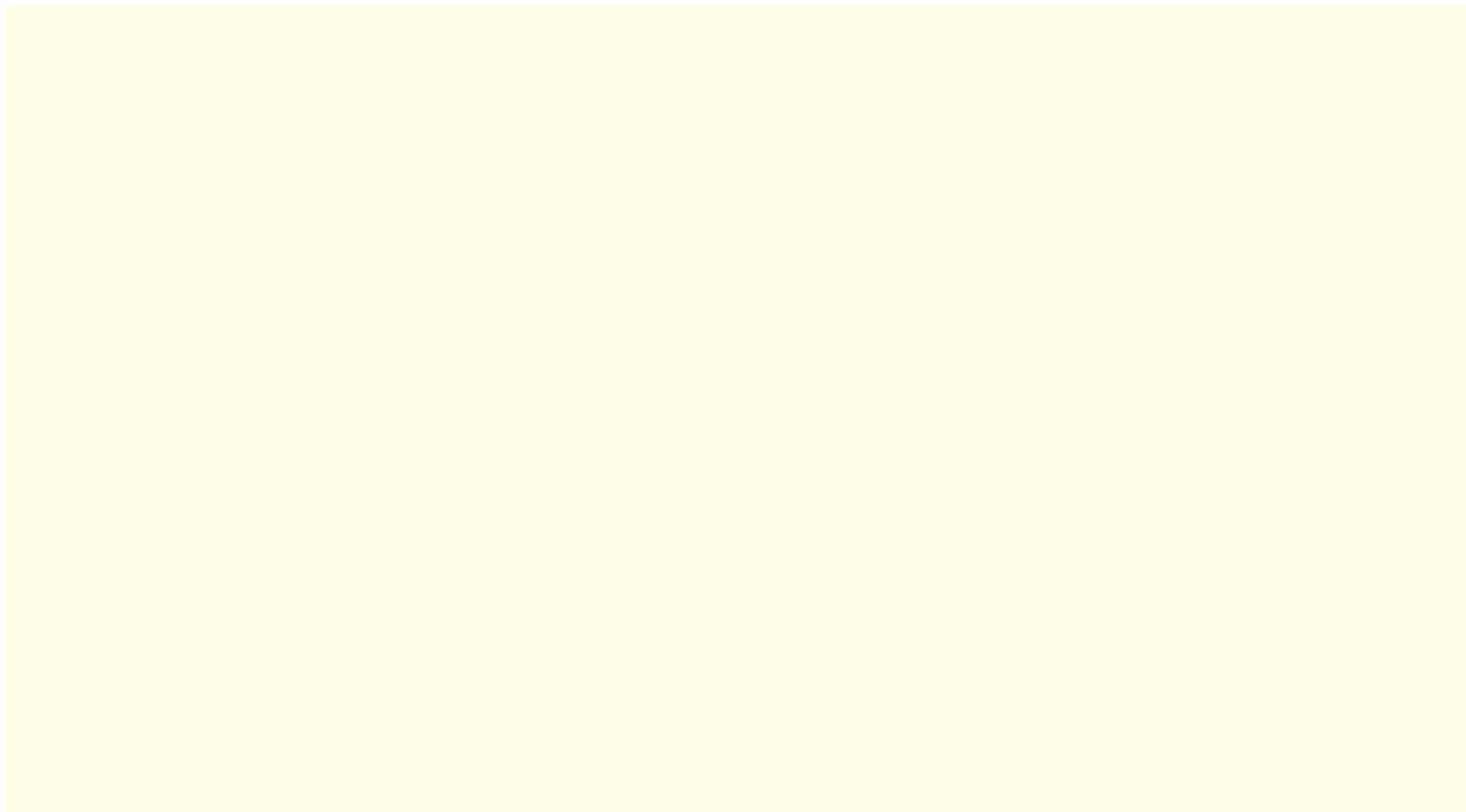


Guidance for colleges and
other post-16 education
providers on implementing the
Disability Discrimination Act



What's your problem?

Working with learners with
challenging behaviour



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I would like to offer thanks to those who helped write this publication: Lynn Macqueen who lead the project, Liz Maudslay and Chris Hewitson. I am also extremely grateful to the research sites who contributed to the project and to the many people who offered comments and suggestions which have helped to shape this publication.

I hope you will find this a valuable resource for helping you to respond to the DDA.

Sally Faraday
Research Manager
Learning and Skills Network

Context of the report – who is it for?

1

This thematic report has two major sources. In 1998 the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA, precursor to the Learning and Skills Development Agency, LSDA, and the Learning and Skills Network, LSN) produced a study entitled *Ain't misbehavin'*, which strongly advocated the necessity of a whole-organisational approach when working with learners who exhibit disruptive behaviour in further education (FE) colleges. *Ain't misbehavin'* contains many messages that are particularly relevant in the current context, and many of the approaches included in it will be incorporated into this report. In addition, from 2002 LSDA (and now LSN), in conjunction with Skill and NIACE, have been coordinating a programme to support the implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Part 4 in the post-school education sector. Challenging behaviour was seen as an issue that fell under the scope of this programme; it was specifically addressed in one of the LSDA (LSN) action research projects, 'Developing inclusive provision for people with challenging behaviour', and material arising from this research will be included in this report. It will also draw on more recent work carried out with learners who challenge the system in a range of different post-school settings, and will include examples of innovative work carried out in young offender institutions (YOI).

What's your problem? is relevant to the full range of staff working in FE colleges, adult and community learning organisations, work-based learning and offender contexts. Because of its strong emphasis on the importance of a whole-organisational approach, it is equally relevant to practitioners and managers. It surveys the steps necessary for organisations to review and revise their ways of including learners with challenging behaviour, including:

- creating consensus in the organisation on what constitutes challenging behaviour
- creating a clear and holistic framework that is supported at all levels of the organisation
- exploring what needs to take place at policy, procedural and delivery levels, and creating a clear plan for implementing these changes.

What is challenging behaviour?

The LSDA (LSN) DDA action research project agreed on the following definition of challenging behaviour:

- behaviour that disrupts routine teaching to an extent that challenges the teacher's resources and the concentration of other learners; this behaviour may not be violent, offensive or dangerous, simply disruptive
- behaviour that is offensive or violent, interfering with routine activity
- offending behaviour, including offending in the criminal sense, which bullies or ridicules fellow learners and creates an intimidating environment
- extreme passivity or non-engagement in learning
- intermittent patterns of attendance.

This definition is fairly broad; it might include learners with an impairment. For example, some of the increasing numbers of young people and adults currently being diagnosed as having attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), or being on the autistic spectrum. It might also include some learners with mental health difficulties or others with a learning difficulty.

Some of the learners who fall within the definition might come under the DDA definition; a wider range might come under the definition in the Learning and Skills Act of learners who have a disability or learning difficulty that significantly affects their learning. However, this report addresses the inclusion of learners with challenging behaviour, whether or not the behaviour is impairment-related, and it does not focus significantly on specific impairments. Other LSN DDA action research project reports with a specific focus on learners whose impairment can at times lead to them exhibiting challenging behaviour include a project leader report on *Developing inclusive provision for autistic spectrum disorders* and a thematic report on *Supporting learners with mental health difficulties*. These can be found on the LSN website at www.lsneducation.org.uk/dda/publications.aspx.

A small proportion of learners with challenging behaviour may also carry out acts that are violent, and require legal intervention. This report does not cover legality; organisations will have their own procedures for learners who contravene the law. Instead it will focus on approaches that try to include the significant minority of learners whose behaviour results in their not being able to enjoy the full benefits of learning.

Discovering the profile of your own organisation in relation to challenging behaviour – the ‘5 Ws’

The definition of challenging behaviour cited above was created by the LSN DDA project, and is not absolute. Individual organisations need to define for themselves what behaviour they regard as challenging, and whether there is a distinction between behaviour that can be seen as challenging and behaviour that is disruptive to staff and other learners. Different members of staff may have widely varying views, therefore it is important that any organisation’s definition is a consensus of views throughout that organisation. For example, in the DDA project already referred to:

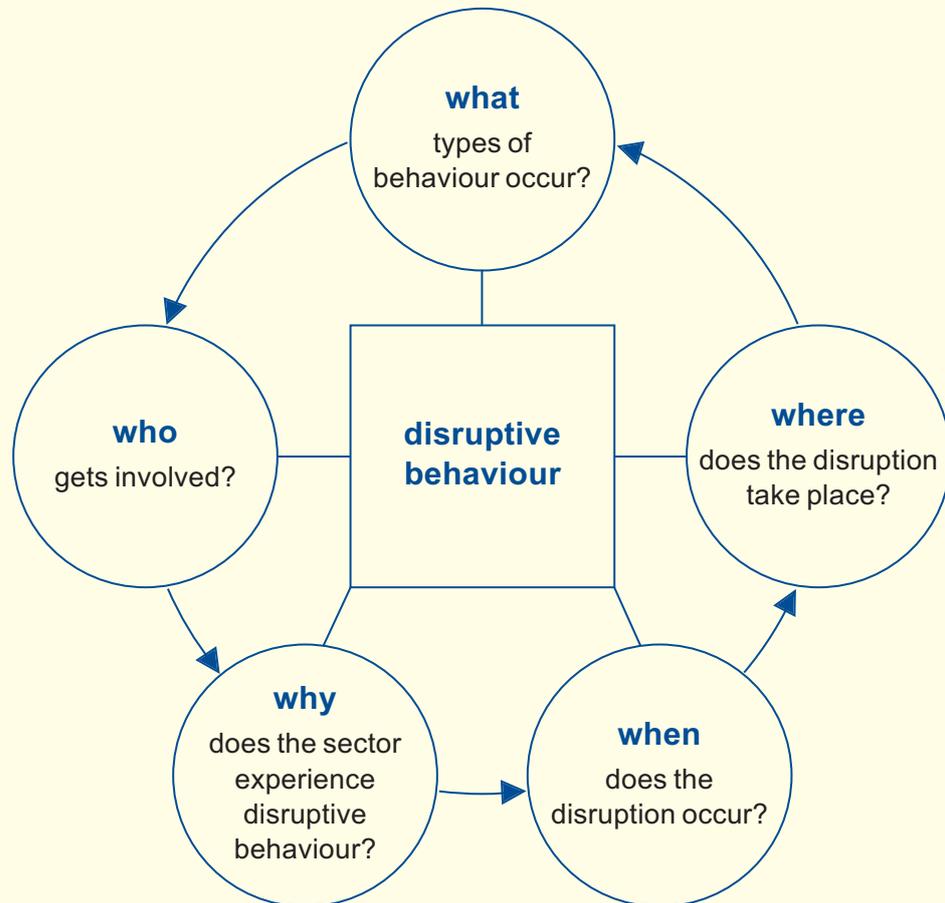
One institution canvassed staff to establish their personal definition of challenging behaviour and found quite diverse views. Some viewed this as particular behaviours that were violent in nature. Others saw it more as an absence of any particular action (ie apathy, non-compliance, the quiet, passive learner who remains apart from the group, etc).¹

Ain’t misbehavin’ described a ‘5 Ws’ schema that can help organisations to gain consensus on their definition of disruptive behaviour, as well begin to analyse where it happens, who it involves, and some of the reasons why it might be occurring.

¹ *Ain’t misbehavin’* (1998)

Figure 1: '5 Ws' schema²

Framework



The following is a summary of responses that might arise when an organisation carries out this exercise.

² *Ain't misbehavin'* (1998)

What types?

Disruptive behaviour could include particularly immature behaviour; for example, persistently irritating behaviour, rule breaking, 'winding up' or name-calling. It could include behaviour that is aggressive, such as physical fights, verbal abuse, harassment or bullying. There might be behaviour that inhibits learning, such as non-cooperation, extreme passivity, poor punctuality or attendance, or hyperactivity. It might show itself in problems with relationships, such as challenging authority, disrespect or cultural clashes. Learners may target the environment; for example, by setting off fire alarms, misusing or destroying equipment or writing graffiti. Or there might be more serious anti-social behaviour that verges on or crosses the boundary into criminal behaviour, such as gang behaviour, intimidation of others, sexual or racial harassment.

Where does disruption take place?

This will vary from one organisation to another. In one setting, disruption may occur in public places, such as the canteen, the corridors or the toilets. In others it might be more apparent in classroom settings or in learning centres. Organisations with split sites may well find it happens more on one site than another.

Who gets involved?

Looking at this will enable an organisation to develop a profile of the kind of learner who exhibits challenging behaviour. It may be adults who lack interpersonal or communication skills and do not understand group dynamics. It may be learners who have some underlying impairment, or learners from ethnic groups whose cultural differences are not being recognised by the organisation. It may be young people. It may be triggered by certain key individuals.

When does the disruption occur?

Again, certain patterns may emerge. Challenging behaviour may be more predominant at certain points of the day; for example, during break times or at the end of classes. It might happen at certain key points of the year, ends or beginnings of terms or festival periods.

Why does the organisation experience disruptive behaviour?

In beginning to analyse why this behaviour occurs, organisations will begin to recognise what is needed to repair the situation.

At a **strategic level** you may be aware that staff are not responding appropriately, perhaps because of a large number of part-time staff who have had little opportunity for staff development and may not understand the ethos of the organisation, or staff demoralisation due to job insecurity or changed conditions of service. It may be exacerbated by a reduction in taught hours for learners, or learners having long periods of unsupervised time. At a **systems level** you might find that challenging behaviour can be exacerbated by a lack of time for communication (both between learners and staff and between staff and staff). It might occur where a curriculum is particularly tightly structured, leaving little room for flexible approaches. Or it might happen when young learners are not given adequate time and support to make the transition from school. At a **delivery level** you might realise that some of the disruptive behaviour of learners is due to an absence of tutorials that can address behavioural issues, a lack of appropriate guidance, a failure to address equal opportunities issues adequately and understand cultural differences, or a failure to offer a variety of teaching methods. You might find that challenging behaviour is more apparent in certain curriculum areas, or with certain members of staff, which will then lead on to an analysis of how there needs to be greater consistency of approach and an opportunity for good practice to be more readily shared across an organisation.

Carrying out the '5 Ws' exercise can be immensely valuable for an organisation. It will establish consensus across different roles as to what constitutes challenging behaviour, and also allow you to begin to draw up a profile of the challenging learners and where and when this kind of behaviour is manifest. By focusing on the question 'why', you will begin to analyse some of the causes of disruption, and so be in a position to draw up an action plan that could lead to positive change.

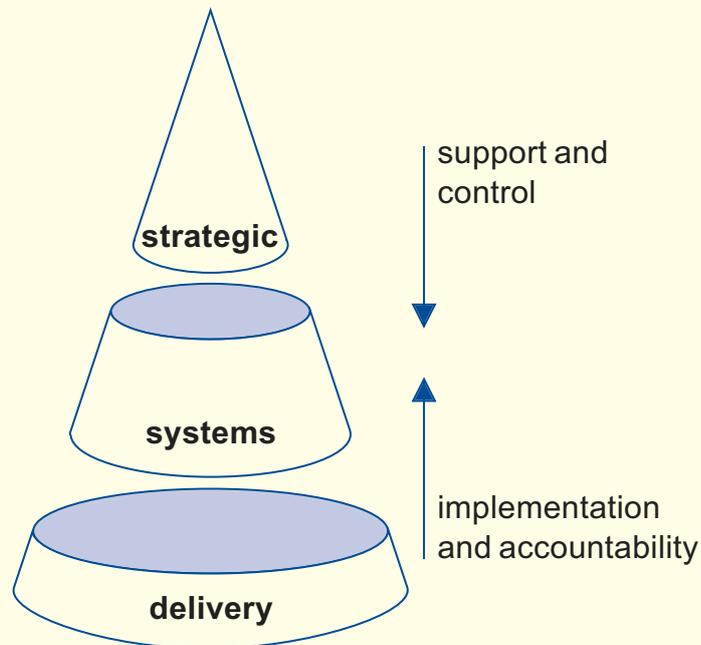
A whole-organisational response to challenging behaviour

In carrying out this initial analysis, it will become apparent that challenging behaviour in an organisation cannot simply be ameliorated through the responses of one or two individuals. Instead it requires a whole-organisational approach, with changes not just at the delivery level but also in organisational policy and procedures. The importance of a whole-organisational approach has been clearly recognised and articulated in *Inclusive learning* (Tomlinson, 1996), which identifies the necessity of a proper match, not just between teacher and learner, but also between organisational systems and learner requirements. *Inclusive learning* shows how, without this whole-organisational approach, learners with learning difficulties and disabilities will fail to be properly included. The same is just as true for learners with challenging behaviour.

Participant sites in the LSN DDA action research project on challenging behaviour recognised the importance of a whole-organisational approach, and staff realised that many of their difficulties arose because they were expected to deal with individual disruption alone without the corresponding support of, and changes to, the organisation as a whole. Other organisations recognised that challenging behaviour occurred specifically in particular areas of the curriculum or in certain physical areas, such as the canteen or the learning resource area, and that consistency could only be achieved through the creation of a whole-organisational approach. The following sections of this report will look in some detail at some of the elements needed at each of these levels for an organisation to respond creatively to the challenges posed by disruptive learners.

Figure 2: *Ain't misbehavin* makes use of a cone model to represent the necessary interdependence of changes at the levels of strategy, systems and delivery.

Figure 2 Examples of elements at each level of the cone model



Strategic level policies on:

- student support and welfare
- staff development and support
- equal opportunities and inclusive education
- college environment
- schools
- learning
- charter
- discipline
- admissions
- security and ID
- external support
- student representation
- learning support
- behaviour
- timetabling
- parents
- human resource
- communication

Systems level procedures on:

- student representation
- support and management of part-time staff
- congruence with external procedures
- referral and external support
- teacher peer support
- contracts
- communication
- security and ID
- complaints
- disciplinary
- customer care
- learning support
- counselling
- student induction
- timetabling
- tracking and recording
- quality management
- parents
- grievance
- induction (staff)
- staff appraisal
- tutorial
- guidance
- school liaison
- quality circles

Delivery level styles, methods and approaches on:

- matching/pacing/leading
- no blame approach to bullying
- the affective curriculum
- individual behaviour controls
- teaching for self-esteem
- beyond classroom methods
- neuro-linguistic programming (NLP)
- personal construct psychology
- classroom rules and rights
- Rogers
- BATPACK approach
- the respect rule
- parent support
- family therapy
- learning variety
- reinforcement
- time out
- on report
- Gestalt
- assertive discipline
- social skills training
- assertiveness training
- transactional analysis (TA)
- discipline protocols
- incentive and reward
- joint problem solving
- ABC approach

Changes at the 'delivery' level

This section covers four main areas. The first looks at how a secure context for learners might be mutually established between learners and staff. The second focuses on the importance of listening to learners, and gives examples of how different practitioners have done this. The third looks at creative approaches to curriculum planning, and the fourth at some strategies for both handling, and planning to prevent, disruptive behaviour.

i. Creating a secure context for learning

All learners, in particular those who exhibit challenging behaviour, require a secure context in which to learn. They need to be clear about boundaries and recognise that rules are both transparent and consistently applied. Dewsbury College carried out an interesting exercise asking both teachers and learners to produce a list of attributes of the 'ideal teacher'.

Teaching staff produced the following list of attributes:

- explains points clearly and at the appropriate level
- conveys enthusiasm and interest for the subject
- pays attention to revision and exam techniques
- makes lessons interesting
- has high expectations for students' work
- teaches for understanding rather than rote learning
- is confident
- is constructive and helpful.

In the learner list, the 'ideal teacher' had the following attributes:

- keeps order by being firm but not intimidating
- explains things clearly
- treats all students fairly and equally
- is friendly and humorous
- gets to know learners' names/treats them as humans
- tries adventurous strategies/variety of techniques.

It is interesting to note that teachers made no reference to a disciplinary role but learners placed this at the top of their list, although they recognised that rules must be consistently applied and all students treated 'fairly and equally'.

There is, however, an important difference between an authoritarian approach that demands appropriate behaviour and a democratic one in which boundaries are established by both teachers and learners. Gribble (1993) talks of the importance of making a shift from an 'authoritative to a democratic' approach while Rogers (1994) speaks of the importance of establishing 'mutually agreed rights, responsibilities and roles'. One of the most useful strategies that staff can use is to negotiate ground rules of behaviour with the learners. In such a situation, staff and learners make their expectations explicit by agreeing openly what behaviours they regard as unacceptable. The following chart is one way of recording what has been agreed:

Figure 3 Ground rules of behaviour

Ground rules of behaviour		
Unacceptable to staff	Unacceptable to learners	Unacceptable to both
Expectations of staff	Expectations of learners	Expectations of both

Another example adopted by one college and built into their tutorial system was what they termed 'granny behaviour'. Students were asked to identify behaviours that might be appropriate with peers or at home, but might not be appropriate 'in front of granny'. It became clear that, whatever their culture or background, the majority of learners quickly recognised things that would not be appropriate 'in front of granny'. This led them to think about types of behaviour that might be appropriate at home but inappropriate at college.

The establishment of such a framework will allow both teachers and learners to have a context of agreed understanding of appropriate behaviour within which they can explore and develop some of the approaches discussed below.

ii. Listening to learners

The shift from an authoritarian to a democratic approach must involve listening to learners. In recent years several reports have emphasised the need to shift from a viewpoint that sees learners as needing to fit into established patterns of provision to one where provision is developed around the stated aims and aspirations of all learners. Tomlinson (1996) recognised that the inclusion of learners with disabilities and learning difficulties required the development of a far better 'match' between the individual learner and the organisation and teacher. *Valuing people* (2001) spoke of how provision needed to be created around the personally articulated aspirations of people with learning disabilities and not the other way round. More recently, Leadbeater (2005) has written about the concept of 'personalised learning' and how a person-centred approach to learning requires 'co-production', where learners themselves have more say in designing the service they receive so that they can tailor it to their specific needs.

He speaks of how:

Users who are more involved in shaping the service they receive should be expected to become more active and responsible in helping to deliver the service.

Leadbeater (2005): P. 15

Leadbeater particularly addresses the needs of learners who are disengaged from the system. He writes about how understanding the aspirations of learners who are disengaged requires far more than simply asking them to define their aims and wishes, as their individual context will often mean that other immediate concerns dominate their thinking, and that they have had no experience of beginning to define where they hope learning might lead them. A fundamental challenge for teachers is to help provide learners with the tools with which they can begin both to examine their current behaviour and also look beyond the immediate present to articulate where they might want to be going. Learners with challenging behaviour are often 'heard' – some of them might well be the loudest in expressing their anger or discontent. However, superficial hearing is not the same as 'listening' to what may be expressed underneath particular outbursts. The examples below show some different ways in which teaching staff have attempted to support learners in developing skills that will help them to articulate both where they are and where they might want to progress to.

One college used a joint problem-solving approach to create a personal action plan for a learner. Joint problem-solving is different from counselling in a number of respects. It works from the premise that there is a 'problem' but that both parties – the tutor and the learner – share that problem, and have an equal stake in its resolution. It involves the suggestion of options and solutions, and outlining the perceived outcomes of these. Most importantly, both parties have to agree an eventual outcome, even if that entails some compromise and re-negotiation. In this way learners are supported in moving from monologue to constructive dialogue.

The stages of the process are:

- identify and agree on the symptom
- identify and agree on the causes
- identify and agree on the options for moving forward
- discuss the pros and cons of each option.

Then:

- agree on and record the course of action to adopt
- agree on the consequences of not following through
- agree on and record the next steps (who is to do what, by when)
- agree on a review date.

As a result of this process the learner involved identified that he found it difficult to organise himself to study, which caused him to fall behind with his coursework. When asked to participate in class he was overwhelmed, which caused him to be disruptive. An action plan was devised in which the learner agreed to the following goals.

In the short term to:

- put coursework files in order and index them
- buy a calendar diary and record key dates and deadlines
- tidy up study areas at home.

In the medium term to:

- maintain the diary
- get into the habit of making lists of things to do and establishing priorities
- develop filing systems for home study.

In the long term to:

- gain an understanding of time management and apply this
- set study targets for self and use study sessions productively to meet these targets.

In this case the short-term goals were achieved with both the subject tutor and a friend of the learner commenting on the improvement. This had a positive effect on the learner as he worked on his long-term and medium-term goals.

The second example comes from a work-based learning programme that particularly caters to learners with challenging behaviour. Staff in this organisation recognised that many of their learners had considerable difficulties expressing their emotions and understanding the consequences of their actions. This led them to reading literature on 'emotional intelligence', which involved looking at the skills and attributes required to make positive use of one's feelings and emotions. First, they devised a staff training programme, then a programme for learners to attempt to develop their 'emotional intelligence' and so help them to deal more positively with potentially disruptive emotions such as anger and aggression.

The underlying theme was to support learners in understanding the consequences of decisions and in developing the skills to react to situations in a more positive manner. To demonstrate consequences of actions, they looked closely at the emotions of anger and aggression, and differing ways in which to deal with these feelings. The sessions, although complex, were designed to ensure that learners of all abilities could participate. The amount of writing required was limited, and alternative methods of explanation, such as art, were acceptable ways of describing their feelings.

The programme was not without its difficulties. Some learners found that the exposure of personal feelings was too great, and opted out. Others found the whole concept of looking at emotions too threatening or too difficult. In particular, several of those with a history of drug or alcohol abuse found it hard to think about consequences. When talking about future plans within the sessions several of them stated that their future aims would involve drugs and that they could not see how this could or would affect their future. This shows how, for some learners, other priorities, such as a programme of drug or alcohol withdrawal, may need to be addressed before a person is able to engage positively in learning (a point also made by Leadbeater 2005). Those involved in the project also acknowledged the need for considerable staff training before undertaking such a project and the importance of giving it sufficient time.

However, in general participants, both learners and staff, were positive about the outcomes. Staff felt they had a far greater understanding of how to encourage learners to take control of their own behaviour rather than trying to impose controls upon them. Learners too, in their feedback, said that they had found the sessions interesting, and felt that they had developed tools that enabled them to take more control over their own lives:

It was fun, not boring, really useful and helpful.

I think it has calmed me down a bit.

It was a lot quieter than normal.

I now think about things before I act.

Sort of know how to control myself now.

I can talk about things more.

The two examples above are instances of staff choosing specific ways of developing learners' skills in expressing themselves and managing their behaviour. In other instances, self-expression and understanding might come through the particular context of a learning programme. An example of this can be seen in work carried out by education staff in a young offenders' institution, although its content would be equally applicable in a college setting.

Wakefield Young Offenders Team sought to find ways to engage hard-to-reach young people in finding employment. They created a three-part programme TOE (Thinking about Employment) in an attempt to develop a customised programme that addressed individual needs:

- Part one: Learners explore the history of employment in their local area, which in their case involved looking at the history of the coal mining industry.
- Part two: Looks at the present, displaying an honest view of what is available for young people in the area today. It explores this through a fictional character 'Billy'.
- Part three: The programme progresses from looking at 'Billy' to addressing the needs of the individual young person.

An interesting finding in relation to this report is that one of the most successful parts of the course was dealing with the past. By studying the history of their community, young people began to engage with it. Their own immediate experience tended to have been one of isolation, with no real sense of belonging to a community. In learning about the history of their area (and in many cases being able to relate this to certain key family members, such as grandfathers who had been miners) they gained an understanding of their own context and place in it. This in turn led them to reflect on their own behaviour and recognise that offending was not just a crime against individuals but against the community as a whole.

The fourth example is of a college that anticipated external triggers that might generate aggressive behaviour among learners. Bradford College has many learners from the Muslim community as well as learners whose friends or relatives serve in the armed forces. During the build-up to the Iraq war, staff were concerned that these events could fuel racist incidents. Support services in the college developed guidelines to encourage learners to discuss issues of concern. If learners wished, they could also be referred to support agencies. In this way, avenues were made available for learners to discuss issues first in an attempt to defuse potentially aggressive confrontations.

The four examples above reflect very different approaches. However, in each instance they reveal ways in which staff respect learners' views and try to find ways in which learners can begin to articulate their own concerns, and so begin to develop their own responses to their behaviour, and their own strategies for dealing with it. Staff working with learners possessing more severe learning difficulties have for several years been looking at ways in which they can empower these learners to find their own voice and articulate their aspirations; for example, the strong self-advocacy movement that was developed with people with learning difficulties. The above examples reveal how learners with challenging behaviour also often require a framework within which they can begin to express their views and have these acknowledged.

iii. Creative ways of delivering the curriculum

In the example at the beginning of this section, students at Dewsbury College listed one of their attributes for an 'ideal teacher' as trying 'adventurous strategies and a variety of techniques'. This sub-section will look at some ways in which teachers might alter their delivery to better engage those whose behaviour is preventing them from learning.

Tomlinson (1996) makes clear the importance of ensuring that there is an appropriate 'match' between the learner and the delivery of the curriculum. The first step of this match is to ensure that individual learners are on the most appropriate programme. Disengagement from learning, whether it manifests itself as overtly challenging behaviour or as extreme withdrawal, can be a signal that a learner is not placed in the most appropriate programme, or that the level of learning is too hard or too easy.

Having ensured that the learner is in an appropriate programme, it is important for teachers to examine their own curriculum delivery and ensure that they are matching the learning preferences of all their learners. Disengagement is far more likely to occur when learners fail to see the relevance to them of what they are learning, or when they feel unmotivated by the way the subject is being presented.

The examples below show ways in which teaching staff can adopt innovative approaches to draw in learners who were previously disengaged with learning. Although they are drawn from practice with young offenders, it is important that practitioners working in colleges, adult education centres and work-based learning organisations recognise that the approaches described here are equally pertinent in their different learning contexts.

One residential project in North Yorkshire created an exciting programme bringing together basic skills teaching and creative arts programmes. Following discussions with the North Yorkshire County Council, the project established a three-week, 90-hour learning package.

The underlying principle of the course was that, while learners may lack formal education, they do not lack intelligence; confidence-building is an essential part of motivating learners to learn. The three partners in delivering the course were local creative artists, local youth workers and basic skills teaching staff. Areas of work covered included subjects that were likely to motivate learners; such as graffiti art, performance poetry and DJ work. Basic skills tutors were able to integrate basic skills into the course content while the youth workers provided pastoral support.

This interactive and creative approach resulted in basic skills teaching becoming both relevant and motivating to learners. Youth workers could find the culture of prison, but received support in how to manage this new situation from established prison staff.

Staff have noticed increased levels of basic skills, confidence and motivation in learners. The involvement of arts experts has also helped to raise learner self-esteem. One learner, who is interested in DJ work, is now being supported by one of the visiting artists to achieve his goal of working in Spain as a DJ. Another group of young men gained the confidence to sing and recite their own poems in front of an audience that included their peers. In a similar programme in Liverpool, learners were able to perform their poetry in a local community centre at an event attended by members of their family.

A work-related learning project in Reading sought to address the way in which learners on basic skills courses failed to see the relevance of their learning during an ambitious programme linking education with local employers. The course they developed included the CITB construction skills certification scheme Level 1 qualification. Key skills of communication, application of number and working with others were incorporated into the course so that learners would be working towards industry-level qualifications at the same time as improving their basic skills. Employers are invited to visit the project, and as a result have revised their expectations of the skills that can be achieved by previously disengaged young people.

The course has resulted in skills sharing between basic skills and vocational tutors, and two tutors have already enrolled on Stage 2 of the City and Guilds 7407 teacher training course.

Learners' responses to the course have been very positive. Around 80 have gained the industry qualification, and some learners are now employed as kitchen fitters or with other related industries, such as plumbing. Many learners who were previously disengaged from education have realised, via the practical nature of the course, the value of basic skills learning.

Perhaps most importantly, the course led to a culture shift. Staff involved in this programme have recognised that, for it to be successful, many 'hearts and minds' need to be won over. Curriculum staff need to be convinced that embedding basic skills into vocational training for learners with low basic skills levels can often be of more value than a course that is limited to literacy and numeracy. The project managers also recognise that they need to overcome the reservations of contractors and funders, who may well be more familiar with traditional basic skills courses than they are with vocational training.

The third example is from a Young Offenders Institution, where learning support staff set up a Support Group. The rolling programme lasts for 8 weeks and its aim is to provide a structured social interaction within which individuals can develop positive and progressive social skills and behaviour guided by specialist staff. These skills should be transferable both within the establishment and on release.

The emphasis is on praise and reinforcement of positive student behaviour. The key focus is to develop targets alongside, and from, the preparation and sharing of breakfast. Many of the learners who take part in the programme exhibit extremely challenging behaviour. Several of them spent time in the Segregation Unit or the Anti-social Behaviour Wing.

At the initial meeting rules are agreed and weekly targets are set. The group runs for 8 weeks and meets each Tuesday and Thursday from 8.00–9.30 am, using Chapel kitchen facilities.

A 'typical' Support Group session would involve:

- an agreed rota of responsibilities
- preparation of breakfast
- eating/sharing of breakfast around the table
- sharing success from education/wings
- discussing appropriate strategies
- updating individual session records and setting new targets
- completing student comment sheets
- clearing away and tidying the room.

The final week would also involve obtaining individual student evaluations and recapping with the student any changes and progress made. Liaison also occurs with prison and education staff for post-course comments.

During the programmes, teaching staff notice substantial improvement in learners' self-esteem and self-confidence – and also in their social skills and in the development of trust between learners and staff. In the secure environment of the group, learners are able to make and negotiate choices. They are also able to share their successes as they are allowed to invite 'guests' to the breakfasts.

Some comments by young people who have been involved in the group include:

The Nurture Group was a good thing because, as a group, we learned to communicate with each other. We worked together as a group and shared manners at the table.

The good points was [sic] for the group to get to know each other and to get on without any silly behaviour. There was [sic] a few occasions when there was silly behaviour but apart from that it was OK. Everybody conformed into doing something like cooking, washing up and setting the table and drinks. I think I was OK. I helped with things that needed doing and the group helped me to get on with the other people and the staff. I think I was a valid member of the group and I recommend it to anybody for the future.

The Support Group taught me how to cook and calm down by reinforcing good points and asking me to calm down.

A good point was the way everyone sometimes came together. It was nice the way the table looked.

One of the key successes of the Support Group is the way it brings learners together in a practical situation within which they can develop skills of interaction. Other organisations have achieved this through peer-mentoring groups. For example, several organisations have developed peer-mentoring reading schemes. Mentors who have good literacy skills are given a short accredited course and then paired with others who have difficulty with reading and writing. Mentors acquire confidence by being in a situation where they can support others while mentees are able to learn in an informal context away from a classroom situation (that they often equate with past failure). Learners with challenging behaviour can become either mentors or mentees, although care needs to be taken with pairing to ensure that individuals are not given roles beyond their emotional maturity or placed in situations where they can abuse their power.

iv. Planning how to pre-empt disruption

Rogers (1990) identifies three types of teaching styles in relation to disruptive behaviour:

1. the authoritarian professional who demands social behaviour
2. the abdicating professional who hopes for social behaviour
3. the confident professional who expects social behaviour (and usually gets it).

Gribble (1993), who strongly supports Rogers' work, lists some strategies that teachers can adopt to try to become Rogers' 'confident professional':

- lesson planning – having a clear theme, aims, targets, variety, good seating arrangements, appropriate materials
- keeping attention – using eye contact and body language, responding to feedback and inattention
- pace – engaging students through a prompt start, keeping them on task and allowing time to conclude
- motivation – through questioning, encouraging opinions and valuing them, involving all students
- question and feedback (in larger groups) – including all those who wish to contribute by asking short, factual questions and indicating turn- taking
- confidence – asserting control through voice quality and body language
- reducing unwanted behaviour – by not rewarding attention-seeking, avoiding emotional outbursts, rewarding students for getting on with their work
- clear instructions – for whole groups and individuals using manners ('please' and 'thank you') and a polite but non-apologetic delivery
- reprimands – only when necessary, and kept clear and brief
- consequences – a pre-negotiated or directed set of logical consequences which are planned responses to disruptive behaviour.

The strategies listed above may seem obvious, but that does not mean they are easy to follow. An interesting exercise for staff, which could be carried out either individually or in a small group, is to identify which of these strategies you use, which you find difficult to use and why, and to identify a situation where using one of these strategies might have been able to defuse or prevent a disruptive incident.

The strategies above refer to whole-class teaching. However, certain learners with challenging behaviour can significantly benefit from some periods of individual support. This can provide them with a safe environment in which they can explore their difficulties and develop strategies for learning. Staff in the Learning Support Department at the YOI have devised a way of enabling some young people to have individual learning sessions.

The Learning Support Department at the YOI has five teachers and one learning support coordinator. Staff work on a one-to-one basis with students. Each student has a 1-hour appointment in their chosen area of work, either literacy or numeracy. Students with behavioural, emotional or intellectual differences are also encouraged to address areas of need and develop coping strategies. Through discussion, barriers to learning are removed, and learning can occur in a safe environment. Students are referred to learning support in various ways: they can self-refer or be referred by members of the teaching or prison staff.

When students first attend learning support they receive an initial assessment through a comprehensive interview. This is to determine areas of need, and where focus is most urgently required. The learning support tutors set short-term and long-term goals in conjunction with the students. Regular two-monthly reviews are carried out. These enable teachers to assess the past and look to the future needs of the students, and allow the learning support coordinator to monitor and evaluate standards.

The Learning Support Department also provides a 'chill-out' facility to enable students with behavioural difficulties to calm down and return to lessons. The ethos of the area is to reinforce the positives with a student while addressing any negative, inappropriate behaviour.

The trained teaching staff work with individual learners to help them address their behaviour and the barriers it might be bringing to their learning. In colleges, such intervention might be better carried out by trained counsellors. Where they work best, counselling services operate not only on an individual basis with learners but are also able to advise teaching staff on the extent to which they can support students with challenging behaviour both in tutorials and within a classroom situation.

Changes at the 'systems' level

The DDA project on challenging behaviour (Macqueen, 2004) found clearly that, unless transparent and consistent systems are in place to support this area, work will not be effective. It appears that organisations have often thought more about how to establish systems to support work with learners with disabilities and learning difficulties, but that these have not been extended to include learners with challenging behaviour. Below are some of the systems that will be needed to provide a structure for the kind of approaches described above.

Working with learners with challenging behaviour can be extremely stressful, and individual teachers need to know that they are not working alone. Support systems will vary between different organisations, but all staff need to be clear about who is responsible for providing them with support. This includes part-time staff, who are often in a particularly isolated situation. There is a need both for regular meetings and for teaching staff to be clear about who they can approach when they need urgent, immediate advice or support.

There may at times be a need to draw upon specialist support, for example a college counsellor. Organisations need to have clear systems for referral to a counsellor, and also for counsellors to be able to offer support to teaching staff. Systems also need to be in place for liaison with external agencies. With younger learners particularly, work in the post-school sector will benefit if there are clear procedures for liaising with referring schools and, where appropriate, with parents. These procedures need to be accompanied by clear guidelines on confidentiality. Learners need to be assured that particular referrals to a counselling service or discussions they may have with staff about, for example, a mental health difficulty, are not shared without their explicit consent.

Many of the examples given in the preceding section rely on teaching staff being able to listen to learners and act on their views. This should not be an ad hoc exercise. They need to work within an organisation-wide structure of listening to learners. There needs to be a system in place for all learners to have the opportunity to create individual learning plans along with systems for regular tutorial input.

Creating learning programmes based on individual views and needs requires considerable flexibility within an organisation. Systems need to be in place that allow for and support flexible programmes so that individual practitioners are able to adapt them to deliver their curriculum in ways that best address the needs of learners. There also need to be open and explicit systems that allow for the rectifying of structures that work against the interests of learners with challenging behaviour. For example, in carrying out the '5 Ws' exercise given at the beginning of this report, an organisation may find that long breaks between classes results in periods of anti-social behaviour. Systems need to be flexible enough to address these timetabling difficulties quickly and effectively.

The examples in the section above also show the importance of learners knowing that organisations have clear and consistent procedures for dealing with unacceptable behaviour. Disciplinary procedures need to be developed and shared with all learners. Most organisations have disciplinary procedures, but for these to promote good practice in working with learners with challenging behaviour, they need to be geared towards 'recovery'; that is, rectifying difficulties and identifying learner-appropriate strategies, rather than merely leading towards exclusion.

Learners also need systems of support that can help them to have their say in a disciplinary procedure. Some learners with challenging behaviour may find communicating their viewpoint extremely difficult. Some organisations have responded to this by having a system whereby certain staff can act as advocates for learners when they are faced with a disciplinary procedure. For example, one college has amended its disciplinary process and procedures by offering advocacy support from trained 'mentors', and has found that this has worked particularly well for learners with mental health difficulties who would previously have been at risk of being asked to leave the college because of poor attendance or erratic production of coursework and assignments.

It is very important that work involving learners with challenging behaviour is supported by ongoing staff development programmes. These need to begin with mandatory induction programmes for all staff, including part-time tutors, who should be able to be paid for their attendance. Induction programmes need to cover challenging behaviour and make clear both the organisation's policy on it and what systems there are to support it. Following induction, a rolling programme of staff development needs to be implemented. Organisations need to be creative in the ways they organise this staff training, listening and responding to the particular requests of staff. Some organisations have established successful staff training mentoring programmes in which staff who have developed effective approaches can be paired with staff who do not feel confident in this area.

Finally, monitoring processes need to be in place to ensure that the kinds of systems listed above are actually working effectively. Many organisations have well-documented systems, but they do not operate consistently; they may be effective in parts of an organisation but not in others. Teaching staff need regular opportunities to feed on how effectively they feel the organisational procedures actually support them and where they feel there is a need for change.

Changes at the 'strategic' level

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The third section of the cone diagram reproduced in Figure 2 looks at changes that need to occur at the strategic level of an organisation. *Ain't misbehavin'* produced a model that summarised the recurrent themes which emerged in their work as central to effective strategic planning and development³:

1. Control
 - How effective are the behaviour control systems in place?
 - How are learners tracked in terms of attendance and/or disruption?
 - How are disciplinary, capability and grievance procedures monitored?
2. Consistency
 - How are policies, procedures and strategies implemented consistently and with transparent fairness throughout all parts of the organisation?
3. Consideration
 - To what extent do staff at all levels act as models of reasonable and social behaviour?
4. Cooperation
 - What evidence is there, in concrete and behavioural terms, of the fostering of a culture of mutual respect between staff, between learners and between staff and learners?
5. Consultation
 - To what extent are learners, staff at all levels and other stakeholders involved in developing policies, procedures and strategies?

³ *Ain't misbehavin'* P. 87

6. Communication

- To what extent is up/down communication genuinely two-way?
- What is the extent of reliance on unmediated written communication such as memos and notices?

7. Commitment

- What evidence is there of a commitment to a culture of mutual respect at all levels of management and across all sections of units?

These themes provide a value base and positive ethos that need to be reflected in the specific policies drawn up by organisations.

Organisations may well wish to draw up a specific policy statement on challenging behaviour. Such a statement would need to apply to all members of the organisation, and have clear links with other organisational policies. It will need to include:

- a mutually agreed definition of what constitutes challenging behaviour
- commitment from those with executive responsibility at a senior level
- the recognition that any changes in this area need to be sufficiently resourced (eg by designated non-contact time for certain members of staff)
- a clear plan for implementation (eg specific tasks might be allocated to a steering group with representatives from all levels of an organisation – including learners)
- effective consultation in drawing up the statement, with opportunities for all stakeholders to contribute through the use of multiple channels (eg surveys, e-mail sites, focus groups)
- a commitment to specific staff training to ensure implementation
- clearly stated expectations of what is required by all stakeholders – staff as well as learners
- clarity about who is a member of an organisation and procedures (eg ID cards and visitor's passes) that ensure that only those with a bona-fide purpose have access to facilities.

Other policies that need to be closely linked to a challenging behaviour policy statement include an organisation-wide confidentiality policy and a personal harassment policy.

A confidentiality policy needs to ensure that learners who share information in confidence are supported in their belief that this information will only be used for the purpose in which it was given and agreed on. It is paramount that staff respect the rights of learners. Such a policy does not equate with total secrecy; a duty of care will prevail and, when the health and safety of individuals demands it, information can be passed on. However, these instances are likely to be very rare (for guidance on drawing up a confidentiality policy see *Disclosure, confidentiality and passing on information*, Learning and Skills Council 2003).

A personal harassment policy provides a system to deal with discrimination in any form, as well as sending a positive message to those subject to discrimination. It should address matters relating to race, gender, disability, age, religion or sexual orientation. Such a code should be designed to complement existing grievance and disciplinary procedures for staff and learners.

In addition to these specific policies, it is important to understand that an organisation demonstrates its ethos and culture through a variety of less tangible ways. For example, the presentation of common areas is an important factor in supporting a positive learning ethos. If learners are presented with a positive environment free of graffiti and litter they will feel respected and be far less likely to treat the environment with disrespect. In some instances, provision will need to be made for security (CCTV coverage, security guards, etc) but attempts should be made to ensure that this is done within a welcoming rather than an authoritarian context.

Attempts also need to be made to ensure that positive links are created between the educational organisation and the wider community. This could include respecting immediate neighbours, maybe by calling or attending liaison meetings. It could also involve ensuring that relationships with local community officers (both police and environmental) are positive and mutually supportive.

There are two overriding themes to this report: the first is that challenging behaviour should not be seen purely as a problem inherent in certain individuals but in the context of an inclusive learning approach where organisations do all they can to ensure that they create a learning environment that responds to the particular needs of all their learners. The second is that this requires a whole-organisational approach that involves action at the levels of structure and systems as well as at delivery level.

Organisations will, of course, need to create their own ways of addressing this issue, but the outline below gives some suggestions for possible ways forward.

1. Organisations need to bring together a coordinating group who can take this work forward. Membership will understandably vary from one organisation to another, but it is important that this group does not just consist of practitioners who may have a key role in working with these learners. Other members who may have valuable contributions will include learners themselves, someone from senior management, representatives from regular teaching staff and also from non-teaching areas of the organisation.
2. This group will need to come up with a definition of what they mean by the term 'challenging behaviour'. Different members may have different definitions and time needs to be taken to explore these differences and to work towards a consensus.
3. The group could very fruitfully carry out the '5 Ws' exercise discussed at the beginning of this report.

This would involve them examining:

- what types of challenging behaviour are apparent in the organisation
- where disruption takes place
- who gets involved
- when disruption occurs
- why the group feels it is occurring.

This will enable the group to draw up an organisational profile that can begin to form the basis for an action plan for change.

The group could then look at the cone model reproduced on page 8 and examine how well the issue of challenging behaviour is addressed at delivery, systems and strategy levels.

Questions that will need to be addressed arise out of the issues raised in this report, and need to be looked at in relation to the corresponding sections on delivery, systems and strategy. They will include:

At delivery level:

- How and how well are learners being listened to?
- Does disruption occur more frequently in certain curriculum areas, or certain parts of the organisation rather than others and, if so, why and how can it be addressed?
- Is there an opportunity for learners and staff to work together in drawing up clear ground rules?
- How creative and responsive is the delivery of the curriculum?
- Is there the opportunity for good practice in certain parts of the organisation to be shared with other staff?

At systems level:

- How well are staff, including part-time staff, supported in addressing issues around challenging behaviour?
- Is there the opportunity to draw on specialist support?
- Are there college-wide systems for listening to learners' views?
- Is sufficient time allowed for communication both with learners and between staff?
- How flexible can the organisation be in responding to particular needs, eg re-timetabling certain classes?
- Are organisational rules clear, logical and transparent, and administered consistently throughout the organisation?
- Are there opportunities for learners to have the support of an advocate if they have to appear before a disciplinary panel?
- Are issues related to challenging behaviour included in your induction training?
- Is sufficient attention given to staff development and are staff views taken into account when staff development programmes are drawn up?
- Is there the opportunity for staff mentoring so that experienced staff can support others who may be having difficulties?
- Are there effective monitoring processes to ensure that any systems in place are actually working?

At strategic level:

The group might like to look at the model reproduced on page 8 and analyse how effectively their organisation adheres to its messages. They then will be in a position to see where gaps may be occurring and start drawing up a specific policy statement on challenging behaviour while also looking at how this relates to other existing policies.

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