Please note that references to the following legislation are out of date:

- Education (Early Childhood Centres) Regulations 1998

- Education (Home-Based Care) Order 1992 and Amendment Order 1998

Providing Positive Guidance

GUIDELINES FOR
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
SERVICES

Na te mahi a muri ka ora ai a mua
The work behind the scenes makes for success in front
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Introduction

The regulations and guidelines for early childhood education services prescribe the health and safety standards for curriculum, management and staff which must be met by licensed and chartered early childhood education centres and home-based care networks. The way in which adults behave with and towards children in the early childhood education environment forms part of these regulations and requirements.

A wide cross-section of organisations and individuals have been consulted on the development of these guidelines and have contributed examples of policies and practices which demonstrate the way in which goals and objectives for early childhood education are effectively met.

Purpose of the guidelines

These guidelines are an interpretation of the legal requirements for practices, both appropriate and inappropriate, which adults in early childhood education centres and home-based services should follow in their interactions with children.

They provide a framework for developing management policies which facilitate and encourage the use of effective positive guidance strategies in early childhood education settings.

Positive guidance strategies include: management and organisation of the environment for learning; and modelling and implementing practices which meet the regulations for child behaviour practices and are in line with early childhood curriculum goals.

These guidelines:

❖ discuss legal requirements and regulations on the way in which adults interact with children to provide “guidance and control” as specified in regulations;
❖ clarify the link between curriculum development and adults’ behaviour towards children;
❖ include a range of effective strategies for adults to use when working with children;
❖ identify areas of children’s behaviour which may be challenging to adults and give examples of effective and, in some cases, ineffective strategies for dealing with these;
❖ provide some examples of policy statements which clarify management practice by adults towards children.

Background


All early childhood education centres and home-based networks must comply with the range of government legislation relating to the ways in which adults should behave towards children within the setting of a licensed or chartered early childhood service. The legislation also includes a range of practices which are unacceptable behaviour.
The licensee of every early childhood education service must develop and implement a written policy on practices for child behaviour which meet the requirements set out in the Education (Early Childhood Centres) Regulations, 1998.

Similarly, the Education (Home-based Care) Order, 1992, requires care arrangers to be satisfied that the requirements for practices for child behaviour are being met by caregivers.

The Education (Early Childhood Centres) Regulations 1998 (section 33) and Education (Home-Based Care) Order, 1992, (section 34) state that every child in a licensed early childhood education or home-based care setting should be:

❖ given (The Education (Early Childhood Centres) Regulations 1998) or, treated with and allowed to have (Education (Home-Based Care) Order, 1992) respect and dignity;

❖ given positive guidance, promoting appropriate behaviour, having regard to the child's stage of development (The Education (Early Childhood Centres) Regulations 1998) or, positive guidance directed towards promoting behaviour that is appropriate for the child's stage of development (Education (Home-Based Care) Order, 1992).

This guidance must be by means of praise and encouragement, rather than blame, harsh language, belittling or degrading responses (Education (Early Childhood Centres) Regulations 1998, Education (Home-Based Care) Order, 1992).

The regulations state that no child is to be subjected to any form of physical ill-treatment, solitary confinement, immobilisation, or deprivation of food, drink, warmth, shelter or protection (Education (Early Childhood Centres) Regulations 1998, section 33, d); any form of physical ill-treatment, corporal punishment, solitary confinement, verbal abuse, immobilisation, or deprivation of food. While receiving home-based care a child must at no time be left unsupervised (Education (Home-Based Care) Order, 1929, section 34, &., 42).

The legislative requirements state that no force shall be used, by way of correction or punishment, towards any child enrolled at or attending the centre unless that person is a guardian of the child (Education Act, 1989, section 139A).

Each chartered early childhood service is required to implement policies and practices which reflect legislative requirements and to build on the regulations to include the additional requirements set out in the Revised Statement of Desirable Practices and Objectives, 1996 (effective as of August 1998). Policies and practices should be consistent with the early childhood curriculum, Te Whaariki: He Whaaiki Matauranga mo nga Mokopuna o Aotearoa - Early Childhood Curriculum, 1996.
Management practice for child behaviour

The Education (Early Childhood) Regulations 1998 include regulations about how to achieve these goals.

Guidance and control
Every child should be given “guidance and control”. The dictionary definition of ‘guidance’ is ‘to show the way’ and implies a goal to be reached.

Guidance is sometimes known, in the context of social behaviour, as ‘discipline’ which is derived from a word meaning ‘to teach’. This contrasts with the concept of ‘control’ which relates solely to the behaviour itself and does not include a learning goal.

Control may be used in specific and urgent situations, e.g. to stop a young child running onto the road or to prevent a child hurting her or himself or another child. It may also refer to management systems used to ensure that limits and boundaries set for children are met, e.g. control of access beyond the early childhood education setting or organisation of the environment to control the flow of traffic.

Setting limits and boundaries
‘Setting limits and boundaries’ provides an alternative definition of the concept of ‘control’ in the early childhood context. This takes into account the need for children to be given guidance as to what behaviour is acceptable and what is not.

In early childhood, children often communicate their needs non-verbally through behaviour. The way in which they do this is an expression both of their developmental level and of their individual needs and abilities. An inappropriate method of non-verbal or verbal communication used by a child can result in behaviour which is seen as unacceptable in terms of the limits and boundaries set by the early childhood service.

Knowing the limits and boundaries enables children to develop self-control and self-discipline.

The goal for educators is to guide and support children through the early learning process and to ensure their safety and well-being, not to achieve conformity at the expense of understanding.

Respect and dignity
The regulations governing early childhood education services state that the licensee must have a policy that ensures every child is given respect and dignity.

Respect is derived from the word meaning ‘to pay attention to’ or ‘to have regard for.’ It includes the concepts of acknowledgment, admiration and esteem. Dignity has the sense of having distinction and worth.

These terms need to be discussed and defined by each early childhood education service or home-based network so staff, parents and management agree about what behaviour by adults towards children is considered acceptable.

Different cultures and languages will express these concepts in different ways.

Respect for the Maori language provides Maori children with a sense of self-esteem and is therefore an important aspect of giving respect and dignity to Maori children.
EXAMPLE - “Giving respect to a child was a new idea for me. When my son was little I expected him to respect me, to be obedient to me. I’ve learnt a lot more about what respect means since we started coming to this centre. My child is learning Maori now which I never had the chance to learn. I respect him so much for that.” - Parent helper at a bi-lingual early childhood education centre

Many cultures, in particular Pacific cultures, emphasise respect for parents and elders. This provides a model for mutuality of respect between children and adults.

The spiritual dimension of children’s learning and the recognition of the child’s spiritual and cultural heritage is similarly interwoven with concepts of respect and dignity.

Management and educators need to be aware of the inherent influence of cultural and family practices for child behaviour. The way in which adults behave towards children is influenced by behaviour patterns experienced in childhood. If these are deemed inappropriate, e.g. do not give the child respect and dignity, strategies used to modify or change the behaviour should consider the adult’s sense of self worth.

EXAMPLE - “We had difficulty with a staff member in our baby room. She would swoop down on toddlers from behind to check if they needed changing and if they did she’d scoop them up and take them off to the changing room. She didn’t mean to be disrespectful, it was obviously the way she was used to acting with her own family, and it was difficult to know how to deal with it.

In the end I organised a workshop on toileting procedures based on Te Whaariki. We discussed this as a team and developed a set of guidelines that included things like asking and talking to the child before changing them. It linked in to encouraging independence in children. This way we avoided any criticisms of the staff member which would have been hurtful.” - Supervisor, tertiary based early childhood centre

Praise and encouragement

Praise and encouragement are identified as key behaviours for adults working with children in the early childhood setting. Praise relates to something that has been done, or has already happened, i.e. a finished work or a completed action.

Encouragement, on the other hand is related to something that could or should happen in the future. It may be given where a child is reluctant to begin an activity or carry out an action, or to help a child persist in an endeavour.

The regulations link these concepts with ‘positive guidance to promote appropriate behaviour’. Both praise and encouragement are to be used for the purpose of promoting behaviours in the child which are recognised as appropriate for the child’s stage of development.
Charter guidelines for appropriate practice

Desirable adult behaviours towards and with children are described in more detail in the Revised Charter Guidelines: Statement of Desirable Objectives and Practices (1996). These define desirable adult behaviours as those which:

❖ are responsive, reciprocal, positive and encouraging;
❖ provide sensitive and informed guidance interventions and support;
❖ respect children’s preferences and involve children in decisions about their participation in activities;
❖ include planning and evaluation of the physical environment;
❖ provide resources to support each child’s needs;
❖ model and promote non-discriminatory behaviour;
❖ facilitate quality curriculum and interactions;
❖ implement strategies which include all children.

These practices apply to all adults, whether trained or untrained, who work in a chartered early childhood centre or as a home-based caregiver on a regular or formal basis. (Revised Statement of Desirable Objectives and Practices, 1996).

EXAMPLE - Policy: Statement of Philosophy

“We believe that all children have individual needs which, through a process of discussion with their parents/guardians and staff observations, should be recognised and, as far as possible, met. Staff are encouraged to get to know each of the children well and to respect them.

Staff are expected to have knowledge about child development and its implications for the children’s behaviour individually and collectively. They are required to treat the children with respect and dignity at all times and to be clear and consistent in their expectations and actions”

- Excerpt from Management of Behaviour Policy, Childcare Services Trust

Unacceptable practices

Regulations also specify practices which may not be used within any early childhood education setting. These regulations are very specific.

Corporal punishment is not permitted (Education Act, 1989, Section 139A). This regulation is strengthened and extended by the Education (Early Childhood Centre) Regulations 1998 and the Education (Home-based Care Order) 1992, which state that children must not be subjected to any form of physical ill treatment.

Other practices not permitted in any early childhood education setting are the solitary confinement of a child, or deprivation of food, drink, warmth, shelter or protection.
EXAMPLE - In the family daycare situation it’s easy to forget that it’s not the same as looking after your own kids. When my children played up I used to put them in their room until they had cooled off. My lot were used to it and it was their own bedroom but it’s different when it’s other children. Now I’ve got a special ‘snuggle’ corner in the corner of the porch and when a child is misbehaving I tell them to go and snuggle down there until they feel calmer. It usually works pretty well - and my kids like it too. So the regulations were really helpful here.”
- Home-based caregiver

Blame, harsh language and belittling or degrading responses are to be avoided. Verbal abuse is specifically prohibited under the Education (Home-Based Care) Order, 1992.

Although reasonable physical punishment of children by parents, e.g. smacking by parents, is allowable in New Zealand under Section 59 of the Crimes Act, this does not mean that it is acceptable within early childhood education settings or in playgroups and unlicensed or unchartered early childhood education services.

If the licensee of a licensed early childhood centre becomes aware that there are reasonable grounds for believing a member of the centre’s staff, or any other person has physically ill-treated a child or has used guidance and control methods which are not acceptable, i.e. solitary confinement, immobilisation or deprivation of food, drink, warmth, shelter or protection, the person must be excluded from coming into contact with the children or, if necessary to ensure no child is ill-treated, from the centre.

If the licensee does not do this, or if there are reasonable grounds for believing that the licensee has ill-treated children or used those guidance and control methods which are deemed unacceptable, the Secretary for Education may suspend the service’s licence. (The Education (Early Childhood Centres) Regulations 1998, Section 34)

The arranger of home-based care must be able to determine whether provisions are being complied with in relation to the home-based care and can terminate the arrangement if not satisfied. (The Education (Home-Based Care) Order, 1992, Part 111, Section 4.)

Links between regulations for child behaviour practice and curriculum goals

The regulations governing early childhood education services state that learning opportunities must be created through planning, providing and evaluating a range of appropriate activities that cater for the learning and development needs of the children, fostering their physical, emotional, social and cultural, creative and cognitive development. (The Education (Early Childhood Centre Regulations 1998.)

The charter guidelines, in the Revised Statement of Desirable Objectives and Practices (1996) extends this to describe quality standards for curriculum which should assist “all children to grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society”.

The charter guidelines require management and educators to meet quality standards consistent with the example of curriculum set out in Te Whaariki: He Whaariki Matauranga mo nga Mokopuna o Aotearoa - Early Childhood Curriculum 1996.
The curriculum is defined in these as the ‘sum total of the experiences, activities and events, whether direct or indirect’ provided by this environment is the curriculum for early childhood education.

These quality standards cover:
❖ the way the adults behave with and towards children;
❖ the organisation of the environment;
❖ the opportunities, challenges, limits and boundaries set for the children;
❖ the way in which adults behave with and towards each other.

Management practices for child behaviour and curriculum goals are, therefore, interdependent.

Management and educators, both trained and untrained, of each licensed/chartered early childhood service must develop a clear and shared understanding of their goals for children and the learning processes to be used to achieve these.

Effective behaviour strategies and practices must meet the developmental and individual needs of each child. An effective strategy, for example, would be unacceptable if directed towards an inappropriate outcome. Similarly a method of interaction which might be appropriate for one child might be inappropriate for other children.

Principles underlying the early childhood curriculum

The principles which underpin the early childhood curriculum, Te Whaariki: He Whaariki Matauranga mo nga Mokopuna o Aotearoa - Early Childhood Curriculum 1996, have implications for practice for child behaviour. Early childhood education services are expected to be able to identify links between the early childhood curriculum, Te Whaariki: He Whaariki Matauranga mo nga Mokopuna o Aotearoa - Early Childhood Curriculum 1996, and their curriculum.

The four principles are that the curriculum should:
❖ empower the child to learn and grow;
❖ reflect the holistic way in which children learn and grow;
❖ include the wider world of family and community as an integral part of the curriculum;
❖ embody the principle that children learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships with people, places and things.

EXAMPLE - (Principle: The wider world of family and community is an integral part of the early childhood curriculum.)

“I’d always assumed that children should be taught to be assertive and to be able to say ‘no, I don’t like it when you do that.’ It was a shock to find out that some children were getting into trouble at home for ‘answering back’ and being ‘rude’ to parents and relatives. It made me think a lot more carefully about how I encourage children to make their feelings known.” - Kindergarten head teacher

The word ‘responsive’ means ‘open to’ or ‘amenable’, while ‘reciprocal’ has the meaning of ‘to balance’ or ‘complement’. This defines relationships with people as being open and supportive. It refers also to the environment and equipment or furnishings within this, which should be accessible and child-friendly.
Goals for the early childhood curriculum

The early childhood curriculum goals as set out in Te Whaariki: He Whaariki Matauranga mo nga Mokopuna o Aotearoa - Early Childhood Curriculum 1996 and in the Revised Statement of Desirable Objectives and Practices 1996 include goals relating to experiences provided for children and goals for children to individually achieve.

Achievement of these goals should be a focus for policies and procedures on how adults behave with and towards children.

Goals relating to experiences for children

Goals relating to experiences provided for children within the early childhood education environment emphasise the role of the adults in ensuring that:

❖ children’s health is promoted;
❖ children’s emotional well-being is nurtured;
❖ children are kept safe from harm (Well-being);
❖ connecting links with the family and wider world are affirmed and extended (Belonging);
❖ equitable opportunities for learning are provided irrespective of gender, ability, age, ethnicity or background;
❖ children are affirmed as individuals;
❖ children are encouraged to learn with and alongside others (Contribution);
❖ children experience the stories and symbols of their own and other cultures (Communication);
❖ children’s play is valued as meaningful learning and the importance of spontaneous play is recognised. (Exploration).

EXAMPLE - (Goal: children’s emotional well-being is nurtured.)

“One morning during mat time a four year old was playing up - kicking other children, being ‘cheeky’ and just generally difficult. I was about to tell her to go and sit beside the other teacher, away from the group, when I thought ‘this isn’t her usual behaviour!’ I went over and just gave her a hug and asked what was wrong. She burst into tears. Her best friend had gone to school and she missed her. If I hadn’t known each child’s characteristic behaviour well I would have lost that important opportunity to help her express her feelings of grief. As it was, the whole group spent a great mat time talking about sadness and change.” - Early childhood education teacher
Goals for children to achieve

Early childhood curriculum goals for children to achieve are that they:

- know they have a place;
- feel comfortable with the routines, customs and regular events;
- know the limits and boundaries of acceptable behaviour (Belonging);
- learn with and alongside others (Contribution);
- develop non-verbal communication for a range of purposes;
- develop verbal communication for a range of purposes;
- discover and develop different ways to be creative and expressive (Communication);
- gain confidence and control of their bodies;
- learn strategies for active exploration, thinking and reasoning;
- develop working theories for making sense of the natural, social, physical and material worlds (Exploration).

These provide direction for the goals set for children's behaviour and the type of practices and strategies used by adults within the early childhood environment to help them achieve these.

EXAMPLE - Policy: Statement of philosophy

We aim to provide an environment which is positive and to ensure that every child attending the Centre is nurtured in a way which cares for them as a whole person. The feelings and beliefs of their parents/guardians are considered to be very important.

We use methods of behaviour management which are positive and that help children: take responsibility for their own actions; learn to control some impulses; and learn to respect the rights of others. This happens by having realistic limits based on reasonable guidelines which make sense not only from the adults’ perspective but also the children’s. - Excerpt from Behaviour Management policy, Childcare Services Trust
Developing a positive environment for learning

Setting goals for children's learning involves the curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation. These three facets of learning interact to provide children with needed knowledge, skills and attitudes. Guiding children's behaviour requires:

❖ a clear understanding of the desired objectives for early childhood education and for the particular child;
❖ strategies for meeting these which are compatible with the objectives;
❖ both an understanding of and a liking for children and for each individual child;
❖ on-going and regular review and evaluation of the use and effectiveness of practices for child behaviour.

It is important that adults:

❖ have a good feeling of self worth;
❖ feel alert and are not tired;
❖ enjoy working with the particular age group;
❖ have a sound understanding of child development and learning;
❖ have good communication and interpersonal skills for working with children, with the children's family/whanau and with their colleagues;
❖ value and understand each child as a worthwhile and interesting individual;
❖ have sensitivity and an understanding of cultural differences and needs.

For management, it is important to:

❖ take into account that an adult may have worries or concerns which may make it difficult to provide the degree of positive guidance required for a particular child or at a particular time;
❖ ensure that the adults working in the centre are confident and happy in working as a team.

Working as a team

Not all adults in an early childhood service may be qualified or confident enough to adapt or modify their behaviour to meet the needs of every child all the time.

In some cases, similarities in temperament or customary behaviour may make it more helpful for one particular adult to work with a child on a one-to-one basis.

Relatively slight disruptions to normal health such as unusual sensitivity to noise or light, a higher than normal level of fatigue or stress, can also make soothing of an infant or tolerating energetic behaviour more difficult on some occasions.

In these cases, team support and understanding for the adult will benefit the child. Policies on practice for child behaviour should emphasise the need for supportive team relationships and systems.
Including parents

Parents are an integral part of the early childhood education team. They should “feel welcome to spend time at the service, discuss concerns and participate in decision making concerning their child.” (Revised Statement of Desirable Objectives and Practices, 1996.) There should be regular discussion both formal and informal, between staff and parents about their child, including sharing of specific, observation based, evidence.

Acknowledgment by staff of the important part parents play as the first teachers and prime caregivers of their children models the behaviours of giving respect and dignity, which are a requirement for working with children.

Some barriers to Maori participation in early childhood education, identified by Te Puni Kokiri, include lack of information, discomfort at being with people who were not known or who were seen as being unfriendly, lack of transport, and family commitments. (Barriers to Maori Participation in Early Childhood Education and Strategies to Overcome Them, Eddie Clark, 1995, Te Puni Kokiri.)

Thoughtful understanding and positive attitudes which demonstrate respect for the position of Maori parents as tangata whenua, enhance the self-esteem of young Maori children and provide a basis for future learning.

Creating a positive climate

The development of a climate that provides for and supports learning and development will minimise the need for overt guidance or control.

The environment involves a range of factors which change over time. For example, the ratio of younger to older or male to female children, the number of new children to be settled at any one time, and family or community changes will impact on the environment.

On-going as well as regular assessment should be carried out to determine whether the early childhood environment provides a positive climate for learning and development. Assessment should include all information that may be relevant including changes to the roll and involve parents as well as staff.

Observations, including time sampling, event recording and duration recording plus informal observations should be made at different times and in different situations to gain a well-rounded picture.
Organisational and management factors

Factors to consider include:

**Space**
- Mobile infants and toddlers have a need for uncluttered and open spaces to allow them confidently to practise their developing skills unhindered.
- Are there sufficient spaces for adults to work with small groups of children; for children to play without interference from others; and for children to have ready access to an adult wherever they are?
- Is there space for large muscle activities to take place indoors in wet or winter conditions?

**Weather**
The weather can affect children’s behaviour. Surveys have found that wide variations in temperature, for example from 0 degrees to 10 degrees over the day can affect children’s behaviour more than a small variation, although the average temperature may be the same.
- Is the early childhood setting comfortable, neither stuffy nor chilly?
- Are the centre activities ‘in tune’ with the weather conditions, e.g. relaxing and soothing activities in humid or windy weather?
- Is children’s clothing appropriate for the weather? Clothing that is too hot or too cold for the situation can affect behaviour, particularly with infants.

**Noise level**
Noise levels can influence behaviour in young children and the tolerance of children’s behaviour by adults.
- Does the centre environment absorb noise effectively. Are there sufficient carpets, curtains and soft floor coverings?
- Are there opportunities for energetic play? Lack of an outlet for energy can increase children’s noise level. Include rhythmic games and dance or playing appropriate music to regulate or modify noise levels.

**Opportunities for on-looking**
Observing before interacting is an important way for children to develop an understanding of accepted behaviour and of limits and boundaries. Research has shown toddlers may spend as much as 20% of their time in observation.
- Are both time and space available for children to be on-lookers before joining in a group? Does the environment include equipment and furniture of different heights and comfortable places for children to sit apart and observe the group in action?
- Are familiar activities, such as dough, drawing, water play, sited so that children can observe other children as they play?

**Access to familiar adults**
As children begin to take responsibility for their actions, they need the reassurance of knowing that a supportive familiar adult is available and aware of what they are doing. Adults who are knowledgeable about, and known to individual children, are a key to anticipating and avoiding unacceptable behaviour.
Are adult:child ratios sufficient to enable adults to relate to each child as an individual? Management should ensure that staffing and organisation of the programme provide opportunities for children and staff or caregivers to play and talk together.

Are routine activities, such as greetings and farewells, meals, nappy changes or tidying the centre, relaxed and unhurried opportunities for adults and children to interact?

Is there a primary caregiving system for infants and children under two years that enables them to relate closely to one or a few adults?

Is the environment organised so that the children can see the adults as easily as they can be seen?

The adults as a team
The climate of the early childhood centre depends on a team of adults working together to meet the needs of the children. When this team is not working smoothly there is an added potential for difficulties to arise in working with children.

Do all the adults in the centre consistently interact sympathetically and positively with children and with each other?

Are staff non-contact time and meal breaks adequate and restful?

Do the staff rosters ensure close supervision for the ages, play preferences and numbers of children?

Are staff relationships friendly and supportive?

Do parents feel welcome and that they are part of the ‘education and care team’?

Small group opportunities
The overall size of the group of children enrolled is not the only factor to be considered. Within the centre there should be opportunities for children to interact in small groups. The greater the percentage of young or newly enrolled children, the greater the need will be for small group interactions.

Are there spaces and opportunities for children to work in small groups or individually without interference?

Are there sufficient adults available to provide opportunities and support for stable adult:child and child:child relationships to develop within small group or one to one situations?

Equipment available
Conflict can arise where equipment is restricted in type and scope or if there are scarce amounts of sought-after equipment or materials.

Are equipment and play materials able to be accessed by the children?

Are equipment and materials in good order, clearly and attractively displayed and presented?

Is there enough of each type of equipment to meet children’s current needs and preferences?

Is the equipment versatile, age-appropriate, and of sufficient variety?

Is new equipment regularly introduced and is equipment available sometimes presented in different ways and settings?
Encouraging positive behaviours

New Zealand research and overseas research has shown that the quality of the early childhood education service affects children’s behaviour (e.g. Meade 1996, Smith 1995). In New Zealand early childhood services which provide quality programmes, children have been found to have more peer social skills, perseverance and communication skills, and to show less aggression than in services which were categorised as being of lesser quality.

The early childhood education environment which creates a positive climate for children’s learning and development will encourage children to develop self discipline and minimise the need for direct methods of intervention.

Plan the environment to ensure that:

❖ it is both safe and challenging and does not unduly or unreasonably inhibit or control children’s behaviour;
❖ it includes a sufficient range and quantity of equipment and materials to meet the individual and developmental needs and preferences of every child;
❖ there are opportunities and places for children to watch activities or to be ‘out-of-the group’, on their own;
❖ it is designed to enhance children’s well-being and sense of belonging. For example: music and rhythms are used to provide a climate of enjoyment and relaxation; there are calm, pleasant and predictable routines for meal and rest times; fun, laughter and humour are encouraged.

Develop and implement:

❖ clear, consistent expectations for behaviour by adults and by children and procedures for ensuring that these are known to all children, staff or caregivers and parents;
❖ an unhurried pace to the day where each child has space and time to learn at an individual pace;
❖ a range of activities designed to meet the developmental, individual and current preferences, needs and abilities of every child;
❖ regular events and routines that are flexible for each child;
❖ on-going training and professional development opportunities for staff;
❖ opportunities for staff to explore and debate personal beliefs and practices;
❖ opportunities for regular observation, discussion and evaluation on the way in which the environment is meeting children’s needs;
space and time to talk and consult with parents.

Ensure that adults working with children:

- limit the use of negative commands, e.g. 'no', to circumstances such as dangerous behaviour which requires urgent intervention;
- accept that staff will have different ideas and are encouraged to explore ways of working effectively together as a team;
- show respect for and trust in children’s ability to learn;
- allow children to identify and express their feelings honestly and express their own feelings honestly, as a model for children. (The child should be able to choose whether to share feelings with others in any situation.);
- take part in activities and play with children;
- listen to and answer children as equal partners in the interaction;
- provide opportunities and support for children to practise decision-making, negotiating and resolving conflicts;
- meet infants’ needs immediately, positively and consistently;
- nurture children through affirmative body language and expressions, warm physical contact such as stroking, hugging or cuddling a child on a lap, by showing empathy and by ‘being there’ for children when they need reassurance or support.

PHYSICAL CONTACTS BETWEEN ADULTS AND CHILDREN - (Principle: children learn from reciprocal and responsive relationships with people.)

Warm physical contacts between adults and children are an important aspect of responsive and reciprocal relationships. Sensory perceptions are an essential aspect of learning and development for very young children and for children who have a limited understanding of language or who are emotionally upset.

Physical contact between children and adults is ‘normal, natural and desirable’ and should be used by adults to ‘show affection, to comfort, to reassure them and to give praise as well as taking care of some of their physical needs.’ (Prevent Child Abuse, Guidelines for Early Childhood Services, 1993, Ministry of Education.)

Early childhood services should develop policies that minimise the risk of child abuse by defining physical contact between adults and children in the early childhood setting. Touching should never be initiated to gratify the adult’s needs. (Prevent Child Abuse, Guidelines for Early Childhood Services, 1993, Ministry of Education.)

It is not appropriate to persist with physical demonstrations of warmth or affection if the child shows that these are not wanted.

do not label or judge children (either positively or negatively) based on aspects of their behaviour;

acknowledge and focus on the feelings behind a child’s behaviour;

do not engage in power struggles with children;
❖ put the focus on the behaviour rather than the child and respect the child’s need to communicate, even if it is inappropriately expressed;

❖ can demonstrate an understanding of each child and can express an appreciation of their individuality;

❖ have an understanding of each child’s place in relationship to the group of children;

❖ adhere at all times to the regulations and rules regarding unacceptable management practices for child behaviour;

❖ provide and model appropriate behaviour for children in both adult:adult and adult:child interactions;

❖ understand and acknowledge that some behaviour goals apply to the early childhood setting and may differ from those of the child’s home environment;

❖ acknowledge that it may be more productive for a different adult to interact with a particular child;

❖ implement routines and regular events, such as nappy changing, snacks and nap times, flexibly to allow for individual needs.

EXAMPLE - Policy: Goals for adult behaviour

Adults working with children will:

• foster harmonious working relationships with other adults, including parents/caregivers and staff;

• model appropriate behaviour and relationships with other adults as well as with children;

• affirm the positive in their approach to child guidance;

• be consistent and reliable in their behaviour with children;

• demonstrate empathy with children’s feelings;

• help children to recognise their feelings and to express them in appropriate ways;

• have realistic expectations of what children at different stages can be expected to do or cope with;

• establish a few clear, constant rules about what is acceptable and what is unacceptable behaviour;

• encourage children to care for equipment, the environment, and other people;

• use the management of behaviour as a positive opportunity for learning appropriate social skills, and for thinking about concepts such as justice;

• use clear, simple, and friendly direction;

• value mistakes as learning opportunities;

• be objective when assessing children’s behaviour;

• consider the child’s behaviour within the context of the environment.

- Excerpt from Child Behaviour Management Policy, Community Childcare Centre
Strategies for positive guidance

Changes and regressions in behavioural patterns are integral to the learning process in early childhood. It is not enough for adults working with children to be knowledgeable about each child’s learning abilities and progress towards goals. In order to treat every child with respect and dignity, adults must be aware of children’s strengths, understand that they have reasons for their actions, and give each child regular and honest feedback that is positive.

Define children in terms of their strengths.

Ask - what is a positive thing I can honestly say about this child? This may mean selecting a positive rather than a negative behaviour as a focus. Alternatively, some behaviours which have a negative connotation may be able to be reassessed as positive attributes and developed as strengths.

For example:

- Has leadership qualities, can be assertive not bossy
- Likes ‘rough and tumble’ play, is very energetic not aggressive
- Takes time to observe before acting not unfriendly
- Independent, sets own objectives not uncooperative
- Is able to ask for reassurance (verbally or non-verbally) not clingy

Ensure that each child receives positive feedback each day for some thing/s

Structure the programme to enhance children’s well-being and sense of belonging through such things as provision of energetic outdoor play, use of music and rhythms, calm and pleasant routines for meals and rest times. Give praise and encouragement when the child responds, however small or brief the incident.

Provide understanding and support in adversity

Recognise and help children cope with adversity. When things go wrong a child may be angry and upset that their work has been destroyed, that they cannot play at a particular activity or be accepted into a group. Do not accept the child’s view of this as a tragedy.

- Offer alternatives or provide support for the child to try again. Children need to be helped to accept as a matter of fact that each day will include both change and predictability. Activities are means to a goal, not goals in themselves.
- If a child is fearful or upset at a situation such as a best friend leaving for school, sickness in the family, a new environment or an unfamiliar staff member, acknowledge the child’s feelings openly. Assure the child that your support is there. Be reassuring that things will feel better in time.

Focus on what the child could achieve.

Children behave in the way they do for a reason. Respect the fact that there is a reason even when the behaviour itself may not be acceptable. Take the approach of ‘how can this child do things better?’ ‘What goal is this child wanting to reach?’ Avoid attaching blame.
For older children, help the child to think about the situation and to generate solutions. This requires considerable skill and time on the part of the teacher but the process is an integral part of the early childhood curriculum, ‘to learn strategies for thinking and reasoning’.

**Guidelines for adult practice**

Guidelines for adult practice should:

❖ be based on the assumption that children have sound motives and reasons for their actions but are not communicating these effectively;

❖ not assume that children know what is the behaviour required - what is common sense to an adult may not be so to children;

❖ look at the situation from the children’s perspective, asking questions such as ‘do adults clearly model the desired behaviour?’ ‘are rules applied consistently by all adults?’ ‘how similar are the early childhood service’s rules to the ones children are familiar with at home?’

**EXAMPLE** - Policy statement (Goal: children learn the limits and boundaries of acceptable behaviour)

Developmentally appropriate methods of behaviour management include:

• reminding children of the rules and their rationale as needed;

• letting children know when their behaviour is becoming unacceptable and what the consequences of that behaviour will be;

• providing logical consequences when limits are broken, such not being able to play in sandpit after sand has been thrown;

• guiding and allowing children to resolve their own conflicts where appropriate.

- Excerpt from Child Behaviour Management Policy, Early Childhood Education Centre

**Analysing behaviour patterns**

When analysing children’s behaviour, either positive or negative, consider the following:

❖ how often does this behaviour occur - during the day, over the course of one to two weeks?;

❖ when does it occur - is the behaviour more frequent at a particular time or times, e.g. before meals, at the end of the day?;

❖ where does it occur - is it associated with a particular place or situation, e.g. outdoor play, group times?;

❖ who is involved - are several children/adults or one particular child/adult involved? Is the behaviour associated with a particular child and/or adult?;

❖ is children’s behaviour restricted to the early childhood setting or does it occur with parents/family? Is the behaviour seen as acceptable behaviour in the home situation but not in the centre, or vice versa?

**Recurring cycles of behaviour**

Positive strategies are an integral part of working with children. They are particularly important in helping to avoid recurring or recursive cycles of negative behaviour. These cycles occur where the
expectation that a child will continue to behave in a certain way acts as a reinforcement for the child's behaviour pattern. Once children have been ‘given’ a particular behaviour pattern, the responses they get from others will elicit more of that behaviour.

This can be either positive, e.g. the child who is seen as friendly or co-operative becomes more cooperative and friendly - or negative, e.g. the child who is characterised as disobedient becomes more prone to disobedience as a response the adults’ efforts.

If negative behaviour patterns become an ingrained response they will start to recur automatically. Direct focus on the behaviour, including giving the child strategies for future use, e.g. “Next time listen to what I tell you to do and see how quickly you can do it”, can be counter productive. This focuses attention on the idea that the behaviour will reoccur. It can also make the child self-conscious and aware of the negative image projected.

**Breaking a negative cycle**

Breaking a negative cycle of recurring behaviour can be achieved when the adults work together to support the child in developing social and emotional understanding and skills.

Positive guidance strategies chosen must be applied consistently and regularly. For some children a positive focus at the start of the session can make a remarkable difference to subsequent behaviour patterns. As the child arrives, the adult should stop what he or she is doing to give the child a positive welcome.

Cycles of behaviour which invite intervention by an adult are most often related to behaviour that disrupts the early childhood environment for other children (fighting, throwing, shouting), or for the adults (crying, clinging, whining, non-co-operation).

Care should be taken that children whose natural behaviour is passive or unassertive are not overlooked. Although this behaviour is not necessarily a concern in itself, it can cause the child to become ‘invisible’ and as a consequence, the child’s actual needs for guidance and support may be unmet.

Behaviour that can be inhibiting to a child's learning includes: fear or severe anxiety of some situations or people; extreme shyness; unfamiliarity with activities, centre routines or social customs.

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**EXAMPLE** - (Goals: they know they have a place; they are encouraged to learn with and alongside others.)

Mario (3 1/2 years) avoided other children and did not appear to know how to respond to friendly overtures by them. In group situations he stayed very close to the teacher. At a staff team discussion a staff member suggested he might feel more comfortable and independent if he knew the names of the other children and something about them.

Over subsequent days, staff made it a practice to sit near Mario and name other children in the vicinity - “That’s Leon in the blue shirt playing in the sandpit. Leon has a baby brother like you”. They also described the activities - “The children are taking turns on the slide. Samuel is climbing up the steps. Betty’s waiting for him to go first. Now he’s sliding down”.

The supervisor commented, “This worked like a charm. It hadn’t occurred to us that naming children and explaining what was happening would be so important. Within a week he was joining in play with other children.” - From a community early childhood centre
Meeting children’s individual needs

Where an individual programme of positive guidance is needed, this should be developed in consultation with parents and the team of adults involved in working with the child. In home-based early childhood settings, the co-ordinator would also play an important role.

Although the need for the programme of action will have been precipitated by specific behaviour patterns, the process of defining the child and the behaviour is essential, if new, positive patterns for development and learning are to be effective. The process should include:

1. **Gathering information** using a range of information gathering techniques including, but not exclusively, observation-based techniques, to develop a well-rounded picture of the child in the context of the early childhood setting and the child’s home environment. Factors to take into account include:
   - the child’s developmental level;
   - family and cultural background;
   - relationships with peers or adults in the early childhood setting;
   - family circumstances;
   - the degree of understanding of and familiarity with the routines and regular events of the early childhood service;
   - the consistency between the early childhood setting and the home;
   - personality and characteristic temperament;
   - basic needs, including hunger, illness, or emotional health, which must be met.

A child may also have trauma or be upset about their home situation or a personal relationship which may make it difficult for the child to behave in effective and acceptable ways.

2. **Defining the behaviour or behaviours giving concern**

   - Observations and feedback from parents as well as from staff should be used to gain an understanding of the child’s behaviour patterns including their reactions to situations and people. The observations and feedback should include the range of discipline and guidance strategies used.

   **EXAMPLE** - Policy: involvement of parents
   
   Because people differ in the teaching and guidance strategies they use, parents and caregivers must discuss the practices and methods that will best achieve the goals for the child.
   
   - Statement of philosophy, Management Practice policy, early childhood centre

   - Focus on the **antecedent**, i.e. what was occurring to initiate the behaviour, not on the consequences which are a reaction to the behaviour. By looking at what happened to ‘trigger’ the incident, the adult can be proactive in changing the behaviour. This will, effectively, alter the consequences and allow the child to develop competence and confidence in learning.

   - Assess the child’s knowledge about the effects of their behaviour.

     Does the child know how to be socially acceptable, e.g. that children will not be friends with someone who hits them. This is often assumed to be obvious but to a child it may not be so.
Does the child clearly realise the connection between the way he or she acts and what happens as a result, e.g. that if they make friendly overtures, others will be friendly in response? This understanding can be developmental - for example, a toddler may share possessions if asked but will not have the developmental capacity to understand the connection between sharing and the consequence of friendly relationships.

- Assess the child's ability to apply the knowledge they may have.

Is the child old enough to act in accordance with what they know will bring positive results, e.g. a child may not have the physical skills to join in the preferred activities of others. Children who are bigger than average are often expected to show more sophisticated behaviour than they can handle. (Conversely adults may have low expectations of smaller than average children.)

Can the child apply understanding gained in one situation to other situations? For example, a child may be able to comply with behaviour expectations such as not pushing on the slide but may not make the connection between this behaviour and not pushing during water play.

Implementing a plan of action

The plan of action should be described simply and applied consistently by all adults working with the child and parents. Written guidelines should be complemented by team discussions. A variety of methods including anecdotal observations and verbal feedback should be used to chart progress over a period of time (at least two to four weeks).

- Implement a programme of interaction with the child that focuses on shifting the child's perception of him or herself from the negative to the positive. This will include helping the child learn strategies for positive social interaction and to make links between the behaviour and curriculum goals;

- Use positive guidance strategies which are agreed to and consistently applied by all staff and parents.

EXAMPLE - Policy: Developing rules for behaviour

Rationale: It is important that children and families experience an environment where they are safe and secure, they are respected and their dignity is protected;

- Centre rules are discussed, accepted and displayed clearly in the centre;

- Supervising adults are as physically close to children as possible;

- Strategies such as shadowing, gentle teaching and a constructivist approach will be used by all staff;

- Adults will use the language of rules when dealing with conflicts eg 'I can't let you hit because one of our rules is...'.

Model Positive Behaviour Management Policy

- Support the child in learning through observation. Introduce spaces where the child can be an on-looker and see effective behaviour modelled by other children and adults;

- Support the child to learn through interaction with other children. Encourage and identify cooperative behaviours that bring results such as giving and taking, being friendly;
provide a curriculum that interests, excites and challenges the child and which provides opportunities for the child to enjoy positive feedback.

Strategies for working with infants

‘Infant’ covers the age range from birth to 18 months, overlapping with the age range defined for toddlers, i.e. one year to three years.

Infants have the most specialised need in early childhood education. Their ability to change their behaviour is limited and they are very susceptible to changes in their environment or routines. They are at the very beginnings of learning to communicate their needs and to establish consistent patterns of behaviour.

Behaviour management strategies need to consider the individual and different needs of infants and their incapacity to adapt to circumstances with ease.

Appropriate behaviour practices when working with infants include:

❖ responding promptly to needs. Infants may fuss or cry a little as part of a settling down process, however if an infant cries for more than a brief time, this indicates a need to be met. Responding to needs promptly is a strategy that encourages a sense of security and avoids a recurring cycle of a crying response;

❖ setting an individual pace and timing for each infant. Infants each have their own innate preferences for the pace and timing of activities and routines and will have difficulty in adjusting these. Adapt the activity or routine to the infant rather than the infant to the activity or routine;

❖ providing support by ‘being there’. Support or guidance includes watching but not participating. Intervention by an adult should be offered with caution where an infant is absorbed in an activity - ‘Don’t bother a busy baby’;

❖ providing clear and consistent routines. If an infant is showing signs of tiredness but is unable to relax into sleep for example, check first whether the routine is congruent with home. A clearer, consistent, sleep routine, or more relaxed and unhurried preparation for sleep-time may be needed;

❖ accepting the ‘messiness’ of learning self help skills. Mess, such as spilled drink and preferring to eat with fingers, is normal and expected behaviour, even where the infant is aware of the way to use a mug or spoon, and has shown the ability to do this. When mealt ime behaviours arise which do not relate to eating, for example, dropping food on the floor, offer the meal again, and, if the behaviour is repeated, assume the infant is telling you they are no longer hungry;

❖ be responsive to the infant’s initiatives and use these to develop an appropriate curriculum.

❖ setting a few, but not too many limits. Mobile infants are explorers and the environment for infants needs to be carefully organised to allow for safe and ample exploring. However, limits on behaviour and boundaries are sometimes necessary. Mobile infants can respond and remember these if they are clearly stated and there are not too many. Make sure that all adults apply the agreed limits consistently.
The act of dropping things, including food on the floor, as described above, is normal at about nine to 12 months. This is part of the developmental learning process (to learn that objects dropped do not reappear). In an interactive curriculum, staff should respond to the child’s initiatives by providing opportunities to experiment with dropping and retrieving, hiding and finding.

Taking control

Where a child is in danger of harming him or herself, the environment or other people, it may be necessary to take control of the situation initially. This may be verbal control or, for younger children and where a child is experiencing a strong emotion such as anger or frustration, involve physically holding or removing the child.

Firm calm action should be combined with clear, concise directions which indicate what is the preferred behaviour. This positive focus is important. The use of the word ‘no’ should be kept to a minimum. A tone of voice that conveys a sense of urgency provides a more effective focus and avoids setting up a negative cycle.

When children are developing language, actions and words are closely linked. They will understand and react most strongly to those words that give a clear sense of action and which provide direction as to what should be done.

For infants:

❖ always include the infant’s name - this is most likely to attract attention;

❖ make sure that your tone of voice and words are consistent in conveying the meaning. It is not helpful to respond to behaviour such as grabbing at hair by saying “Hey, stop that now!” in a laughing tone;

❖ reinforce your words promptly with action, by redirecting the child or changing the activity;

❖ state and demonstrate a preferred behaviour;

❖ describe the preferred behaviour in simple words, which convey encouragement and approval.

EXAMPLE - (Goal: They gain confidence in and control of their bodies)

An infant has grabbed hold of another infant’s hair. The second infant is pulled away, crying but the first infant does not let go. The adult quickly sits between them and unclenches the fist holding the hair.

“Diane, let go of the hair.”

She holds both infants, comforting the crying child and making sure the behaviour does not continue.

“Stroke her hair gently, gently.”

As she says the words she takes the first infant’s hand and strokes it down the infant’s own hair and then Diane’s own hair.
“That feels nice. Let’s stroke our hair gently.”

She continues to sit close with the children and stroke their hair, with their involvement, until they are both calm.

“Gently stroke...gently stroke...”

For young children

Where the adult is requiring a young child not to do something in a crisis situation, the child’s impulse is for action. Intervening by physically stopping the child frustrates but does not negate this impulse. Offering a positive action to follow is more likely to de-escalate the situation than insisting on non-action.

1. Intervene quickly.

2. State a preferred action clearly, avoiding a focus on the undesirable behaviour.

3. Provide praise and encouragement to the child for not carrying out the action (even if this is because the adult has taken control).

4. When the child is calm, briefly say why you took control.

5. Look for solutions together.

EXAMPLE - (Goals: they develop working theories for making sense of the social world; their emotional well-being is nurtured.)

The adult holds back a young child who is angrily pulling at a swing to try and make another child get off it.

“You have to ask David for a turn on the swing.” (The adult models the appropriate words.) “Ask David ‘Can I have a turn please’.”

The adult holds the child away from the swing. As the child relaxes, the adult supports him as he asks for a turn.

If David refuses the turn-taking solution, the adult can explain the actions of the other child - “David really wants to swing some more”.

If the child objects to this, discussion on other options can be introduced such as suggesting the setting of a time limit (a timer which can be set by the children themselves is useful), finding an alternative activity, introducing a new activity.

(In this example respect for the child wanting to swing needed to be balanced by respect for the need of the swinging child for more time.)

Where rules for children are stated in positive terms the emphasis on undesirable behaviour is reduced. Children are encouraged to see themselves as learners, rather than as uncooperative or disobedient.
EXAMPLE - Policy: handling difficult behaviour

Our policy on child behaviour practice has been formulated to provide clear guidelines and also to enable parents/guardians to feel comfortable with the knowledge of how their children will be cared for throughout the day.

A successful and immediate method of handling difficult behaviour when it does occur is to:
- anticipate by knowing each child’s pattern and needs;
- ignore the behaviour, not the child;
- interrupt to stop the behaviour. Avoid using words ‘no’ and ‘don’t’;
- redirect - guide the child to another activity and/or use positive information about what you DO want the child to do, e.g. ‘build with the blocks’ rather than ‘don’t throw the blocks’;

Reinforce using positive encouragement and attention for attempts and/or completion of the redirected activity.

This method takes understanding and practice. Staff should consult with senior staff for more information and ask for their support. It is different from the ways we are usually accustomed to reacting because there are no easily recognisable consequences, but used consistently it is effective. It allows us to alter children’s behaviour patterns while maintaining a positive, constructive environment.

- From Behaviour Management Policy, Childcare Services Trust

Taking time out

‘Time-Out’

‘Time-Out’ is an intervention strategy that is sometimes used to deal with excess anger or a lack of impulse control. It consists of removing and isolating the child from the action. The aim is to provide a brief space for the child to calm down and regain control.

Although it may act as a control mechanism, “time-out” is not an acceptable strategy in the early childhood education context. It does not encourage reflection or give children an understanding of the effects of their action on others, nor does it demonstrate a right way to behave.

Moreover, a child who will quietly sit apart in ‘time-out’ is being compliant and therefore, by definition, does not need to regain control.

Solitary confinement is deemed an unacceptable practice in early childhood education under regulations. (The Education (Early Childhood Centres) Regulations 1990, the Education (Home-Based Care) Order, 1992.)

Inclusionary time-out:

A similar strategy that has a learning outcome for the child involves seating the child apart from the group, beside an adult. The key to this strategy is the helpful interaction between the adult and child.

This strategy involves taking time out to watch how others do it. It could be described as “taking the child out of the action to help the child be part of the action”. It involves two steps:
1. Explaining the child's disruptive behaviour to the child in terms of the effect it had on the activity.

2. Supporting the child back into play by pointing out examples of the sort of behaviour that would be more helpful.

EXAMPLE - (Goal: children know the limits and boundaries of acceptable behaviour)

Adult to child: “Come here, Manu, I can’t let you wave that big spade. Come and sit by me a minute. See what the others are doing? They keep the spade down low when they are digging. Watch what they do. Can you do that? Now you show me how you can keep the spade low. OK let’s see how well you can dig your hole...” - inclusionary time-out strategies, Christchurch College of Education

“Cool-down time”

Where a child is not able to exercise self-control and refuses redirection, educationalists Jim Greenman and Anne Stonehouse recommend the use of ‘cool-down time’ as a settling down period. ‘Cool-down time’ should be a ‘quiet, relaxed, neutral break; a cooling-down period for the child to regain self-control’ (Greenman J. & Stonehouse A. Prime Times, 1996). A child should not be made to take ‘cool-down time’.

This strategy should not be used if a child has violated a rule without losing control.

Strategies which set the child apart from other children are not intended and should never be used as a threat or as a punishment.

Guiding and redirecting

Guiding or directing a child to an alternative activity respects the feelings of the child and their right to express their impulse or need but offers a more acceptable way of doing this. Examples of this are:

❖ offering a child who is throwing equipment a game of catch with a soft ball, or newspaper to tear and throw;

❖ redirecting a child who is over-boisterous or playfighting with other children to a jumping game or an energetic outside activity;

❖ saying firmly to a toddler who is leaning forward to bite another child, ‘bite the shape’ as you substitute a wooden shape or teething ring;

❖ asking a child who is trying to ‘push in’ to be first at an activity to carry out a well-liked responsible task. This might be: setting the morning tea table; pouring drinks for other children; caring for a smaller child;

❖ where a child is agitated or hyperactive firmly redirecting or removing the child to an alternate, less stimulating activity such as helping, or being with, a supportive adult, on a one-to-one basis.
EXAMPLE - Policy: positive guidance strategies

Caregivers will only use positive guidance, redirection, and the setting of clear-cut limits. These should be designed to encourage the child’s own ability to become self-disciplined.

Caregivers will guide children to develop self-control and orderly conduct.

Children will be encouraged to be fair, respect property, and assume personal responsibility as well as responsibility for others. - Model policy on positive guidance strategies

The effectiveness of redirection and guidance will depend on how well the adult knows the individual child, the adult’s understanding of child development and knowledge of developmental needs.

If an intervention strategy continues to be used regularly, e.g. once a week or more - this is a signal that the strategy is not working. Evaluation of the environment and/or of a child’s behaviour patterns and development of an overall strategy is needed.
Some common areas of concern

Some commonly seen child behaviours can arouse a strong emotional reaction in adults and make it difficult to give the child respect and dignity and to offer positive guidance.

Aggression

Aggression towards adults or other children may initially be unintentional. However, if alternative ways to achieve satisfaction are not given, aggression can quickly become intentional as the child discovers that this is a method which brings results. The child's emotional level is increased by the response to the aggression. Aggression and the stimulation which brings results can become part of the child's emotional repertoire.

Aggressive behaviour may be modelled on the behaviour of important adults in the child's life (this may include powerful television images). Verbal aggression can also act as a model or a catalyst for a child's physical aggression. An angry tone of voice used by an adult will often provoke a physical anger response from a child.

A level of aggression can be common in 2 to 3 year olds who are experiencing increased demands on their behaviour. These demands include toilet training, eating with a spoon or fork, playing cooperatively with others, doing as they are told. This type of aggression usually decreases as children become more verbal and can make their needs and objections known orally.

Inappropriate adult expectations of an older child's behaviour, e.g. being expected to share a new or special plaything, can also result in an aggressive attitude.

Effective strategies are those which help the child to take alternative action and which offer on-going support for the child, such as:

❖ Provide the child with other ways to express his or her needs and support the child in carrying these out, e.g. releasing energies through energetic activities, verbalising anger, asking for what is wanted;

❖ Remove the child from an inflamed situation promptly, to a calm area and, preferably, a one to one activity with a caring adult;

❖ Support the child to express feelings verbally where the situation that causes the emotions is beyond the child’s control. This may be family disruptions, violence, death of a family member or beloved pet, or a required activity which the child does not want or cannot do;

❖ Help children who have verbal skills state how they feel. Say to the child: “Ask him to stop. Say ‘Please don’t do that. I don’t like it’.” Then offer on-going support by adding .."If that doesn’t work, come back and let me know”.

Discuss and explain affirmative action strategies with parents and families. Affirmative action can be seen as ‘talking back’ or showing a lack of respect to elders.

Biting

Biting is common behaviour in some infants and toddlers but does not usually escalate after about two years. In the infant it may be identified with increased activity and bodily control or with pain
(teething). For the toddler and older child, a lack of impulse control, a lack of language to express feelings and needs or frustration can result in biting as a physical response.

Some infants and toddlers develop a strong desire to bite others as a satisfying sensation. This is not necessarily linked to a frustrating or negative situation, however, the behaviour can develop into a response to frustration unless positive guidance is consistently used.

Effective management of biting by children can include:

❖ Close supervision (or shadowing) and knowledge of the child, so as to be aware when warning signs of biting may occur, e.g. suddenly leaning towards another child/adult and then diverting or removing the infant/child from the situation;

❖ Offering an alternative object to bite. Explore different objects to find one that has a shape and texture that is satisfying to the infant. Offer a short, firm and clear statement, “Bite the wooden shape”, to reinforce the idea of a substitute. Provide sufficient of the preferred alternative objects and make them accessible to encourage the child to choose the substitute independently;

❖ For toddlers and older children, focus on on-going positive support strategies to increase competence and language use and to reduce areas of frustration. Refer back to the section on creating a positive environment and check the environment for space, noise, ratios and group size. These can have a marked impact on behaviour;

❖ For all children, as with aggressive behaviour, ‘dampen down’ negative (angry or upset) reactions and attention given to a biting incident. Be firm but not ‘fussy’. This will reduce the possibility that the emotional stimulation received will act as a reinforcement of the behaviour.

‘Biting back’ by the adult is ineffective as well as illegal.

‘Superhero’ or ‘Weapons’ play

Superhero play or play with toys designed or used as weapons is often associated with stereotyped violent behaviour as seen on television. This type of play need not be interpreted as negative. Each early childhood service will need to consider the approach they feel will be most effective and apply a range of strategies consistently.

Strategies may include:

❖ Accentuating the positive aspects of the particular superhero such as a sense of fairness, protection of others in need, a respect for the environment, a sense of fun and laughter, a liking for adventure and activity;

❖ Introducing and applying rules on the use of ‘pretend’ weapons such as no play involving guns, swords or knives allowed within the early childhood setting;

❖ Providing a supervised and safe space which includes rules of no body contact with other children. This can be a focus for action activities such as leaping, throwing, ju jitsu or punchbags. It allows children to practise attitudes and actions safely and reinforces the idea that the actions can have harmful consequences if safeguards are not present;

❖ Substituting more acceptable actions, e.g. “Pretending to kill someone is not allowed. - what else could you do with someone who was bad? Freeze them/magic them so they can't move?” Use ‘weapons’ to change ‘baddies’ into ‘goodies’;
providing dramatic play accessories and equipment to promote acceptable alternatives to the superhero play.

Non-co-operative behaviours

Non co-operative behaviours can range from withdrawal and shyness to a refusal to co-operate or disobedience.

To minimise non co-operative behaviours:

❖ explain children to each other. Young children are in the process of learning to understand other points of view and often do not understand the reasons for other children’s behaviours;

❖ encourage and support children in saying why they are acting in a particular way and what they would like to happen as a result;

❖ crouch or sit at the child’s level and make eye contact with the child;

❖ stay with the child or children until you are sure they have clearly understood what should happen and follow up to make sure they are doing what was agreed;

❖ look for and express positive explanations for behaviour which upsets a child.

EXAMPLE - Goal: Children and their families feel a sense of belonging

Picking up belongings and tidying up may be foreign concepts to some young male children. In Muslim communities men and boys are normally waited on by women and it takes time for children to understand that picking up belongings and tidying up are expected behaviours in the early childhood centre.

Adults should be aware of different cultural norms and be able to verbalise this to children - “Other people pick your things up at home but here everyone helps to put things away here. You put things away here too”. - Supervisor, city-based early childhood centre

❖ avoid dominating play situations. Be the assistant and facilitator with children rather than the leader;

❖ have clear expectations which are attainable by and appropriate for each child;

❖ break down tasks into small steps and give praise and encouragement for even small efforts along the way;

❖ pair children together in tasks such as setting the table, taking part in an activity. Involve all the children not just those who are already friends;

❖ encourage turn-taking by children.

SHARING - (Principle: the early childhood curriculum will reflect the holistic way children learn and grow)

Sharing between children involves a co-operative attitude as well as a co-operative action. It implies an acceptance that more than one person can have a right to a belonging or an activity. Sharing will only develop when children feel that their needs are being met and are at a developmental level when they can understand and enjoy the positive consequences of interacting with other children.
Young children are self-centred, gradually developing an awareness of and an understanding of other children and others' needs as their learning and development mature. Children's emotional need to have sole possession of some things will diminish as they learn to associate companionship and friendship with a sense of well-being and pleasure.

Sharing implies giving up something that is wanted or valued. If insisted on by an adult it demonstrates a lack of respect for the child's as yet unmet needs. It is not the same as turn-taking, which is a process involving division of time or possessions which is decided in advance. Turn-taking is about equity. “She can do this now, then you can have a turn.”

When further help is needed

Variations in behaviour are a normal part of young children's development. Sometimes, however, changes in behaviour occur which cannot be linked to developmental or environmental factors. If a range of untypical or challenging behaviours persist after time, there may be an underlying reason.

As a first step to establishing whether there is an underlying reason for behaviour, assess the child's overall behaviour patterns. Observe the child as a team over at least two weeks. Focus both on individual behaviour and on the environmental and other factors (such as nutrition, staff:child interactions) which may impact on behaviour.

This process should involve parents from the beginning. Their knowledge of the child's needs should be given weight and all anecdotal comments and observations taken into account.

In consultation with the family, the involvement of specialist education services should be considered. This may include health and education services such as the Specialist Educational Service, Public Health or Plunket Nurses, or involve consultation with people in the community with culturally or educationally specific expertise.

Implementing a plan of action

When implementing any plan of action always:

❖ consider the child's family values and traditions;
❖ work with parents, using a positive approach;
❖ take into account the child's developmental level and temperament;
❖ work as a team to develop a plan of action and decide who will have prime responsibility for working with the child within the centre;
❖ structure the environment to support the child;
❖ consistently work with the child in positive ways;
❖ notice every sign of progress, however small, noting what strategy works and what doesn't work. Share the information with other staff, parents and specialists;
❖ give your intervention strategies time to work (at least four weeks);
❖ maintain confidentiality and respect the child's right to dignity and protection at all times.
Establishing a policy framework for management practice for child behaviour

Management policies

Policies define the philosophy and approach to early childhood education of each early childhood education service. They should contain guidelines for organisation, management and centre practice which are fundamental and are not subject to change each year.

They should be reviewed on a regular basis, including evaluation by parents as well as staff.

Policies should include statements on:

Objectives and practices for child behaviour such as:

❖ appropriate positive guidance strategies which give the child respect and dignity and which use praise and encouragement;

❖ unacceptable practices, together with the consequences for staff and management if these occur;

❖ links between adult practice and early childhood curriculum goals. Many of these links are already implicit or explicit in the early childhood curriculum, Te Whaariki: He Whaariki Matauranga mo nga Mokopuna o Aotearoa - Early Childhood Curriculum 1996. (Early childhood service/s may find that some of these policy statements ‘sit’ more comfortably with policy statements on the implementation of the early childhood curriculum.)

EXAMPLE - Policy on inappropriate practice

Inappropriate practice for adults working with children includes:

• inflicting verbal or physical punishment;
• isolating children;
• labelling children with derogatory words;
• shaming or comparing children;
• ignoring unacceptable behaviours.

Physical restraint will not be used except as necessary to ensure a child’s safety or that of others, and then only for as long as is necessary for control of the situation. Any staff observed or accused of any of these practices may be suspended or given leave without pay pending investigation or may be given a job that does not require interaction with children. - Model early childhood centre policy

Monitoring, review and evaluation such as:

❖ strategies for monitoring, evaluation and review of a) the environment and b) the way in which adults in the early childhood setting behave with and towards children and towards one another. This should include provision for obtaining and recording feedback from parents and children as well as staff;

❖ procedures for parents to be informed and involved.
Staffing issues such as:

❖ lines of responsibility, including who will make a final decision on the appropriateness or inappropriateness of a particular strategy or practice;
❖ professional development opportunities for staff on practices for child behaviour;
❖ regular team meetings on appropriate strategies for working with a child or children;
❖ organisational support to support effective practice e.g. adequate staff ratios, non-contact time and strategies for primary caregiving.

Parent information and involvement such as:

❖ parent involvement in policy development and evaluation;
❖ the need for feedback from parents on the way in which adults behave with and towards children;
❖ useful information for centre records and guidelines for regular parent input;
❖ strategies for publicising and promoting positive guidance policies.

Protection and safety practices such as:

❖ identifying and involving specialist education services, e.g. to help staff work together or to develop and implement an Individual Development Plan (IDP);
❖ procedures to use where abuse or unacceptable behaviour towards children is identified;
❖ centre rules and the way these are developed, revised and made known to staff, parents and children;
❖ the way the environment is organised to ensure it is physically and developmentally appropriate and safe for the range of children attending;
❖ confidentiality procedures.

EXAMPLE - Policy: promotion of centre rules and practices

❖ Centre rules are discussed, accepted and displayed on noticeboard, newsletters, in enrolment pack and induction booklet.
❖ Staff facilitate discussion of feelings both within a conflict situation and afterwards.
❖ Parent workshops are held on positive behaviour management and other issues, e.g. television, play - refer to annual management plan for parent education.
❖ Parent library resources are available.
❖ Preview of the environment/behaviours/conflict is a regular agenda item at staff meetings.

- Early childhood education service’s Draft Positive Behaviour Management Policy

Policies may also include:

❖ Guidelines on specific aspects of children’s or adults’ behaviour, e.g. (for children) biting, play using aggressive weapons; (for adults) unacceptable touching of children. These may be included as part of the policy on child behaviour practice or as separate policies (e.g. child abuse policy).
A definition of ‘limits’ as they apply to children’s behaviour, taking into account children’s developmental and educational needs. This is a philosophical decision for the early childhood education service. Legal requirements and regulations for management practice for child behaviour refer to the ways in which this should or should not be exercised. They do not define the circumstances in which it is used.

**EXAMPLE** - Policy: inappropriate behaviour by children

We endeavour to provide a consistent, warm and welcoming environment in which families feel accepted and involved.

Children are encouraged through positive reinforcement to develop appropriate behaviour. The three basic limits on behaviour are:

1. A child may not hurt another person or him or herself.
2. A child may not disturb another person’s work.
3. A child may not damage or misuse property or equipment.

We believe that a child’s freedom of action includes recognising the freedom of others and their rights. Use of positive reinforcement means that negative forms of punishment are seen as inappropriate and unnecessary in the playcentre environment. - Model Behaviour Management Policy, Playcentre Association

**Management plans**

Management plans detail the way in which the policies will be actioned within a defined period (generally a year). They should be based on guidelines provided by the management policies and describe how, when where and what actions should be taken to implement policies effectively.

Management plans may take into account several different policies, e.g. parent education and information, positive behaviour management; staffing conditions of work, professional development, child abuse policies, maintenance of equipment/environment.

A management plan should be specific and provide clear guidelines on:

- **WHAT** will happen.
- **WHICH** person will have responsibility for the action.
- **WHEN** and where it will happen.
- **HOW** it will be carried out e.g strategies and procedures.
- **WHO** will be involved.
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