

1 **Abstract**

2 **Background:** Childhood obesity is a global public health issue. Interventions to prevent the onset of
3 obesity in the early years are often implemented in preschool settings. The ToyBox intervention was
4 delivered across Europe and targeted energy-balance related behaviours in preschools and children's
5 homes through teacher-led activities and parental education materials, and was adapted for use in
6 Scotland. This study assessed the acceptability of the 18 week adapted intervention to both parents and
7 teachers.

8 **Methods:** Mixed methods were employed to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. Preschool
9 teachers and children's parents/caregivers completed post-intervention feedback surveys, from which
10 acceptability scores were calculated and presented as proportions. Focus groups were conducted with
11 preschool teachers, while parents/caregivers participated in semi-structured interviews.. A thematic
12 analysis was applied to qualitative data following the development of a coding framework. Quantitative
13 and qualitative data were analysed using SPSS and NVivo 10, respectively.

14 **Results:** Teachers rated the intervention as highly acceptable based on post-intervention feedback
15 surveys (80%; mean score 8.8/11). Lower acceptability scores were observed for parents/caregivers
16 (49%; 3.9/8). Nine teachers participated in focus groups (n=3). User-friendliness of the intervention
17 materials, integration of the intervention with the curriculum and flexibility of the intervention were
18 identified as facilitators to delivery. Barriers to delivery were time, insufficient space and conflicting
19 policies within preschools with regard to changing classroom layouts. Parental interviews (n=4)
20 revealed a lack of time to be a major barrier which prevented parents from participating in home-based
21 activities. Parents perceived the materials to be simple to understand and visually appealing.

22 **Conclusions:** This study identified a number of barriers and facilitators to the delivery and evaluation
23 of the ToyBox-Scotland preschool obesity prevention programme, which should be considered before
24 any further scale-up of the intervention.

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Key Messages:

- Preschool offer a promising environment for obesity prevention interventions to be implemented
- The preschool staff perceived the provision of concise materials to facilitate the delivery of classroom-based physical activity sessions
- Lack of time was identified as a major barrier to delivery of the home component of the intervention by parents

Introduction:

Addressing the high levels of childhood obesity is a major priority in public health research and practice internationally (WHO, 2006). Preventative efforts in the early years is of particular importance (Han, Lawlor, & Kimm, 2010; Reilly et al., 2005). However, interventions to prevent obesity in preschool-aged children have produced mixed results to date (Brown et al., 2019; Fitzgibbon et al., 2006; Reilly et al., 2006; Sacher et al., 2010). One such intervention, Toybox, has recently been tested in six countries in Europe (Manios, 2012), and involved classroom and home-based activities, which targeted physical activity (PA), sedentary behaviour (SB), eating/snacking, and water consumption. The results show that Toybox has a positive impact on some energy balance related behaviours and, importantly, does not lead to intervention-generated inequalities (De Craemer et al., 2014; De Craemer et al., 2015; Latomme et al., 2017; Pinket et al., 2016). The authors of the present paper, some of whom were also involved with the original Toybox study, have adapted the intervention for Scotland (Author et al., 2018), and

1 have conducted a feasibility and acceptability cluster Randomised Controlled Trial (cRCT) of Toybox-
2 Scotland in Glasgow.

3 Traditionally, evaluations of complex interventions such as Toybox-Scotland have focussed on
4 effectiveness outcomes (e.g. difference in change in weight-related outcomes between intervention and
5 control group), with the assessment of feasibility and acceptability typically limited or lacking in such
6 studies (Fitzgibbon et al., 2011; Østbye et al., 2012; Reilly et al., 2006). This is despite the fact that the
7 importance of assessing feasibility and acceptability within a rigorous process of development and
8 evaluation of a complex intervention is recommended by the UK's Medical Research Council (MRC)
9 (Moore et al., 2015). Although more recent studies have assessed components of feasibility and
10 acceptability (Griffin et al., 2014; Langford et al., 2019), such studies rarely use multiple data collection
11 methods to achieve data triangulation, instead opting to exclusively use questionnaires or
12 interviews/focus groups(Barber et al., 2016; Pinket et al., 2016).

13 The aim of this study was to assess the acceptability of the Toybox-Scotland intervention, and a number
14 of outcome measures, within a feasibility cRCT conducted in pre-school settings in Glasgow. Aspects
15 of acceptability considered here include the experience of delivering the intervention (by preschool
16 practitioners) and receiving and implementing the intervention (reported by parents), and specific
17 experiences of outcome measurement during the cRCT. In contrast, the results relating to the feasibility
18 of the intervention and the trial have been published elsewhere (ref, or in press), and include measures
19 of intervention fidelity, attrition rates, and compliance with outcomes measures.

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21 *Methods:*

22 *Methodology:*

23 A Mixed methods design was employed consisting of questionnaires and logbooks, in addition to focus
24 groups and semi-structured interviews with practitioners and parents/caregivers. Ethics approval was
25 granted by the Institutional Ethics Committee.

1 Setting and participants:

2 This study was embedded within a feasibility cRCT, which was conducted in six preschools in Glasgow,
3 UK from January-June 2018. Preschools were predominantly located within the 20% most deprived
4 localities in Scotland. In brief, forty-two 3-5 year old children were recruited to the trial, which tested
5 the ToyBox-Scotland intervention in three preschools compared with three control (usual curriculum)
6 preschools. The intervention was delivered by preschool practitioners in sessions within the normal
7 preschool day. The intervention targeted PA and SB through classroom activities, changes to the
8 classroom environment to reduce SB, and home-based parent-child activities targeting PA, SB,
9 eating/snacking and water consumption(Author et al., 2018). Practitioners received a 2-hour training
10 session prior to implementation. Details on the content and delivery of the training sessions are reported
11 elsewhere (Author et al., 2018).

12 Recruitment:

13 Practitioners within the three intervention preschools were invited to participate in focus groups through
14 preschool head teachers, who provided their staff with information sheets and consent forms. A
15 purposive sampling strategy was used to recruit parents from the intervention preschools via
16 practitioners who provided information sheets and consent forms for parents.

17 Measures and data collection:

18 Data collection was undertaken by one researcher (SM) who has extensive training and experience in
19 conducting interviews with participants in public health intervention research.

20 *Intervention acceptability-preschool component:* Preschool practitioners took part in focus groups
21 conducted within staff rooms at intervention preschools. Focus groups were facilitated by a topic guide
22 (supplementary file 1), with questions exploring barriers and facilitators to delivery of the intervention
23 and conduct of the RCT, and aspects which could be improved for future implementation. Practitioners
24 also completed post-intervention feedback forms containing a mixture of Likert scales and open-ended
25 questions that investigated staff perceptions of the intervention, and areas for improvement.

1 *Intervention acceptability-home component:* One to one, semi-structured interviews were conducted
2 with a sample of parents within a private room at the preschools. The interview topic guide
3 (supplementary file 2) explored parent’s views and experiences of the home component of ToyBox-
4 Scotland, and barriers and facilitators to participation. All interviews were audio recorded and
5 transcribed verbatim. Parents/caregivers were given a £25 shopping voucher as an incentive for
6 participation. All parents within intervention preschools were provided with a post-intervention
7 feedback survey by practitioners.

8 Data analysis:

9 Participants’ responses to post intervention feedback surveys were coded using a similar approach to
10 that employed by Verloigne et al.(Verloigne et al., 2015) and Pinket et al (Pinket et al., 2016).
11 Specifically, positive likert scale responses (responses of either “agree” or “strongly agree”) were coded
12 as 1, while non-responses or negative responses (“neither agree nor disagree”, “disagree” or “strongly
13 disagree”) were coded as 0. Dichotomous responses of “yes” or “no” were coded as 1 or 0, respectively.
14 A total acceptability score of 11 was available for practitioner surveys, and 8 for parental surveys.
15 Proportions were calculated to give the total acceptability score as a percentage for each sample. At
16 present, there are no specific guidelines on quantifying the level of acceptability in intervention research.
17 Therefore, recommendations proposed by Durlak et al. (2008) for categorising fidelity scoring were
18 adopted whereby a threshold of $\geq 60\%$ was classified as high acceptability (Durlak & DuPre, 2008).

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20 Interview and focus group data were analysed using an inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke,
21 2006). A coding framework was developed by one researcher (SM) using the framework approach
22 (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013), before the coding was independently checked by another
23 researcher (AMG). Any discrepancies in the assignment of codes to text, or the definition of codes were
24 discussed and agreed upon, before codes were grouped into themes and sub-themes. Additional data
25 from open-ended questions in practitioner logbooks and parental surveys were also added to the dataset
26 during coding. Data analysis was conducted using NVivo 10 software. Method triangulation was

1 employed by considering the findings of both the quantitative surveys and qualitative focus
2 groups/interviews collectively. The collection of both quantitative and qualitative data from two distinct
3 groups (teachers and parents) regarding a specific phenomenon (acceptability of intervention
4 components and delivery) increases reliability and validity of the findings (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius,
5 DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). All survey and questionnaire data were analysed prior to the
6 analysis of outcome data as recommended by current process evaluation guidelines (Moore et al., 2015).

7 **Results:**

8 Post intervention feedback surveys were distributed to all participants of eligible children (n=125) for
9 which twenty-six were returned. Seven of these were incomplete and were excluded, leaving 19 for
10 analysis. Nine preschool practitioners completed post intervention feedback surveys, and participated
11 in focus groups, while four parents took part in a semi-structured interview. All participants were
12 women and all parental interviewees identified themselves as the child's mother.

13 **Preschool acceptability:**

14 The total acceptability score from post intervention practitioner questionnaire responses was 80%
15 (mean score 8.8/11), indicating that acceptability of the intervention was high. Based on the focus
16 group findings, four themes and twenty sub-themes were identified relating to intervention
17 acceptability, barriers, and facilitators to implementation, which are detailed below:

18 *The need for obesity prevention interventions in Scottish preschools*

19 *Increasing opportunities*

20 There was a consensus that interventions such as ToyBox Scotland were needed in Scottish preschools.
21 Practitioners cited high levels of childhood obesity, increasing use of screen devices and a lack of access
22 to opportunities to engage in healthy behaviours as a rationale for the programme:

23 My initial thoughts were it would be good for the children because a lot of our children live
24 in high rise flats and they don't have much time to go out and play. Also, in society today,
25 parents are afraid to let their children out to play. So, there's less physical activity again and

1 a lot of children are hooked to their phones and their iPads and things. So, I thought it was
2 good for the children.

3 *Aligning with preschool and government health objectives*

4 A major asset of the ToyBox programme was that it enabled preschool staff to meet health and
5 wellbeing curriculum targets in the Scottish education system. Practitioners stated that they could easily
6 match ToyBox activities to the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence's Experiences and Outcomes (ref).

7 ***Acceptability of the intervention***

8 *Practitioner perceptions of intervention content and materials*

9 In general, practitioners found the intervention to be acceptable and feasible to deliver. A number of
10 barriers and facilitators to implementation were identified and discussed.. Specifically, the classroom
11 materials and activity guides were perceived to be a useful resource, which made the delivery of
12 physical activity sessions easier by reducing the need for prior planning:

13 I think because it gave me something to do and something to plan for, that it was all organised,
14 and then I was not stressed. I was like that's it; this is what I'm doing and this is it, you know,
15 its all planned out for you.

16 All participants agreed that the classroom materials were visually appealing, used appropriate language,
17 and provided clear, concise instructions, which aided the delivery of the programme:

18 I think they're quite easy to use [classroom activity guides] because they're step-by-step and
19 obviously, you've got a picture to represent as well. Some of us need that. Like, what is this
20 we're doing? But also, it tells you everything you need.

21 Practitioners also felt that the classroom activity guides allowed flexibility in delivery, and PA sessions
22 could be easily adapted to suit the context of the specific preschool:

23 I like it because it gives you a base for stuff as well. So, we can do the wee chiffon cloth game
24 but we can also make it a bit different and we can try different things with it. So, we can adapt

1 it as well and make it harder, give more of a challenge or we can scaffold it. We can do
2 different things with them all.

3 There were mixed feelings about making changes to the preschool environment. Some participants were
4 against the idea to begin with, but accepted it once changes were made:

5 I mean, initially, when we were talking about losing chairs and that kind of thing, I was a bit
6 apprehensive about it because you get used to what you're used to. But, you know, since
7 making the changes, it's been good.

8 *Parent and child perceptions*

9 A number of practitioners reported receiving feedback from parents regarding both the changes
10 implemented in the preschool, and the parent-child activities provided as part of the intervention.
11 However, others stated that they received no feedback from parents. In general, parental feedback was
12 positive and focused on how the home component of the intervention had benefited them:

13 A lot of parents have been coming back and saying it gave them ideas and useful things to do
14 when they were going out and at the weekend. It was things that they could do that didn't cost
15 any money.

16 Practitioners at one preschool stated that although they did not receive any direct feedback from parents,
17 children told the practitioners that they were engaging with the home materials with their parents:

18 Some of them were saying they were doing it and if we were talking to the children, they were
19 saying they were doing it, but getting any kind of evidence, we didn't get a lot of evidence.

20 But verbally, children would say they were doing the games with mum or dad

21 Practitioners believed that the children enjoyed the preschool-based component of the intervention,
22 based on children's reactions and asking to do specific activities again.

23 *Practitioner training*

1 Participants found the pre-intervention training session to be informative and sufficient to allow them
2 to implement the intervention in the preschool:

3 I think it was fine. It was all explained and the handbooks are really quite self-explanatory
4 and I think the staff found them easy to use as well.

5 *Level of implementation*

6 The intervention was implemented with high fidelity across the three preschools (results published
7 separately). However, practitioners highlighted a number of barriers and facilitators to implementation
8 of specific intervention components.

9 *Environmental changes to the classroom*

10 The level of environmental change varied between each preschool. One preschool did not remove any
11 chairs from the classroom, and cited a lack of space and conflicting preschool policy as the reason:

12 We didn't [remove chairs] purely because we've got a new head teacher in place and he was
13 trying to set up the environment in different ways before he introduced any of these
14 programmes. What's happened is, we've actually got less space to move around. I think the
15 new head teacher is looking at ways to reduce the children running around the playroom.

16 The remaining two preschools did remove chairs, which offered was perceived to offer more space for
17 children to be active. One preschool also adopted an open door policy, giving children the freedom to
18 go outside:

19 There was taking away the chairs and giving them more space, and then we changed that
20 making it an open door policy out here...There's more floorspace for them to extend their
21 playing as well.

22 At the art area as well, there's less sitting down painting.

23

24 *Mode of delivery*

1 The way in which practitioners delivered the intervention differed slightly between preschools. All
2 practitioners stated that they delivered the programme indoors and outdoors, weather permitting.
3 However, one preschool only delivered PA sessions in the gym hall, and did not utilise the classroom.
4 Most practitioners stated that they did not deliver sessions from start to finish, instead they split sessions
5 up throughout the day:

6 See the warm up games? They were kind of most popular. The kids, kind of enjoyed them
7 quite a lot like fire, water, storm. They really enjoyed that, and you don't need any resources
8 for that. So we would start with those and do the rest later.

9 Practitioners generally agreed that children were able to participate in the sessions with minimal
10 instruction. This was seen as a benefit, as child-led learning is encouraged as part of the Scottish
11 preschool curriculum:

12 We didn't need a member of staff there; the kids were just wanting to do it themselves. They
13 sometimes take it their own way as well, with their own wee bits and pieces which was nice
14 to see.

15

16 *Sedentary behaviour*

17 Movement games that aimed to break up sedentary time were implemented with less fidelity across all
18 three preschools than the PA sessions. However, movement corners were set up within the preschools,
19 with a number of practitioners stating that they created their own movement corners, which were not in
20 the manuals:

21 We have made more cosy areas for children to just go and chill out. The book corner's a little
22 bit bigger, so they can jump around or chill out

23 Practitioners were more conscious about when children were sitting down and used the SB activities to
24 break up sitting time:

25 Yes, rather than sitting the kids down we've got them to stand stretching and things.

1 Conversely, some practitioners felt a number of the SB activities did not work so well, as children would
2 lose interest, or instructions and props were insufficient, however they were able to adapt these and
3 make them more engaging:

4 But I think she had written the difficulty in following the story without pictures or props. I
5 think it was just the story and the book but there were no kind of pictures to go with it. So,
6 she said once she introduced the props and it was kind of simplified, the children engaged and
7 they enjoyed the role play with the puppets and searching around the garden.

8 *Physical activity sessions*

9 Practitioners generally enjoyed delivering the PA sessions, and this was reflected in the level of
10 implementation in comparison to the SB activities:

11 The cardboard rolls one we did. Barefoot land, she's done that twice. Because she spoke about
12 that one in the staff room and she said that the children really enjoyed that. It was a bit different.
13 We've never really done anything like that, and I think that was fab.

14

15 *Barriers to delivery*

16 In general, the intervention was perceived to be simple to deliver, this was facilitated by easy to use
17 resources, and the programme offering flexibility for delivery. Barriers to delivery were preschool-
18 specific, and were mainly related to logistical issues such as time and a lack of space in one preschool:

19 Probably just not having the physical space all the time. We've only got the gym hall, the use
20 of the gym hall and weather permitting. We're outdoors every day no matter what the weather
21 but depending on the weather, it's sometimes hard to carry out the physical activities because
22 we've only got one playroom.

23 *Trial procedures*

24 Acceptability of trial procedures

1 Overall, practitioners felt that the trial procedures to measure the feasibility of the ToyBox study were
2 acceptable, and the time taken to conduct data collection was manageable. However, a major issue
3 highlighted by all participants was the acceptability of the activPAL accelerometers. While it was felt
4 that children enjoyed wearing the devices, practitioners agreed that they were overly invasive, and that
5 parents did not find them acceptable for a number of reasons, including skin irritation.

6 However, all practitioners stated that alternative devices (e.g., wrist or ankle worn accelerometers)
7 would be more practical for this group, and would be more acceptable to parents.:

8 I think it's still good though if you still use a tracker of some sort, but maybe... Or like these
9 wee watches. They're great.

10 Yes, I'm thinking more like a wristband-y thing might be better. Or put them on their ankle
11 or something and it can stay on there.

12 Parental response rates to questionnaires were low in the trial, and practitioners attributed this to parents
13 being too busy, or lacking the reading ability to complete the questionnaires:

14 Some parents actually physically can't read. And things that are coming home from school on
15 bits of paper is linked to actual primary school, and parents will just put it to the side and you
16 have to keep chasing them up and chasing them up which we've found for your questionnaires.

17 All practitioners found the monthly activity logbook, which was used to measure fidelity, to be
18 acceptable and time efficient to use.

19

20 *Trial recruitment*

21 Practitioners at two of the preschools stated that they actively engaged with parents during study
22 recruitment, which they felt aided recruitment:

1 I stood at the door and I was like, so this is what we're doing and de, de, de, de, de, just sign
2 here. And I did explain fully what it was about and the impact that it would have. I was really
3 keen.

4 Practitioners offered a number of suggestions to increase recruitment rates. Specifically, having more
5 face-to-face interactions between the research team and parents, and the use of social media:

6 I think if you can meet them [parents] and explain the benefits that it will have in front of the
7 parents, and then if they see an actual outcome, an impact for their child and their family, then
8 they tend to go with that

9

10 **Home acceptability:**

11 Acceptability scores from parental post-intervention feedback surveys totalled 49% (mean score 3.9/8),
12 indicating low acceptability. Table 1 summarises the parental responses to each acceptability item on
13 the survey. Items relating to acceptability of materials and activities (items 1, 2, 3 and 8) were higher
14 than items relating to the perceived effect of the intervention on health behaviours (items 4-7). Results
15 of semi-structured interviews are presented below.

16

17 [Insert table one around here]

18

19

20 *Acceptability of materials*

21 *Parental perceptions of materials and activities*

22 Parents generally found the materials to be visually appealing. The length of the activity packs was
23 deemed appropriate, and the language was easy to understand and instructions were easy to follow:

1 I quite like them visually [the materials], like for me; like I'm not quick, so I need to read
2 things over, like just to make sure it goes in again. But no, I think it's quite visually...nice,
3 and easy to make sense of what was being said.

4 Two of the parents stated that they enjoyed engaging in the activities with their child, while the
5 remaining two stated that they did not use the activities enough to form strong opinions:

6 I can't remember in detail like each one, but to me they looked fine and the stickers and poster
7 were really nice, he did really like them like I said good visuals and that. Can't think of
8 anything right now to be honest, like I said its more just the time that was a problem, think as
9 a single parent its not that easy to do everything, you know

10 *Parental recognition of obesogenic behaviours*

11 Parents stated that while they may not have utilised the suggested activities fully, the materials
12 stimulated their thinking about obesogenic behaviours and to what extent their child is engaging in PA,
13 screen time, and healthy snacking. With regards to knowledge, parents generally did not feel that they
14 learned anything new through receiving the materials:

15 It kind of got me thinking a bit more about what he's doing like for keeping active and that.
16 And I'd say I'm pretty good with watching what he eats and drinks and stuff, so not really on
17 that side, but I did think a bit more about keeping him active

18 *Child perceptions*

19 All parents stated that their children enjoyed the activities, and the stickers and accompanying materials
20 were well received by the children according to the parents:

21 They had nice wee sketches on them, my kids really liked the stickers as I said. She's at that
22 age where stickers are really good

23 *Level of implementation*

1 As highlighted in the parental survey results, parents stated that they did not implement the programme
2 fully. All stated that they implemented some of the activities, but were mainly limited by time
3 constraints and other commitments:

4 I would just say, when the packs came out, we would try the odd activity. I never got a chance
5 to do all of them, as I say, due to personal circumstances. I... would just go through them with
6 him and let him choose what one he wants to do

7 An important facilitator identified by two parents was that children would prompt them to implement
8 the activities, sometimes due to reinforcement from preschools:

9 As any busy mum working full time, you get to a point at night and go, oh, and try and get the
10 activities done; but he was actually really good at prompting, because in the background the
11 nursery must have been highly speaking about it; so he'd go, Mu-um, activities; and I'm like,
12 oh, again

13 *Use of sticker incentives and wallchart*

14 Parent's implementation of the sticker incentives and accompanying wallchart varied. One parent used
15 the wallchart as intended, awarding a sticker to their child once an activity was complete. The remaining
16 participants used the stickers more loosely; one participant did not use the wallchart, but still gave the
17 stickers to her child. Two parents stated that their children stuck the stickers to their clothes instead of
18 the chart. All participants felt that the stickers were an effective incentive for influencing their children's
19 behaviour to an extent:

20 I think it was really good and really engaging, because the way it's laid out, like for me it
21 wasn't difficult, it really wasn't difficult to understand; [child's name] got it; and as and when
22 you're putting your stickers on, obviously because it matches and colour coordinated he knew,
23 he could do it; he says, like, we've done that one, we did this. It was really good.

24 *Use of activities*

1 In general, parents perceived their overall use of the materials to be low. The main barrier identified to
2 participation was time constraints:

3 Mainly just time. I work shifts and my partner does too, so we have the three of them and
4 between getting them fed and bathed and that, school, nursery, and all that. There would be
5 times I'd get the packs and have a look at them and go like "ok I'll give that a try" but then
6 never get around to it.

7 Parents recalled specific activities which they did implement, and their children's reactions to these:

8 Now he's more into water as well; so, it was just trying to... He was measuring himself
9 [measuring water consumption] just to make sure, like he'd get up in the morning and go like,
10 oh, like straightaway. Which was really good. It was more it made him more aware

11 ***Trial procedures***

12 *Acceptability of accelerometers*

13 Three of the four parents were involved in the cRCT, and their children wore the accelerometer during
14 the study. They offered insights regarding the device's acceptability. Specifically, while the children
15 liked wearing the device, parents generally felt a wrist-worn device would be more acceptable and
16 would encourage more parents to give consent for their child to participate in the study. One parent
17 stated that their child developed a mild rash when wearing the activPAL:

18 It could be like Fitbits, but they don't take them off at night. Think they are a bit less hassle
19 and people would be less bothered by them.

20

21 **Discussion**

22 This study investigated the acceptability of the ToyBox-Scotland obesity prevention intervention in
23 preschools and children's homes. By using a mixed methods design, important aspects of intervention
24 acceptability were identified that will assist with further development of the programme within Scottish

1 preschools. Post intervention practitioner survey results suggested that the intervention was highly
2 acceptable (80% acceptability score). This was reinforced in the qualitative findings, as practitioners
3 identified a number of aspects of the intervention that aided delivery, namely user-friendly and
4 informative classroom manuals, the programme being well aligned with preschool health and wellbeing
5 curriculum objectives, and not overburdening staff with additional responsibilities or paperwork.
6 Similar studies have highlighted time-consuming paperwork and additional workload as major barriers
7 to intervention acceptability(Alhassan & Whitt-Glover, 2014; Whitt-Glover & Porte, 2013). Therefore,
8 it appears that the extensive involvement of stakeholders during intervention development (Author et
9 al., 2018) has benefitted the acceptability of the intervention in Scottish preschools, a finding reported
10 by similar studies which have actively involved practitioners during intervention development (Howie
11 et al., 2014).

12 One aspect of the intervention that was highlighted as more difficult to implement by practitioners was
13 changing the classroom environment, which specifically aimed to reduce sitting time and encourage
14 more active-play. A related issue was the disparity between the level of implementation of movement
15 breaks in comparison to physical activity sessions. A possible explanation for this is provided in a study
16 by Alhassan et al. (2014) of a teacher-led preschool physical activity programme. Specifically, teachers
17 incorrectly assumed that the classroom needed to be rearranged for each movement break, which
18 discouraged regular implementation. Additionally, teachers also highlighted a need for more training
19 regarding movement breaks (Alhassan & Whitt-Glover, 2014). Indeed, practitioners in our study stated
20 that prior to receiving the classroom activity guides; their confidence was low with regards to delivering
21 classroom PA, but increased following training and the provision of classroom activity guides.
22 Therefore, additional training on how best to incorporate movement breaks into the preschool routine,
23 without disrupting other activities, may be of benefit in the future.

24 The acceptability of the home component of the intervention was lower (49% acceptability score) than
25 the preschool component (80% acceptability score) based on parental survey responses, with the
26 qualitative findings offering further explanation for this. Specifically, a major barrier identified during
27 interviews was limited time to participate in the activities. This is a barrier commonly identified in

1 family-based obesity prevention studies (Berge, Arikian, Doherty, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2012; Staiano
2 et al., 2017). It was apparent that parents did not perceive the intervention to have had any major effect
3 on health behaviours possibly due to them feeling that they were not able to participate in activities
4 fully based on the aforementioned barriers. However, parents had positive perceptions of the materials
5 and activities concerning child enjoyment, acceptability of sticker incentives, and legibility of activity
6 instructions, indicating that the lack of acceptability is likely an issue with method of delivery, rather
7 than the content of materials. The Miranos study by Sosa and colleagues utilised a more engaging
8 delivery approach, whereby parents were invited to short information sessions at their child's preschool,
9 which were led by trained parents who acted as peer educators. Sessions were offered at multiple time
10 slots, provided appealing visual materials and offered incentives for participation. The intervention
11 achieved high attendance rates (mean attendance = 80%), and resulted in significantly increased
12 parental knowledge of obesity-related health behaviours (Sosa, Parra-Medina, He, Trummer, & Yin,
13 2016), indicating that such approaches may be more effective than solely distributing intervention
14 materials to the home.

15 Both parents and practitioners offered extensive insights on acceptability of the trial procedures.
16 Specifically, the activPAL accelerometer was perceived as invasive and caused a mild rash in some
17 children, a finding supported by another study with preschool children (De, De, Santos-Lozano, Van, &
18 Cardon, 2013). Wrist-worn devices were regarded as a viable alternative by both parents and
19 practitioners, with such devices having previously been shown to provide similarly valid estimates of
20 physical activity and sedentary behaviour in comparison to the activPAL, however these devices do not
21 provide postural data, and their accuracy varies (An, Kim, & Lee, 2017; Koster et al., 2016).

22 Recruitment to the feasibility RCT was somewhat low (18%), therefore practitioners were asked how
23 best to engage parents to participate in future research. It was strongly suggested that having face to
24 face interactions with parents, and providing information sessions as opposed to only distributing forms,
25 was the most productive approach to take. This supports findings from a systematic review of childhood
26 obesity prevention recruitment strategies, where higher recruitment rates were achieved than in the

1 present study by using additional approaches such as parental presentations, phone calls, or home visits
2 (Cui, Seburg, Sherwood, Faith, & Ward, 2015).

3 There are a number of limitations to this present study, which should be considered when interpreting
4 the findings. Firstly, recruitment of parents to take part in interviews was low, and only included
5 mothers. This may have biased results, as the parents who participated in the interviews may have had
6 stronger perceptions of the intervention in comparison to parents who did not participate. Additionally,
7 fathers may have offered differing perspectives regarding intervention acceptability to mothers. Recall
8 bias is also a potential limitation within this study, as the focus groups and interviews took place
9 approximately two months after the intervention had ended. Despite the limitations identified, these
10 findings offer insight regarding the feasibility and acceptability of ToyBox-Scotland, which can be used
11 to further develop and adapt the programme before any future evaluation, and may assist the
12 development of similar interventions.

13 The ToyBox Scotland intervention appears to be acceptable in the preschool environment, based on the
14 perceptions of preschool practitioners. Further development and adaptation measures are needed to
15 improve the acceptability of the home-based component. Specifically, a new approach to intervention
16 delivery in the home environment may be needed. Further development work with both parents and
17 preschool practitioners will assist with optimising intervention content and delivery, and should be a
18 priority before progression to further implementation and evaluation. The employment of feasibility
19 studies allows for the identification of issues with intervention acceptability. Such studies should be
20 more widely used within intervention development and evaluation research.

21

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24

25 **Conflicts of interest:**

1 The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

2

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48

49 Tables

50

1 **Table 1.** Acceptability scores per item for parental feedback surveys

Item number	Survey Question	% coded as 1 (agree/strongly agree)
1	Overall, did your child enjoy the activities in the programme?	84%
2	Overall, did your child like the stickers and wallchart provided?	79%
3	Did you enjoy doing the activities with your child?	58%
4	Do you think the activities helped your child be more physically active?	37%
5	Do you think the activities helped your child spend less time sitting/being inactive?	21%
6	Do you think the activities helped your child eat healthier snacks?	21%
7	Do you think the activities helped your child drink more water instead of sugary juices?	16%
8	Were the instructions provided for the games and activities easy to read and clear	79%

2

3

4

5 **Figures**

6

7 N/A