



Belfast Health and  
Social Care Trust

caring supporting improving together



# Managing Behaviour

Focus on the use of proactive strategies. These are used to make sure that a child has got what they need, reducing the chances of a child using behaviours that challenge.

### Key Points

- Routine
- Structure
- Praise
- Rewards
- Consistency
- Boundaries & expectations

## Proactive ways to support your child include:

- Communicate with your child at their level of understanding.
- Provide opportunities for child to have some space/solitary activities, and some time to share space and do shared activities.
- Be aware of what triggers your child's behaviours and try to ensure the environment is supportive in reducing the likelihood of these triggers.
- Try to resolve situations when you see your child's early warning signs that they are having difficulty coping. For example if it's related to the activity they are completing, try to reduce demand by helping them complete it.
- Support your child to feel happy and healthy

## Benefits of Structure and Routine

- Make the world more predictable, accessible and a safer place for children.
- Promotes independence and flexibility.
- Children enjoy routines that are easy to understand and easy to accomplish, yet flexible enough to alter if circumstances change.
- Helps to eliminate power struggles as you are not always telling your child what to do.
- Reduces anxiety about what is going on.
- Helps children learn to wait for preferred activities.



## Benefits of boundaries and expectations

- Helps children to understand what is acceptable behaviour.
- Reinforce these regularly.
- Involve your child in agreeing the boundaries.



Remember: a child will repeat a behaviour if it is being rewarded e.g. giving a child a lot of attention when they use behaviours that challenge.

-Focus on the positives.

## Praise and rewards

- Praise is an effective way to encourage children to engage in the desired behaviour as it focuses on a child's effort rather than on what is actually accomplished.
- Encourages children to make positive choices
- When rewards or praise are used following appropriate behaviours it is more likely that appropriate behaviour will occur again.
- If using rewards they should be immediate, consistent, achievable and fair.



# Why is my child engaging in behaviours that challenge?



**Health** - could my child be feeling unwell or in pain?  
Medication?

**Communication** - could my child be trying to tell me something?



**Sleep** - could my child be tired?  
Is my child getting enough sleep?



**Activity** - is my child getting enough exercise? Is my child bored? Has my child been engaging in activities that make them overstimulated



## How to help at different stages

