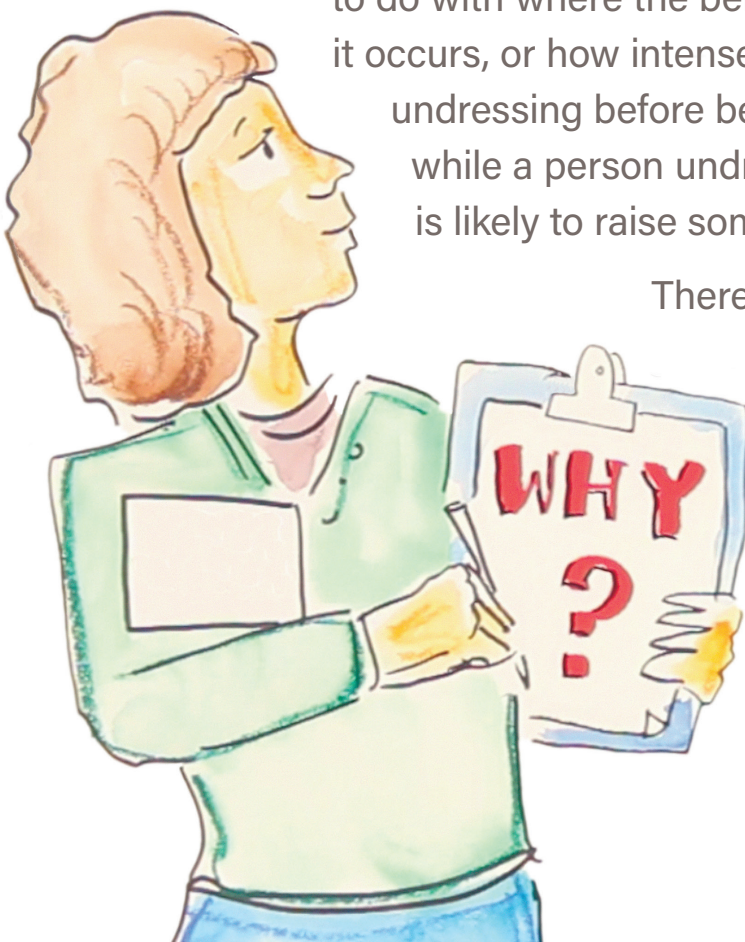


02 Understanding 'behaviours of concern'

Behaviours of concern or behaviour that challenges are terms often used to describe behaviours that people with learning disabilities engage in which others might find unusual, difficult, or even, sometimes, dangerous to themselves or to others. It usually has little to do with what the behaviour itself looks like; instead, it is more to do with where the behaviour happens, how often it occurs, or how intense it is. For example, a person undressing before bed is perfectly acceptable, while a person undressing while in a supermarket is likely to raise some concern.

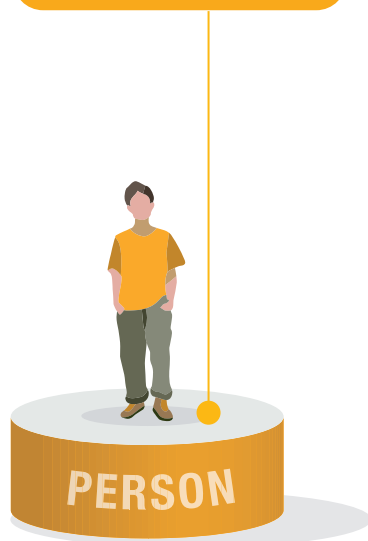


There is a risk that children and adults who display behaviours such as these will have far fewer opportunities, be more likely to be subject to restrictions and inappropriate responses, and ultimately experience a much poorer quality of life.

If our first instinct is about stopping the behaviour rather than understanding the meaning or purpose of it, the person's world will get smaller and smaller

The person being supported

PBS keeps the person being supported at the centre of all decision-making. Support is shaped by the person's life experiences, their preferences and the approach is holistic.



Look for the message

All behaviour has meaning. This is especially true of behaviours that may cause concern. Some of the behaviours a person may demonstrate can seem unhelpful or confusing initially. However, if we see those behaviours repeated over time then we must recognise that they are achieving an important purpose or function for the person. In fact, this form of expression, or behaviour may have become the most effective way the person has of communicating that something isn't right, or that they are unhappy.

When we think about the earlier example of the person undressing in the supermarket, there is a risk that if we just look at the behaviour and how to stop it, we might resort to short term fixes, like not taking the person to the supermarket again. Sometimes this might be helpful, because perhaps the person is communicating that the supermarket environment is uncomfortable for them. However, undressing in the supermarket could be telling us something else. If our first instinct is about stopping the behaviour rather than understanding the meaning or purpose of it, the person's world will get smaller and smaller.

Seek to understand, not to label

The language that we use is important because it can influence how we feel about the person and our responses to the things they sometimes do. The terms challenging behaviour or behaviour that challenges are sometimes used. However, there is a risk that people use this to suggest that the person is being deliberately challenging or that the way they behave is a challenge that families need to overcome. Behaviours of concern is a more recent way of thinking that starts with understanding what the person is trying to communicate and this enables us to respond with compassion and concern. When we realise that the person is telling us something is not right for them, we are less likely to think that their words or actions are attempts to hurt or annoy us. Our response can then be more attuned to whatever the person needs in that moment and what we can do to help.



Behaviours of concern is a more recent way of thinking that starts with understanding what the person is trying to communicate and this enables us to respond with compassion and concern

Don't ask what is wrong with me; ask what is wrong for me or what has happened to me

Behaviour is what we do and say; our actions. Behaviour is influenced by many different factors, some of which are internal (inside of us) and some are external (the social and physical environment around us).

| Internal factors | External or environmental factors |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Thoughts ● Emotions ● Our past experiences ● Physical and mental health or conditions ● Our skills and abilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The people around us ● Smells/sounds/temperature etc. ● How accessible the things we need/want are ● How stimulating it is/what activities are available |



Functional
Behaviour
Assessment
helps us
understand
and predict
behaviours of
concern

Behaviour doesn't occur in isolation; it will be influenced by internal or external factors and by the person's previous experience of being in similar situations (learning history). Functional Behaviour Assessment helps us understand and predict behaviours of concern. It is a structured way of looking at how the person interacts with the world around them in different situations. This is done by observing what was going on before the behaviour occurred (Antecedents), how the person responded (Behaviour), and what the most likely purpose/function of the behaviour was (Consequence).

Further information

For local general support for families and carers contact

All Wales Forum: www.allwalesforum.org.uk

For support with behaviour that challenges contact

Challenging Behaviour Foundation:

www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk

See *Additional Resources* document for more information.

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