Handout 6: Positive Approaches to Challenging Behaviours

Challenging behaviour refers to those behaviours that are so severe that the physical safety of the person or others is at risk. Such behaviour may limit a person being able to participate in work, education or social activities.

A positive approach to such behaviours means that we start from a point of trying to understand the meaning of the behaviour. This means that we do not punish people for their behaviour but we understand that the person is trying to tell us something. Our role is to then change things so that the person does not need to behave in that way anymore.

This does not mean that people do not take some responsibility for the consequences of their behaviour. However, that is not the only focus of our intervention.

When trying to understand the function of a behaviour we look at it in a holistic way. This means that we look at the person's environment and other aspects of their life rather than just at the behaviour in isolation.

Most importantly, we focus on doing things that will prevent the person needing to behave in ways that are challenging.

(This model of responding to challenging behaviours is based on that outlined in the NSW Government Policy: The Positive Approach to Challenging Behaviour which is available from the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care)