

Behaviour Policy & Procedure

Children face many challenges throughout their lives. Learning acceptable behaviours and being able to regulate their own behaviours in different social and emotional environments, or when interacting with their peers or adults, are two of those challenges. Sound knowledge and understanding of children's social, emotional and cognitive development and recommended appropriate practices assist services in developing a behaviour policy.

Our Behaviour Policy reflects the commitment of staff/carers to establish behaviour management strategies, with children and families, which ensure that children are treated with the same respect and empathy as an adult would expect.

The term behaviour includes all forms of behaviour and not just those behaviours labelled as 'negative'. Staff/carers should remember that an environment which supports children to learn self-regulation and guide their own behaviour reflects the importance of a behaviour policy

Policy statements

Our Behaviour Policy emphasises that children have the same rights as adults; and recognises, values and celebrates the differences and similarities that exist in all persons.

Our staff includes; teaches & mentors should use appropriate strategies to guide children to recognise, manage and learn from their behaviours and express their emotions in positive, non-threatening and productive ways.

Our service is committed to providing a service which:

- reflects the values, attitudes and current recommended strategies that promote positive play behaviours and patterns;

- respects the importance of interactions and relationships between children, families and staff/carers;
- understands why children behave in certain ways in specific circumstances;
- promotes realistic play and behaviour limits that guide children's safety and security rather than curb their play experiences, curiosity or creativity;
- defines clear and transparent caregiving strategies that communicate how behaviour guidance is implemented by the service;
- informs the service's stakeholders about the procedures involved in behaviour guidance management plans; and
- explains the service's commitment to professional development and utilisation of external agencies

The purpose of the service's Behaviour Policy is to:

- encourage acceptable forms of behaviour by using strategies that build children's confidence and self-esteem;
- provide children with support, guidance and opportunities to manage their own behaviour; and
- promote collaborative approaches to behaviour guidance between the service's stakeholders and/or external agencies.

The service recognises and understands that a child's behaviour may be affected by their:

- age and development;
- general health and wellbeing;
- relationships with their family;
- play and learning environments, which includes the physical indoor/outdoor settings, the weather, the time of year, the time of day;
- staff/carers' caregiving strategies and practices, which includes how those strategies are implemented;
- relationship with other children and stakeholders, such as students, volunteers and visitors; and
- external factors, such as family, home life, school or peer group experiences, or media coverage of traumatic events

Families and staff/carers display respect and empathy towards children when they label behaviour and not the individual child.

This means that behaviours are managed, not children. Staff/carers, other children and families should refrain from labelling a child's inappropriate or negative behaviour as 'naughty' or 'bad'. Similarly, traditional labels such as 'good boy' or 'good girl' identify the individual but not the positive behaviour.

For example, when a child completes a task directed by an adult, such as washing their hands before a meal, staff/carers should identify the behaviour that reinforces the achievement and not label the worth of the individual. Instead of 'good boy/girl', the staff/carer can respond with "thank you (child's name) for washing your hands with soap before lunch" or "thank you for remembering to clean your hands before you eat"

While staff/carers are aware and respect individual children's and families' backgrounds and beliefs, it may be necessary to balance the individual needs of stakeholders with staff/carers' knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices and current best practice recommendations from recognised authorities. The Occupational Health and Safety Act² states that employers have a duty of care to their employees to ensure that the working environment supports emotional and mental wellbeing.

Staff/carers who are implementing behaviour guidance strategies and/or plans for children that display inappropriate behaviours, (especially if the behaviour is aggressive towards other children or adults) need continued support and assistance. Staff/carers can experience levels of stress or anxiety, which may lead to sickness or apathy in the workplace. Services have a duty of care to ensure that employees' mental and emotional wellbeing is considered, as well as the child's need for positive behaviour guidance strategies

The use of physical punishment by staff/carers/students/volunteers/visitors as a behaviour guidance strategy is not acceptable under any circumstances. The use of isolation, humiliation, intimidation or negative labelling by staff/carers/students/volunteers/visitors as a behaviour guidance strategy is not acceptable under any circumstances.

Children are active participants in the development, implementation and monitoring of behaviour guidance management plans, and should be consistently communicated with during the process.

What we expect

Children are involved in establishing play and safety limits in the service, which reflect recommended best practices, and the consequences involved when limits are not adhered to.

- Reflective questions engage children to think about their practices and environment. Encouraging children to develop their play and learning limits and consequences, reinforces ownership of the service's practices.
- Defining limits in terms of a 'positive' instead of a 'negative' assists children to remember what to do rather than what not to do. For example, 'children walk inside' is preferable to 'children do not run inside'.
- Establishing limits depends on the developmental level of children. Younger children require safety and guidance limits established for them by adults, while staff/carers can vary their communication style and language with older children to negotiate limit setting.
- For example, staff/carers can discuss with children why it is important to wash hands before handling food and the reasons why people sit when eating food.

Service should consider the following reflective questions:

- Why is it important to do X,Y,Z
- What could happen if you didn't do X, Y, Z
- Why might this be dangerous
- What do you think should happen if someone doesn't do X, Y, Z

Establishing spaces, the Learning Environment

- Children are involved in establishing play and learning spaces in the environment which includes areas where children can find solace, peace and relaxation. Environments need active, loud and energetic play spaces balanced with passive, quiet and peaceful areas where children can find solace and peace. It is important that services provide both

types of spaces, especially for those children who recognise that they require time apart from their peers. For example, a child who recognises that they are becoming frustrated with other children can retreat to an area that is calming and allows them to refocus.

At Active Outreach Services we use the following reflective questions to ensure our service meets the needs of our young people and children on roll.

- How does the service support children to make decisions about their environment?
- How are quiet spaces utilised for children to encourage solitary play? How do staff/carers actively encourage children to develop their sense of ownership about their own learning play and care space?

All our Teachers and Mentors are all inspected by our management team to ensure that the lessons and the learning environment are well resourced and lessons are creative fun and relevant and the young person is meeting his or her full potential.

Regular training takes place for all our team.

Where a behaviour proves challenging staff and mentors will never use any form of physical punishment where restraint needs to be used to either protect that of the young person or staff members this will always be noted and parent/carers will be informed. If challenging behaviour persists, we will always work closely with the families and parent/carers to put suitable plans in place.

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