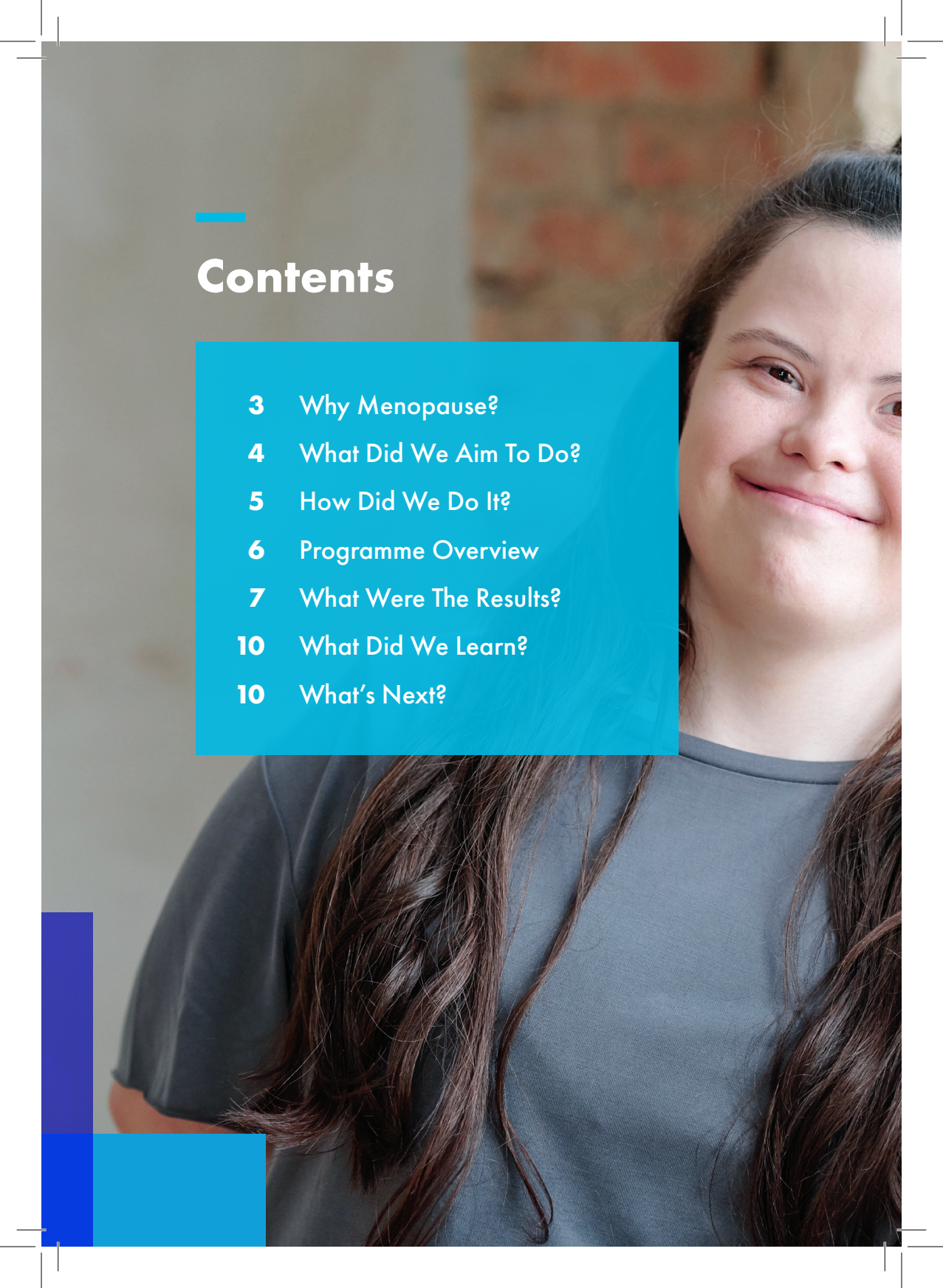


Project Report 2024

The development of a menopause education programme for women with a learning disability.





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Why Menopause?

All women experience menopause, including those with a learning disability. However, those with a learning disability normally experience menopause earlier than the general population (Martin et al., 2003).

Research has shown education about menopause improves knowledge and supports women to manage the signs and symptoms when they arise (Yazdkhasti et al., 2015).

Every woman with a learning disability will experience menopause however, to date, there has been no research completed on education programmes for this group of women.

What did we aim to do?

We wanted to design an education programme for women with a learning disability. We then wanted to deliver it in a group setting and find out if it improved knowledge on menopause.

We also wanted to find out if there were any changes needed to the programme based on feedback from the women with a learning disability who had completed it.



How did we do it?

Educational Programme Design

Informing Choices NI and researchers from Ulster University worked together to design the initial version of the programme. We looked at the literature on menopause programmes and used this to design the content of the programme.



Informing Choices NI also worked with women with a learning disability, support workers, and a manager from a lived experience organisation to further design the programme.

Programme Delivery

The programme was delivered to 6 community groups in the Derry City & Strabane Council area. Sessions were held in the community venues of the participating groups and were led by Informing Choices NI facilitator, Deborah McGinn.



Participants completed a questionnaire at the start and end of the programme to identify any changes in knowledge.



Participants also completed a focus group on the final day of the programme to understand their experience of the programme and identify any future changes required.



Programme Overview

The participants attended workshops, once per week for six weeks. Each workshop lasted one hour. These are some of the topics covered:



Signs and
symptoms



Knowledge of
menopause



What to do
when you
experience
menopause



Periods



Mindfulness



Who you can
talk to



Self care



Symptom
management



What were the results?

Participation

- 43 women with a learning disability, aged between 19 years and 53 years, participated in one of the 6 groups.
- Within each session, there were between 4-8 women with a learning disability. Some sessions also had support staff present from the voluntary organisation.
- Weekly attendance was high.

Knowledge

- 36 participants completed the knowledge questionnaire before the education programme. On average they got 58.7% of the questions correct.
- After completing the programme, participants scored 98.6% on average.

Experience

- From the focus groups that were completed at the end, there were four main themes.



Navigating
change



Fostering
safe spaces



Empowerment
through
knowledge



Active
learning

What were the results?



Navigating Change

Participants found education sessions helpful for discussing current and future changes, especially related to the impact menopause had on different aspects of life.

“

It was good to talk about things. Really good to know.

”



Fostering Safe Spaces

Education sessions provided a comfortable environment for participants to express themselves, particularly appreciating the opportunity to interact with other women with a learning disability.

“

I like the group best because you get different points of view. We can all see what each other is going through.

”



Empowerment Through Knowledge

Understanding menopause symptoms empowered participants, boosting their confidence in managing them and enabling them to support others.

“

You know what symptoms you’re going to get. If you get sweaty you know what it is.

”



Active Learning

Participants positively responded to interactive learning methods, such as quizzes and visual aids, which enhanced their engagement and understanding.

“

I liked the quiz. It really shows that what you have learned. It’s kind of like an assessment.

”

What did we learn?

- Educational programmes tailored to women with a learning disability are crucial for addressing their unique needs, especially regarding menopause.
- Many women with a learning disability lack key knowledge about menopause, indicating a significant gap in access to sexual and reproductive health information.
- Tailored education programmes can significantly improve knowledge and understanding among women with a learning disability, empowering them to navigate menopause effectively.

What's next?

- Ongoing group-based activities are needed, using interactive learning methods to support women with a learning disability. This will also provide peer support.
- Despite positive outcomes, gaps in support and resources for women with a learning disability in menopause exist. There is a need for healthcare providers and community organisations to work together to develop this.
- Inclusive and accessible support programmes for women with a learning disability, including training for healthcare professionals and securing funding for sustainable initiatives are needed.



Thank you!

We want to thank all the participants who completed this research project. We have learnt so much with you and from you. Without your engagement in the programme, it would not have been possible.

A special thanks to the community groups for supporting the organisation and hosting of the weekly sessions.

Finally to the Ideas Fund for the crucial funding to enable this research project to happen.

Our amazing participant groups:

- Destined
- Tuned In
- Aspace
- New Horizons
- Stage Beyond
- Foyle Down Syndrome Trust



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