

# BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

A WHOLE ORGANISATION APPROACH

**LSDA NORTHERN IRELAND**

HELPING COLLEGES AND TRAINING PROVIDERS MAXIMISE LEARNING BY DEVELOPING POLICIES AND STRATEGIES FOR BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

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### **The purpose**

This publication has been written for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is hoped to put behaviour management on the agenda in colleges and training organisations. Secondly, it is intended to support a training initiative developed by LSDA NI as part of its mission to provide targeted staff development for the sector. Thirdly, it is intended to promote a whole organisation approach to addressing challenging and disruptive behaviour.

### **The audience**

It has been designed for lecturers, trainers, tutors and managers and leaders in colleges and training organisations. It is meant to be relevant to all those who deliver and support the delivery of learning in an educational or training setting. Although intended for the post-16 sector, it may be of interest to other providers e.g. schools and community groups or voluntary agencies.

### **Caution**

This is not a self-help booklet on behaviour management. It is not meant to substitute for supportive training or staff development, or to take the place of individual college initiatives.

*If I had wanted to put up with this type of behaviour I'd have become a school teacher. **FE tutor, teaching on VEP programme, Greater Belfast***

*Well if we can deal with them in school I don't see why the college has a problem. **School teacher, VEP liaison duties, Greater Belfast***

# CHALLENGING, DISRUPTIVE OR JUST PLAIN BOLD

For the purpose of this publication, the term disruptive behaviour has been adopted. The term is used to describe a range of behaviours from the mildly irritating to those which can be dangerous. The Further Education and Development Agency publication **'Ain't Misbehavin'** defines disruptive behaviour as

*'.....patterns of repeated behaviour which significantly interrupt the learning of others or threaten their personal security or well being.'* (FEDA 1998)

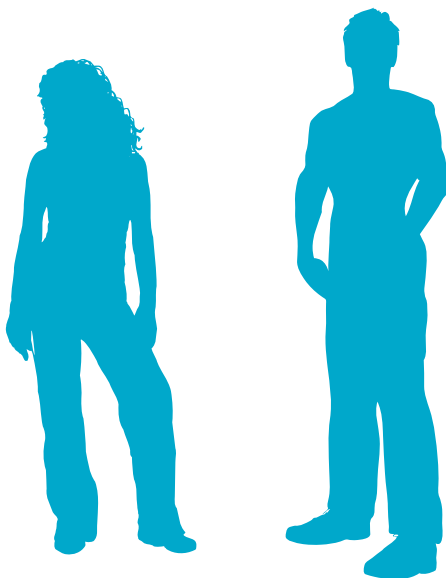
As will be seen later, this definition has been extended in this publication to include the tutors' wellbeing and ability to teach in an environment free from persistent interruption.

## Typical Disruptive Behaviours

Behaviour	Yes	No
Persistent lateness		
Poor attendance		
Constant talking		
Not paying attention		
Cheek		
Sexual comments		
Not submitting work		
Bullying		
Mobile phone use		
Substance abuse		
Monopolising discussions		
Refusal to comply with reasonable instruction		

If you or your staff are experiencing any of the above then read on!

*I think there are behaviour problems, the problem is my boss doesn't agree.* **Tutor, Armagh**



# ADDRESSING THE ISSUE

*'I see no hope for the future of our people if they are dependent on the frivolous youth of today, for certainly all youth are reckless beyond words. When I was a boy, we were taught to be discrete and respectful of elders, but the present youth are exceedingly wise and impatient of restraint'.~attributed to Hesiod<sup>1</sup> (8th century B.C.)*

Teachers, by and large, enjoy teaching their subject and may not see themselves as disciplinarians. Indeed, we would all like to teach highly motivated students who attend regularly and punctually and always pay attention. In the real world this is not always the case.

What we can't do however is ignore disruptive behaviour. If we do, it won't go away! We can't ignore disruptive behaviour for a number of reasons:

- It will probably get worse
- It will have a negative affect on outcomes
- Teachers can't teach effectively
- Learners are prevented from learning

Surprisingly, learners – even the most disruptive – want a secure environment with clear boundaries.

*I agree with what you said about managing behaviour in the classroom but remember I was never trained for this. I thought I would only be teaching my subject to people who wanted to learn.*  
**Tutor, Training Organisation, Newry**

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<sup>1</sup> Adolescent Psychiatry (1997)

# TEACHERS' BEHAVIOURS

Teachers may not be the cause of disruptive behaviour but they are important architects of the learning environment. We all hope that we are good teachers. We care about our subject and our ability to communicate with enthusiasm. Indeed, this is what we have been trained to do!

When asked what makes a good teacher, teachers tend to focus on quality of teaching. Not so students! An interesting study in Dewsbury College found that students produced the following profile of the ideal teacher.

## The Ideal Teacher

- 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 learners as humans

*The problem is by the time I get them they've been allowed to run wild by the previous teacher. **Tutor, Training Organisation, Coleraine***

# RATE YOURSELF!

Teacher Behaviour	Always	Sometimes	Never
Arrives on time for class			
Work prepared and photocopied			
Students' work marked promptly			
Goals shared with learners			
Rules explicit and explained			
Sanctions agreed			
Sunny disposition			
Sense of humour			
Knows learners' names			



# A WHOLE ORGANISATION APPROACH

Students want an ordered environment. They want to feel that there are rules – even if they will test them occasionally! Staff want an ordered environment as a basis for creativity and learning. Managers want an ordered environment to plan for change and growth. Why then can the ordered learning environment be so elusive?

In some institutions behaviour management has traditionally been a ‘fire-fighting’ activity. That is, behaviours are dealt with after they have become a problem. By this stage, unacceptable behaviour can be ingrained in individuals or in groups. Staff too can be suffering from stress and feel unable to retrieve the situation.

Behaviour management initiatives work when they reflect a whole institution approach. Initiatives, policies and strategies must reflect the concerns of the key players.

## Who are the key players?

Modern approaches to behaviour management promote the democratic as opposed to the authoritarian. This means listening to **learners**. If learners are on the wrong courses, or their abilities and preferences have been ignored, then behaviour problems are more likely. Rules and regulations are more likely to be kept if learners are involved in their design.

Teaching is potentially a stressful situation. **Teachers** want to maximise the learning that takes place in the classroom. Teaching is more effective when it is practised in an environment of mutual respect. This is made possible when learners and teachers have clear guidelines and expectations of what is and isn’t acceptable.

**Managers** have responsibilities for both learners and teachers. They tend to hold power when it comes to the allocation of resources and the identification of priorities.

*I sometimes feel as if I spend my whole day trying to keep order and do no teaching at all. **FE tutor, Greater Belfast***



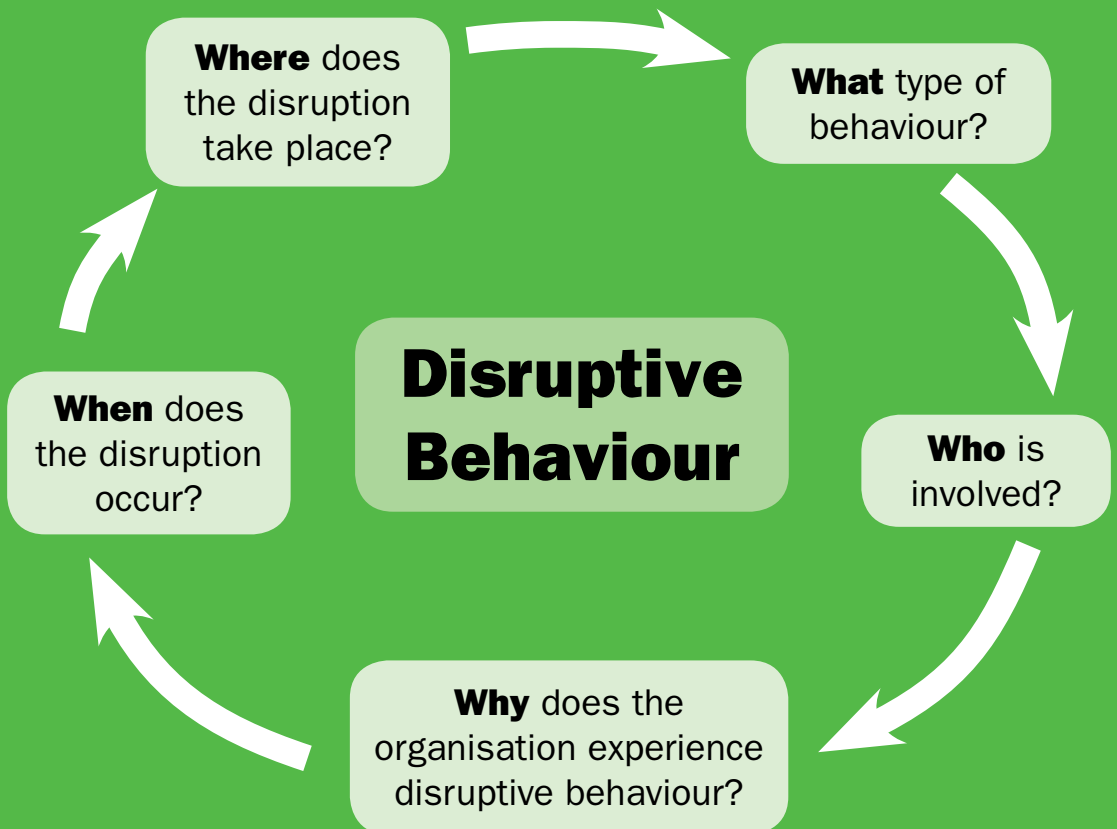
### What can be done?

Not all organisations are the same. They will differ in

- size
- student age profile
- funding source
- education/training aims
- cultural mix
- staff experience and expertise etc

They will also vary in the extent to which disruptive behaviour impacts on teaching/learning. This means there is no 'one size fits all' solution. The organisational response will depend on a range of variables related to the needs of the organisation.

The model below is known as the '5-W Schema.'<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> Ain't Misbehavin' (1998)

*My problem is that there is no consistency. Different tutors apply different rules.*

**Manager, Training Organisation,  
Greater Belfast**

### **Identifying the problem**

The 5-W Schema is useful in that it provides a starting point. Behaviour can be improved by such basic responses as timetable changes, room allocation etc. Some organisations have found it useful to begin with a behaviour management audit.

### **Prioritising**

Some problems are serious and need an immediate response. Some are longer-term or complex and need a more considered strategy. The next step from the audit is to prioritise and decide what needs to be addressed first.

### **Listening to students**

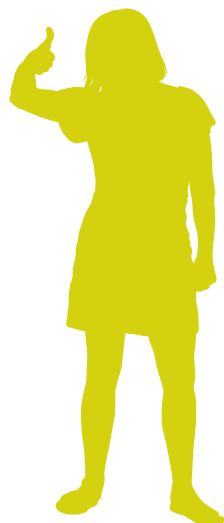
Students are not the enemy! Younger students in particular may have their own values but they too want a secure environment with clear guidelines. Students are more likely to respond if they have had some input to the process.

### **Planning for improvement**

If teaching and learning is at the heart of the curriculum, then teacher/student behaviour is at the heart of teaching and learning. Behaviour management needs to be included in the institution's plans. It needs to be included on the agendas of managers and course delivery teams. It should warrant its own set of targets and success criteria.

### **Letting everyone know**

Don't keep it a secret! Let everyone know. Behaviour policies, standards of behaviour, strategies and sanctions need to be disseminated.



# THE TRAINING PROGRAMME

LSDA NI has devised a short staff training programme in behaviour management. The programme is intended for tutors and trainers in the post-16 sector. It has been designed to be flexible enough to fit the needs of individual organisations.

The programme has adopted a **Four Focus Model** of behaviour management. The model's central

core is the role of the organisation and the need for a whole organisation approach. It looks at the impact of the four focuses on the key players: the learner, the teacher and the manager.

*I really need support in this area. I'm good at teaching my subject but have never had any training in how to deal with discipline. **Hairdressing tutor, North West***



**The Four Focus Model**

## IMPLICATIONS FOR THE KEY PLAYERS

FOCUS	LEARNER	TEACHER	MANAGER
RECOGNISING		Consistent approach	Clear guidelines
UNDERSTANDING	Being listened to. Access to counsellor		
PREVENTING			Acting on audit
DEALING WITH		Set of strategies	

**The template above will help you focus on the solutions to behaviour problems in your organisations.**

# BENEFITS FOR THE ORGANISATION

If the whole organisation is committed to improving behaviour management, then it will improve. It will not be perfect – few things are! – but it will get better.

Learners will have been engaged. They will have had input to the process. They will know what is expected and what the sanctions are. They should feel that praise and sanctions will be equitably distributed.

Teachers will feel supported. They will know what behaviour to expect from

themselves and students. If there is a breakdown then they will have a range of strategies.

Managers will spend less time fire-fighting. They will have shown leadership and supervised the production of policies to assist the whole organisation. They will also have prioritised the behaviour issues which most affect their organisation.

Remember, behaviour problems will not vanish but there will be agreed policies and procedures to deal with them.



## Study 1

I don't know how it happened but a trainee got my mobile phone number. I certainly didn't give it to him! But I've been getting really obscene text messages. It's been going on for six weeks now. The manager doesn't take it very seriously and tells me to ignore them but I can't. I phoned the police and they advised me to change my number but I feel that would be giving in. I don't know what to do. It's made me very suspicious.

## Study 2

My class is on the Training for Success programme. They're not bad kids but they seem incapable of doing any work. If I try to get them to use word processors they go straight to Bebo or Myspace. When I tell them to close the Internet, they tell me the other tutors let them do it. I just think there's potential there and I don't want to give up on them just yet.

## Study 3

My main problem is with one student. He's in my sociology class. He's constantly interrupting and challenging what I say. I feel that because I am female and young I'm not getting the respect I deserve. He's also begun to make sarcastic remarks. What's made things worse is he's found a mate and now they're both at it. I notice when John takes the class he's totally different.

## Study 4

They arrive like whirling dervishes. They burst in the door and look around for what damage they can do. I don't know what way they behave in school but I dread Tuesdays when they arrive. I think the teachers pick the most maladjusted and psychotic they can and send them down to me.

# HOW WE CAN HELP

## Strategies for improving behaviour will work when they are

- 1 generated from within the organisation
- 2 the result of discussion between the key players
- 3 an integral part of the teaching/learning process

**LSDA NI cannot solve individual problems either at teacher or organisation level.** No external organisation can do that. What it can do is provide a lead in the sector in getting behaviour management on the agenda. Organisations can only begin to address behaviour problems when they acknowledge that they exist.

LSDA NI can also work with individual organisations to provide support. This can happen in a number of ways:

- Support a review of behaviour to identify areas for auditing in more depth
- Help organise a review of the organisation's existing policies
- Disseminate examples of good practice in behaviour management
- Offer targeted staff development in behaviour management
- Assist organisations in identifying key action points
- Work with staff and students to identify key objectives
- Provide support in the development of action plans

In the analysis of the Listening to Learners Survey<sup>3</sup>, learners were asked what they considered most important in helping them to complete their course. 89% of respondents replied that it was the knowledge, skills and abilities of their tutors that was most important.

Of the learners who did not enjoy their course, 66% said their classes did not start on time! These comments underline the crucial role of the tutor in the formation of the attitudes of students. It also indicates that while tutors evaluate students' behaviour against certain expectations, students do the same for tutors' behaviour.

Behaviour management is a whole organisation responsibility. In instances where student behaviour improves within an organisation, evidence indicates that the whole organisation is involved.

Behaviour management is not only about learner behaviour. It is also about the behaviour of tutors and managers. Behaviour management strategies work best when the aims are made explicit and shared with the key players – learners, tutors and managers.

Managing the behaviour of learners is part of overall classroom management. Tutors and managers need training and support to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to feel confident in managing student behaviour and dealing with disruptive or non-participating students.

No one has all the answers but LSDA NI, as part of its remit to provide training and support for the sector, wants to help. If you want to discuss any of the issues raised in this booklet then contact:

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Please see inside back cover for full contact details.

<sup>3</sup> LSDA Northern Ireland 2006 Unlocking Excellence Listening to Learners Survey



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