

Elder Street Early Childhood Service

BEHAVIOUR INTERVENTION & SUPPORT POLICY

PURPOSE:

For educators to use a positive, individual approach with all children and families regarding behaviour intervention and management. For educators to work in collaboration with parents and other community support services on strategies to support each child and family.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Behaviour intervention and support involves the teaching and learning of self-regulation. It is also the way we teach children about respect for the rights and feelings of themselves and others. By guiding children's behaviour we help them to learn emotionally sound and socially acceptable ways to express their feelings, how to act assertively in social situations (i.e., to say no, to request what they want) and how to cope with all kinds of life's situations supported by caring and responsive educators.

The behaviour and guidance techniques used by Educators at our service are designed to give children the opportunity to expand their experiences of life in a productive, safe environment that allows individuals the right to safety, tolerance, self-expression, cultural identity, dignity and the worth of the individual.

Children benefit from knowing that their environment is stable and that a competent adult is taking care of them.

There are three aspects to promoting positive behaviour:

1. A learning environment that is positive and supportive
2. Strategies for building skills and strengthening positive behaviour
3. Strategies for decreasing undesired behaviours

GOALS:

- To understand and reflect children's own context and associated behaviours.
- To support children to think critically and help them begin to understand other's experiences and perspectives.
- To consult with families regularly on behaviour intervention and support issues and seek solutions.
- To show sensitivity to varying expectations for children related to family background.

OBJECTIVES:

- Establish positive relationships with children.
- Encourage and assist children to make decisions for themselves and provide opportunities for independence and self-regulation
- Help children develop a sense of social responsibility, so that they become aware of the impact of their actions on others.
- to involve children in discussions about dealing with conflict;

- to encourage children to show empathy for others who are experiencing difficulties;
- to supervise carefully and diffuse problems
- to have realistic expectations of what individual children understand and are able to do regarding self-regulation; and
- to involve children in the setting of simple and easily understood rules.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

It is the belief at Elder Street Early Childhood Centre that behaviour intervention and support must always encourage the individuality and confidence of children and never lower or jeopardise their self-esteem. There are different ways to support and guide children which will be explained next:

Indirect Behaviour intervention and support: Indirect guidance comes from a well-planned program and environment. For all rooms from infants to preschool, sufficient materials need to be provided so children can play, with as little adult intervention as possible. For example, ensuring in a 2-3 years group that if the transport toys are planned for play, that there are multiple trucks for the group to be able to play with. Anticipating, planning and intervention will help maintain a supportive environment. Educators should plan activities based on children's ideas and interests which will challenge children. Being aware of barriers to children's success such as environmental factors are an important part of supporting children's interactions.

Direct Behaviour intervention and support: Presenting children with clear boundaries and alternatives helps them develop the ability to make decisions. Each room has clear limits which the children are supported in understanding and these limits are consistently and positively reinforced by educators co-regulating with the children. The presence and attention of an educator providing sustained shared thinking strategies helps children concentrate and engage in an experience. Educators are better able to observe, support, engage, guide and intervene if a child is close by. It may be necessary, if another child or adult is being put at risk of injury, to gently remove a child from a situation.

EXAMPLE OF BOUNDARIES ARE:

- ~ Be gentle with other children and adults
- ~ Show respect and care for built and natural environments
- ~ Wash your hands before eating
- ~ Sit down to eat and drink
- ~ Flush the toilet and wash hands after going to the toilet
- ~ Respect other children's property
- ~ Respect other children's boundaries (no go zones and space)

Verbal Behaviour intervention and support: This is used to support explaining boundaries and redirecting a child's behaviour. Language used by educators is positive, clear and appropriate for each child. Requests for a child to respect a boundary should be given with respect and calmness.

For example, if a child was standing on a table an educator could say; "Please hop off the table, that is not for climbing on", rather than "Don't stand on the table". Educators would also discuss and unpack with the child why we have this rule. ie: What do you think could happen if we stand on the table?"

STRATEGIES FOR SPECIFIC BEHAVIOURS:

Certain behaviours are common to children of different ages whilst in their early childhood years. Children behave and react to different situations in different ways. At times aggressive behaviour can be exhibited which educators respond to a positive. The following information relates to this kind of behaviour and how educators support children through it.

Shouting, screaming or hurting others: To begin with an educator would engage with the child by discussing what they would like to happen i.e. Your voice is very loud at the moment, can you please use your inside voice? If the child is unresponsive the educator would act in the following way:

"I can see that you are having trouble using a quieter voice. Are you ok? I will sit with you to help you feel calmer".

Or

"I can see you are having trouble being gentle with your friends, I won't let you hurt them. Let's find something else to do together for a little while"

The educator would gently take the child and move with them to another area. The child that has been hurt would be immediately cared for either by another educator or prior to this interaction with the child who is lashing out.

Biting: Reasons for biting and ways of dealing with it differ with under 3's and over 3's. Over 3's usually have more of an understanding of how hurtful and unacceptable the behaviour is. Over 3's should be able to employ self-regulation. However, under 3's may bite because:

- they are teething
- they may bite impulsively
- they are communicating non verbally that they need attention/support

Active supervision is effective in supporting children who are biting. This can be implemented through the careful organisation of an environment that encourages both group and individual experiences. Any child that has developed a consistent biting behaviour will have a Behaviour Intervention and Support Plan developed which is completed by educators in consultation with families. The process for this is similar to what is described in “process of resolving ongoing challenging behaviour” explained further in this policy. If certain children are being targeted by the child who is biting, the families of the child/ren being bitten will be advised of the measures being taken to stop their child being bitten. It is very important to convey to these families that educators will make all attempts to keep their child safe and that a Behaviour Intervention and Support Plan is being followed.

INFANT/2-3 YEARS

Self-regulation and the development of executive function abilities start at birth, along with other teaching and learning. The process begins with meeting infants needs. A secure start for a child fosters a much greater capacity in the child to give, wait and share. When infants start moving and exploring their environment we provide:

- Educators who are ready to guide, re-direct focus and interest and remove temptation;
- Educators who give lots of attention when babies are happy, talkative, playful, as well as when they are unsettled.
- Educators who are sensitive to infant's limitations, able to know when changes to the environment needs to occur.

The number of situations in which caregivers have to redirect can be minimised through the flexible structuring of the environment.

BEHAVIOUR INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT STRATEGIES FOR THE NURSERY

1. If a child hurts another child, the child who is hurt or upset will firstly be attended to. Then the educators in a calm tone of voice talk to the other child about what has happened and model appropriate behaviour;

“.....(name of child) be gentle, lying on the other children hurts them”

“.....(name of child) be gentle, it hurts when you pull hair.

The child would then be supported to engage in another activity.

2. If the behaviour is repeated soon after the child has been re-directed, an educator will further model gentle and appropriate behaviour to the child who is hurting others, repeat the above statement and then engage the child in another activity.

3. If the child is very young and does not understand the impact of their actions, i.e., waving arms about shaking a toy near others who may be hit, educators will move with the child to another experience so that no one is hurt by their play.

With older babies in the nursery, e.g., over 18 months, the strategies described in 2-3 years procedures will be implemented also. This is also dependant on the individual child and their development at the time.

2-3 YEARS

Level of understanding: 2-3 year old children sometimes do hurtful things to other children when playing and exploring, without understanding that they hurt. Their primary objective is to explore the world, as they are in the process of learning that their actions have a cause and effect. This may mean that they push a child with the intention of seeing the effect of their action without an understanding of the hurt they are causing.

Good intentions, bad execution: 2-3 year old children sometimes do negative things with good intentions. For example, a two year old gives a toy to a crying baby by dropping it on his head. Young children's first expression of interest in one another is through hands-on experience - poking, jabbing, and pulling. What 2-3 year olds need is not to be stopped from interacting with the child but shown how to do it gently and appropriately.

Level of self-regulation: It can be characteristic for under 3's to lack the impulse control and overall self-regulation (they simply can't stop themselves). Many acts that are labelled aggressive or impulsive are due to the child's developing ability to inhibit or stop.

BEHAVIOUR INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT STRATEGIES FOR THE 2-3 YEARS

1. If a child's actions will not injure them or another child, the behaviour is simply observed.

2. If inappropriate behaviour causes a child to be hurt, we give the injured child lots of attention and cuddles. The child who is needing behaviour intervention and support will be re-directed to another activity with support and discussion about feelings and experiences.

3. If negative behaviour continues, the educator should look further into possible reasons for the behaviour, looking to identify the function of the behaviour. The aim being to work out what the problem is, remembering that all behaviour is communication, e.g. is the child bored, wanting attention, in discomfort?

BEHAVIOUR INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT STRATEGIES FOR PRESCHOOLERS

Observing Behaviour: Where it is determined a behaviour is exploratory in nature, educators will not draw attention to the occurrence of this behaviour. In situations where children are squabbling over toys or having a confrontation, educators use their discretion in deciding when to intervene. If the children are both safe and communicating, educators try to allow the children to use their problem solving skills and enjoy the accomplishment of dealing with a situation on their own.

For children who are less assertive and where it is obvious that a child is not coping with the issue, then educators will step in and facilitate ways for both parties to sort out the issue. This technique is used only if the behaviour is not harmful to themselves, other people or objects in a physical, emotional or social manner.

Verbal engagement with boundaries: A verbal engagement, with boundaries is given, E.g. "John, you need to sit quietly with the group so we can all hear the story. If you would rather do something else, that is ok". If the request is not followed an educator will support the child, further helping to calm the behaviour or engage them in a different experience. The child is encouraged to rejoin the group when they feel ready. "Would you like to come and sit and listen to our story now John? You can come back whenever you are ready".

Removing a child from a situation: In a positive manner the child is verbally told that the behaviour is not acceptable, and another activity is found that may interest the child.

"I can see that you are not enjoying this experience, I won't let you bother your friends who are enjoying it though, so we will go and find another experience for you."

This is in an environment suitable to the mood of that child. I.e., quieter, away from particular children or activities. Children are invited to come back and join in when they are ready to "play gently, share with their friends, talk in a soft voice" etc.

Positive Reinforcement: Verbal acknowledgement is given to the children all day. This strategy is to not draw attention to any undesirable behaviours as much as possible and instead acknowledging the positive. From this, children soon discover that they are important and valued capable individuals. Typically, children who have had their behaviour supported positively in their early childhood years will feel confident by the time they are of school age to play and learn whilst making decisions on how they will regulate their own behaviour.

PROCESS OF RESOLVING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR:

Following are the steps that would be taken if educators at the service have decided after much consideration, that the behaviour intervention and support strategies that have been put in place for a child are not effective. Indicators for this would be that the child, educators and entire group are not enjoying a quality environment and program due to issues relating to a particular child's behaviour.

1. Team leader consults outside the immediate group for an objective point of view from other educators i.e, Educational Leader/Director etc on the child's behaviour and seeks ideas for different strategies and advice.
2. Team leader further consults with the Director about the issue at hand and the steps that have been initiated to support the child so far.
3. Families are formally consulted about the Behaviour Intervention Strategies & Support plans that the educators would like to implement. Together educators and families reach an agreement of techniques that will be used by both educators and families at home when particular behaviours are displayed by the child.
4. When the strategies and plan have been drawn up, the plan is shared with other educators as it is important for all educators to follow the same strategies so there is consistent support at all times.
5. Implement the plan for a 2-3 week period.
6. If the behaviour is reported to be continuing either at home or the service, meet again with the families and discuss issues at hand. Educators can share with families' further resources available outside the service that could be helpful for further assistance with the child and the classroom environment. The service can suggest to families that we engage with allied professionals (e.g., occupational therapists, behavioural psychologists etc) to attend the centre to support educators and the child. Obtain permission from families to take this next course of action.
7. Contact one of the behaviour intervention and support resources available to the service. Work through our Strategic Inclusion Plan Barriers and strategies to try to find a solution to the issues. Set dates for meetings in consultation with families and strongly encourage families to attend the meeting.

With new information, start the process of implementing any further action plans and behaviour intervention and support strategies for the child at home and the service.

EXCLUSION FROM THE SERVICE

In the unfortunate situation, where a child's behaviour is such that it hinders educators from providing proper care for any other children and constantly places educators and children under physical or emotional stress, the service is within its rights to terminate enrolment for that child. We believe that if parents are not willing to accept that the situation is causing due stress and strain on educators, that the service has no alternative but to discontinue the placement for their child. We aim to support children and families that are experiencing behaviour challenges but can only do so with full cooperation from the family.

EDUCATOR BEHAVIOUR INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT REFLECTION

Critical reflection and ongoing professional development are crucial to ensure that all educators are considering different factors when working with children displaying challenging behaviour. The following points of reflection are used to support educators through this process:

- Why is the child engaging in that behaviour? Are they communicating that they are frustrated, unhappy, anxious, bored, in discomfort, wanting attention, curiosity, fun, anger, frustration?
- What is happening in the environment today? Does anything need to change?
- Why is the behaviour of the child challenging or unacceptable?

- Is the behaviour dangerous?
- Will they hurt themselves or others?
- Will it be OK if I wait? Could I be overreacting?
- Am I uptight, tired, stressed or unsure?
- What options do I have?
- Is there a Strategic Inclusion plan in place for this child?

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Source: "Children are People Too", Dr Louise Porter, Early Childhood Educator.
NCAC Accreditation Principles
Behaviour intervention and support In-service with Ruth Davies Newcastle University.

John Waring Child and Adolescent Psychologist
Newcastle – Managing Children's Behaviour
Information Evening 2013/2016
Elevating Child Care – Lansbury, J (2014)
Dr Kate Williams – Self Regulation and children
Dr K Watson – the Inclusive Classroom
KU Inclusion Support Team