

## Responses

- Give **reminders** when you are trying to help someone learn alternatives to challenging behaviours. It may be helpful to **practice** the alternative skills when the person is not upset.
- Be **consistent** in your response to challenging behaviour.
- Provide a motivator/reinforcing reward when the person use's alternative skills, as opposed to challenging behaviour. **Rewarding good behaviour** through the use of praise or preferred objects and/or activities can be very helpful.
- **Record** instances of challenging behaviour. Record keeping will help you to consider what "message" the person was sending (i.e. what the person needs), and help identify what was helpful or unhelpful for them.

## Further Information

The Complex Behaviour Clinic (CBC) forms part of the service offered by the CAMHS Learning Disability and Autism team. Further details about this service and the CAMHS referral form are available at:

<http://www.nhshighland.scot.nhs.uk/Services/Pages/CAMHS.aspx> or by contacting the department on the details below:



**Child and Adolescent Mental  
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# CAMHS

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services



## Learning Disability & Autism Service

# Challenging Behaviour

*Information for Parents and Carers*



*All behaviour is a communication of need.*

## What is challenging behaviour?

Challenging behaviours are “messages” which signal that something important may be missing, that the person needs.



Challenging behaviour is not necessarily deliberate or planned. In situations of need, people behave in ways which have been most successful in the past. If particular challenging behaviour has been effective in getting a need met, it is likely to be used again, especially when the young person has communication difficulties and so other means require more effort or are less successful.

## Why is challenging behaviour occurring?

Challenging behaviour is communication of need, to **obtain something** or to **escape or avoid something**.

### Obtain

- Social interaction or attention (e.g. adult, peer, smiles, hugs, help).
- Tangible (e.g. an object, activity, or event).
- Sensory stimulation (e.g. visual, kinaesthetic).

### Escape/Avoid

- Social interaction or attention.
- Tangible (e.g. an object, activity, or event).
- A demand, task, or level of effort.
- Internal pain or discomfort.

## How can I support someone with challenging behaviour?

### Environment and Skills

- Provide a **structured** and **predictable routine** within the environment. Make use of visual timetables/supports.
- It is important that the person generally has things in their life that are **pleasurable**. Fun is a powerful antidote!
- Plans and routines should be **personalised**, to include things that the individual enjoys.
- Teach **alternative/replacement skills** to achieve the same outcome (i.e. a specific sign to ask for something).
- It is important to have realistic expectations, and set tasks and supports at an **appropriate level**.

**TIP:** Re-introduce strategies that may have been helpful in the past when the child was younger (e.g. visual timetable), but at a more age appropriate level for adolescence.

### Emotion

- Help the person to **regulate their emotions**; use calming techniques (e.g. controlled breathing, tense and release muscles, pressure massage) or provide **diversion** from potential triggers.
- **Distraction** can be a good way to diffuse challenging behaviour. (E.g. the use of humour, offer a preferred object or activity, even a change of face).
- Instead of ultimatums, give **choices**. (E.g. I know you're upset. What would help? Bike ride, walk, or drive in car?). Help the person have more **control** over their life.
- **Family support** should be accessed as much as possible (e.g. respite, emotional support, charities, parent