

Waltham Forest Early Years Guidance

Behaviour Support in the Early Years

This guide will help you to understand behaviours that challenge and how to support them.

Behaviour as communication

It is important to put behaviour that challenges into context; it is not 'naughtiness,' it is a means of communicating. The child will be telling us something and as the adult, we need to try to understand what they are communicating in order to meet their needs appropriately.

Behaviour that challenges can often occur as a result of sensory overload, but the trigger may not be obvious. Changes to routine or not understanding boundaries can also cause difficulties.

Functional analysis

- It is important to do an analysis of the behaviour, looking at the causes and consequences of it. This will help to discover what the child is achieving or trying to achieve through the behaviour.
- You need to record carefully in order to analyse – specify the exact behaviour you are observing.
- Once you have analysed the behaviour, you will then be able to begin to make changes which will produce an alternative behaviour.

Tools for analysis

- ABC charts
- Frequency Charts
- Motivational Assessment Scale (MAS)



Top 10 tips for preventing and managing behaviours that challenge

- Use short, simple language – don't confuse the child with too many commands or instructions.
- Time – allow the child time to process what is being said/asked of them.
- Use visual cues.
- Use the child's name to get focus.
- Anticipate and pre-empt – if you know something will be a trigger, can you remove it before it causes distress?

In times of crisis

- Stay calm, positive and quiet and use a low arousal approach.
- No physical touch (unless safety issues).
- Only one person intervenes.
- Remove the child from the situation where possible.
- Use minimal words – don't explain/reprimand or ask for reasoning at the time.

This guidance is followed by a recorded webinar offering a deeper exploration of Behaviour Support in the Early Years.