

# Learning Guide

# Challenging behaviour



23388 Provide support to a person whose behaviour presents challenges in a health or wellbeing setting

Level 3

4 credits

**Name:**

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**Workplace:**

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# Introduction

This learning guide is about support a person whose behaviour presents challenges.

## How to use your learning guide

This guide supports your learning and prepares you for the unit standard assessment. The activities and scenarios should be used as a general guide for learning.

This guide relates to the following unit standard:

- 23388 Provide support to a person whose behaviour presents challenges in a health or wellbeing setting (level 3, version 3).

This guide is yours to keep. Make it your own by writing notes that help you remember things, or where you need to find more information.

Follow the tips in the notes column.

You may use highlight pens to show important information and ideas, and think about how this information applies to your work.

You might find it helpful to talk to colleagues or your supervisor.

Finish this learning guide before you start on the assessment.

## What you will learn

This topic will help you to:

- Understand what challenging behaviour is and what can cause it.
- Respond to challenging behaviour in ways that reduce, or prevent it from occurring in the first place.

# Understanding challenging behaviour

## What is behaviour?

Behaviour is anything that a person does which you can observe. It is the actions or reactions of a person in response to stimuli and it may be positive or negative.

Behaviour can be expressed in a number of ways.

Some reactions to stimuli are acceptable to others and reasonable for that situation, while some are less acceptable. It is the less acceptable reactions to stimuli that can be seen as 'challenging' behaviour.

You must recognise that the behaviour might be different to your own beliefs about what is appropriate behaviour.

It might be considered challenging because the behaviour has a significant negative impact on that person's or other people's quality of life.



Some challenging behaviour can result in injury, for example, eye poking or head banging. Other challenging behaviour may not have such immediate consequences, but can still be upsetting, disruptive, stressful or anti-social.

Minimisation of the effect of the behaviour may be required.

## Aspects affecting behaviour

Behaviour is influenced by many aspects and the situation that the person is in may determine how they interact with the world around them. As a support worker you need to know about the people you are supporting.

**Who is the person?** This includes their personality, life experiences and personal history, personal values and beliefs, culture, self-awareness and self-esteem, interests, likes and dislikes.

**Who are the other people in the person's life?** The relationships people have with others, and how well they communicate with others, affects the way people behave. These relationships could be with family, friends, work colleagues, support workers, teachers, neighbours and even pets.

The person may be influenced by other people, may be dependent on others, and may even be controlled by others. This can affect the person's trust, autonomy, and feelings of being in control of their life.

**What challenges are presented by health?** A person's general wellness and health status may change over time, and can affect their behaviour. Consider chronic illness, disability, discomfort or pain, the effect of medications and the person's mental health.

**What is their learning history?** Are they motivated to learn? Consider the strengths that the person has, their abilities, talents, qualities and skills. Be aware of their accomplishments, in education, performance and in attaining personal goals.

**Are the person's needs being met?** This influences behaviour because this affects their quality of life or the measure of satisfaction that a person has with their life. Safety, independence, physical and mental health and wellbeing all contribute to a person's quality of life. Needs may be related to:

- personal and/or financial circumstances.
- employment.
- health care and level of support required.
- community contacts and participation.
- culture.

**Is the environment appropriate?** The person may be living in their own home, with the family or in a residential setting. Whether a person feels positive or negative about the environment they are in affects behaviour. For example, you enjoy work because you feel valued and an equal with your workmates. You don't enjoy work because you feel isolated and undervalued.

## Types of challenging behaviour

Challenging behaviour can be categorised into four main types: aggressive, stereotypical, self-injury or non-person directed.

### Aggressive

Aggressive behaviour towards other people includes biting, scratching, hitting, kicking, pinching, grabbing, hair pulling, throwing objects, verbal abuse, screaming and spitting.

### Stereotypical

Repetitive or apparently purposeless movements are known as stereotypical behaviour. For example, rocking and other repetitive actions, repetitive speech, head tapping that is not hard enough to cause damage, or repetitive manipulation of objects.

### Self-injury

Any behaviour, initiated by the person, that directly results in physical harm (damage to body tissue) to that person, is self-injurious. This type of behaviour includes cutting, head-banging, self-biting and hitting, scratching, bruising, lacerations, grinding teeth, eating inedible objects, for example, stones, faeces or cigarette butts.

### Non-person directed

Challenging behaviour that is not directed at a person includes inappropriate social behaviour. This type of behaviour includes, damage to property, breaking objects, destruction of clothing, hyperactivity, stealing, inappropriate sexual activity, for example, groping or public masturbation, deliberate incontinence, temper tantrums, lack of awareness of danger and withdrawal.

### Other types of behaviour

Any behaviour that is 'out of the norm' or makes you or others feel uncomfortable can also be challenging. This can include constant swearing or the use of inappropriate language and gestures.

Challenging behaviour also includes any behaviour that prevents or stops a person from taking part in everyday life, for example, defiance, or withdrawal and refusing to participate.

The concept of personal space may be different. Challenging behaviour may be a person getting too close to people and invading their personal space, or perhaps following someone around in close proximity.



#### More info

**Stereotypical** behaviour is sometimes called **repetitive** behaviour.



#### More info

**Defiance** means standing up to someone in authority, or refusing to do something for no apparent reason.

# Reasons for challenging behaviour

There are many reasons why people exhibit challenging behaviour.

## Escape

While some people want attention, others prefer to be left alone. They may behave in a particular way to avoid a situation or activities in which they do not want to take part. Avoiding compliance with demands may be a form of escape or gaining a degree of independence.

## Tangibles

These are things like food or objects that a person has a need or desire for. People may behave in a particular way to get what it is they want.

## Social attention

Some people learn that by behaving in a certain way, they gain the attention that they want, even if the attention is negative. Being uncooperative, for example, at mealtimes, may be the only way that highly physically dependent people can show their emotions.

Withdrawing cooperation, for example, by refusing to eat, may gain the person some attention.

## Sensory

People may behave in a certain way because of the sensation that results from the behaviour. Rocking backwards and forwards may create a sensation that they like, or that rocking distracts them from activity going on around them. Grinding teeth or clicking their tongue may produce sounds that they like. These behaviours may be a means of dealing with under, or over, stimulation. Although it may be annoying or distressing to the observer, the action may help people cope with negative feelings, confusion and disorientation, boredom or anxiety.

Challenging behaviour may have medical or psychological causes.

Let's take a look at some examples of challenging behaviour.



### More info

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**Tangibles** are real physical objects that a person can touch.



### More info

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**Sensory** means things that can be seen, smelt, tasted, touched or heard.

## Example of challenging behaviour - 1

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A person you support dislikes the meal they have been served and makes a scene.

You could:

- take the plate away.
- ignore the behaviour.
- offer an alternative.

This behaviour may be challenging to you because:

- you believe food should not be wasted.
  - the person needs nutrition.
  - the person will become hungry later and you will have to spend time preparing more food.
  - the person needs to take their medication at the same time as having food.
-

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## Example of challenging behaviour - 2



A person displays unprovoked physical aggression and lashes out at you.

You could:

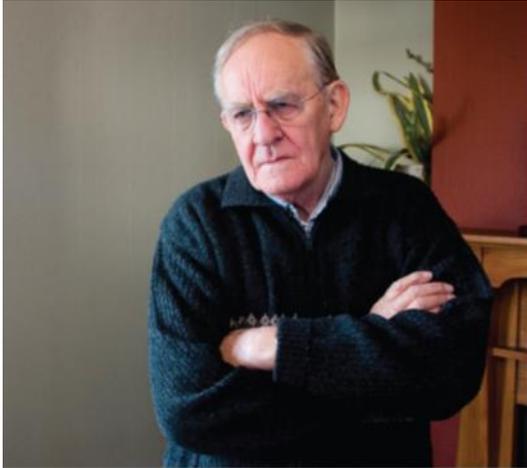
- avoid supporting this person.
- ignore the behaviour.
- complain about health and safety issues.
- decide what triggers the behaviour and develop alternative management strategies.

This behaviour may be challenging to you because:

- you could get injured.
  - you feel unsafe when supporting this person.
  - there is potential for neglect by other support workers.
  - the behaviour is frightening for other people.
  - you have a sense of responsibility for this person.
-

### Example of challenging behaviour - 3

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A person withdraws their cooperation and refuses to take their medication.

You could:

- find out why the person is refusing to cooperate.
- negotiate with the person.
- encourage the person and explain why compliance is important.
- leave it for the moment and try to give the medication again later.

This behaviour might be challenging to you because:

- it makes you feel frustrated.
  - you are concerned about the amount of time taken up by the inappropriate behaviour.
  - the person needs to take their medication at a prescribed time.
  - the behaviour is having a negative effect on other people.
-

## Example of challenging behaviour – 4

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A person is constantly swearing at others in a loud and confrontational manner.

You could:

- ignore the behaviour.
- intervene if someone else is upset.
- redirect the behaviour to an appropriate response.
- model an appropriate behaviour.
- use positive reinforcement when the response is appropriate.

The behaviour might be challenging to you because:

- you have a personal belief that swearing is wrong.
  - other people are complaining.
  - it is upsetting and embarrassing for other people.
  - you feel personally threatened.
  - the behaviour is a daily stress at work.
-

 **Write**

*My notes* →

Think about a person you are currently supporting who has displayed challenging behaviour.

What was the behaviour?

How did you react to the behaviour?

Why did you find this behaviour challenging?

## Contributing factors

Challenging behaviour can often result from the person's characteristics as well as their physical and emotional situation.

A person's previous experiences of health and support, their family's experiences, their own memories of events and impressions of people and places all contribute to their behaviour.

When challenging behaviour occurs, ask yourself:

- Why did this behaviour occur?
- What may have been the trigger for the behaviour?
- What may have contributed to the behaviour?
- What was the person's status of health?
- What is their personal history?
- What is the environment?
- What are the person's needs?
- What other people may be involved?

You need to be able to:

- Identify the behaviour.
- Know what the person is doing.
- Work on finding out the causes of the behaviour.
- Develop strategies to support the person.

Factors that can lead to the occurrence of challenging behaviour include:

- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| • communication                        | • health issues and medication.    |
| • environment                          | • syndromes.                       |
| • sensory issues                       | • anxiety.                         |
| • relationships                        | • service limitations.             |
| • power over the individual by others. | • loss of independence and choice. |
| • cultural factors.                    | • quality of lifestyle.            |
| • response to trauma or abuse.         |                                    |

Now we'll take a look at how these factors are associated with challenging behaviour.



### More info

Some of these factors can also be used to **reduce** challenging behaviour.

## Communication

Communication is the two-way process of giving and receiving information and it is one of the most important ways in which we control our environment and influence other people.

Many people with challenging behaviour have some difficulty with communication. They may have difficulties speaking clearly, finding the right words to express themselves or using the appropriate body language for what they are communicating.

Miscommunication can lead to frustration and may be followed by challenging behaviour.

Challenging behaviour is more likely to occur in situations where people do not understand what is expected of them, are unable to make themselves understood or are unable to communicate their needs.

If such behaviour leads to getting what the person wants or needs, it is likely to occur again.

People who have difficulty communicating may become isolated due to withdrawal.

It is very important to have a good understanding of the way in which a person communicates.

Improving communication can be very helpful in reducing or preventing challenging behaviour.

## Environment

The environment will influence behaviour. For example, physical factors, such as noise or visual stimuli can affect how a person behaves.

Social conditions or a particular situation can affect the way a person behaves. For example, a person may live with a large, extended family which provides that person with the physical and social support they need. An unexpected change in that environment can result in a loss of the usual support system, causing anxiety and fears for the future.

Changing the environment so that it better meets the needs of the person is a technique to manage challenging behaviour.

Recognising the triggers that may aggravate the person's behaviour and knowing what the potential effect may be on a person, means that the environment can be changed to minimise or prevent the trigger occurring.

## Sensory issues

Sensory issues are related to sensation and sensory organs, including sight, hearing and touch. Sensory organs increase people's awareness and experience of the world around them. People who have deficits related to their senses may not receive all the messages in their environment, for example, they might not hear a shouted warning and therefore be unaware of an imminent danger.

Sensory issues related to the environment may affect a person's behaviour by over, or under, stimulation. The environment may be:

- too noisy.
- have too many people or too much activity going on.
- overly warm or too cold.
- too quiet.
- boring, with too little happening.

For example, one person may prefer a calm environment (there are not too many other people and there is no television playing loudly). This person is normally very quiet and appears calm, with no signs of anxiety or repetitive behaviour, like continually asking questions.

An individual who is used to a lot of action and bustle, may feel uncomfortable being alone and may use challenging or disruptive attention-seeking behaviour as a way of complaining.

## Relationships

Relationships are about the connections between people, including how someone feels about another person, how much or little they are involved with that person and how they communicate with them.

Relationships can be with, for example, a partner, spouse or other family members, friends, neighbours, colleagues or formal or informal caregivers.

Relationships that are not working well can cause tension, anxiety and anger that can have a very negative influence on behaviour. Relationships that are positive help people to feel good and influence behaviour in positive ways.

A person needs to experience consistency of approach from individuals involved in their life. All staff involved with the person being supported need to be using the same approach.

If everybody uses the same approach, the challenging behaviour might diminish. The person likes being treated in the same way by everyone as they then know what to expect.

## Power over the individual by others

Power is the ability to have control or influence over other people and their actions.

The power over an individual may be:

- through being in a position of authority (real or perceived).
- financial.
- through making threats.
- by coercion.



When power is used in a manner that is detrimental or damaging to the person, it is abuse. The behaviour of a person who is subject to abuse may be withdrawn and anxious. They may be fearful of being left alone with the person who is in a position of power over them.

## Cultural factors

Culture is a word used to describe the socially transmitted beliefs, values, customs, behaviour patterns and practices characteristic of a particular group of people. There are many factors other than ethnicity that can create a culture, for example, age, disability and occupation.

Characteristics of a person's culture will have an impact on the way they see themselves and their world. The effects of health or disability issues combined with cultural factors will strongly influence a person's actions, sense of control and subsequent behaviour. For example, a Muslim woman must keep her body modestly covered at all times in public places which may present a challenge if medical treatment is required.

## Health issues and medication

Chronic illness, such as diabetes or heart failure can have a significant impact on a person's quality of life. Energy levels, mood and motivation can all be affected and these, in turn, will affect behaviour.

Disability may be related to a physical or medical condition and will limit aspects of a person's life. For example, a person who has had a brain injury may find it difficult to manage basic personal care or household tasks. This may lead to both frustration and fatigue, both of which will influence behaviour.

A person with an intellectual disability will have different issues to people with medical or age-related conditions. The nature of the disability will have an impact on the way a person behaves, communicates and feels



To read more about **power relationships** review US 28521 Vulnerability and Abuse Learning Guide

about themselves and others. A disability with cognitive function can affect a person's understanding of their situation.

Medications are drugs used to treat or control an illness, disease or condition. The positive benefits of a medication have to be weighed up against potential side effects. Some side effects will have an influence on a person's behaviour, for example, by making them feel tired or nauseated.

Improving health status can improve quality of life and reduce challenging behaviour.

## Syndromes

A syndrome is a group or pattern of symptoms that collectively characterises and describes a disease or disorder. Each syndrome is associated with a specific group of symptoms unique to that disorder.

For example, Downs Syndrome is a recognisable group of symptoms for a person with the presence of all or part of an extra chromosome. The syndrome characteristics include differences in body structure, including facial appearance, and may be associated with reduced cognitive ability. As a consequence, a person with Downs Syndrome may not have the understanding to avoid a risky situation.

## Anxiety

A person experiencing anxiety has feelings of worry, nervousness and/or agitation and a sense that something bad is going to happen. This state of apprehension or fear may be a real or imagined danger, with the person experiencing an increased heart rate, sweating, trembling, weakness and stomach or intestinal discomfort.

Anxiety is closely linked to depression and both mental states will affect the way a person behaves.

Strategies to reduce anxiety include:

- telling people in advance if something is going to change and give them time to get used to the idea.
- explain the reasons behind any change.
- explain any changes in rules or procedures or boundaries well in advance.
- ensure that communication is effective and that the person knows you understand what they are trying to tell you.

## Loss of independence and choice

Changing or deteriorating health may mean a person experiences a loss of independence. For example, reduced mobility may mean the person now can't walk as far and has to rely on other people to do the things they previously did unaided. This may lead to a sense of anger and frustration because of having to ask other people for help.



People may also lose employment, friendships and hobbies that were important in their lives. Feelings of grief and isolation can have a major impact on behaviour.

A person who is reliant on other people for support may have less choice than someone else in the community who does not need support. For example, a person requiring assistance for personal care may have to wait for a support worker to arrive. This means they have less choice about the time they get up or go to bed. This may leave a person feeling frustrated or uncooperative when the support worker arrives to help them.

If a person has some control over choices in life, for example, what they wear, or activities to do, challenging behaviour is less likely to occur.

## Service limitations

Placing restrictions on the system which provides people with something that they need is a way of limiting the availability of a service. The limitations may mean that people can only get some of or none of a service that they need.

For example, a person requiring home based support every day may have the service limited because the organisation is unable to attract sufficient staff to work at weekends, resulting in a reduced service for that person.

A change in service delivery can improve quality of life. For example, asking a support worker to come later to assist a person to get ready for bed, may allow that person to attend some evening social events.

## Quality of lifestyle

Quality of life is the measure of satisfaction that a person has with his or her life. Safety, independence, physical and mental health and wellbeing all contribute to a person's quality of life.

Each person will see quality of lifestyle in different ways, based on their culture, values and beliefs, health, financial situation, housing, social contacts and many other factors.

People who experience deficits in any areas of their life which are important to them may see themselves as having a reduced quality of life.

For example, a person with limited income and poor health may see a bleak future for themselves and their family, especially if it not within their control to change their situation.

Some features of a person's lifestyle can reduce challenging behaviour such as:

- being communicated with in a way they can understand.
- having an environment that is comfortable to them.
- having some control over choices in their life.
- having stable, positive relationships.
- having a consistency of approach from those involved in their care.

 **Write**

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*My notes* →

Identify a factor which you have found leads to challenging behaviour.

Describe a situation which you have found leads to challenging behaviour occurring.

Describe how you managed this challenging behaviour.

 **Write**

*My notes* →

What are the policies and procedures for your workplace that you have to follow when recording and reporting challenging behaviour?

How do you record it?

To whom do you report?

What do you report?

What form does the report take? (Do you write it down, fill in a form?)

# Respond to challenging behaviour

## Assessing challenging behaviour

### What information is needed?

Before we can begin to manage challenging behaviour, we need to gather a lot of information in order to assess challenging behaviour.

### How is the information gathered?

Some of the different ways of gathering information include:

- direct observation.
- record keeping.
- looking through and reviewing any information already gathered on the person.
- observing the person in the environment where the behaviour occurs.

### Asking questions

Asking questions is often the best way to gather information. We can group the questions together according to the reason they are being asked:

#### Establish the nature of the behaviour

- Is it really a problem?
- To whom is the behaviour a problem?
- Is it a new or established behaviour?

#### Determine the facts

- Is the information received about the behaviour reliable?
- Are there differences with how different carers see the challenging behaviour?

#### Describe the behaviour

- What happens, how often and how bad is it?
- Is there a pattern, for example, does it occur at certain times of the day? If so, when?
- Under what circumstances does the behaviour occur?
- What was the person doing immediately before the behaviour occurred?

#### What are the outcomes of the behaviour?

- Escape from a threatening event?
- Rewards such as attention, food or drink?
- Interaction with others?

- Self-stimulation?

### **Examine the person's history**

- Is there a history of the same behaviour?
- What were the previous interventions?
- Were the previous interventions successful?
- Were there unknown triggers?
- Under what circumstances did the behaviour occur?

### **Examine the medical history**

- Has there been a new diagnosis/illness?
- Is the person demonstrating new physical symptoms, for example, urinary frequency?
- Has any medication been reduced or increased?
- Has new medication been prescribed?
- Has old medication been disposed of before new medication is taken?
- Is the person fatigued or tired?
- Is there pain or discomfort?

### **Determine changes to the environment**

Has there been a change of:

- Carer or key worker?
- Daily routine?
- Activities?
- Frequency of family visits?
- Is there a lack of stimulation or over stimulation?
- Has there been any loss or bereavement with family, friends or colleagues?
- Has the carer's attitude towards the person changed?

## **Analysing the information**

The reason you gather information to understand why the person is exhibiting challenging behaviour is to help decide how to manage it. Analysis can help you understand what needs the person is expressing and how you can meet those needs. A management plan can then be devised.

It is important to look at the whole person and not just the behaviour in isolation. Analysis means looking for patterns of behaviour – when it occurs, what time, who is around, what's going on and what the environment. It can be helpful to make links between the behaviour and when the behaviour is being displayed.

*My notes* →



## Write

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Take your example of challenging behaviour from the previous learning activity.

Review the list of suggested questions on the previous pages to gather information in order to assess this behaviour. Write as many answers as you can below.

# Managing challenging behaviour

## Managing yourself

The first step in managing challenging behaviour is to manage yourself. How do you manage your stress when faced with a challenging behaviour?

Are you managing yourself effectively?

Is what you are saying and the way you are reacting in your best interest?

Is it helping the person know what to do?

Challenging behaviour can be reduced by:

- treating the person with respect.
- giving the person the opportunity to make choices and take responsibility.
- supporting the person's feelings and making sure that any frustrations are reduced or got rid of altogether.

## Support strategies

Improving a person's quality of life may reduce any challenging behaviour that the person is displaying. Positive support strategies include:

- establishing functional communication options.
- changing environments and accessing new environments.
- participating in new activities and acquiring new skills.
- gaining new social contacts.
- improving health status.
- change in service delivery.
- providing positive rewards for providing information.
- providing opportunities for active participation and choice.
- using distraction techniques.
- reducing stimuli
- utilising additional support services.

Some of these support strategies will develop from issues identified related to the factors influencing behaviour, for example, communication, relationships, service limitations and environment.

Some support strategies will overlap. A person who is engaging in new activities will also be gaining new social contacts and may be accessing new environments at the same time.

## Implementing support strategies

When you actually use some or all of these strategies, you need to make sure that you do so in accordance with your organisations policies and procedures, and be mindful of any cultural considerations. Any strategies need to be implemented safely and in a timely manner. A strategy that is implemented too late will be ineffective.

You may have a role in helping the person you support acquire new skills and you will have to be able to communicate effectively with the person.

Your organisation will have policies and procedures about monitoring a person's health status and how it may be improved. As a support worker, you will have responsibilities involved with monitoring and reporting changes that affect a person's quality of life.

## Evaluating the effectiveness of support strategies

After you have implemented one or more support strategy, it's important to review how successful it was in reducing or eliminating challenging behaviour. Ask yourself:

- did the strategy make the challenging behaviour better or worse?
- if the strategy made the challenging behaviour better, is there any strategies that you could use next time that would be even more effective?
- if the strategy made the challenging behaviour worse, what would be a better strategy to use next time?

You should note down the strategies you used and their effectiveness.

## Communication

It is very important to have a good understanding of the ways in which a particular person communicates and how to present information to help them understand.

Communication is particularly important with certain sorts of messages, like:

- letting someone know that a request has not been understood.
- expressing a preference, how you want something done or what you need.
- letting someone know how you feel, expressing emotions.

Communication interventions need to include all aspects of the person's life and must include all those people who regularly communicate with the person. It is important to respond consistently (the same way every time) to what the person is trying to communicate.



### Some strategies to help communicate

Try to understand the situation from the other person's perspective. Repetitive language or questions may stem from the person not understanding, and trying to clarify the message.

Check that the lines of communication are open. 'You're not listening to me' is a cry for help.

Frustration often comes from miscommunication. Backtrack to find the root cause of the frustration. When communicating use simple closed questions, which can be answered with yes or no and are easier for the person to answer.

Use simple, short sentences and key words, with information given in small chunks.

- Avoid saying something that could be misunderstood or misinterpreted.
- Teach new vocabulary or add to spoken language, such as using sign language.
- Use objects, pictures and symbols as a way of reminding people what will be happening throughout the day or for the person to express a need or emotion.
- Recognise communication through non-verbal behaviour.



Read the following scenario and then answer the questions.

Jason who is 20, has an intellectual disability and uses signs, gestures, pictures and symbols to communicate. One evening Linda, a support worker, is taking over care at the house where Jason lives. She arrives on time but is in a rush to prepare dinner, so doesn't read Jason's file or the house diary, relying on her memory from her last visit.

Jason points at the calendar and his watch and then makes gestures like he is driving a car. Linda thinks he wants to go for a drive and tells him she is too busy. Jason seems unhappy and continues to gesture, until Linda tells him to stop talking about driving.

Jason's frustration is then at a peak. He storms out and rides away on his bike.

Linda discusses this with her supervisor Derek who reassures her Jason will be fine on his bike. Linda fills in an incident form. Later Derek discovers that it was Jason's ten pin bowling night and usually his support worker drives him to and from the bowling hall.

What was the trigger for Jason's challenging behaviour?

What could Linda have done to understand Jason?

What do you think Linda should do differently next time?

## Environmental management

Changing the environment can have an effect upon behaviour. If the person has their needs met and are more comfortable, they are less likely to have challenging behaviour.

For example, trying new activities, which will probably involve going new places and meeting new people, may be unsettling to a person and a behaviour change may occur. However, a person who is unsettled and disruptive may calm down once back in a familiar environment where they feel comfortable.

## Intervention

Some behaviour may require the carer or support worker to encourage and promote positive behaviour over undesired behaviour. This reinforcement may have the effect of changing the behaviour the person is displaying.

One of the characteristics of challenging behaviour is that it is often long-term and may be displayed by a person for many years. Even with the best intervention plans in place, there are likely to be times when behaviour can get out of control or become more prominent.

When behaviour escalates, carers or support workers may be required to intervene to prevent injury to the person concerned, themselves or others. If there is no intervention plan to manage out-of-control behaviour, the risks of injury for everybody involved are increased.

Before an intervention is made, you need all the facts:

- observe and document the behaviour.
- collect or consult any background information that may be relevant, for example, the person's personal history.
- identify any triggers of the behaviour. What is causing the person to behave that way?
- what does the person need? What need is causing this behaviour and how can this need be best met?

Intervention can be made using either a reactive or a proactive approach.

## Proactive approach

This may be creating an environment, or changing the environment, so that the challenging behaviour is less likely to occur.

Or you may be acting in a way that tries to prevent the triggers that set off the challenging behaviour.



### More info

The **environment** includes the physical environment, the social environment and programmes and activities the person may be involved in.



### More info

Being **proactive** means that you are acting in a way that tries to prevent the challenging behaviour **before** it occurs.

You can be proactive by:

- Working with the person to give them the skills they need to communicate personal wants and needs.
- Recognising early signs of the person becoming agitated or distressed and intervening to stop serious outbursts of challenging behaviour.
- Redirecting or moving the person on to a different activity.
- Distracting or getting the person's attention away from what is causing the problem and engage the person in thinking about or doing something else.
- Working to develop relaxation strategies for the person, for example, a quiet place they can go to or listening to music. Anything that helps the person relax and keep calm needs to be developed into a strategy to help deal with any stressful situation.
- Teaching skills to manage anger and frustration.
- Helping the person to develop positive behaviour when they need or want something.
- Reinforcing acceptable behaviour.

The proactive approach meets the need for behavioural change without using punishment or harsh techniques. The strategies are based on the person and meeting their needs and they aim to bring about long-term change regardless of how severe the behaviour.

Proactive strategies are generally acceptable to the wider community (socially valid) and are legal. Because of this, these strategies can be used in a variety of environments and in public.

Proactive strategies contribute to positive attitudes and give the person displaying the behaviour a feeling of self-respect.

## Reactive approach

Reactive strategies provide support workers with a clear plan for how to respond to challenging behaviour. They are reactive because they are used only once challenging behaviour occurs.

Using a reactive strategy may not result in any future change in the pattern of a person's behaviour. The goal is simply to help support workers achieve rapid, safe and effective control of the challenging behaviour.



### More info

Being **reactive** means that you react **after** the behaviour has occurred.

## Positive reinforcement

Reinforcement is any event that increases the behaviour that it follows and makes it more likely that the behaviour will happen again.

When supporting people with challenging behaviour, we should try to reinforce the behaviour that we want to occur. Reinforcement should happen, as soon as possible, after the behaviour has occurred.

Focusing on the desired behaviour generally has a positive spin off as the behaviour is displayed more frequently.

Challenging behaviour can be ignored, if it is safe to do so. If it is not safe, or the behaviour is upsetting other people, an intervention will be required.

The person can be offered an alternative choice or re-directed into another activity or environment to assist in changing the behaviour.

Acceptable behaviour can be praised and positively reinforced to encourage more of this type of behaviour.

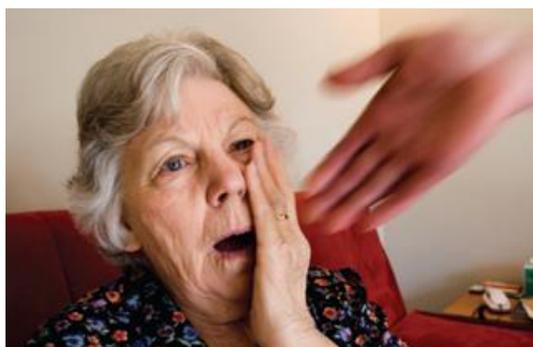
A positive approach to the best behaviour works best.



## Negative consequences to challenging behaviour

Negative consequences include:

- **physical abuse** – such as hitting, pinching, pushing, hair pulling and being rough with a person.
- **physical restraint** – such as forcing people to stay in “time-out” rooms, leaving them in chairs or holding them down on toilets.
- **emotional or psychological abuse**, such as threatening, frightening, yelling, depriving, isolating, degrading or embarrassing people.
- **withdrawal of privileges**, such as missing outings or having possessions removed.



### More info

To read more about abuse review US 28521 Vulnerability and Abuse Learning Guide

Negative consequences often do not have a long-term positive effect on the person. Negative consequences can escalate the behaviour, or negative impact on or have a demeaning effect on the person.

Negative consequences do not work because:

- They are not ethical or legal.
- They do not result in sustained behaviour change.
- The punisher needs to be there for it to be effective.
- They do not deal with the underlying issues or cause of the behaviour.
- They do not encourage alternative ways for the person to have their needs met.
- They create a power relationship that is not equal.
- They can become rewarding for the person in a position of power.
- They reinforce a lack of control over the person's life.

## Positive programming

This involves teaching a person new skills which might lead to behavioural change. There are four main categories of skills that need to be considered for the person to participate fully in their community.

### General skills

This is the range of skills that enable a person to perform a wide range of functions that are reinforcing and of benefit to the person, that is, social, cognitive, physical and emotional.

### Replacement skills

These skills replace the challenging behaviour that is currently meeting the needs of the person. Because the challenging behaviour has a purpose for the person, encouraging replacement skills enables the person to meet those needs in a more appropriate way.

### Support skills

Some skills required to successfully reduce challenging behaviour include:

- discrimination and choice making.
- ways to improve predictability and control.
- rules about when a certain behaviour is acceptable.

### Coping and tolerance skills

This might include how to cope with events such as having to wait, or being criticised. The skills should include how to give a generalised response to trigger events and make the person less sensitive to those events that cause challenging behaviour.

Read the following scenario and then answer the questions.

Mr Millar is 80 years old and lives in residential care. He suffered a severe stroke several years ago and is very limited in both mobility and speech. He has a favourite chair he likes to use in the lounge and loves to watch the racing channel on television.

If more people choose to use the lounge area, it can become a little noisy and the volume on the television needs to be turned up. When this happens, Mr Millar starts rocking in his chair and shouting. The words are incomprehensible but very loud and if anyone approaches Mr Millar to ask him to be quieter, he pushes them away. He can be quite rough and some support workers are nervous of having to deal with the situation.

What is the challenging behaviour in this case?

Who is being affected by the behaviour?

What do you think is causing the behaviour?

What are some possible positive strategies to manage this behaviour?

## Management plans

Plans or strategies that are being implemented to manage challenging behaviour are there to meet the person's needs and promote the safety of those around the person.

Plans need to be based on the knowledge of the person and what works for that person. They must be designed specifically for an individual. Any plans or strategies that are implemented need to be well document

A plan should be:

- written in a way that is easily understood.
- easily accessible to all people involved in the care of the person.

Plans need to include:

- staff members and any other people who will be involved.
- locations and times of intervention.
- materials needed.
- how changes will be monitored.
- how often the plan will be reviewed.

## Safety plans

Safety plans have to include everybody who may be involved in a situation involving challenging behaviour. This may include:

- you as the support worker.
- the person who is exhibiting the challenging behaviour.
- family members.
- rest home residents.
- other staff members.
- members of the public.

Your organisation will have policies and procedures concerning safety. A specific plan for the person you are supporting may be included in their service plan. Make sure that you have all the information you need to keep yourself and others safe.

Techniques, such as redirection and active listening may be tried first. Physical management procedures should only be used as a last resort when there is no other alternative. These physical management procedures need to be taught by a qualified person.

## An example of a management plan for challenging behaviour

Plan for behavioural support	
Name of person: <i>Jane Morrison</i>	Date of birth: <i>2/06/1928</i>
<b>Behaviour</b>	
<i>Jane is refusing to cooperate in getting out of the vehicle after attending social events.</i>	
<b>Goals</b>	
<i>That Jane exits the vehicle consistently on returning from social activity.</i>	
<b>Person's strengths</b>	
<i>Jane can get in and out of the vehicle without assistance. She behaves well while on an outing. Able to socialise positively.</i>	
<b>Agreed strategies with</b>	
<i>Jane Multidisciplinary team Support worker Family</i>	
<b>General skills required</b>	
<i>Understanding the need to cooperate, social rules around outings.</i>	
<b>Replacement skills</b>	
<i>Teaching alternative ways to communicate how she is feeling and why she isn't cooperating.</i>	
<b>Coping and tolerance skills</b>	
<i>Negotiation. Reality check ie what is expected in the "real world".</i>	
<b>Methods for evaluation/</b>	
<i>Records of consistent behaviour change.</i>	
<b>Time frame</b>	
<i>Over five outings.</i>	
<b>What other strategies could be considered?</b>	
<i>Encouragement from another support ie team or family member.</i>	
Name of manager/supervisor	Signature:  Date:

 **Write**

*My notes* →

Find your organisation's policies and procedures related to safety when confronted by challenging behaviour.

What is an example of a safety plan in your workplace?

How is this plan implemented?

What are your responsibilities in implementing this safety plan?

## Staff training

The skills and knowledge of the staff implementing a management plan will determine how successful the plan is.

## Implementing a plan

Once a plan has been decided on, everyone in the multidisciplinary team and involved in the person's care needs to be taken through the plan. They need to understand how to carry out any instructions, be aware of any schedules or routines that are devised, and be able to adjust them for any changes that may occur. Systems need to be in place to monitor the effect of the plan and make note of any of outcomes.

Consistency of approach from everybody involved in a person's life is important. For example, a person may respond positively when spoken to quietly, with a non-confrontational approach and invited to participate in a desired action rather than ordered to participate. All staff involved in the care of this person will need to use the same approach which will strengthen its effectiveness in diminishing challenging behaviour.

## Modifying the plan

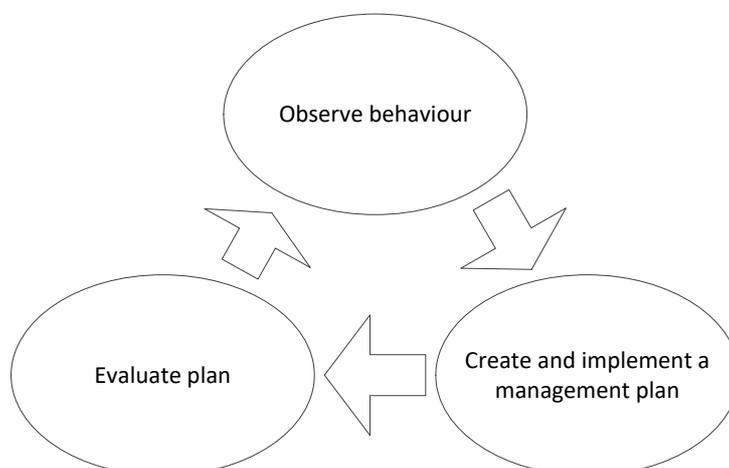
The effects of the plan and how well it works need to be regularly observed and any necessary changes made. If the plan is not effective it will need to be modified.

Observe the behaviour and assess the problem.

Try to find out the reason for the behaviour; sometimes this may be just a guess.

Try to implement a strategy that is proactive and gives the person control over what is happening to that person.

Observations should be reflected in the plan and then implemented. All programmes needs to be applied consistently by all people involved in the care of a person.



## Professional responsibilities

The implementation of any strategies to manage challenging behaviour must be in accordance with your organisation's policies and procedures and with your professional responsibilities.

The Code of Rights sets out the professional responsibilities (duties) of people and organisations who provide health and wellbeing services. These rights cover areas such as cultural considerations and effective communication. Providing services of an appropriate standard covers areas such as safety and timeliness. As a support worker, you must be very familiar with how to follow the Code.

Legal issues may be important, for example, concerning the use of restraint (any intervention that limits a person's normal freedom of movement). Your organisation will have policies and procedures based on the National Restraint Minimisation and Safe Practice Standards. Make sure you know what these policies and procedures are and discuss their implications with your supervisor.





Read the following scenario and then answer the questions.

Tane is an eight-year-old boy with Down syndrome and a mild hearing impairment. He is supported by Liam who takes him swimming and to a drama class after school. At drama class, Tane has started to poke his tongue out at Liam and call him silly names. This is making Tane stand out from his peers and is getting a little out of hand.

Tane has always been really well behaved and Liam is not sure why this has suddenly started happening. He knows that if he wants the behaviour to change he needs to figure out why Tane is behaving this way. Just telling him off doesn't seem to be making any difference.

Liam thinks about whether there is anything at drama class that has changed recently and realises that Tane has gone into a new class with older children who he doesn't know well.

Liam guesses that Tane is feeling a lack of confidence and is trying to get attention by being silly. He discusses his theory with the drama teacher and Tane's parents and they agree that this is the most likely cause.

As a "team", they decide to target his behaviour by:

Not paying too much attention to the behaviour. Tane wants the attention so receiving it only encourages him to do more of the behaviour.

Providing opportunities for Tane to be successful at drama class by making sure that any activities he has to do are modified to suit his level of ability. This way he can show the other students his success.

Setting up a buddy system so that Tane spends time with a student that he looks up to, who can model good behaviour for him.

Using a star chart system, where Tane gets stars for every five minutes of sensible behaviour and a small reward if he achieves five stars in each session. This will be gradually phased out.

Using these positive strategies starts to work immediately. Once Tane is feeling successful and confident again, the silly behaviour stops. He no longer needs to use it as he is getting attention for more positive things.

What physical limitations does Tane have that could affect his behaviour?

Why does Liam find Tane's behaviour challenging?

Apart from Liam, who else is affected by Tane's behaviour?

How did Liam identify the possible trigger for Tane's behaviour?

What kind of strategies were put in place?

How do these strategies work?

What were the positive outcomes of these strategies?

Were there any negative outcomes?