

# New resource brings back teachers relief and let's staff have their say

Our Derby based Healthy Schools Physiotherapist (Lorna Taylor) who invented an award-winning chair designed to help teachers avoid back-pain has, together with two vocal specialists (Leon Trayman and Gemma Boaden), has launched a new training product aimed at reducing back and voice injury in education and childcare professionals.

It's an age old problem and one which is unlikely to change— adults working in child-sized environments. Staff are at continuous risk of musculo-skeletal injury from sitting on children's chairs, washing up at low sinks, lifting children, moving equipment, picking items up off the floor, working at child-height computers, kneeling on the floor for example. These daily poor postures compromise their back and voice health and put staff at serious risk of damage.

Teachers are also professional voice users, with their voice being their most powerful tool. They often have to adapt to cope with varying conditions such as teaching in halls, classrooms, outdoors and coping with unruly children.

Research confirms widely accepted anecdotal evidence of primary and early years staff having “bad backs” and “losing their voice”.

Up to 70,000 teaching days are lost every year due to voice strain in primary schools. 88% of early years and primary staff have experienced work-related back pain with 82% reporting discomfort (back, neck, hip or knee pain) once a week or more.

## Yet, staff often receive little or no training on safer manual handling, back and voice care.

Alarming, an increasing number of primary aged children are experiencing back and neck pain. A recent study showed approx. one third of primary aged children suffered back and/or neck pain once a week.



“BackChat”, a CPD certified DVD-training resource has been developed with staff, their employers and pupils in mind. Lorna secured a Healthcare and Bioscience Innovation Network (iNet) grant to carry out exploratory work on the need and best delivery of the educational resource.

iNet advisor Dr Ros Graves says, “Lorna has shown incredible resourcefulness by coming up with simple but effective products. Her commitment to back care is evidenced by “BackChat” which features staff, voice coaches as well as physiotherapy advice to the teaching profession”

Lorna said, “staff working with young children are so important, the risks of adults working in low, child-sized environments are well-known, yet it's an area of professional practice which is often overlooked. BackChat has been created to provide staff and their employers information and workable practical solutions to everyday situations to help identify and reduce risks. It also has a section relating to pupils (covering school bags, safer lifting and carrying, posture, exercise, sitting on the floor and in class)”.

Matt Crawford, Head Teacher at Richardson Endowed Primary School Smalley said, “Staff are the most important resource I have. BackChat is an effective, cost-effective resource which covers

essential, specific well-being information for my staff and can be referred back to. It is also perfect for inset days as it is 1-1.5 hours of expert training which we can run by ourselves”.

Debbie Lamb, Smalley Pre-School Manager said, “BackChat is a superb resource as it helps us as an employer meet our legal requirements, is great for our staff CPD and benefits our children too”.

Leon Trayman of TemperVox said, “BackChat can be used by schools and nurseries to help prevent both back and voice injury as both are related and dependent of good posture. It should also be considered that helping people stay in work does not just have an economic imperative; it has a social and moral one too. This is especially true for staff working with children. We are committed to improving staff well-being – practically and realistically, in terms of advice and budget”.

The resource is the first of its kind and has been developed with feedback from (and includes) teaching and childcare professionals, governors and employers. It consists of a 60 min DVD (6 stand-alone sections), a ROM based self-assessment exercise, downloadable certificate and “Points to Remember” A3 display poster.

It means schools and nurseries can help meet their legal requirements and have a complete CPD certified training resource which all members of staff can access at a time and place convenient for them.

To find out more about “BackChat – An Essential Guide to Manual Handling, Back and Voice Care for Education and Childcare Professionals” visit [www.jollyback.com](http://www.jollyback.com) . Here you can also view the Introduction Section.