Handout 8: Steps to Managing Challenging Behaviours

Responding to challenging behaviours needs to be done as a team. The team involves the person with challenging behaviours, their family, carers, service providers and professional staff such as programmers. Carers are usually responsible for collecting accurate data, providing information about the person, working with the programmer to develop an intervention plan, implementing the plan and participating in reviewing its effectiveness.

There are three responses to challenging behaviours:

1. **Reaction** - when urgent action is required to ensure everyone's safety. Organisations will have policies and procedures in place about this. The general rules are to protect people and property, try to distract the person or calm them down and don't crowd them, try to work out what triggered the behaviour and see if it can be resolved immediately, use minimal force or confinement. Some examples of reactive strategies are: removing everyone from the place where the behaviour is occurring, directing the person to a quiet area such as a backyard.

2. **Planned intervention that is holistic** - including a plan for consistently responding to the behaviour, improving quality of life such as social life and relationships, developing skills such as communication, addressing health needs - based on lifestyle and environment review. Planned intervention may include:
   - developing an alternative communication system
   - involving the person in a broader range of social activities
   - supporting the person to see friends more frequently
   - having a health check.

3. **Prevention that focuses on environmental changes** - Preventative strategies may include:
   - changing the environment such as reducing noise levels if a person finds noise disturbing
   - separating people who clearly annoy each other
   - involving a person in an active social life so that they feel valued and their loneliness is reduces.

A lifestyle review often assists in understanding what areas of a person's life may be causing them unhappiness. Preventative strategies would take into account how to support a person to have a richer, more satisfying life.