

Developing understanding of challenging behaviour through masterclasses

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Key words: challenging behaviour, escalation, environment, practice.

Keypoints:

Support workers from a range of settings highlighted their support needs in relation to managing challenging behaviour

Shared experiences of support workers enhanced discussion and reflection

Reflecting on the assault cycle related the masterclass to practice

The workbooks were well received by support workers and provided reflection points

Further work to understand the impact on support worker practice would be beneficial

Abstract:

This article provides insight into the development of a three hour masterclass for support workers in care homes across Durham and Darlington. The aim of the masterclass was to give practical understanding and approaches to the management of challenging behaviour. A variety of teaching approaches were used to support learning and development. Feedback from support workers was collected and is discussed along with implications for practice. This paper is structured in line with the layout of the session.

Introduction:

Peate (2016) highlights the importance of recognising the unique needs of those with dementia, mental health conditions and learning disabilities which cannot be underestimated. Within the delivery of healthcare the importance of recognising these needs in the context of physical, psychological and social perspectives is essential to the delivery of

compassionate and holistic care.

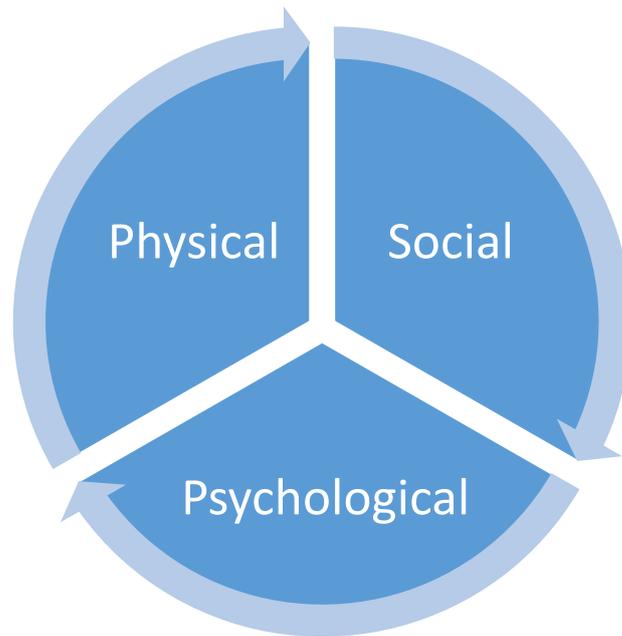


Fig 1. The recognition of the holistic needs of the individual is essential to our understanding as to why someone may present challenging behaviour.

This is also highlighted in the skills for care document (2013), which identifies the importance of those who support people with challenging behaviour recognising the context in which this occurs, be that with regard to somebody's disability, personal skills and experiences, or the environment in which the behaviour occurs.

Context

A series of ten masterclasses were commissioned in partnership between Teesside University and County Durham and Darlington CCG's in 2014 to provide training on the Mental Capacity Act and challenging behaviour in 2015. This was broken down into two standalone workshops in one day, where the Principle Lecturer from the Mental Health Team focused on the Mental Capacity Act (2005) aspects, and a member of the Learning Disability Team, with MSc qualification in positive approaches to challenging behaviour provided a masterclass on challenging behaviour. Various settings were utilised and the target audience were support workers, carers and senior carers within elderly residential settings, some learning disability and mental health nurses also attended. There were 123 attendees throughout the year.

The Mental Capacity Act and challenging behaviour masterclasses ran

alongside other masterclasses. Training on the 6 C's of nursing (compassion in practice) was delivered by a group of adult nursing, senior lecturers from Teesside University. This work had also been commissioned following the training needs analysis by the CCG care home training group in collaboration with care home managers, Sanderson et al. (2016).

Approach to learning and teaching:

In planning the sessions it was important to take on board the specific requirement from the commissioners, one of which was to utilise varied strategies which did not incorporate a 'PowerPoint' approach, the rationale being that the attendees would benefit from an interactive and fluid approach to learning. This meant that use of flipchart, group discussion and guided work through a workbook was adopted as the most suitable approach.

D'arcy (1998) highlights that audiences where learners have various levels of knowledge can be the most difficult to prepare for and the understanding of the perspective of the learner is essential to delivering meaningful learning opportunities. Given the short duration of the training and the mix of individuals within the room this was anticipated, and so it was important to gather brief introductory information using a simple icebreaker to ensure that the learners were at ease and able to interact with each other. One of these approaches included giving time to learners to introduce the setting that they worked in and providing information as to their role in supporting people with challenging behaviour.

In planning the masterclasses, consideration was given to the short time duration for the session and it was agreed that four main areas would be covered:

What is challenging behaviour?

Why do people present challenging behaviour?

How does behaviour escalate?

Good practice guidance.

A workbook was also designed, which linked to the exercises that were carried out over the day. There were thinking points included throughout which allowed for reflection on practice during the sessions. Some of the activities within the book were designed for individuals to use in their own time and some had the dual aim of supporting their ability to influence the practice of others when back in the workplace.

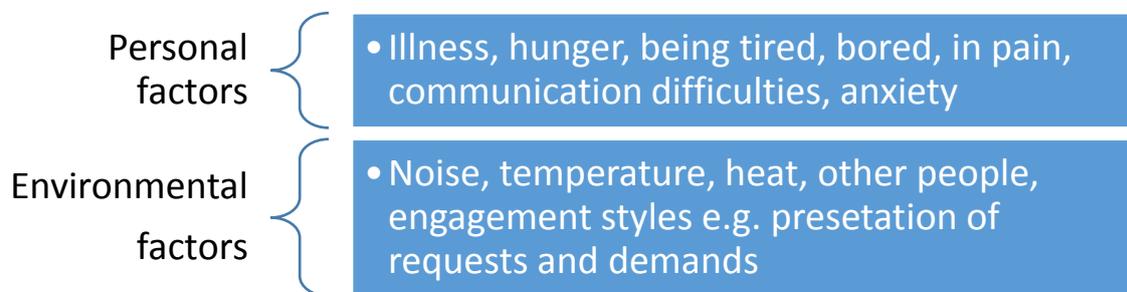
What is challenging behaviour?

Blunden and Allen (1987) refined the term challenging behaviour to reflect the challenge presented to services in meeting individual need, rather than labelling an individual who displays such behaviour as a problem. Challenging behaviour is in no way a diagnosis, however over time, people who are often vulnerable and have been described as challenging, as though this is something they have, own or as described by Blunden and Allen is a problem the person is carrying around with them. There is recognition within the Shape of Care Review (HEE 2015) that as nurses and health care professionals we are increasingly required to meet the complex needs of the individuals we care for, this is likely to include those with challenging behaviour in a residential care setting.

The group were exposed to the following, most up-to date definition of challenging behaviour, 'behaviour of such intensity, frequency or duration as to threaten the quality of life and/or the physical safety of the individual or others and is likely to lead to responses that are restrictive, aversive or result in exclusion' (Unified approach, 2007). This supported the group in recognising the impact of behaviour on an individual's life and the power of staff in managing this.

All support workers were able to describe episodes of challenging behaviour which they had witnessed and supported an individual through, time was built into the session for reflection on an occurrence of behaviour and the support worker were asked to reflect individually on what could be a personal or environmental factor in an individual's presentation of behaviour, this was a task that the groups seemed to find difficult.

Fig 4. Some examples of personal and environmental factors which may influence the occurrence of challenging behaviour.



Why do people present challenging behaviour?

Learners were randomly allocated to tables to ensure that people who worked in the same setting were not sitting together, this kind of approach avoids the possibility for break off groups who may not engage within the wider dynamic.

Once in the smaller groups, a simple exercise was introduced 'the human needs exercise'. This involved the teams reflecting on their own daily needs, making a list of everything that was important to them considering finer details such as whether they have a shower or a bath, sugar in their tea etc. This was then fed back to the wider group, following this a specific item is selected from each list, and the group are asked to reflect on how they would feel if they couldn't have this thing, the group work together to describe their thoughts and feelings in relation to this and after feedback the activity evolves further. The group are asked to consider what they would do if they couldn't have this thing. They tended to need more support in considering this, because sometimes they would revert back to what they felt, rather than what they would do, and the point of the exercise is to encourage the link between unmet need and the occurrence of challenging behaviour.

Once overall feedback was achieved, discussion in relation to the person/environment fit and some of the barriers within the workplace were explored, with regard to how people living within residential settings are still entitled to receive individualised approaches to their behavioural

needs. This is because evidence around the validity of positive behaviour support suggests that increasing skills, quality of life and understanding why people present with challenging behaviour (through scientific approach) is likely to result in lower levels of challenging behaviour.



Fig 2. The person environment fit is essential in reducing occurrence of challenging behaviour, the further apart the two are, the more likely the individual is to display behaviour.

This link between unmet need is described by Pitonyak (2005, pg.2) 'the very presence of a difficult behaviour can be a signal that something important that the person needs is missing'. Challenging behaviours have long been recognised as 'a result of deficient environments which bring about responses from staff which are restrictive, aversive or result in seclusion', (Toogood, 2011, pg.7). Recognising this person environment interaction was essential within the masterclass, reflecting together through the use of the human needs activity supported this understanding.

How does behaviour escalate?

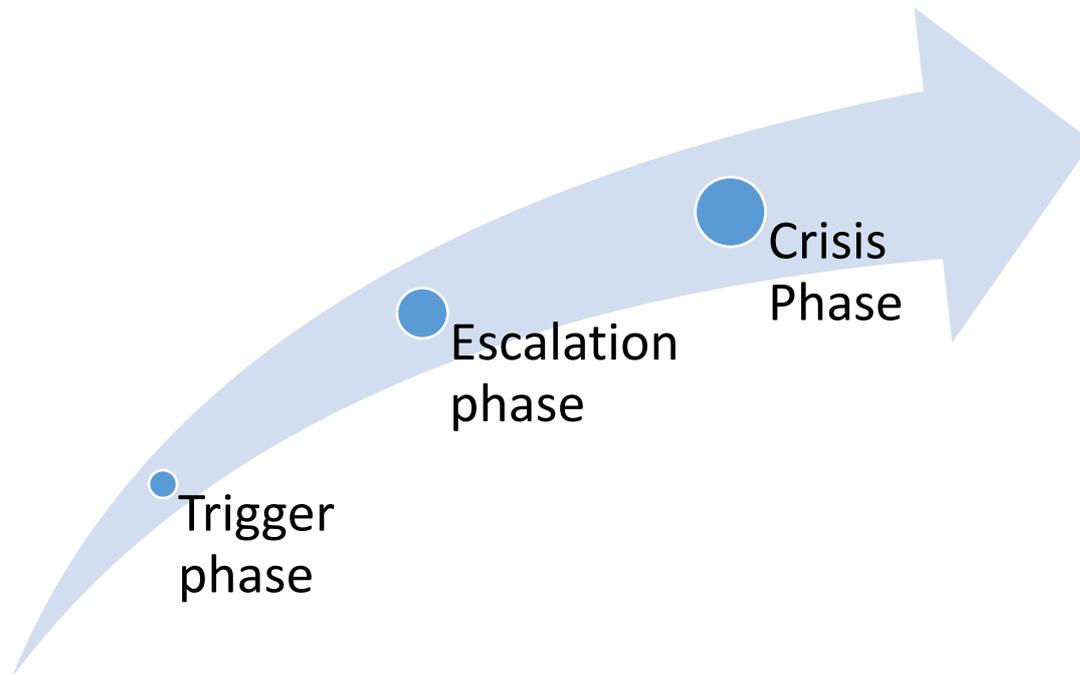


Fig 3. The assault cycle was explored, using a story which could relate to everyone's daily activities, staff enjoyed this aspect and feedback well on it.

Kaplan and Wheeler's (1983) assault cycle was used to demonstrate the escalation of challenging behaviour and encourage the staff within the room to reflect on incidents that they may have seen which follow the patterns described in this seminal research. This session was well received and the groups engaged in their own practice and areas which could be enhanced to prevent unnecessary escalation of challenging behaviour.

Good practice guidance

The session was drawn together with discussion as a wider group, linking theory and practice, support workers reflected on the points they would take away from the session and specific links were made to communication needs, person centred approaches and promotion of dignity and respect in supporting an individual who may display challenging behaviour. Assessment processes and the importance of clearly defining the behaviour was reinforced at this stage.

Feedback and reflection

Feedback from attendees was gathered in a formal evaluation, support workers were asked to provide three elements they enjoyed and three areas for improvement.

Things that participants enjoyed	Things participants felt could be improved
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The delivery of the training was relaxed and down to earth	Centre more to individual setting
Mixing with others and getting ideas from them	More group work
The handout on challenging behaviour	Talk specifically about the elderly with dementia and why they may present with challenging behaviour
Able to link the training to working experiences	More time (i.e. more than ½ a day).

Reflecting on the feedback was essential in preparation for the next sessions, Ofsted (2004) argue that the best educational facilitators learn each time they teach, reflecting on these lessons and making adjustments based on their evaluations. This was important to fine tune any issues raised by the staff teams and improve on the learner experience.

Some people also stayed behind to discuss their particular situations and their thoughts about their ongoing needs around training in relation to challenging behaviour. There was some thought that the session was not long enough and would have been more beneficial if it was tailored to their individual settings. With regard to this, from personal experience of delivering training, it does appear that staff teams find a benefit in having a shared vision, and ability to reflect on their specific situations. Person centred workshops often draw out more detailed discussion and development of specific approaches in meeting the individual who has challenging behaviour's needs, this also provides more scope for capturing an impact on service users needs.

The workbooks were well received and had specific points for the attendees to write down the one thing they were going to take away from the session. One of the most important messages from the overall masterclasses was feedback from a support worker who reflected that they would change the way that they dealt with challenging behaviour, to help the resident rather than the service.

Conclusion

There is clearly a role for ongoing development of staff in their understanding and management of challenging behaviour. The content of the masterclasses provided an introduction of complex topics in an informal and easy to understand way, however limitations of this are acknowledged in terms of how the support workers could make meaningful links to practice if not attending a workshop relating to specific individuals they care for. There is no capacity to report back on how attendance at the event has influenced support workers practice, which would be beneficial if the events were to run again.

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