

What are Behaviours of Concern?



Behaviours of Concern are persistent behaviours that causes difficulties and limits a person's ability to have a good life. They are often called 'challenging' because it challenges everyone who supports the person to understand why it is happening and to work together to find a solution.

Why does it happen?

1. All people have a range of strengths, abilities and needs. For some people with a disability they need assistance to ensure their needs are met. For example, people on the autism spectrum have some difficulty in being able to communicate and will feel strong frustration if they are not supported to communicate their needs. In this situation a person may use other ways (such as behaviours) to get their message across.

Often, these behaviours 'pay off' – parents, teachers and others respond and give the person what they want and then the behaviour is learned over time (this isn't to say you should just ignore behaviour). Over time, a build-up of challenging behaviour can result in fun activities being stopped, relationships being strained and negative perceptions of the person, all leading to a poor quality of life for the person.

2. Providing good quality support for people with a disability requires additional knowledge that is beyond everyday parenting or teaching, and a range of supports. Without this additional knowledge and support (and despite everyone's best efforts) it is possible that there is a mismatch between a person's support needs and what is being provided to them.

This mismatch can increase the likelihood of behaviours of concern. Our bodies are made to react to challenging situations in a particular way ('fight, flight or freeze') and it can be difficult to respond calmly and rationally to challenging situations.

3. Just as people who use a wheelchair have a right to everyday environments that meet their specific needs and allow them to access life freely and fully, people With cognitive impairments or on the Autism spectrum are the same. We know that providing specific supports and using strategies to support communication, social and sensory needs, that build on a person's strengths help them to live life freely and fully. When these things are not in place we are more likely to see frustration and behaviours of concern.

We encourage people to recognise that the ownership of behaviour is shared among all elements involved in the interaction not just the individual.