to include other non-verbal children on the SEND register and could have wider applicability.
- Staff were active learners as well as teaches, transforming their practices to better support the individual needs of the children they support.

"The materials demonstrated how to break down teaching into simpler steps so this was very beneficial for staff to see this..." (SENCO, Primary)

Conclusion

Given that most of the participants in this evaluation had received very little specialist training prior to supporting children with Down's syndrome, this suite of materials produced by specialists on Down's syndrome, is a valuable resource for any setting. Staff were very clear that they had changed their practices to better support the learning needs of the children they support as a result of having access to Teach Me Too. It had also given staff the confidence to know how to communicate more effectively, and to set the right pace, according to the needs of the child. For the more experienced staff, the programme provided them with an additional set of materials that could be used alongside pre-existing provisions and for new and inexperienced staff it gave them confidence to apply this knowledge in their practice.

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to evaluate specialist teaching resources developed by Learn and Thrive to support educators who work with children with Down's syndrome in mainstream and special early years settings across Hertfordshire.

Learn and Thrive

Learn and Thrive is a charity providing children with Down's syndrome with online digital tools that empower them to learn and thrive. The charity has developed "Teach Me Too"; a free online library of short educational videos and learning resources, designed for children with Down's syndrome. The videos and resources have been produced by specialist teachers and speech and language therapists and focus on early learning concepts and skills across five key domains of the Early Years and Key Stage 1 Curriculum: Literacy, Mathematics, Language through Play, Exploring Language and the Wider Curriculum. Originally, the resource was designed for parents' supporting their children's learning at home. The current evaluation is a pilot to assess the impact of the resources when used by educators' who support children with Down's syndrome in the classroom.

Teach Me Too Evaluation

TONIC were asked to independently evaluate the impact of the resources on the educators' practice, confidence and knowledge in relation to supporting learners with Down's syndrome in both mainstream and specialist early years settings. The main aim of the study was to understand how and in what ways the use of the Teach Me Too programme changed the practices of educators, and in what ways it impacted the confidence of educators towards supporting children with Down's syndrome. For these positive impacts to be realised, Learn and Thrive needed to know how the materials were used, which resources and videos were especially useful, and how, from the educators' perspective, they fit together. A secondary aim was to assess whether educators used or accessed any of the other activities or resources from the videos, and if any of the materials were shared with parents.

TONIC

TONIC are specialists in social research, public consultation and evaluation with a focus on education, criminal justice and public health. A team of highly experienced and skilled researchers, academics, practitioners, and analysts, work with organisations to make the best use of public funds and to assist them in improving outcomes for the public, especially vulnerable and under-represented groups. The current evaluation was carried out by Research Associates Dr Amanda Carr and Holly Harris.

Methodology

Design

The evaluation took place over the course of three half terms in the academic year 2022 / 2023 from September to March. A mixed methods approach was used to measure the impact of the Teach Me Too resources by combining baseline and follow-up survey data with in-depth qualitative interviews. The survey compared ratings of confidence both before and after educators had used the Teach Me Too resources in their practice. The baseline survey also assessed educators' training needs and current practices in relation to supporting children with Down's syndrome and gathered some key information on the child or children they supported including any individual needs and other specialist support received. At the end of the baseline survey, participants were given a link and unique evaluation code to access the Teach Me Too programme, including an introductory video about the trial and how to navigate and use the materials.

The follow-up survey and interviews which took place at the end of the evaluation in March, were used to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of the programme on individual educators' practice, and understand the experience of using the programme in the classroom over the course of study, including an appraisal of its usability.

A mid-evaluation survey was sent in the October half-term to gather early feedback and as a reminder to participants to use the resources and engage with the trial.

Participants

All settings across Hertfordshire that were supporting a child with Down's syndrome were invited to register an interest in taking part in the evaluation by email sent through the Delivering Special Provision Locally (DSPL) service. In total, 37 settings registered their interest all of which were then contacted by TONIC with an invitation to join the evaluation and complete the baseline survey. Of these, 25 settings signed up and 26 educators completed the baseline survey by the cut-off point of mid-October. These were then registered onto the trial and given access to the Teach Me Too resource via the evaluation login code.

Of the settings that did not take part, nine did not respond to the invitation to participate. This included an initial email and 3 follow-ups if a response had not been received. A further two declined the invitation to take part without giving a reason, and the remaining setting did not yet have a child with Down's syndrome placed with them at the time of the evaluation.

The follow-up survey and invitation to take part in a depth interview was sent out at the end of Term 3, just before the February half term. The response rate to the follow-up survey was initially very low, and 3 further targeted reminders were sent out to individual participants over the course of February and March. The survey was closed on the 17th March with 14 follow-up surveys completed, and 10 interviews completed by the end of March. Table 1. provides a summary of the final sample at each stage of the evaluation by setting type and role of participant.

Table 1 Sample Characteristics

	Setting				Role				
	Mainstream Primary	Mainstream Nursery / Preschool	Special Provision	Total	SENCO	Class Teacher	Teaching Assistant	Keyworker	Total
Baseline Survey	18	5	2	25	14	10	1	1	26
Follow-up Survey	9	3	2	14	10	4	0	0	14
Depth Interview	6	2	1	9	6	3	1	0	10

In total, there was a high attrition rate of 46% from the baseline survey to follow-up. Given the small original sample, attrition rates are naturally inflated, and there were no clear differences in school type, age or ability of children between those who participated at follow-up and those who did not. Feedback from settings who did not participant at follow-up cited staffing and capacity issues, teacher strikes and children originally placed with them not attending. Of those who did complete the follow-up survey (N = 14), there was a high opt in rate for the interviews with over 70% also participating in a depth interview.

Teach Me Too Materials

Participants were given an initial link and password to the Teach Me Too resources webpage which contains a 25-minute introductory video at the top of the page describing the project, the trial and providing an overview of the materials and some guidance on how to use the programme. Scrolling down this page is a link to the free downloadable resources for each thread in the programme. The threads/topic areas are: Language Through Play; Mathematics; Wider Curriculum; Literacy; Exploring Language, and a set of Prompt Cards pack for all videos. This page also provides a further link for participants to sign up to in order to have access to the videos. On this page, a resources link is visible below the videos.

Analysis

We have used a thematic approach to analysis in order to explore the dataset as a whole and consider themes that emerged across survey responses and depth interviews. Given participant number were low with a total complete sample of 14, analysis of change and impact is descriptive, rather than statistical. We have cautiously used percentages to describe change from baseline to follow-up, but draw attention to natural inflation given the low numbers. Of greater value to this evaluation are the qualitative responses and feedback provided by participants in both surveys and depth interviews.

Data were analysed using deductive coding looking for evidence of the following:

- Key strengths and challenges of using Teach Me Too
- How the programme was used in settings
- Impact on educators' practice
- Which threads were used/found most useful

Inductive analysis was applied to emergent themes and resulted in two categories:

- Wider SEND application of Teach Me Too resources

- Building complexity (developing resources beyond current levels)

Findings

Baseline knowledge, experience and confidence

At the start of the evaluation, we asked participants to rate their levels of knowledge, experience and confidence in relation to supporting children with Down's syndrome in the classroom and to identify what, if any, specialist training they had received.

Knowledge and Training

While all participants indicated they had generic SEN training, only a third had accessed or received specialist training in relation to supporting pupils with Down's syndrome. This ranged from single introductory workshops (3 hours) to fuller programmes delivered by Down Syndrome Education (20 hours) and DS Achieve (4 days).

Half of the participants said they drew on guidance and information from other professionals (e.g., educational psychologists, and speech and language therapists) and from parents in order to inform their understanding of supporting individual children with Down's syndrome in the classroom. Most reported that they sought training or guidance only when they needed to support a particular child and thus the frequency of accessing advice, guidance and training varied considerably among the sample, as seen in Figure 1.

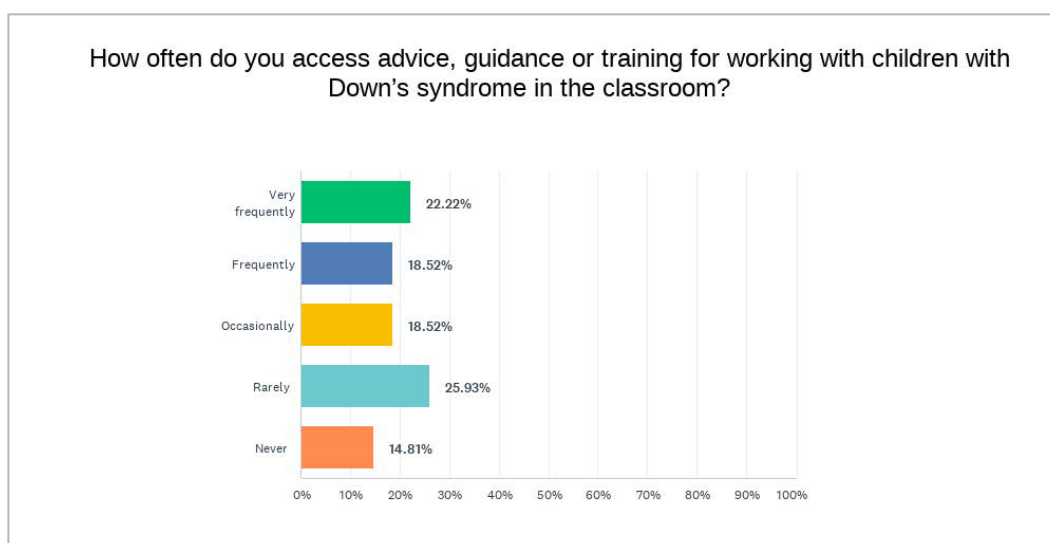


Figure 1: Frequency of seeking advice, guidance or training

Experience

The majority of educators in our sample had little to moderate levels of experience supporting children with Down's syndrome in the classroom. Of these, most had only ever supported between 1 and 2 children with Down's syndrome over the course of their career, and only a small minority (N = 4) had supported more than 3 children with Down's syndrome in the classroom. In addition, nearly 40% of the sample had never supported a child with Down's syndrome in the classroom and therefore had no experience within an educational setting. However, some of these did report having some contact with people with Down's syndrome in other contexts, such as personal contacts.

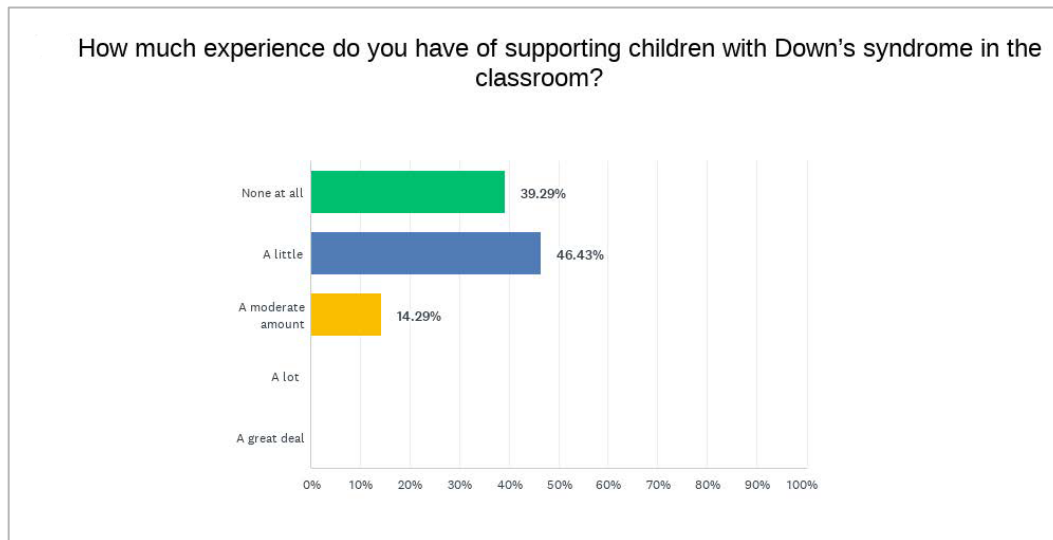


Figure 2: Experience of supporting children with Down's syndrome in the classroom

Confidence

As in Figure 3, the majority of participants in the study indicated they were neither confident nor unconfident in supporting the learning needs of children with Down's syndrome in the classroom. This neutrality may in part be linked to the lack of experience indicated above, with many not yet having had the opportunity to put any training or knowledge into practice.

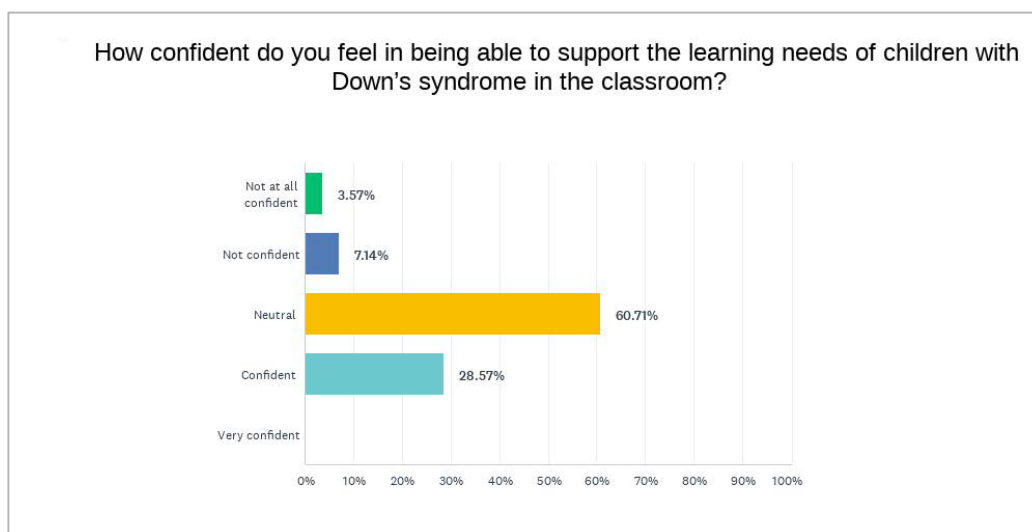


Figure 3: Baseline confidence in supporting the learning needs of children with Down's syndrome

Child characteristics

Although this study has not focused on the impact of the Teach Me Too materials on child outcomes, we did assess baseline characteristics of the children that were being supported over the course of the evaluation. Nineteen of the settings that took part were supporting one child, and six were supporting two children with Down's syndrome. Data for all 31 children have been combined in the figures below.

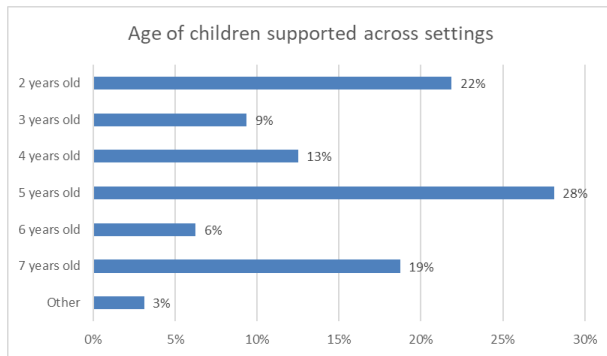


Figure 4: Age of children supported across settings

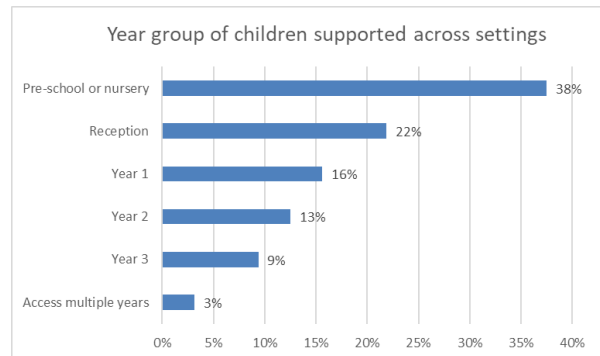


Figure 5: Year groups of children supported across settings

Children’s ages ranged from 2 years old to 7 years old and were relatively evenly spread across the full age range. However, the majority of children were in either pre-school/nursery or Reception classroom, with a small minority (3%) accessing classes in multiple year groups.

Ability was also measured using a teacher-rated scale in a range of areas including communication, motor abilities, objective recognition and counting. Staff rated each child’s ability on a number of items using a four-point scale of ‘Trying’, ‘Sometimes’, ‘Mostly’, ‘Secured’, in line with usual assessment methods. Figure 6 shows that in relations to communication skills, themajority of children were either rated as ‘trying’ or ‘sometimes’ achieving each skills.

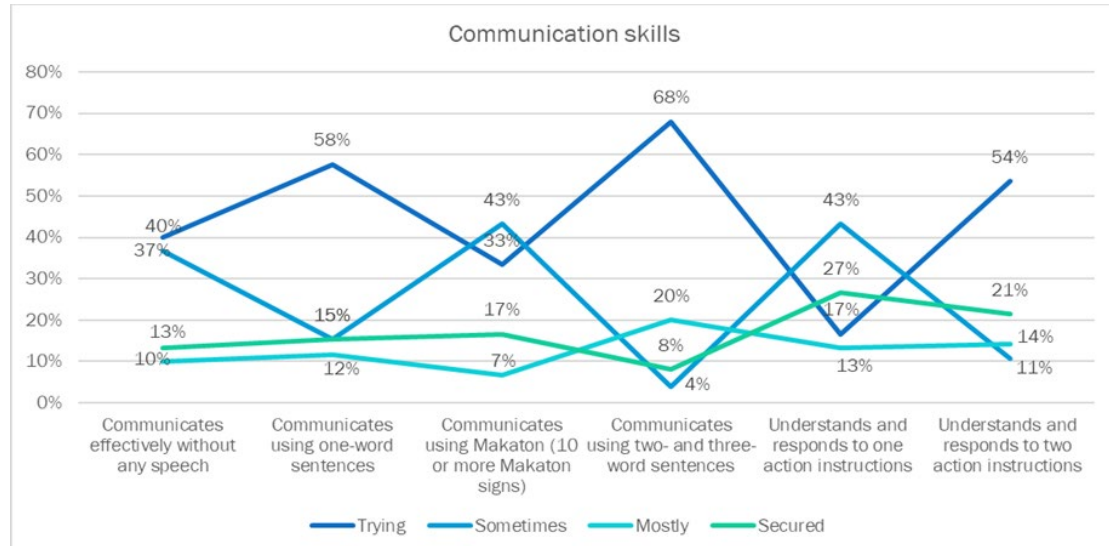


Figure 6: Communication skills of children supported across settings

Figure 7 shows a similar pattern was found for counting skills where the majority of children were in the ‘Trying’ or ‘Sometimes’ achieving range. Object recognition was more variable and evenly spread out across the ability range.

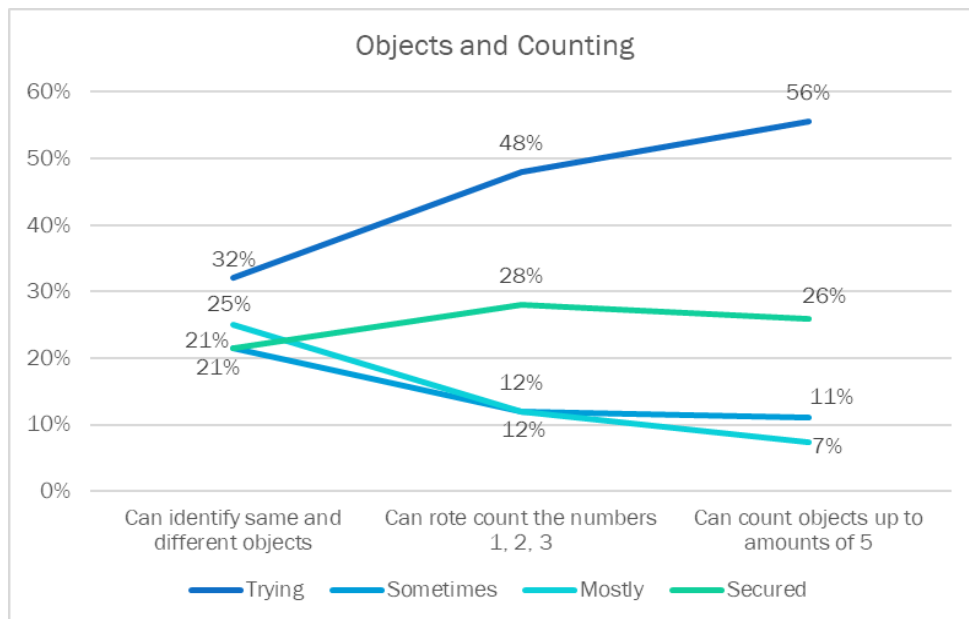


Figure 7: Objection recognition and counting skills of children supported across settings

In relation to motor skills, the opposite pattern was evident where the majority of children were rated as secure for walking, running and grasping. Holding and using a pen or pencil, was the only motor skills with a more variable pattern with children’s ability spread evenly across the four ability markers.

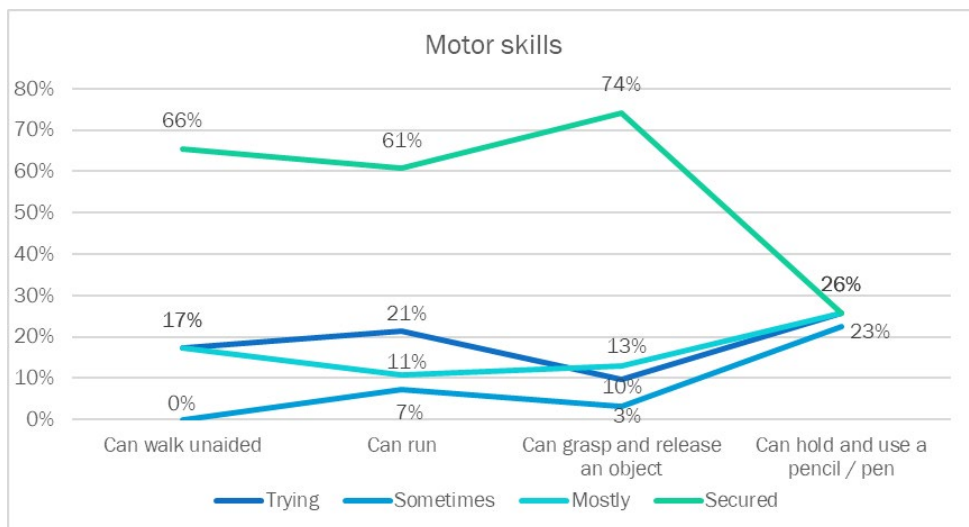


Figure 8: Motor skills of children supported across settings

Use of Teach Me Too across the study

In the follow-up survey and interviews we first assessed participants use of the Teach Me Too materials across the evaluation period, in terms of frequency and how the materials were used.

Frequency of use

Figure 6 shows that the frequency of using both the videos and the resources was variable across participants. Overall, the videos were used more frequently than the resources. A small proportion of participants didn’t use the resources at all over the course of the evaluation or only did so rarely. We explore the reasons for this in

greater depth below. One setting used the videos daily on a 1-2-1 basis, but generally, staff reported approximately 30 minutes a week or once weekly use of the materials.

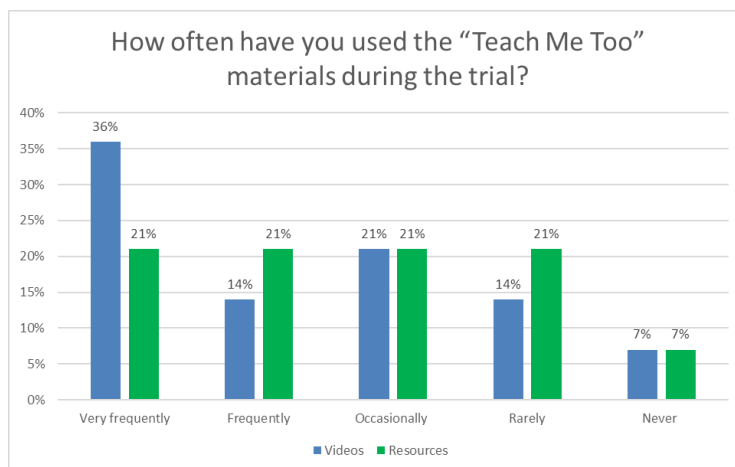


Figure 9: Frequency of use across evaluation

How materials were used

The experience of using the materials across the sample was overall very positive, with participants reporting that the structure of the materials and the threads highlighting the different topic areas were a real strength. In addition, the flexibility and adaptability of the resources to the ability of each child and the needs of the setting were also highlighted as strengths. We explore these themes in greater depth below.

Two settings reported using the programme in a group of 2 and a group of 4 children, but mostly participants reported using the materials in 1-2-1 contexts. For those staff who used the programme most frequently, they reported that they liked how new resources had been added during the programme, e.g., exploring language, and how the consistency of the programme (e.g., song and then activity) benefitted their pupils who anticipated the next activity.

We also asked participants to identify which of the content areas they found particularly useful. *Mathematics* and *Language through Play* were most frequently cited in the survey, but during interviews participants reported using all or most of the materials, pointing out that staff are led by the interests of the child, and so the materials used were largely determined by what the child enjoyed.

The abilities of the children were also mixed with some settings reporting lower cognitive abilities than the Year group the child was in, while others had found some of the activities appropriate to use with older children. For a few settings they reported that their child exceeded the current level of provision in Maths and had adapted these activities to the required level – this is described in more detail under the impacts on practice section. It was therefore not possible to get a clear picture of how the different threads fitted together from the staff point of view as they appeared to select different activities according to the interests or abilities of the child, rather than using them to follow the curriculum.

The quotes below demonstrate the way in which staff used the programme according to what worked for them in their settings and dependent on the child they were supporting:

“As I was working on the 'language through play' section with S. we used the 'Big and Little' which I found was really useful as it helped her widen her vocabulary and understanding on different sizes; she would match the little pictures with the bigger pictures. We would then use them on different everyday objects.” (TA, Primary)

“We started randomly with no tie to class work but in hindsight it works very well as a standalone programme too that you can use from start to finish.” (SENCO, Pre-school)

“My 1–1 appreciated the songs 5 little Ducks and videos especially. The number lines with Numicon we are using it every day in class in lessons. We are led by pupils' interests and our particular child has an interest in Maths so we use the maths-based threads” (SENCO, Specialist school)

“We didn't use all the threads – our child is slightly older (year 3) but we thought we'd use it anyway. Prepositions were good – colours no. Money – yes, shapes No.” (SENCO, Primary)

Videos

Overall, the videos were highlighted more frequently than the resources as being especially useful and beneficial both staff to use as well as for pupils' learning.

Participants reported that the videos were engaging, easy to follow and their structure and consistency were helpful for staff. The structure of the videos was also reported as being particularly good at engaging pupils using Makaton actions to represent words, and the recurrence of an introductory song in particular engaged pupils. Participants reported that over time pupils looked forward to the songs and would anticipate the next activity, and this was important to them. The song '5 little ducks' was reported most frequently as being enjoyed by pupils.

Settings used the video materials mostly in 1-1's and with the adults taking an active part in the activity, by using the resources alongside the video to support learning. For the one specialist school interviewed, their SENCO reported that the videos were used during snack times with small groups, as it was more difficult to provide 1–1's in a specialist setting. In this context, the children would watch the videos during supervised snack time without active participation from adults.

Overall, settings identified it was the pace, content, and songs of the videos that staff valued in helping to engage pupils, but most significantly, the videos demonstrated to staff how to work to support pupils with Down's syndrome effectively. For inexperienced staff especially, being able to watch the presenters use of signing facilitated their own practice and gave them more confidence in how they approached their practice.

“I think the videos are fantastic and something very practical that staff can watch and use during their practice.” (SENCO, Primary).

“Very engaging. The pupils were engaged when watching them and joined in with minimal prompting.” (SENCO, Primary)

Resources

All participants who used the videos also used the learning resources provided, or improvised with resources from their own settings in line with what was suggested.

Experience of the resources was more mixed, with some key challenges identified. For example, participants found the resources less accessible than the videos and were ‘harder to navigate’. Some also reported it was not always clear which resources were linked to which videos.

Some settings, where resources already existed and were being utilized, reporting using the learning resources in conjunction with other provisions. For example, one setting explained:

‘We used all the resources – very nicely coloured but no different to Widgit which we use heavily’ (TA, Primary).

Although some participants reported difficulties with linking the resources to the videos, other reported that the link between the two materials worked and the use of both was particularly beneficial.

“The resources supported the pupils to engage with the videos, and allowed them to have a concrete/ pictorial resource to support understanding.”

“The learning resources support the learning they are colourful and easy to use. Crib sheets are really helpful.”

Impact on practice

The primary aim of this evaluation was to assess the impact of using Teach Me Too, on participants’ practice in the classroom when supporting the learning needs of children with Down’s syndrome. All participants that were interviewed cited evidence of how use of the materials had a positive impact on their practice. All agreed that this programme goes a long way to addressing the needs of pupils with Down’s syndrome, and noted important aspects of their practice that were changed

or enhanced by using the resources. Here, we extract a number of themes which demonstrated the positive impact the resources have had.

Improved confidence to support learners with Down’s syndrome

There was evidence both in the interviews and also participants’ survey ratings, that use of the materials and engagement in the trial had improved their confidence in meeting the learning needs of children with Down’s syndrome. At baseline, only 29% of participants indicated they felt confident about meeting the learning needs of children with Down’s syndrome, but at follow-up this had increased to 71%.

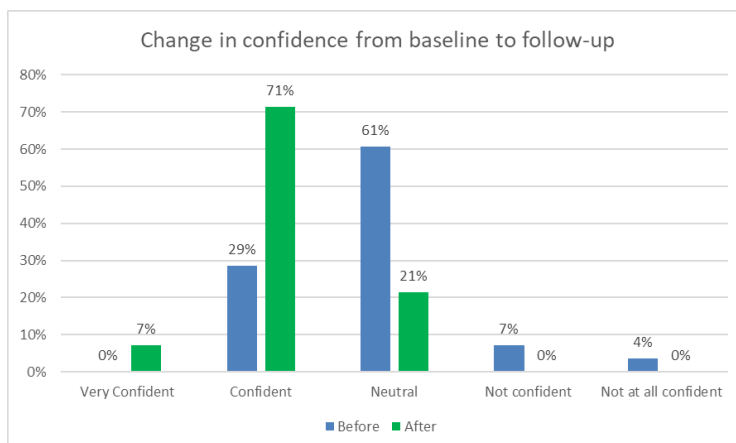


Figure 10: Participant confidence in meeting the learning needs of children with Down’s syndrome

In interviews participants identified that Teach Me Too had increased their confidence in delivering quality teaching through better communication and setting the right pace for their pupils. SENCO’s reported that for their TA’s, especially those with little experience, learning through the video demonstrations gave them more confidence in what they were doing, such as how to work at the right pace, and by breaking down tasks into smaller steps. They reported that this was beneficial to their practice by helping to engage pupils more effectively.

“Some of our staff do not think they’re very good and lack confidence and TM2 cemented that what they are doing is on the right track.” (SENCO, Primary)

“Really helped staff who did not know Makaton. Good for inexperienced staff.” (SENCO, Primary)

*“The materials demonstrated how to break down teaching into simpler steps so this was very beneficial for staff to see this. Made staff realise they needed to work in smaller steps”.
(SENCO, Primary)*

“The videos taught us how to pace learning appropriately” (TA, Primary)

Learning to be skilled communicators

One of the biggest impacts on teaching practice was in gaining communication skills, reported by 9 of the 10 interviewees. Being able to observe the skilled practitioners in the videos using signing taught TA's and SENCOs how to use signing pragmatically in everyday interactions with the children, which was not something they had had prior experience with.

“We learned Makaton – we have the signs, we know them but we learned you do not have to sign everything, as staff think, so we have learned how to use language.” (SENCO, Primary)

“I found it really useful for learning Makaton myself” (SENCO, Primary)

‘I’ve learnt a lot – for me to follow it, it has given me new skills in Makaton. I’m getting more confident over time’. (SENCO, Nursery)

A flexible resource extending practice

Staff also reported that the materials facilitated a flow of other ideas as they became more familiar with the content, and more confident in their own practice. This helped them to tailor the learning to meet the particular needs of the children they support, using the materials to build or simplify the different activities.

“I still used the Numicon, they only went up to 5, but as S. knew more, I extended it up to 15.” (SENCO, Primary)

“I can stop and start the videos, and copy what Laura’s doing. We don’t always go through to the end of session – we follow the child’s interest.” (SENCO, Nursery)

An Active practice

It is clear from the feedback that all participants who engaged frequently with the materials approached the programme actively, participating alongside the videos to support the child’s learning. Videos were used to copy the presenters’ methods, and resources used alongside to consolidate learning and to provide an active learning experience for the children.

“When I would do any of the warm ups with her, whether its to help her with the pronunciation on the songs or even the words, I would get G. to look at my mouth when I was saying it, I would then get her to repeat it.” (LSA, Primary)

“We gathered all resources we needed and made up a pack for that lesson. We recommend that the video is watched once with the child before you run the activities. And we go over the props (resources) beforehand too with child using the Makaton signs”
(SENCO, Nursery)

Wider applicability

In two of the settings the programme was used with other children on the SEND register, suggesting the possibility of wider application. The context of the first setting was for a small group of children with Reception level phonics. They were vulnerable as a result of the COVID pandemic, not having been schooled throughout lockdown. The SENCO reported that the children positively engaged with the videos.

“We used 3 videos about teddy bear; also verb work. The children were not phased by Makaton at all. We see this as benefitting them too” (SENCO, Primary)

The other setting used the programme with two non-verbal autistic children, although did not specify which activities they used. The SENCO suggested that Teach Me Too benefits not only children with Down’s syndrome but has wider utility through its use of Makaton which other children could engage with. Staff also note that they would use signing to check children’s understanding, particularly receptive language.

“Because it doesn’t require verbal it worked really well to help us know what the children understand – it helped us assess receptive language.” (SENCO, Primary)

Sharing with parents

At interview participants were asked their views on sharing the materials with parents. The responses were mixed. No setting had shared it with parents but all parents were aware it was being used. Some staff said it would benefit parents to have at home as a general reinforcing of language and communication skills; some said certain activities and resources were more suitable than others to take home, and some staff felt it would be too much for parents. These responses reflected the settings’ understanding of the various home environments and stages that parents were at with understanding their children’s needs. The statements below reflect the variability in views about parents’ using the materials at home, and perhaps reflect the particular parents the staff had in mind when responding to this question:

“I think it would really help parents to reinforce what we’re doing in school – using the same language throughout the child’s day – help communication skills” (SENCO, Nursery)

“You could have a simple activity within each video as a ‘take home’ activity for example ‘ask me’ activities because we wouldn’t want to have to explain too much to the parents”
(SENCO, Primary)

“For parents, they are a fantastic array of resources. It would be great to share with them.” (SENCO, Primary)

Key Challenges

Although the materials were overall well received and had a positive impact on practice, participants did identify some key challenges in using the materials within their settings. These generally fell under two themes: time and usability.

Time

Participants reported that the preparation time needed prior to using the materials was a barrier to use. Several issues were reported in relation to this. Firstly, it was typically the SENCO’s or Class Teachers who were the first point of contact in this trial, accessing the materials and going through them prior to giving them to their Learning Support Assistants or Teaching Assistants with instructions and access to the materials. They reported that this had put an extra pressure on their time, as it took time to watch the videos and prepare the resources and then to relay the information to support staff.

“Really lovely resources, well organized and structured with videos but quite time consuming to go through the videos before using with the child. 20 mins long! I had to show the TA’s where everything was and then they were fine to use it”. (SENCO, Primary)

Sometimes, having the time to do this preparation was difficult to find whilst also supporting the pupil.

“Initially not sure how to use them – there was a lack of time as the child is quite demanding. Only when he wasn’t there did we get the time to put the resources together” (SENCO, Pre-school)

“Time consuming to go through each video every time – I couldn’t find any plans on ‘how to’” (SENCO, Primary).

Usability

The time constraints for staff identified above were the biggest factor in the uptake and engagement with the programme. In many cases, this was linked by participants to the time it took to navigate the videos and resources. The link to access the Teach Me Too programme (videos as well as resources) was a two-step process in order to identify those participating in the trial. First, participants were directed to the Resources page (with accompanying introductory video by Learn and Thrive). Information on how to then access the videos was embedded in the introductory video (25 mins). Access to the videos was then through a further registration. Participants reported that this 2-step process was time-consuming. Some of the confusion had arisen from staff accessing the resources from the 1st page prior to accessing the videos once signed-up – this was the case for one pre-school SENCO who had agreed to interview but had not got further than the initial link and passcode. Although this 2-step process was specific to the trial, and may have added some element of time-stress to usability, it was not the main usability challenge. The main barriers were identified as being to do with how resources and videos fitted together as well as participants wanting more guidance or recommendations on how to use the materials in class.

In particular, most of the interviewees stated that they would like clearer guidance upfront on how to use the programme, such as a ‘how to’ text as well as a list of resources provided, a separate list of resources that the setting may be required to use and would need to find, and a guide that indicated which resources linked to which videos.

“There was no ‘how to’ document or explanatory overall page. Some resources were self-explanatory but others were not. We weren’t sure how to navigate – no explanation in front of the resources/activities.” (TA, Primary)

‘Each lesson should come with a list of what you need’ (SENCO, Nursery)

Discussion and Recommendations

Summary

The Teach Me Too suite of materials was highly rated and valued by the settings who participated in the trial. Staff were enthusiastic and extremely positive about the impact the programme had on their practice and on the children they support.

In particular, participants valued how the videos demonstrated how to work with children with Down's syndrome, how this had helped them to set the right pace of learning, to break learning up into smaller chunks where needed, and how to communicate effectively with their pupils. They were able to adapt the materials to achieve the right levels for their pupils and it had inspired them with fresh ideas for extending the activities and resources in their respective settings.

For the more experienced staff, the programme provided them with an additional set of materials that could be used alongside pre-existing provisions and for new and inexperienced staff it gave them confidence to apply this knowledge in their practice.

Despite the pressures on school settings, it is evident that with more concise, clear guidance and knowledge about preparation time, settings are keen to keep using the programme. In interviews, the participants reported that they hoped they would be able to access the programme on an ongoing basis, especially, in some cases, where they felt they had gained sufficient familiarity with the programme to be able to roll it out with less preparation.

However, the pressures that settings are under including time, resources and staff capacity cannot be over stated. The fact that there is also very little specialist provision for children with Down's syndrome to date, and perhaps less experience of supporting children with Down's syndrome than other special educational needs in mainstream schools, means that the Teach Me Too programme has a significant contribution to make towards supporting the needs of learners with Down's syndrome, and the adults responsible for this provision.

Key Insights

- The content, structure and organisation (themes) of this resource was highly rated by all participants and offered flexibility to staff.
- The materials gave staff greater knowledge of how to use Makaton in practice, increasing their confidence.
- Teach Me Too was particularly beneficial to inexperienced staff in delivering quality provision.
- The greatest barrier to using Teach Me Too in the current sample was *lack of time* in workloads coupled with the time it took *to prepare the activities*, reflecting wider pressure on time across the school sector.
- The benefits of this resource extended to include other non-verbal children on SEND register and could have wider applicability.

Recommendations

To address some of the barriers identified in relation to usability, access and time we recommend the following adaptations.

- Placing the videos and associated resources together under each thread.
- A text-based guidance document containing the list of resources referencing which videos they can be used with and indicating where/if resources are not included.
- Bite-size guidance video on how to use the programme focussed specifically on demonstrating how to use video plus activity/resources – this should be between 5-6 minutes.
- Bite-sized introductory video (max 10 minutes) explaining key aspects of programme – i.e., an active tool; flexibility of use (standalone or supporting curriculum); preparation needed (length of videos; how to prepare resources); how to know when resources are not included (perhaps using a symbol in the threads/topics where resources are not provided).

“Overall a great tool to steer content which we could take further. It gave us ideas....” (SENCO, Primary)



www.tonic.org.uk
engage@tonic.org.uk
0800 188 40 34

TONIC