

**🗹 Neuro Developmental Conditions Pathway**

Challenging behaviour

Some children with ASD show challenging behaviour (e.g. aggression towards others or property, hurting themselves, running away, smearing, eating non-edible items).

Although these behaviours are often difficult to understand, they always have a purpose or function. Whilst there are many reasons young people with ASD show challenging behaviour, some of the most common reasons they show challenging behaviour are:

* To avoid or escape from stressful or anxiety provoking situations or demands
* To get help, support, or comfort from others
* To communicate that they are in pain
* To get access to things or activities they need or want

In order to reduce challenging behaviour and help a young person communicate more effectively it is essential that we first understand the purpose or function of their behaviour(s).

It can be useful to keep a diary and record the behavioural incidents, using the questions listed below:

* Date, time and location of behaviour of concern.
* What did your child do? Try to provide as much detail as possible.
* What was happening in the hours or days before the behaviour that may have unsettled your child? (slow triggers).
* What was happening in the minutes or moments before the behaviour that may have unsettled your child? (fast triggers).
* What happened immediately after the behaviour of concern?
* Why do you think this behaviour of concern occurred?

Once you have completed a diary, carefully look for patterns that might explain why your child is showing the behaviour(s) you are concerned about. Once you have identified what the purpose(s) or function(s) of your child’s challenging behaviour is/are, consider whether certain settings need to be adapted/avoided, how you can help your child cope and build their own coping skills in certain context/settings, and identify the positive behaviour(s) you want your child to show instead of the challenging behaviour (e.g. telling you they are anxious rather than hurting themselves) and reinforce this wherever possible.

The page below from the national autistic society has more information on strategies to support parents when dealing with behaviours that are challenging:

<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/behaviour/challenging-behaviour.aspx>