



**OXFORDSHIRE BUSINESS TACPAC DELIVER SENSORY COMMUNICATION BETWEEN TWO PEOPLE BY DRAWING TOGETHER TOUCH AND MUSIC. THIS SENSORY ALIGNMENT HELPS COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PEOPLE WITH SENSORY IMPAIRMENT, DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY, COMPLEX LEARNING DIFFICULTIES, TACTILE DEFENSIVENESS, AND LIMITED OR PRE-VERBAL LEVELS OF RELATING.**

Co-founder and Director Hilary Wainer tells us how the TACPAC story began "I have many years' experience working with learners who have special needs. I was co-running a lesson in a special school in London. Something happened in that lesson which was the golden nugget that we held onto which made TACPAC what it is today. It was something that the students did which became the object of our study and our curiosity.

We were integrating older students who were able to converse and looked forward to meeting their new friend, with the younger students who had PMLD and no verbal skills (profound and multiple learning difficulties). We wanted to see how they would interact and make friends with each other. We gave pairs of two an object to play with and then improvised some music, some very easy, understandable, and predictable music. Without any further instruction, the students all followed the same pattern and beat at the same time. It was amazing to see. We repeated the session to see if that was a fluke, but to our amazement we had the same results time and time again. The whole process was great fun, and very rewarding to see how many students responded so positively to the music and the touch."

Following the success of the sessions Hilary quickly realised that this discovery was something very special. She explains "Our students were keen to continue with it. Other members of staff wanted to replicate it in their sessions. Then the school down the road wanted to introduce it. And from there it went viral, it went all over the place. We started to sell it, at an incredibly low cost, and the then London Educational Authority Consortium effectively published it for lots of other schools in London."

#### **OXLEP SUPPORTS TACPAC FROM THE START**

TACPAC's relationship with OxLEP began in 2017, when they engaged in the Elevate programme. Hilary tells us how this came about "Myself and the other teachers eventually left the school in London, but I continued to work with the sensory experience concept. Then a few years later, around 2017, a wonderful man, John Vernon, who I met through OxLEP, gave me a huge amount of support and encouragement, signposted me to other mentors in OxLEP. (And it was then through OxLEP I was introduced to my current team members.) Together, we all shaped the business of TACPAC. I was so happy to finally take this sensory experience to market, giving parents and professionals training on how to deliver it. It meant so much to give those who can't speak, a lifeline to express themselves to someone who is there for them, and who cares.

**“ OxLEP, gave me a huge amount of support and encouragement ”**

And it was during those early stages we also took part in some of OxLEP's workshops, giving us excellent start-up business advice, helping us get TACPAC off the ground."

## INNOVATION SPARKS DURING LOCKDOWN

During lockdown TACPAC were no longer able to deliver face to face training. They needed to diversify and quickly come up with an innovative solution that would enable training and support to continue uninterrupted. OxLEP's Innovation Support for Business Programme (ISfB) supported their new, innovative idea.

Laura Cozier, TACPAC's Project Manager, elaborates on this new approach "Things changed for us rapidly in lockdown. We could no longer meet face to face to deliver training. We had to think how we were going to survive, and quickly. We realised that it would be possible to create an online training solution. Due to the nature of our audience and the fact it's a touch resource, it was an unusual concept to communicate our approach effectively through online media. This is when we engaged with OxLEP's ISfB programme and were awarded the 'Go Create' grant funding to help us take our training online. It was successful, the feedback from the online training was fantastic actually. Thankfully, we could continue the business successfully during lockdown, which we couldn't have done without OxLEP's financial support."

## LAUNCHING 'PARTNER PAC' – A NEW SENSORY CONCEPT AIMED AT PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA

Hilary shares the update on TACPAC's exciting new concept "TACPAC is not age restrictive, it's beneficial for anyone who has verbal communication difficulties, no matter their age. So, we're now developing a resource for people living with dementia. It's called 'Partner Pac'. Through the use of this interactive, personalised resource, we aim to support anyone living with dementia, sensory processing, isolation and communication difficulties.

To help us bring this concept to market we reached out to OxLEP for further support. The team at OxLEP were really supportive with our second grant application. This round of funding enabled us to create our pilot study for the resource for those living with dementia.



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We involved a few local care homes in the initial study and the feedback has been very heart warming, very successful. We hope to be launching 'Partner Pac' officially as part of TACPAC's offer, which is really exciting."

Alongside the grant funding, TACPAC also benefitted from the ISfB's one-to-one support. Hilary says 'It's helped us discover a whole new world out there. The OxLEP team have been wonderful, always available. They're even helping us by being going through our online training to offer us feedback. It was also through them that we connected with a new accountant, who is helping us with some more exciting future plans, internationally. I tell everyone about OxLEP. I really encourage people to speak with them."

When asked about the future of TACPAC, Hilary sums up "We're making a big difference to people's lives which is why we do it. We're not going to stop there. We've got more ideas coming thick and fast. More concepts are being born. We're expanding and taking on more staff. We're in a really exciting phase in our journey. And, we'll definitely continue to lean on OxLEP for support as we continue to grow."

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON TACPAC  
PLEASE VISIT: [TACPAC.CO.UK](http://TACPAC.CO.UK)



**TACPAC**



Find out more about OxLEP's Innovation Support for Business (ISfB) programme:

**W:** [oxlepbusiness.co.uk](http://oxlepbusiness.co.uk) **T:** 01865 897181

**E:** [business@oxfordshirelep.com](mailto:business@oxfordshirelep.com)