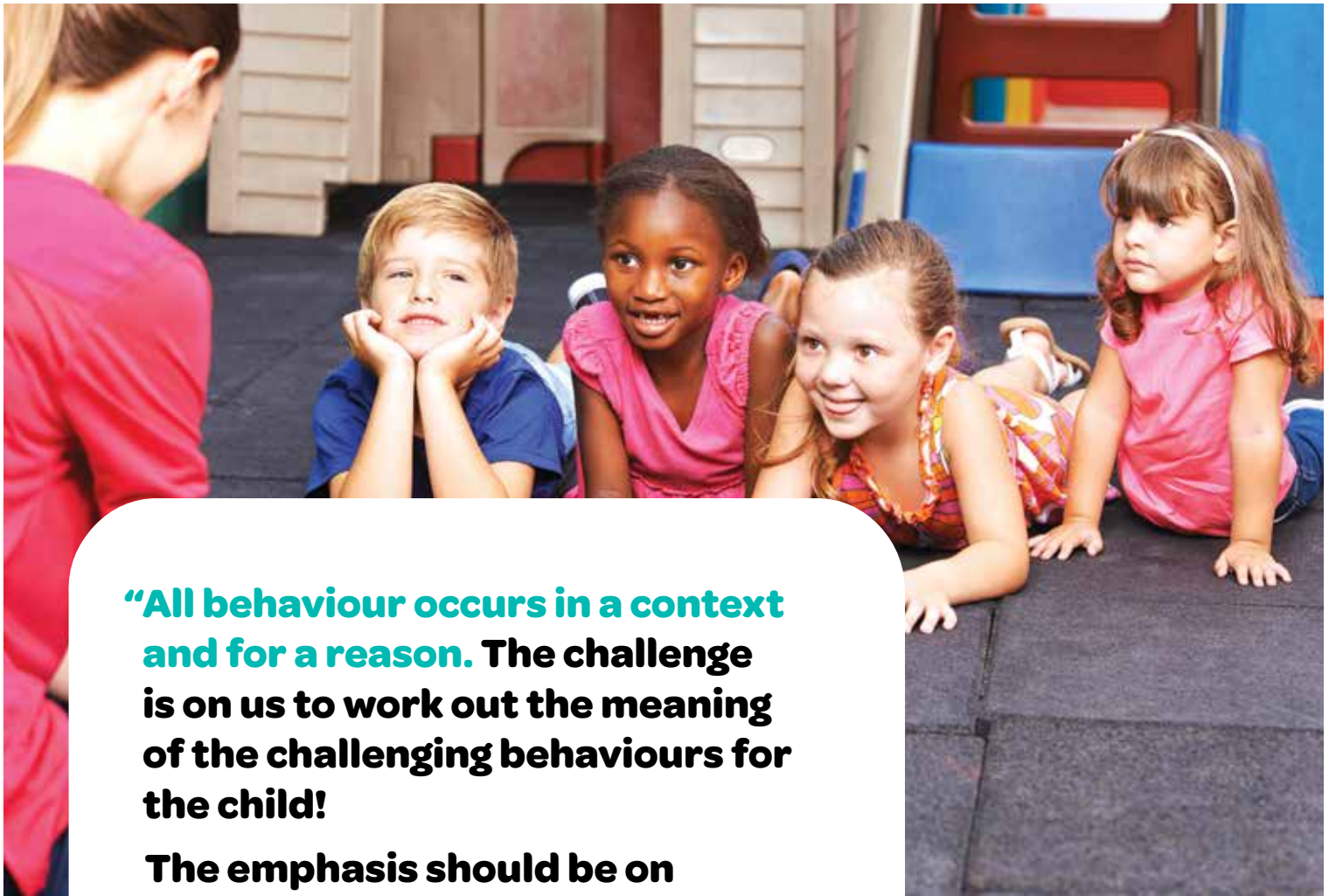




# Inclusive Practices for Positive Engagement

Case studies on  
challenging behaviour





**“All behaviour occurs in a context and for a reason. The challenge is on us to work out the meaning of the challenging behaviours for the child!**

**The emphasis should be on understanding the reason or reasons for the challenging behaviour and then using a positive ‘educational’ approach to manage so that each child’s needs are met.”**

Managing Challenging Behaviour.  
NSW Department of Community Services October 2003.



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# Inclusive Practices for Positive Engagement

## Case studies on challenging behaviour

### Introduction

**Include Me is the equity arm of Big Fat Smile. Our name **Include Me** reflects our passion and commitment. We believe in respect, diversity and honouring differences.**

*Include Me* is the equity arm of Big Fat Smile. Our name *Include Me* reflects our passion and commitment. We believe in respect, diversity and honouring differences.

For many years we have supported education and care services with practical resources to assist educators to build their capacity in providing a quality, inclusive environment for all children, including those with additional needs. We have supported different service types in varied locations in NSW.

Regardless of the location or how long the service has been established, educators constantly express the need for support in including children who are displaying challenging behaviours. Educators are often faced with the need to reflect on their current practice to ensure they are providing a program that values vulnerable families and those children with additional needs. The Include Me team supports educators to aid children's access to and participation in quality early childhood education and care.

This resource is a compilation of case studies from the field to assist educators on their journey to include all children in their care.

In reading the stories in this resource, we can see common strategies used by educators to achieve the successful inclusion of children with challenging behaviours. They include:

- 1** Educators focus on a whole team approach to communication.
- 2** Educators consider the child's perspective in the care environment.
- 3** Educators review and evaluate the physical environment.
- 4** Educators adopt a proactive approach rather than using a reactive approach.
- 5** Educators establish partnerships with the wider community.

Included in this compilation are further useful links to resources and websites that will provide additional support as educators develop their skills.

It is our hope that the case studies will inspire educators and provide practical strategies for educators who may be faced with similar situations to the educators who shared their stories.

We offer special thanks to the people who shared their stories.



## Case Study 1

# Blue Cove Early Learning Centre

**When you care for 36 children from ages two to six in long day care, social skills are paramount to reducing challenging behaviours and engaging children in meaningful activities. Educators at Blue Cove Early Learning Centre discovered just how important those skills and a well-structured day are when they decided to identify and tackle areas of their daily program that did not seem to be conducive to a calm and productive environment.**

Key components of their success can be linked to the educator's willingness to seek advice from other centres, engage with parents to understand the breadth of behavioural issues, adapt their own approaches to planning the day and, most importantly, involving the children in the development of rules for the centre.

Blue Cove is a privately owned centre. It operates from 7.30am to 5.30pm and provides all meals for the children in their care. It caters for 16 two-to-three year olds and 20 three-to-five year olds across two rooms. The centre has two educators in the Early Learning Room and two in the three-to-five-years room.

The issues facing staff at the centre are ones all educators can relate to when energetic children are involved. During free play, in group time when the staff used a CD player as part of activities, and when playing outside, educators found the children were not engaged in the experiences.

Many areas were too open which created space for children to run inside while the layout of the rooms was not inviting and having too many toys out made the rooms cluttered, busy and overwhelming for the children. This also affected the lunch routine.

While the general dynamics of children on certain days could increase the issues, there were also regular problems with children fighting over toys and children bringing in toys from home which then got lost.

During discussions about the issues they faced, staff indicated that such a loud and free-flowing environment was exacerbating the challenging behaviours being exhibited by children throughout the day.

Behaviours that stood out to educators included children hitting others, children taking toys from one another, children wandering around the room and not engaging in group experiences or individual activities, children running away from educators and children having a meltdown.

Realising that change was needed, the team held discussions and sought help from the Inclusion Support Facilitator to gain further ideas. Some of these ideas included consulting parents about behaviour to discover if the same patterns were evident at home and what strategies they were using to deal with these issues. They also researched the book *Inspiring Play Spaces* by Susie Rosback and Natalie Coulson to find ideas on what makes



## PALS Social Skills Program

*A social skills program that teaches children from 3 to 6 years of age about greeting others, listening, sharing, taking turns, dealing with feelings of fear, sadness and anger, and solving problems. The Program utilises Australian animal puppets to teach social skills.*

[palsprogram.com.au](http://palsprogram.com.au)

inspiring play spaces and how they could incorporate them into their centre.

One of the staff's most valuable experiences was when it visited another centre to see how it structured lunch and rest routines. From this visit, the educators were inspired to refine their program to ensure better interactions between educators and children. They also identified the importance of using scripted sentences to deal with certain behaviours. This meant that all educators would be using the same strategies and phrases to deal with challenging behaviours rather than taking an individual approach. They then conducted regular staff meetings to discuss what was happening around the centre and to consult with their peers.

The changes they have implemented have proven to be a dynamic blend of environmental and social elements but success has been based on one major focus – giving the children some responsibility.

Key responsibilities adopted by the centre were for the children to contribute to the making of the rules and

to encourage the older children to buddy-up with the younger or quieter children coming up from the Early Learning Room. Allowing the children to set their own rules for the day helped give them ownership of the area while a new program of making children monitors for a special job gave them the added responsibility of enforcing their rules. Children got to choose their job which could include things like making sure all of the chairs are pushed in, making sure the taps are turned off or watering the garden. The monitors are further empowered with the privilege of wearing a lanyard.

Blue Cove has taken on the responsibility of developing stronger socialisation skills for their children through use of the **PALS Program**. This program incorporates the use of puppets for learning and socialisation with others.

Educators also needed to make physical changes to the environment in order to better utilise the space they had available for activities and to improve the engagement of the children. They redesigned the



## Case Study 1

# Blue Cove Early Learning Centre cont.



rooms to include more defined areas using furniture as dividers and separating the tables to ensure smaller groupings of two or four children. The blocks and craft areas were known to be popular so they were made larger, enabling children to leave their work where it was and return to it after routine times of the day like lunch or group activities.

In order to deal with specific challenging behaviours, the centre has introduced the use of visual aids and basic sign language. A lot more sensory play and toys have been incorporated into the daily routine. Educators have made their own sensory stress balls out of balloons and flour. Mystery bags, with quiet activities, are being used at rest time along with . The use of the CD player during group time has been reduced. Educators are finding that when they use their voices, the children come and participate more actively in the schedule.

A twice-weekly game of soccer has proven to be an excellent addition to the routine. The staff members have noticed a distinct change in the behaviour of the children after a session and comment that the need to follow instruction and the rules of a game are being transferred to the rules of the room. The centre has also started a news day to counteract the issue they

were having with children bringing in toys from home which would get lost or result in arguments over who owned the toy.

While staff members are constantly reviewing the room throughout the day and watching carefully to see how the children are engaging in activities, they say there has been a marked change in the structure and vibe of the centre.

The room is calmer, children are more engaged with the activities and are subsequently getting more out of them. For the educators, they are feeling more empowered as they see positive results. They are more relaxed and confident in dealing with the children and their individual needs, and can focus on positive behaviour reinforcement. They are more flexible about change in the workplace, are adaptable and have become more aware of their own and each other's particular skills.

When staff members change an activity, they look at what the children aren't playing with and pack it away. They are also continuing to develop their own education, skills and understanding by consulting with professionals to improve skills in observation, inclusive and reflective practices. Programs are continuing to be updated and the centre is also looking at implementing an indoor/outdoor program into its schedule.

***An example relaxation script is included in Appendix 1.***

***Educators can use relaxation scripts during quiet or rest times.***



## Case Study 2

# Calalla Bay Preschool

**Callala Bay Preschool is committed to providing quality learning opportunities. It's innovative 'world café' approach promotes discussion and reflection. This approach is underscored by appreciating and engaging with the individual ideas and beliefs of each staff member.**

Working in collaboration to identify what areas of the program were not effective, the team evaluated the program at the end of each week using a Q&A format involving children's thoughts, ideas and reflection. The team also used individual reflection about planned group times and parent feedback.

Educators began recording their thoughts in a reflective journal to help understand the behaviours that proved to be most challenging. Through this reflection, the staff discovered how important the environment was to a successful day in their centre. On a bad day, it was often the room set-up that caused issues. This could include too much visual stimulation from the paintings, posters and pictures hanging around the room or an art area that did not allow children to be creative and independently access materials for their work.

Rest time was noisy because there was only one open room and the sleepers were situated near the lockers or



## Case Study 2

# Calalla Bay Preschool cont.

**“Educators began recording their thoughts in a reflective journal to help understand the behaviours that proved to be the most challenging.”**



the mat where non-sleeping children were listening to stories or doing yoga, which was distracting. The lack of access to any outdoor play during wet weather was difficult and the room they have is too small to set up internal gross motor activities.

As well as the environmental issues, there were several children who displayed challenging behaviours. The three most testing behaviours were aggression towards peers, educators and equipment; defiance; and squealing as they affected the whole group and created supervision and safety issues.

To begin the process of change, educators engaged in staff meetings and in-house training connected with external services and the Include Me team.

Staff members identified the need to improve the indoor area in order to provide an inviting, natural and calming venue. Among the changes was the development of a new art centre so children could access materials and equipment independently. Children are now invited to sleep in the “Peace Corner” which is situated away from the lockers and mat, and there are table activities for individual, small and large group play.

The staff have improved planned group times, breaking them into smaller groups, where children are invited

to join age-and-skill appropriate experiences. Group times such as “Munch and Move” and “Science and Discovery” have been added to the program and the team has introduced **relaxation techniques** such as **belly breathing, meditation and yoga**.

Where it was possible, the attendance days of children with challenging behaviours were changed to days with lower attendance or to incorporate a different mix of children. They discovered it was important to ensure all staff members were aware of a child’s triggers and personal needs. Educators felt it was important to build stronger connections with families and the development of behaviour guidance plans arose from this. The PALS Program was implemented to support social awareness.

These changes have made a positive impact on children’s behaviour. The day has a sense of calm, children appear settled and the sleepers are undisturbed. Children are showing they are able to regulate their emotions because triggers have been reduced or eliminated.

Educators have found that they are less stressed and able to work with challenging behaviours more effectively. Children are engaging in activities positively and are achieving outcomes.

Since making the changes the team is continually reflecting and evaluating the environment through staff meetings, the Quality Improvement Plan and feedback from families and children. They discovered that they had misinterpreted some behaviours and found some children have sensory needs. They would like to learn more about sensory processing and ultimately adapt their environment to help with those issues.

**Head to the Royal Children’s  
Hospital website [rch.org.au](http://rch.org.au) for  
a useful fact sheet on “Breathing  
and Relaxation Strategies”**

**[rch.org.au](http://rch.org.au)**

## Case Study 3

# Coolgardie Children's Centre

**When your educators feel like they are not coping with the day, it's time to make some changes.**

**Coolgardie Children's Centre in the Illawarra is a Long Day Care centre its team has discovered that through attempts to address the challenging behaviours displayed in one room, there have been positive outcomes for all children and staff.**

The main issues were based around transition times, music time overstimulation from noise and providing individual attention for particular children who were struggling throughout the day.

Reactions at these times included loud squealing, children not wanting to participate within the routine, children demanding toys and attention and meltdowns.

To discover where the program was ineffective, the team used daily evaluation on the back of the program for individual activities. Educators communicated throughout the day about each issue and this information was recorded. The Inclusion Support Facilitator came to visit, helping the staff work through the daily routine to pinpoint non-effective times and work together to find strategies that would help.

To engage all educators in the process, a room meeting was held to discuss any concerns and everyone started to look at how to overcome the concerns.





### Case Study 3

## Coolgardie Children's Centre cont.

The team agreed to focus on smaller goals that would lead to better behavioural outcomes, to change the room routine, to work out strategies to support each other and to work on building better relationships with the children displaying challenging behaviour. During a meeting when staff members watched the Using Visuals to Support Children's Learning DVD, all educators felt that visuals would be of benefit to the service.

Making changes to support the child's individual needs was important in the team's strategy.

The educators reflected on why certain behaviours were happening, looking at energy levels and the need for connection. Routines were modified to accommodate children's individual needs.

One example was implementing physical activity before music time to use up excess energy and create a calm, focused group time. Staff members implemented a jobs roster which allowed one child in particular to spend time with educators and feel connected while still being involved within the routine.

They implemented visuals for routines, expectations (my turn/your turn, wait cards) and mini schedules to further break down the routine. A timer was incorporated into educator-initiated activities as well as for waiting and turn-taking.

A lunchtime placemat and a **feelings chart** were implemented. Educators used scripted language and supportive words such as "I can see you're cranky, I can help you" so the children knew they were safe and supported. This approach calmed the children as they wanted to know that the educators would help and would make time to connect and feel safe.

It was important to be consistent and always follow through. If a child was asked to wait for one minute and then have their turn, the **timer** was used for that minute. Another strategy was to give the children the words to use, such as "if you want a turn, you need to say, 'can I have a turn please'?"

An educator was rostered on at all times of the day which enabled all children to feel they had a safe and supportive person all day.

*There are a range of timers suitable for use in early childhood and education settings including sand timers, liquid timers and count away timers.*



The team then set small goals to improve overall behavioural outcomes. For example, one child was having difficulty sitting at the lunch table to eat. This child would consistently leave the table and spill his drink and food. Getting this child to sit at the lunch table was one small goal rather than expecting him to sit and eat or sit for the duration of lunch. They used a timer so that after two minutes he could leave the table if he chose to, and then go to bed. The next step was introducing a placemat so he knew where to sit his cup, plate and cutlery. If he didn't want to eat, he didn't have to. It was enough for him to be able to sit without throwing his plate. The team slowly extended this time until he was happy to eat with his peers at lunchtime.

The staff discussed the importance of educators swapping roles if they felt they were not able to work through a situation with a child. The staff also

## **“Staff discussed the importance of educators swapping roles if they felt they were not able to work through a situation with a child. The staff also discussed how this was not a failure on the educator’s part, but a way of working as a team and about supporting each other.”**

discussed how this was not a failure on the educator’s part, but a way of working as a team and about supporting each other.

At the heart of the changes was discussion – lots of it. Communication books were used by the service and families to document children’s behaviours and progress.

There was also plenty of daily verbal contact with families. The room educators meet on a regular basis to discuss and evaluate the strategies and how to improve them.

The result has been a huge difference in children’s behaviour and staff members feel they have built a much stronger relationship with the children and families. For one child attending the service, he is now able to talk about how he is feeling, knows the educators will support him with every situation, and his involvement with the program and peers has improved dramatically.

Discussions on how everyone is different started to happen and this led to a higher level of empathy and understanding of differences in the room among all of the children.

After implementing these strategies and building positive relationships, the educators found that the children are more engaged within the room and the day is calm. Some children found it difficult to be involved in a group time, so they become involved in other ways. For example, at music time they may be in charge of turning the music on and off, and dancing at the side of the group.

For the educators themselves, this experience has been a case of a negative becoming a positive.

Originally, they were stressed about how the day would go and felt like they were walking on eggshells. Through implementing the strategies, all educators feel reassured that what they are doing is working. They are seeing major improvements. They are able to pick up on triggers and defuse a situation early. Children are having fewer meltdowns and occasionally, when a meltdown does still occur, the children know they are supported and have someone to help them regulate their emotions. Each situation is evaluated

and educators change the strategies used as needed. For example, if a child is being particularly defiant after a request has been made, they look at why and often discover they just have to break down the steps and make the request smaller.

Educators feel comfortable knowing that everyone is using the same strategies and that everyone is supporting each other.

As a result of the changes and to maintain the momentum, the staff has reduced the amount of visuals needed, preferring to verbally prompt all children about what’s coming up. This is delivered through a comment like “remember, we’re doing (this) and then it’s sand pit time”.

The jobs system is still in use for many other children who like to take part. Positive reinforcement is used throughout the whole day and the timer is used for all children when they are waiting for their turn at an activity.

***A feelings chart and details on how to use these in your service are included in Appendix 2.***

## Case Study 4

# Country Children's Early Learning Centre



**Proving that one size doesn't fit everyone, the staff at the Country Children's Early Learning Centre have learnt that adaptability and stepping outside the square can sometimes be the best way to get results.**

**On this occasion the solution was not just about adapting the environment or the approach of the carer but, ultimately, of engaging two environments and carers to create a safe and secure environment for a child in need.**

While the decision to utilise two environments is not often considered the ideal, it is showing promise and measureable results and proving to be the best option for this family.

The Country Children's Early Learning Centre is a family day care service that supports carers in rural and remote NSW. It covers a 200km radius from Gunning taking in areas such as Bungendore, Yass, Young, Braidwood and Murrumbateman.

About 50 percent of the services operate from homes and the other 50 percent operate in small country towns out of the local hall or a similar building. Half of the children who use the service are under six years old and the other half are between six and 12 years of age.

The child who is the focus of this case study had his greatest difficulties during mealtimes and at the end of the day when other children were leaving. While some days were smoother than others, depending on the dynamics of the group, the child tended to become distressed at mealtimes, resulting in him hitting or biting other children. At day's end his behaviour would become difficult to manage when other children started to leave because he wanted to leave as well. His challenging behaviour would continue until his parents arrived to collect him.

Staff members describe the child's behaviour as unpredictable and explosive at times. During a meltdown he would become aggressive – hitting, pushing and biting. One educator found the behaviour particularly difficult.

The coordinator of the service, was immediately concerned about placing the child in the right environment and with the most suitable carer. The child was coming to the service from a long day care service and the family was given the opportunity to visit a number of environments to see which one they felt most comfortable in.

Right from the start the decision was made to discuss any concerns with the educator of the previous service the child attended. This educator visited the new carer and spent time demonstrating different ideas that had worked for them. An allied support service also visited to spend time supporting the child and offering strategies to the carer.



**“When ideas are implemented, the carer takes time to reflect on their success or the need for change. The program and routines are constantly monitored and reviewed with the educator being open to change.”**



When the carer struggled with the behaviours, the coordinator looked at ways to support the carer. A previous employee and service mentor was approached and offered to visit and mentor the carer on a regular basis. The mentor helped with the tricky times of the day such as transitions, as well as routine times such as lunch and sleep periods.

One key barrier for the service is how difficult it can be for carers to attend meetings with other carers or educators due to the distances in play. The service offers lots of support through visits, emails and phone calls. Concerns are discussed with the coordinator and other support staff. When ideas are implemented, the carer takes time to reflect on their success or the need for further change. The program and routines are constantly monitored and reviewed.

For this particular case, the carer began to use **visuals** of the child in different situations and routines to prepare the child for the transition and the next step. The carer wore a lanyard around their neck with the photos attached so that they could be used throughout the day.

Shorter day attendance was used at the start until the child felt more settled and familiar with the carer and environment. An earlier pick-up time was trialled so he did not become unsettled and distressed by the departure of other children.

A quiet place to ‘hide’ was provided. The child decided he liked to hide behind the curtains in one room and this allowed him time to calm down and begin to self-regulate. During this time he was still within hearing and visual sight of the carer, but he felt like he was in his own quiet space.

The carer made a number of successful changes in order to meet the needs of the new child and support inclusion, but another change happened which had quite an impact.

There was a new child who started and the two children had a clash of personalities. For some reason the new child was antagonistic towards the child with the challenging behaviours, and this affected both children’s behaviour.

The carer become concerned about the wellbeing of

### **Visuals Aids**

**Using visuals supports a child in their learning and understanding. Words ‘disappear’ right after they are spoken, visuals can hold a child’s attention and allows them time to process the information. Visuals assist in learning a sequence for a task e.g. hand washing.**

**You can make your own visuals using apps for smart devices, software such as Boardmaker, or visit sites such as [visualaidsforlearning.com](http://visualaidsforlearning.com) and [connectability.ca/en/](http://connectability.ca/en/)**

all of the children as aggressive behaviours escalated. It got to a point where the carer was stressed and anxious about the safety and welfare of the children. Through discussions with the family and the coordinator, a new environment was found to support the child.

The child is now supported across two family day care environments and while this does not sound ideal it has many benefits and is working quite well.

The two carers are now able to support each other and exchange resources and ideas. The carers regularly discuss strategies and ideas to create an environment that meets all of the children’s needs. The dynamics of both groups on each day of the week are more successful and are working well.

The new carer is now considering applying for Inclusion Subsidy Support to be able to better include the child with challenging behaviours and is seeking support from their Inclusion Support Facilitator.

## Case Study 5

# Echidna Early Learning Centre 2

**The Echidna Early Learning Centre offers long day care and a preschool program in the Illawarra region. Staff members were finding it difficult to support a child who had challenging behaviours, and who had a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The child was creating some discord within the centre. The issue needed to be discussed to ensure the safety of other children and to boost staff morale.**



The child displayed aggressive behaviour towards his peers, educators and equipment. He would break toys and destroy other children's creations, which resulted in a lack of resources and the room not being set up as well as educators wanted for the children. Small group learning experiences were very difficult as this child was creating constant disruptions. Larger groups were reintroduced, but even with greater adult support, disruptions continued. Educators could see that this child was craving attention. However, their attention was never enough. Each day educators had to tell a family that their child had been injured while in care and the other children were scared and no longer wanted to play with the child. Staff morale was low because the educators felt they had exhausted all of their known strategies with little positive result.

The behaviours were extreme on both the high and low end. He could be highly aggressive towards his peers, hitting, biting, and kicking children in the head as they played in the sandpit. On the low end, there were times when he wanted to be alone and could not handle other children being around him. Educators could see he was craving friendships, but he did not know how to interact appropriately.

All educators felt they needed to make changes in their practice in order for the situation to improve. This was challenging as many educators had to work through their own emotions and look at the situation from the child's perspective.

The service contacted the Include Me team to speak at a staff meeting about the issues being faced. During this meeting educators looked at the child's perspective, how he must be feeling and talked about identifying triggers, keeping track of when he was escalating, and strategies that could be implemented straight away. After connecting with Noah's Ark Shoalhaven, all educators participated in a professional development session on challenging behaviours and inclusive strategies.

To identify the areas in the program that were not working, a **reflective journal** was used for evaluation. All educators took an active role in recording information which was then passed on to the educational leader for the room. The educational leader reviewed the journals each fortnight and

## Reflective Journals

*A reflective journal is a simple and effective way for educators to record and share information about their observations, practices, relationships and interactions. They can capture many different perspectives and build a comprehensive picture of what is happening in the service to guide decision making and programming.*

formulated discussion points and professional learning opportunities for staff meetings. Within the room each day, there was constant communication and ongoing reflection between educators.

Educators implemented a flexible indoor/outdoor routine which gave all children more space and created a calm environment. The outdoor environment was where the main interests for the child with challenging behaviours were, so those interests were supported through sports and active play.

Educators identified that this child (and many others) liked completing tasks and these were used as a way of self-regulating. The main tasks used were window washing and gardening which gave the child a feeling of success, and he was given a lot of positive reinforcement. A list of strategies was created to address identified triggers. This way all educators were using the same strategies, saying the same words and providing a consistent approach to inclusion. The service also incorporated a quiet zone into the room using an **egg chair**, pillows, blankets and quiet activities that reflected the current interests in the room.

There have been positive results particularly with the indoor/outdoor program. The children's needs are being met, they are engaging more and educators have more time to be with the children.

For educators, the positive effects arise in their increased knowledge and understanding of ADHD and the importance of inclusion in general. This has prompted educators to reflect on all children's wellbeing and helped them develop individualised strategies regarding the inclusion of all children.

A new understanding of inclusion has the educators adapting sections of the centre's policies and procedures regarding inclusive practices. Rather than focus on the negative behaviours of the child, educators focused on ensuring the child feels connected, makes friendships and participates as part of a small and large group in a more **positive manner**.

The calm space, visuals and self-regulating tasks are now part of the routine and used for many children. Educators have a focus **on positive praise** for all children.

The strategies used for inclusion will change from year to year as there are many different children with varying needs, but the educators know they have an array of strategies on hand to use as a starting point. All educators are aware of how important it is to evaluate what is really happening and to look at things from the child's perspective to assist with creating new strategies to meet their needs.

Many families are actively involved and strategies for the children are developed in collaboration with them. These strategies are implemented in the home and care environments to achieve the best outcomes, stability and transitions for the child.

### Positive Praise

*Positive reinforcement helps build a child's self-esteem and confidence to continue with desired behaviour. It is important to recognise and praise specific behaviour.*

*Instead of:*

- *Good boy Jack.*

*Say:*

- *Thank you Jack for taking turns with Tim. That's very kind of you.*

*Instead of:*

- *You are my best helper.*

*Say:*

- *When you tidy up, it makes our room look very clean.*

*Instead of:*

- *I'm so proud of you.*

*Say:*

- *You deserve to be proud of your painting. You worked very hard on it.*



## Case Study 6

# Fidgety Frogs Early Learning Centre

**At Fidgety Frogs Early Learning Centre in Mittagong, the long-serving director and teacher have noticed a general change in children's behaviour over the years. In particular, in the last five years they have noticed children displaying behaviours that are complex and challenging. There is no particular reason for this, although suggestions include family structure, family dysfunction, disability, lack of respect for authority, the increased use of technology or just how busy life tends to be.**

The staff members agree there is a rise in these complex and challenging behaviours. For example, they said around 10 years ago they had one or two children who displayed challenging behaviours, but when they looked at the children in the preschool room they counted 16 children across the week that have challenging behaviours. They also noticed that younger children (two to three year olds) are displaying challenging behaviours.

In the preschool room they have up to 25 children attending each day with three educators.

When asked what the catalyst was to make changes in this room in regards to addressing challenging behaviours the mostly non-teaching director, said she noticed the educators were struggling with the amount of challenging behaviours occurring across the week. She was able to look at that room with an outsider's lens and saw that her staff was stressed and sometimes at a loss about how to manage certain children. They have accessed the Inclusion Support Professional Program and sought Inclusion Support Subsidy funding for the children who have disabilities. However, there are many children that do not fit the disability requirements and it was these children who made this service reflect on how to change their practices.

Large group experiences, meal times and free play which are usually part of the everyday routine, often result in children displaying challenging behaviours. Some behaviours exhibited during these periods were destructive including destroying or interfering with another child's play, aggression, fighting, biting, hurting others, defiance, destruction of resources and a lack of play skills.

After discussions with the staff members, it was decided that they needed collectively to take a more reflective and responsive approach to the needs of the children. When they realised that a lot of these children had complex family lives, for a variety of reasons, the educators decided that they needed to be more responsive to the children's needs and to be reflective about their own practices.

For example, the director describes one situation which worked particularly well and they have continued this practice. They have three educators in this room and as part of their daily program they often run small and large group experiences. One day, they had planned a large group experience. They reflected on this practice and how it did not work for six of the children who attend on that day. They decided to take 19 children with one educator in the large group experience and six children with two educators in a small group experience. The small group experience was using concrete materials, was hands-on, engaged and was a purposeful experience. All six children were engaged in the experience. The large group was engaged in a music experience with Joy Lubawy's songs, actions and instruments. These experiences were working successfully and then one of the children from the smaller group chose to join in the larger group. He engaged with the new group in a positive and appropriate way which had not occurred previously. This experience made the educators realise that by attending to the needs of particular children, they allowed those children to make good, positive choices. Overall it was a very rewarding outcome.

Another example of responding to children's needs was when they set up the play dough table top experience and had four children able to access it. Other children wanted to engage in this experience and, rather than taking turns, the educators decided to set up another

**“After discussions with the staff, it was decided that they needed to collectively take a more reflective and responsive approach to the needs of the children.”**



area with play dough to allow those children to engage in their preferred choice of activity. They also use the outdoor play area more, as educators had identified that this allows children who need and want to run around to do so freely. Doing this caters for their needs and reduces challenging behaviours. The physical environment has also been reviewed and changes have been made to allow children to engage in areas that they enjoy. One particular area that was set up several years ago was a built-in dramatic play area. It is a semi-enclosed area that allows four children at any one time to play in it. It is positioned in the preschool room and is easily supervised. Over the years the service has changed this area to a castle, hospital, dress-up area and anything that caters to the children’s needs or interests at the time. Other resources that have been implemented in this room are sensory toys including oral toys, **weighted blankets**, balancing pillows, pressure rolling sausages and a container filled with rice and small toys.

Other strategies include plenty of verbal encouragement and redirecting children when it looks like the behaviours are escalating. This approach works well when all educators have agreed to take a responsive and reflective approach. There was a day when two casuals were working and the only regular staff member was the trainee. The trainee had also been on this reflective and responsive journey and when they had an incident with a child being aggressive, the trainee was able to quickly divert the child. This resulted in a stressful situation not escalating and a positive outcome for the whole room. Another example was a couple of children being aggressive and running in the room. Instead of saying ‘no running’ or ‘you should walk inside’, the director took the approach of stating the correct action to do (which was engaging in table top activities), then she assisted these children over to an activity and supported them both to engage in the activity before leaving them to continue independently.

From these experiences, educators identified that they need to increase their communication with each other and ensure the following:

1. They take a more responsive, gentle approach with the children
2. They understand the needs of children and are flexible with the daily routines
3. They communicate regularly throughout the day at opportune moments and reflect on how they are managing
4. They look at the bigger picture and remember to pick their battles

This has also led the whole service to continue its professional development especially in the area of managing challenging behaviours. The staff attended a workshop called Behaviour Guidance – What You Need to Know. This helped the educators to understand the needs of children and has changed their perspective. Previously the educators focused on behaviour and the child, and not necessarily on how the educators could help. This is now their new focus.

## Case Study 7

# Kiama Stars of the Future Early Learning Centre

**Reviewing challenging behaviours and creating a rewarding environment for children and educators has been a positive experience for the staff at Kiama Stars of the Future, a long day care centre.**

**It has helped them understand they are still evolving as educators and that the best outcomes are achieved through teamwork and helping others.**

The team says that continuing positive and professional growth is the key to developing a quality service.

“We need to evolve in our journey of learning and promote passion and expertise within the day, inclusive of all professional practices and behaviours”.

“Don’t ever be afraid to ask for help or implement new ideas. Networking and having a go is the key; you learn through trial and error.”

So what were the issues targeted at Kiama Stars of the Future and what changes did they implement?

Communication and organisation were key elements. The staff highlighted issues with getting children to engage in play areas and activities, as well as carrying out simple tasks like locating and putting on socks and shoes. When they were working on simple tasks, the process was disorganised and rushed. Getting children to listen at group times and to pack or tidy up were also issues.

The challenging behaviours identified were physical behaviours like kicking or hitting others, as well as behaviours associated with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Sensory Processing Disorder. There are children in the centre who are two years old, but who are still developing their concentration, listening and attending group time behaviours.

Identification of the ineffective aspects of the program occurred through daily and weekly evaluations, delivered verbally, written in the diary or discussed at staff meetings. Then, in order to bring everyone together on how to address the behaviours and consider the impact the environment had on those behaviours, the Inclusion Support Facilitator met with the nominated supervisor and staff members individually. This was complemented by staff meetings and continued mentoring and reviewing implementation of the new practices.

As well as the staff discussions, input was sought from managers, professional external programming consultants, families and children. The focus was planning for what, where, when and how as well as scaling back the environment to the bare essentials



## “Don’t ever be afraid to ask for help or implement new ideas”



in order to provide a foundation for play, learning and engagement.

### **The changes were many and the results have been positive.**

Empowering the children has led to greater engagement across the facility, while the educators are more flexible and focused on being strong role models.

The director of the service and her team have refined the program to allow the children more choice, empowering them to take some control within their day. This may include allowing them to use the camera or iPads to learn and investigate, document and identify with their own active play. They are asked what they would like to do and if they would like to eat, sleep or go to the toilet, and are no longer told when they should do these things. In other words, the routine has been relaxed with the main focus being on allowing the children freedom and choice.

The centre has established an open-play environment with an indoor/outdoor routine for a large part of the day, allowing the children plenty of time to be relaxed and engage with whatever they are doing and resulting in minimal transition times and groups.

The Inclusion Support Facilitator suggested the use of visuals within the room which has been useful and educators have adapted the room to make more

defined areas for the children. For example, the construction tables are now smaller, suiting two to four children and resources have been reduced to suit these numbers and to reduce clutter.

Activities and resources are purposeful and are in good working order. The room is set up with more consistency so the play dough is always in the same area. There is now a drawing area and a defined block area. Educators are encouraged to be flexible and excited as they share in the children’s discoveries.

To maintain the new environment and underscore the changes the director has found it is important for her staff to remain in control, reminding the children about what is required and to model the behaviours they want to see. Educators help the children remember where things are by using visual cues and posted signs. Scripted sentences have also been important so the children aren’t receiving mixed messages.

Kiama Stars of the Future is very happy with the intervention the results have achieved. Children and educators are more engaged with the children running about less and behaving better. They are calm and relaxed because they can feel more engaged and in control. Staff members are less stressed and families are commenting on the higher level of cleanliness in the centre.

**See Appendix 6 for before and after room layouts.**

## Case Study 8

# Platypus Kinda Child Care Centre

**At Platypus Kinda Child Care Centre, life can be incredibly busy. With four educators caring for 28 children aged from two to six years in one room, the day is noisy, group times can be stressful for children and the lunch period is the busiest time of the day for educators. The privately-owned centre is run out of an old church in the Shoalhaven that has been converted for long day care. It is open from 8.00am to 5.45pm and features lunches prepared at the centre.**

**“To initiate change the team needed to determine what the most compelling issues were in terms of the routines and, once identified, join forces to provide a consistent approach the children could understand.”**

Six of the children attending the centre were aged two while the rest sat within the three-to-six year age bracket. Educators indicate the challenges they faced were exacerbated by the mix of the children’s ages, routines that weren’t effective for everyone and a lack of consistency between educators on the strategies used to manage behaviour. To initiate change the team needed to determine what the most compelling issues were in terms of the routines and, once identified, join forces to provide a consistent approach the children could understand.

The Inclusion Support Facilitator said the changes didn’t happen overnight. The first step was to understand the primary concerns and three issues were pinpointed as being vital to improving the behaviours at the centre. These issues were:

- all age groups being in one room together all day
- the organisation at meal times
- the lack of a cohesive strategy implementation by educators.

Behaviours that the team noticed were exacerbated in this environment included hitting, biting and children not wanting to participate in activities, but preferring instead to roam around the room. Group time appeared to be stressful for some children because it was a period that tended to be loud and overwhelming. The dynamics of the group on various days also presented its own issues – some children would set each other off and some merely followed the lead of others in engaging in negative behaviour. Similarly, lunch time was proving to be an issue for the staff with this period being so busy the team didn’t have enough time to engage children as positively as they would have liked.

To fully understand the issues, the room leader observed the routines and behaviours over the course of a week to see where changes and improvements could be made. A meeting was held with the educators to learn of their concerns and ensure all points of view were being considered in the strategy. Parents were also consulted. The team changed the structure of the day book, inviting parents to write down their children’s interests so educators were aware of what could be used to engage children’s attention.

*A feelings chart and details on how to use these in your service are included in Appendix 2.*

frustrated / worried



Once the areas of concern and challenging behaviours were identified, the next step was to engage the educators with a standardised plan of action. Staff meetings were used to discuss what was and wasn't working, and to determine a strategy everyone would be comfortable using. This included scripted sentences and staff working together to make the changes. Following the implementation of the strategies, all educators and the children's families were engaged in further formal and informal discussions about the children's behaviours. The processes were assessed after a few weeks and, in consultation with staff members, further tweaks to the routines and strategies were made.

#### **So what were the changes that Platypus Kinda implemented that were successful?**

- The educators decided to run smaller groups at separate times and during group times they introduced **sensory bags** so children could use them while concentrating on the group experience.
- Educators became more aware of the triggers and when children were elevated in their behaviour. They developed consistent strategies to counteract these triggers and to better manage and calm negative behaviours.
- The lunch routine was changed with the two-year-old children dining 20 minutes earlier so they could have the support they need. At this time, the other children took part in a longer group period.
- **Visual Feeling Charts** were introduced for the children. Educators taught the children how to use the chart and identify feelings. Children are encouraged to get the chart off the wall to help explain how they are feeling. From there an educator can use a 'choice board' so the child can select an activity that will help improve their emotions.

While the team continually reassesses the routine to make sure it is meeting the needs of all of the children, staff members say the results have been pleasing and the educators are more engaged in the program. They have time to sit down with children at the lunch table and discuss the day and healthy eating habits. They are also more confident in dealing with challenging behaviours and are aware of each other's limits or

stress levels, and can step in to offer assistance when needed.

There were some difficulties in implementing the strategies and getting all educators on board at the start. Now that the educators are seeing the children's behaviour changing, all are keen for further change and are fully engaged in the initiative.

One educator in the room says that they are working hard to maintain the new environment and are not resting on their laurels. She notes that the best strategy is one that changes with circumstances and daily dynamics. She is pleased that the educators are operating more effectively and are constantly looking at what is happening at any time of the day, and what age groups need more help. She feels confident that the centre is now on the right track.

**Sensory bags can support children with developing their attention skills and memory recall. Objects such as stress balls, spinning tops, stretch toys or water wheels are examples of things that can be included in the bag. They can be used as fidget and tactile bag. Small items inside the bag can pose as a choking hazard, be mindful of the size of the items you place in the bag.**





## Case Study 9

# Snowy Mountains Care and Early Learning Centre

**Educators at the Snowy Mountains Care and Early Learning Centre were reminded of how surprising children could be while completing a study into challenging behaviours in their environment.**

**The team was encouraged by the amazing amount of insight and capacity for empathy shown by children in difficult situations. Even after being hurt, many children will still try to engage in play or offer support. Their capacity for forgiveness is inspiring.**

One of the greatest changes the educators noticed was that by discussing issues and talking about the behaviour rather than the child, there was greater understanding of social skills and acceptance of differences among the children.

**So what behaviours did the team identify and how did they arrive at their inspirational conclusion?**

The service was approached by the Department of Education to support a child with complex needs. Representatives of the support agencies involved, the family and the service attended a meeting prior to the child starting at the centre. Right from the start the educators were concerned about the child's challenging and aggressive behaviours.

As a long day care centre, staff members found arrival and departure times to be stressful. As the time came to leave, the child with challenging behaviours could become aggressive and hit out at anyone in his reach, including educators and parents. Wet weather days could be difficult when there was a large number of children and no escape from the noise and proximity of other children.

The most challenging behaviours to manage were aggressive behaviours. The team experienced verbal and physical abuse including hitting, punching, swearing, spitting and head butting. On one occasion the child was 'boxing' another child.

Educators evaluated and reflected on the program and environment. They looked at how the environment was being used by all of the children to determine if any areas could be improved. Ideas were discussed with educators and the Inclusion Support Facilitator.

Other professionals were approached, including early intervention providers. They organised training on Trauma Informed Practice and were able to reflect on their practices and make changes. They were able to see the importance of working as a team and building a strong connection with all involved, including the family and child. It was a continual learning process.



The educators also evaluated policies and procedures and made changes to reflect the needs of all children and families. They reviewed their philosophy and felt it was still current and inclusive.

They have aimed to have a consistent educator to greet and farewell children to build attachment and trust. They have looked at introducing new equipment within the environment and removing other things that have contributed to the challenging behaviours. They introduced aspects of the **Circle of Security** and social learning programs such as the PALS Program.

They changed aspects of the program such as the Sun Smart policy to allow children the option of accessing the outdoor environment. They ensured all educators were supported and heard, particularly during a bad day. The environment was pared back so children were not overwhelmed with options and choices.

Educators now better understand attachment issues and how this affects behaviours. This has given them empathy and an understanding of what issues children with attachment issues are struggling with on a daily basis. The changes have been ongoing and have challenged the way they think about the program and challenging behaviours.

Educators were concerned at the beginning as there were times throughout the process when little gains suddenly took a step backwards and they felt like they were back to square one. Sometimes it was difficult to tell if the environment was having an impact or if it was just a 'bad day'. Educators had to deal with both physical and mental stress, particularly due to uncertainty about why the behaviours were occurring. Finding the balance between meeting everyone's needs and maintaining safety was challenging.

There have been major changes to how other areas of the service are being used such as the library and veranda. This has positive aspects for many children but some negative impact for older children who are ready for more choice and challenges. This was another area that needed to be addressed further to make sure all children's needs were met.

Overall educators have found this to be a complex and challenging situation which has highlighted the importance of building and maintaining strong relationships with families and the community. Educators have learnt a great deal from the experience and are better equipped to support children who have challenging behaviours.

## The Circle of Security

*The Circle of Security is a relationship based early intervention program designed to enhance attachment security between parents and children. Decades of university-based research have confirmed that secure children exhibit increased empathy, greater self-esteem, better relationships with parents and peers, enhanced school readiness, and an increased capacity to handle emotions more effectively when compared with children who are not secure.*

**Circle of Security is a trademark of Circle of Security International.**

## Case Study 10

# St Luke's Preschool Dapto

**According to St Luke's Preschool, Dapto, teaching a child with challenging behaviours helps equip other children with such vital life skills as tolerance, resilience, conflict resolution and character building. Engaging the children in role-playing scenarios with each other helps to build awareness and an understanding of the different skills people have. Most importantly, these teaching moments equip children with language and empathy for everyone's differences.**

*An example of a Child Support Plan is included in Appendix 3. These plans can assist educators in addressing challenging behaviour to ensure the child is included in the service.*

### Reflective journal

To reach a point where such important lessons can be learnt, the journey is one that must be understood and undertaken by all staff involved. While challenging behaviours can come in many forms, it is equally true that staff have tolerances and expertise that differ from each other. This makes good communication paramount to success and progress is most marked when it is implemented at a pace that suits everyone, not just the early adopters.

To keep abreast of what areas of the program are not effective, the centre employs a reflective journal for use by all staff in each of the two rooms. The journal poses questions which can be answered throughout the day. They are:

#### **How did we modify the environment / routine to support all individual children's development?**

Linked to the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) principles.

**What principles and practices are reflected today? What do we need to rethink in our practices?** (Which theorist is reflected and making sense to you?) Linked to EYLF principles and practices.

**A staff debrief** within the day and at the end of the day to discuss any practices or situations that have not been effective.

The notes in the journal are read and discussed and can lead to modification of routines, the environment and resources. Individual children's programs are conducted and a **Child Support Plan** is designed in order to assist the child to develop new skills within their capabilities. The journal has been invaluable in ensuring all educators are engaged in addressing behaviours. It ensures all opinions are heard and everyone has a voice in scoping new approaches to a child's behaviour. Previously, casual staff would not always have the understanding of a child's developmental needs and would not have been a part of the same journey as



# “Intentional teaching is thoughtful, informed and deliberate”

Connor, J 2010 “Intentional Teaching, The Early Years Learning Framework Professional Learning Program e-Newsletter No 2, p1.



the full-time staff. Now they ensure all information on the child that comes from the service, their home, practitioners and other environments is collated, and individual programs are designed to support the child with challenging behaviours to grow and learn new skills. From this, the environment, resources, individual one-on-one times, **intentional teaching moments**, groups, expectations of the child, room limits and boundaries are modified and considered with all children’s individual programs.

After determining what needed to change, St Luke’s identified four key indicators for success. They are the program itself, the environment, expectations and limits, and reflection.

The team says the program is the biggest step, as putting too much structure into the day does not address challenging behaviours. If there are too many transitions throughout the day it can contribute to more challenging behaviours arising.

Children in the program are enriched with a predictable day of experiences offered indoors and outdoors from

arrival until one hour before departure. Empowering the children to make choices and be where they learn best decreases anxiety and stress in the day. Many experiences are occurring throughout the day that interest the children at appropriate developmental skill levels while building and equipping children. These **intentional teaching moments** are facilitated throughout the program, not at set times or in a box program. ‘Challenging children’, especially those who have no diagnosis, thrive in this program. They are able to achieve rather than be imposed upon with expectations that they often don’t understand. Learning is possible in many forms – visual, hands on, verbal, and interactive.

There is a safe environment that is relaxed and has a predictable routine that empowers children to make choices and join in on experiences when they are ready. This creates the opportunity for every child to flourish and grow in skills and development.

It is important to have expectations and limits for the children that are developmentally achievable. The best

## St Luke's Preschool Dapto cont.



way to achieve good outcomes is to start by doing the task together, move from 'I am here if you need me', to 'I can see you have done this by yourself'. If you continue to do things for the child you are not creating room for the child to show you what they can achieve.

It is important for educators to reflect every day on their role as well as the child's abilities, strengths, areas of need and any modifications needed to their day. This should be discussed with the team and the children's family, and every child's plan continually adapted to reflect the information. Contact the child's practitioners regularly and speak to the child's family in a positive manner while being an advocate for promoting the child's achievements.

As part of the program, St Luke's instigated changes for determining the structure of their day. They embraced an indoor/outdoor program with minimal interruptions to children's learning, set up their rooms with resources tailored to every child's needs and made sure educators were available for the children, whether it was to assist in social play or to cooperate in a game of their choice.

A major success has been the dismantling of formal group times in favour of many small group opportunities run throughout the day. These cover a variety of interests, developmental skills development and enjoyment. This empowers the children to make choices within the program and they are invited to participate in experiences throughout the day. It is the educator's role to ensure all interests and developmental skills are incorporated into these experiences. This is where the reflection journal proves to be invaluable, ensuring all children's development and skills are considered. Another key document is the individual children's goal's statement which is set for the term.

There have been many positive outcomes from the program with the days running smoothly, a less stressful environment for educators and more opportunities to engage children in meaningful learning.

The group has also learned a little more about themselves and their work practices. They now understand that change affects everyone differently and that some people need more time to understand processes or their importance. With a building layout

**“While challenging behaviours can come in many forms, it is equally true that staff have tolerances and expertise that differ from each other. This makes good communication paramount to success and progress is most marked when it is implemented at a pace that suits everyone.”**



that includes two rooms and a large outdoor area, and a program that includes both indoor and outdoor activities, communication is important as there are many educators and they are split up for most of the day. The group has identified the need for an electronic journal that can be accessed both indoors and outdoors to combat this issue.

Best of all, there is strong understanding of the importance of how good communication affects all areas of the centre. Staff need to understand why changes are being implemented. Understanding the background to an issue means people are more likely to jump on board, while being able to express an opinion and know it is being heard. Staff then respect the authority and if something is being addressed to ensure the safety of all children then it is not negotiable.

Over the past five years the service has been proactive in improving the working environment for the staff. This has included increasing ratios to four staff for 25 children. Continually listening to educators’ practical, constructive solutions guided the development of strategies for setting boundaries. Support is in place to ensure educators are looking after themselves and their own health as well as each other. A paid mental health day is available to have a break and recharge where no reason is required for absence. All educators work with every child in the service. No staff member is allocated to a child or solely responsible for them. They take a team approach to children’s needs and work together, valuing each staff member’s input and expertise, regardless of qualifications. Every staff member at St Luke’s has a wealth of knowledge.

Overall, by engaging all staff members in processes and empowering children, everyone wins.



## Case Study 11

# Surf Beach Child Care Centre

**Surf Beach Child Care Centre is a long day care centre located in a large rural town on the South Coast of NSW. The service has been established for many years, with several owners throughout its lifetime. The service is for-profit and is currently owned by a local provider who has a sister service (long day care) in the same town and an out-of-school-hours service. The building is owned by the Baptist Church which operates from the floor above. The grounds are sloping which reduces the amount of space for play and creates hazards for younger children who are not so sure on their feet. There are three separate environments within the service: 0-2 years; 2-3 years; and 3-5 years. There are two separate outdoor play environments.**

The majority of the staff has remained stable over the past few years. The director has held her position for more than 10 years. The service employs an early childhood teacher, and diploma – and certificate III – trained educators. The owner has degrees in primary education, early childhood education and special education.

The service receives inclusion support funding for the 3-5 age group to assist with the inclusion of all children, two of whom have diagnosed disabilities. The team has continually sought support from the local Inclusion Support Facilitator to provide strategies for including all children.

The service has a long history of supporting the inclusion of children with additional needs and developing and maintaining relationships with local support agencies and schools.

Staff members at Surf Beach Child Care Centre consider themselves to be inclusive educators who have supported children with additional needs for many years.

There are three children in the three to five year group with behavioural issues. The dynamics within the group can throw everyone off and staff members have found that no one way of dealing with an issue is effective for all. Staff members have identified that dealing with one child can inflame the situation for another.

Other issues include: the transition from outdoors to indoors; children not actively engaging in any kind of play; experience or social situation; the end-of-day procedures with the distraction of parents and the phone; and the needs of children for attention at any point during the day. If staff do not focus on specific children, the children can become destructive.

The challenging behaviours the team has identified in children include hitting, kicking, jumping off furniture, swearing and being destructive, especially to other children's play environments or constructions. Aggressive behaviours are shown towards children and adults, and occur in front of other parents. Children within all care environments were not feeling safe.

“When dealing with behaviours and effective

**“Educators now take a step back and consider how they will deal with a situation before rushing in. They decided, in consultation with families, what they were prepared to ignore, what was acceptable and what behaviours needed immediate attention.”**



methods of encouraging positive interactions, were we overlooking others and could what we were doing with some children be seen by others as rewarding inappropriate behaviours?”, they wondered.

“How do you reward everyone when things are going well?”

The team does not use one specific tool to identify parts of the program that can be improved. They use on-the-floor discussions to determine how the day is progressing and raise issues at staff meetings. Professional development opportunities to support the issue or SMART goals are then identified along with support strategies. If relevant, they use the QIP to assist with strategies. They are also looking at developing a way to record or identify the achievement of a goal.

As for addressing behaviours and ensuring everyone is on-board with the strategy, the director asked the Inclusion Support Facilitator for assistance. The director and owner then together considered the proposed strategies. They looked at people’s roles and re-evaluated positions to ensure everyone was participating equally.

As the director was the consistent educator tackling behavioural issues and working with children to support participation, her role became more flexible, allowing her to move from one care environment to the other and providing her with sound knowledge of all aspects of the centre, including educators’ expectations, children’s abilities and any issues. She could provide support and guidance for educators working with challenging behaviours and maintain other aspects of her role.

After introducing strategies, the educators agreed that consistency was important, everyone needed to be on the same page about expectations, and staff had to be aware of judgement calls they may need to make.

Parents were invited to participate in sessions to ensure strategies discussed and instigated at the service could also be used at home. Parental feedback about what worked at home and how they dealt with the identified behavioural issues assisted in developing consistent expectations.

## Surf Beach Child Care Centre cont.

To target challenging behaviours, an initial staff professional development session on inclusion and using visual supports was held. An Allied Health team session followed discussing visual communication systems and further strategies for challenging behaviours, including **social stories** to use both individually and in group situations.

The training focus was on accentuating the positive. This means looking for positives in all children and praising appropriately. Communication methods were reviewed, highlighting the need for consistent messages that are easily understood and provide a positive message. Staff members acknowledged that they needed more support. After training, educators were more accepting and their expectations changed.

The service identified the need for some educators to avoid making judgements based on prior knowledge and that they needed to deal with barriers to professional development. They reflected on whether the educators were making effective use of the additional worker in the room. In doing that they also identified the need to reflect on what attributes they were looking for in the additional worker, as well as educators.

This reflective process had them considering their interactions and whether they were creating a positive environment, the effectiveness of the programs, a consistency of approach and whether they were engaging with all children. They identified that the previous pattern of having to police environments meant many children were being ignored or had little or no interaction with educators.

Educators now take a step back and consider how they deal with a situation before rushing in. They decided, in consultation with families, what they were prepared to ignore, what was acceptable and what behaviours needed immediate attention.

Educators have worked on ensuring consistency in approaches, including consistent use of phrases when communicating with specific children. The end-of-day routine has changed, enabling the team to remain more engaged with the children. Family grouping is used at this time and the groups stay separated until much later in the day. Children feel much safer with the new



arrangement. A large nature area has been introduced and is popular with the children as it provides for inventive play.

The quiet area has been relocated and increased in size. It was originally near the kitchen, but this area was noisy and distracting for children. Social stories are available for all children to use and educators use these tools individually and in group situations.

The toddler room, which is used for family groupings in the evening, has had a makeover to be more like home. Resources and furnishings have been relocated and large windows now create a more visually appealing environment.

Educators have tapped in to local support agencies for professional development and they are currently looking to change groups in relation to dynamics and group size.

The group struggled to reach its goals for a while during the transition stage, but everyone acknowledged the worth of the exercise and the positive results. The environment is safer and calmer, positive interactions have increased while negativity has decreased, and staff members feel more supported and able to cope.

The team identified the need to ensure all new and casual staff have a thorough orientation process



that includes the goals and objectives for positive engagement. Educators are no coping better, are more prepared to share the load, be supportive of each other and will remind each other to stay focused and find the positive. The team is more relaxed and more cohesive. Professionalism and benchmarking have also improved.

The team is maintaining these changes through continual open communication and orientation to practices and expanding on the social stories available for the children. Each educator is aiming to work on one thing at a time, be patient and consistent and use staff meetings to reflect and measure practices.

The educators are working on building boxes for children. These areas of interest can be used as an opportunity to 'get away' for periods of time, late in the afternoon or as part of the planned methods of meeting everyone's needs.

The team has raised the benchmark for the service. The starting point in relation to issues has changed, moving beyond knee-jerk reactions, identifying triggers for behaviour and having strategies in place that work. Embedding SMART goals and strategies involving relationships with children and families within the QIP will provide measurable outcomes.

***Social stories are short descriptions of real life situations that help children with autism and other disabilities to understand what they might expect from a specific situation or event, or to better interpret the circumstances surrounding something they may be experiencing. Social stories are useful in preparing children for situations before they happen.***

***Social stories are helpful in assisting children to:***

- ***learn self-care and social skills;***
- ***understand why people behave in a particular way or to understand their own behaviour;***
- ***how to understand and address emotions e.g. anger and fear;***
- ***how to cope with change, transition and events that could be distressing***

***[autismspectrum.org.au/](http://autismspectrum.org.au/)***

***An example of a social story is included in Appendix 5.***



## Case Study 12

# Theaslea Preschool

**Theaslea Preschool is set among five acres at Colo Vale, in the NSW Southern Highlands. The relaxed, rural centre caters for two-to-five year olds and has been operating for more than 20 years.**

The centre owner/operator describes the rise in challenging behaviours over the past 20 years as a reflection of modern society. "There appears to be a lot going on with families and many of them leave their children for long periods of the day as they travel to out-of-area work places".

The view of challenging behaviours is not classified through inappropriate behaviours such as aggression or fighting. A challenging behaviour is one that educators are puzzled by and are struggling with how they can support those children.



The service was challenged a few years ago by one particular young girl. She came from a dysfunctional family which included separated parents, one using drugs and the other incarcerated. This girl's daily behaviour included anger, defiance and aggression. However, for most of the day she was a leader, had many friends and was incredibly likeable. The educators were puzzled about how best to manage her. She appeared to switch from the likeable child who was playing nicely to an aggressive child who liked to throw things. The educators decided they needed to take a survival duty of care approach. Then they used a calming, self-regulating program, supporting her to recognise her behaviour and the consequences. After an incident, the educators would support this child back into general play without judgement.

*An example of a Child Support Plan is included in Appendix 3. These plans can assist educators in addressing challenging behaviour to ensure the child is included in the service.*

**“As a service, they want all the children to feel that this is a safe and positive environment.”**

They set about doing a **Child Support Plan** and looked at the triggers throughout the day. These were hard to identify as there didn't appear to be any obvious ones. However, it was their management of the behaviour that put all educators on the same page. If the girl started getting aggressive and throwing toys, tables and chairs the educators would remove all the other children to a safe area. If they were outside when the incident happened, they went inside. If they were inside, they would go outside. They took the approach that all the other children needed to be safe first, then the educators. The child who was throwing things would be safely monitored by one educator. On one particular occasion the child was throwing tables and chairs. They allowed this to continue until she was utterly spent and just sat on the floor. Then they used the calming approach. One educator would ask if she needed a cuddle and assist her to **self-regulate** to a point where she was calm. This would allow that educator to discuss with her what happened and what else she could do. The educator would begin cleaning up and offer the child the option of assisting. The child usually complied with this as she had already calmed down and could see that this was to her benefit. After the room was cleaned up, the educator would support this child back into general play with the other children. At no point did the educator/s insist that this child 'say sorry' or make her clean up. They took the approach that they wanted this child to recognise the appropriate way to behave and that she would do this with the right support and encouragement. The educators in this service use a lot of positive language and encouragement with their children.

As a service, they want all of the children to feel that this is a safe and positive environment. However, children do need to be able to express themselves and how they are feeling. This young girl did express how she was feeling and she certainly was challenging for the educators. The way that the educators assisted this child was suitable for that situation. Forcing that child to do certain things would have resulted in this child exhibiting more defiant behaviours which would have escalated the situation.

### **Supporting Self-Regulation**

**Some examples of how educators can support a child's self-regulation:**

- **rhythm (e.g. drum beat and having predictable routines);**
- **environment (e.g. quiet area such as a tent or cubby and visual supports);**
- **sensory input (e.g. body sock/ lycra tunnel and jumping on the trampoline)**

## Case Study 13

# Fun Club @ Balarang

### Identifying Behaviours

**The centre says that educators have identified a selection of behaviours that present different challenges to team members. They range from behaviours that are isolating or self-involving for the child to physical reactions to stimuli. The behaviours include answering back or ignoring requests, no engagement in the program, aimless wandering or being unsettled, absconding from the centre and ongoing bickering with other children. Physical and verbal abuse, destruction of property, bullying and throwing missiles like rocks and sand are also dealt with.**

### Scripted Sentences

*Scripted sentences support children with processing difficulties or when a child is aroused or reactive. When aroused, the child may be unable to process a great deal of information or instruction. Scripted sentences, when delivered as short, simple consistent messages, can assist in directing and supporting a child to connect. The sentence needs to be clear and no more than 3-4 words e.g. Stop, hands down, Sit at the table.*

Identifying the behaviours that need to be addressed is the first step in a successful program. The team is united in its belief that a team strategy is paramount to getting the best result. The most positive outcome is one in which the educators feel empowered and the children are able to reflect on their behaviour, with access to a safe 'out' to minimise embarrassment and allow them to save face in front of their peers.

To reach consensus on dealing with behaviours, a simple and fluid four-step process is followed that involves: observation of the children, the environment and the situation; general discussion with individual educators; team meetings; and 'after an incident' reflections. Getting the most out of this basic process is directly aligned with communication between the team members to ensure a common approach for dealing with behavioural issues.

The first step is to identify the actual issue that needs to be dealt with. This includes identifying: what the behaviour is; which children are affected; when does it occur the most; what are the triggers; and what behaviours can be used as warning signs. From this point, the extent of the issue can be determined. Each educator is consulted for their views or feelings about the behaviour and to understand whether this behaviour occurs in relation to all educators or whether some are affected more than others. They can reflect on their personal reactions and triggers to certain behaviours. This also allows the educators to determine if they feel able to respond appropriately to the behaviours.

Once the individual parameters are understood, the team brainstorms ideas based on what has been tried before and what has worked previously. The team discusses any changes that people feel should be made to the program or the environment, what changes can actually be made and how the team members can help each other deal with certain behaviours. At this time, research using Kids Matter and Kids Spot, for example, can help define opportunities to modify behaviour.

From the team discussions, educators can agree on a strategy that is both suitable and comfortable for all involved to implement. One example the team has initiated is the use of **one-word prompts** like "hat", "ball" and "chair" to take the nagging or talking out of **a request**. Children have responded well to this initiative because they already know what the educator wants from them. Similarly, the use of a happy tone and saying "Can you try that again" when faced with rudeness or swearing has fostered good results.





Team consistency in the approach during implementation and trial is the key to success. Evaluation and reflection after an incident, either through a general chat that afternoon or later at a team meeting is beneficial to ensuring ongoing results. Reflection is important because it allows team members to determine if they felt empowered by the strategy or whether an approach needs tweaking or changing.

Because some challenging behaviours were presenting on arrival, the team changed its supervision roster for this period, placing educators in various areas to make them more accessible to children who liked to chat and allowing them to supervise children outside who are taking part in physical activity.

Indoor and outdoor educational leaders have been appointed and they are responsible for having areas set up and ready to go when the children arrive. This makes separate areas inviting and defined and includes, but is not limited to, creative art, a quiet area and outdoor games. There are more hands-on activities for children to take part in such as building tree houses, gardening, Krafts with Kath and free play to explore and discover. This is replaced later in the afternoon with fire gazing, story time, singing and dancing around the fire.

The results have been encouraging. The children are more engaged and look forward to joining in activities because they are inviting and follow their interests. They are also more settled or settle faster and outbursts are not sustained for as long as they were in the past.

Even the educators are enjoying the changes. They spend more time in positive interactions with the children and are being challenged to both maintain activities and 'change it up' periodically in order to keep the momentum rolling.

While evaluation of and reflection on the program is ongoing, the education team is also incorporating new thinking into its strategy and is now looking at how to include more **safe risk-taking activities** for the children.

### Safe Risk Taking

*Risk does not always have a negative outcome. Many positives can come from taking risks. Therefore, it can be helpful to think as risk being divided into two components:*

#### A CHALLENGE:

*something obvious to the child where he/she can determine their ability and decide whether to take that risk*

#### A HAZARD:

*something unseen or not obvious to the child that often results in injury!*

**kidsafensw.org**

## Case Study 14

# Fun Club @ Bulli

**Fun Club @ Bulli is located at Bulli Public Primary School. A difficult physical environment and an array of behaviours that require a high level of support affect its operations.**

The service operates from a demountable building which includes the school canteen. The school fronts a main road and, because it takes up an entire block, it is surrounded by roads. The low fences pose a risk to some children who attempt to abscond. Fun Club has access to the school playing field and an undercover area, however neither is easily supervised. The toilet block is at the rear of the building, out of site of the demountable and has no covered walkway, making supervision a challenge.

The indoor area is a long room with minimal storage so resources need to be chosen carefully. The service can set up and leave some items out in the room each day.

Since the service began operating it has enrolled children with challenging and aggressive behaviours. The service includes a large number of children from the local Aspect school for Autism who require high levels of support with transitioning and settling in to after school care, and adjusting to expectations and the areas allowed to be accessed.

In this setting there are children who have difficulties with peer interactions and reading social cues when entering and exiting play. Some children can become reactive and disruptive in the environment. The group dynamics each day can affect play and social interactions with conflicts occasionally arising. Due to the variety of ages, ranging from five to 12 years old, in the one setting, there can be difficulties with sharing and the need to take turns.

Wet weather can affect the setting and dynamics because at these times children only have access to indoor and veranda areas.

These factors have led to such challenging behaviour as physical and verbal aggression, with children and educators injured when children have become aggressive. The service has also experienced two children, when acting out, attempting to abscond or access areas outside of designated areas.

Several children with a diagnosis of Oppositional Defiance Disorder, Conduct Disorder and Foetal Alcohol Syndrome have attended the service. At times, these children have difficulty following instructions and expectations in the setting.

**“One simple move that we have found reduces anxiety and children feeling overwhelmed in the room is to provide tidy and organised areas”**



The educators have found it is important to have debriefs at the end of each session incorporating critical reflection of an incident or behaviour. Parents are kept informed and the educators work with them to find a resolution. Current practices are reviewed as well as strategies in supporting the child/ room and how they are working. The educators have regular staff meetings to discuss ongoing challenges or issues.

As a team the service reflects on the program and the challenges. The team members look at what is happening in the environment. Are children acting out more than is normal within the setting? Are the children engaging in play or experiences with purpose or do they require a high level of educator direction or support to participate?

These questions help to identify what is and is not working in the environment.

As a team, when setting up and preparing for ASC, educators discuss who will be attending and make adjustments to suit the group dynamics or interests. The strategies developed with the Inclusion Support Facilitator and the team are reviewed regularly, to maintain consistency in the setting.

At the end of each session the educators have brief discussions regarding what went well and what didn't work in the setting. They can then feed this into the next session and program.

Educators have integrated children's interests into the program and encourage children to facilitate play and experiences based on their interests. As a result the educators, along with the children, have created interest areas in the setting. One example is a group of children that wanted to start a NERD club, so educators explored the idea and supported the children in developing the club.

The director says it is important to have all the educators on board in supporting all children in the environment. She encourages a cohesive team that can share some laughs, keep things in perspective and support each other. It is important to facilitate good communication and respectful relationships within the team.

The director acknowledges educators' concerns and gives them the opportunity to discuss their difficulties in providing care for children with challenging or aggressive behaviours or high support needs. From



## Fun Club @ Bulli cont.



this information the team members discuss the safety implications for children and educators when supporting children who may be reactive and displaying behaviours identified as physically or verbally aggressive. This is combined with the need to support all children and each other.

The director requested the support of the Inclusion Support Facilitator when several children displaying aggression and attending the centre posed risks to educators and children. They applied for an additional worker to support the care environment and support educators in implementing some changes in the setting.

Through discussion with the Inclusion Support Facilitator and all educators, the team brainstormed support strategies for children in the setting using visual supports, scripted sentences, a crisis prevention stance, the need to provide consistency within the setting with expectations and consequences, and following children's cues.

Educators reviewed the room layout and how furniture was placed in order to create an indoor space with lots of small play spaces aimed at reducing running areas. The team created quiet play areas and areas where children could be calm, and used a variety of furniture sizes to cater for the multiple ages and sizes of the children. The area now has age-appropriate chairs and tables and older children can sit at adult-sized tables.

One simple move that reduces anxiety and children feeling overwhelmed in the room is to provide tidy and organised areas. The educators now set up areas with items ready for play each day and make changes to resources so children don't become bored with them.

There is now an indoor/outdoor program to reduce internal noise along with soft furnishings inside to help keep things quieter.

**Painting the room with calm colours** has made it more aesthetically pleasing and educators provide varied interest-based experiences with lots of free choice and more sensory play experiences such as a sandpit or mud play.

Educators identified the need to provide a high level of support and guidance for children to enter and exit play. They also engage in more reflective questioning of the children and encourage those who have difficulties with social interactions to problem-solve, reflect and resolve.

Educators have set up timers to support sharing and turn taking. Children now place their name on waiting lists for their turn at toys like the air hockey table where waiting chairs are also provided.

The changes made by the team are already showing results.

The children are more engaged in the setting and experiences and are becoming better at waiting their turn and sharing.

They support each other at play and with experiences, offering help. They are becoming more attuned to children with difficulties and more tolerant and supportive of them.

The children are using the same scripted sentences as educators to support children when they are having difficulties. These include "stop, hands down" and "we sit to eat".

The educators are displaying more confidence in working and supporting children with challenging or difficult behaviours and are attuned to children's cues. They are consistent in their approach and have taken on more responsibility for areas in the program and setting.

The educators are aware of and encouraging children to reflect on their actions and the consequences of their choices in the environment.

An issue arising from the changes is that occasionally typically-developing children question why some children have exemptions from After School Care expectations. There can be difficulties with casual educators as they may question why some children are allowed more tolerance in regard to play and interactions. This may include an outside child without shoes or hat as this task may have been identified as a trigger for behaviour escalation when previously



**“To reach consensus on dealing with behaviours, a simple and fluid four-step process is followed that involves: observation of the children, the environment and the situation; general discussion with individual educators; team meetings; and ‘after an incident’ reflections.”**

pursued by educators. The service discusses why it allows exemptions for some children.

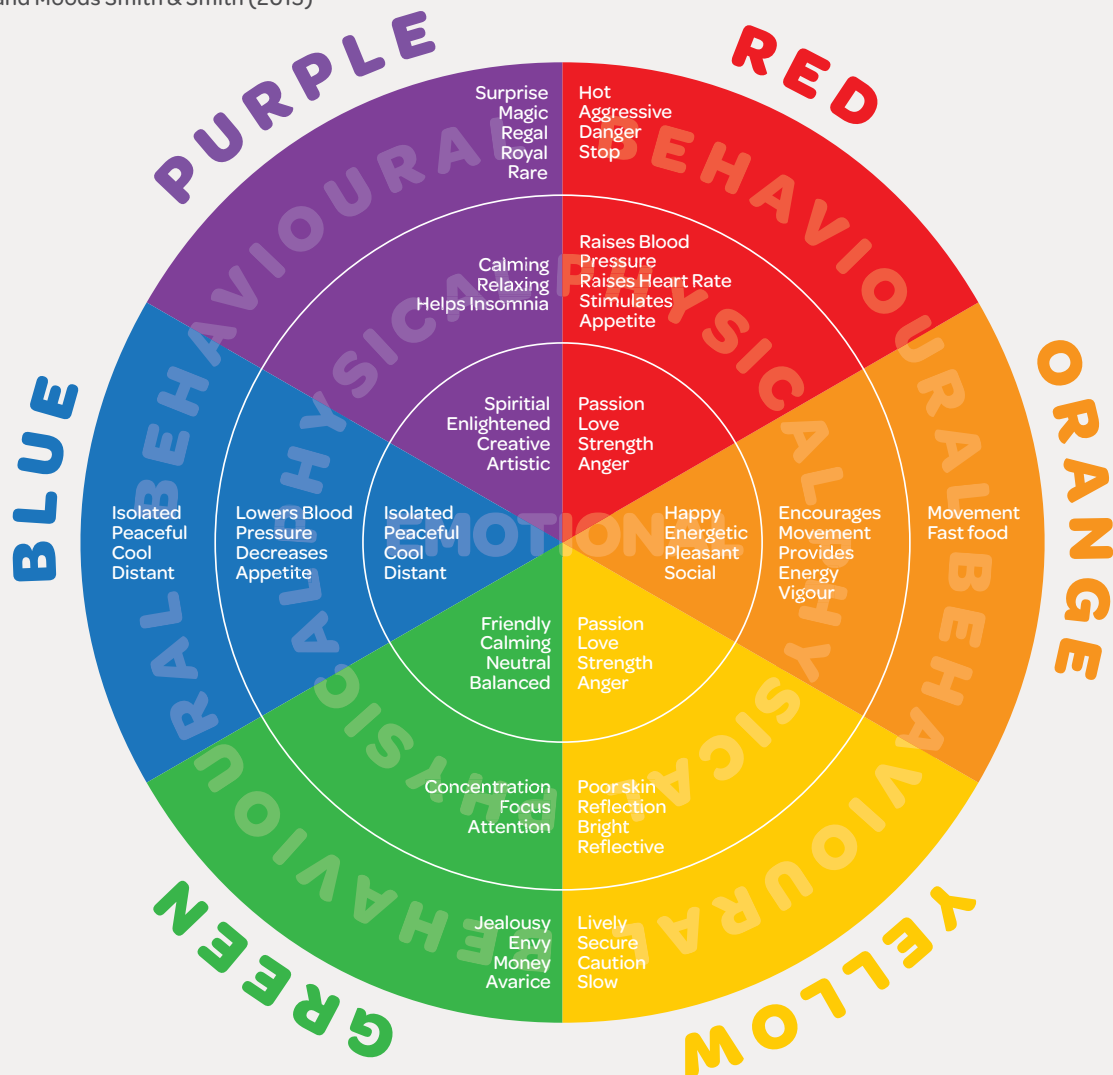
The room layout changes made to support children have, at times, affected other children and some parents have complained about having to weave through the room but, overall, the changes have been positive. When parents expressed concern the educators discussed the rationale for the changes and supporting all children in the environment.

The director has stated it is an ongoing process in supporting the environment when dealing with aggression and reactive behaviours. It is important to keep momentum going which is about being self-driven and maintaining good communications and respectful relationships with educators and children.

It is also about embracing and trialling educator ideas in the setting and using evidence-based observation to support any changes.

## Colour and Moods

Colour and Moods Smith & Smith (2015)



## Appendix 1

# Guided Relaxation for Children

There are many resources available online with scripts for guided relaxation and yoga poses for children.

Following is an example script you might use:

*(Once your child is lying down and comfortable, simply repeat the following, speak slowly and deliberately. Pause or exaggerate the underlined words or when it feels comfortable)*

**1** Let's learn how to relax our bodies and minds tonight. Are you comfortable? OK, now let's start with something called a Balloon Breath. Let's breath in very deeply and fill up our tummy like we're filling up a big balloon. Doesn't that fill good? Give your balloon a colour. What colour is your balloon? Make it really big and beautiful, as you fill it up completely. Breathing in from your nose, fill up your balloon completely and when it's full, exhale the air out and watch your balloon completely deflate! Isn't that amazing? Again a very deep breath, and now, exhale... very good.

**2** Now imagine that you are floating on a huge, white cloud. Feel how this fluffy light cloud totally supports your body and makes you feel so peaceful and light. The cloud seems to wrap itself around you so comfortably so you feel safe and warm. You have a feeling of being loved and cared for. It feels so great. Feel yourself floating on this soft wispy cloud, enjoying the gentle motion of this loving cloud as it glides and softly sways. There is a feeling of total peace and easiness... it feels so wonderful to just relax here.

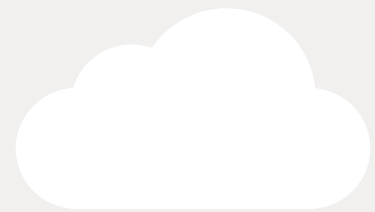
**3** Now in just a moment, there is a large balloon that is going to float up near your float. This balloon is your blow away worry balloon. It's going to take away any worry you have, far, far away. See that balloon coming up, floating close to your cloud. Picture the balloon any color you want.





*Script: Mellisa Dormoy, copyright ShambalaKids 2013.  
ShambalaKids.com*

*Additional scripts are available to download at [greenchildmagazine.com/guided-relaxation/](http://greenchildmagazine.com/guided-relaxation/)*



**4** Now, put any worry of fear you have up into the balloon...just watch that worry go into the balloon and see how tightly and nicely the big balloon holds onto that worry for you. Whatever it is that you are worried about, just see that going into the big balloon. Feel it lifting up out of your body and going straight into that balloon. The balloon is helping you and loves to take away that worry for you. Now, the balloon is quickly floating far far away. In the distance now, you see that balloon just pops a HUGE pop! And your worry is completely gone! How wonderful that feels! Now you see another balloon floating up to you on your nice fluffy cloud. This balloon is a different colour. What colour is this balloon? Now this is another blow away worry balloon and it's here to help! So put another worry into this balloon and watch it do the same as the first did.... it quickly floats far far away and then POPS! Wow... this is **really** amazing!

**5** *(Continue with new balloons coming until you ask...)*

Do you need any more balloons or are all your worries gone? (Proceed according to the children's' answers, if there are more worries, use more balloons, if not continue with script). If you look below you now, you will see that in fact there is someone down there sending up these beautiful helpful big balloons to you. It's someone you love very much and who loves you very much! How wonderful it is to know you are so loved and cared for! Wave to that person and send love back as a Thank You! Just by imagining you are sending love to that person, you are. So send love now.

**6** Now that all your worries are gone, you start to feel the sun shining it's beautiful warm rays done on you. You start to feel a very warm, loving feeling in your heart. You feel so wonderful and so loved! You are such a wonderful and special child! You are unique and amazing. Always remember that and keep that special feeling in your heart all the time. There is no one else like you. You are a very important part of the Universe and no one can do exactly what you do in the way you do it.

Now when you are ready, you can float back down on your soft cloud and back to this room. It was a wonderful journey!

## Appendix 2

# How to Use the Feelings Chart

### The Chart

The purpose of this chart is to provide a visual support to assist a child to identify and label what they may be experiencing. The visual can be used as a reference point when talking to the child about their emotions – its building their skills to self-monitor.

### Preparing to use the Chart

Prior to using the chart it is important to consider the level of understanding the child/children have around 'feelings'. Regular discussion about what feelings are, when we might feel them and the associated physical sensations/changes we experience in our bodies when these feelings arise are important. It can be a useful strategy to have a template of a body outline and sit with the child and allow the child to colour in the area of the body where they feel a sensation when an emotion is experienced. For example, they may colour in their chest when they are worried because they feel their heart beating faster.

### Introducing the Chart to Children

The chart can be introduced in small group settings. Talk about feelings with the children and ask them questions like "what makes you feel angry / Upset? What makes you calm / ok?"

### Using the Chart

When talking to a child you can use the chart as a reference "I can see that you look calm and you are playing well. How are you feeling?"



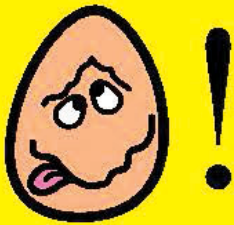

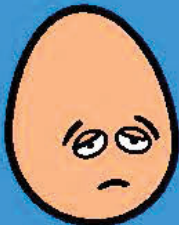
When you can see a child beginning to escalate you could use it and say "I can see you are feeling a bit tense, your shoulders are up and breathing heavy. How are you feeling?"

It can be useful to have a laminated picture of a child's face and allow the child to place their picture beside the emotion they are experiencing.

When a child is in the red zone you may decide not to use the chart as a reference point and instead focus on helping them with strategies to calm their body. When they are calm you could then talk to them about it. For example "Before when you were cranky you were hitting your friend and threw the toys, you were in the red zone. How did you feel doing that? What are some activities that make you calm and ready to be with your friends?"

It is also important when using this chart to validate the child's feelings and reassure them that it is okay to feel e.g. angry. Sometimes, as adults we have this idea that we should be "happy" all the time and this is unrealistic. Happiness is like any other emotion, it comes and goes. If a child is feeling angry/upset, frustrated/worried for example we can validate the feeling and assist the child with effective strategies to feel 'okay' again instead of suggesting that being happy all the time is the expected emotion.

# Feelings Chart

	<p>angry / upset</p> 
	<p>frustrated / worried</p> 
	<p>silly / excited</p> 
	<p>ok / calm</p> 
	<p>tired / sad</p> 

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## What educators may see

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## What the child may feel

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Flight or fight mode</li><li>• Aggressive behaviour / striking out</li><li>• Yelling / disruptive behaviour</li><li>• Over-reactions to what educators see as a minor issue</li><li>• Unable to be reasoned with</li><li>• Meltdown</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hair on back of neck raised</li><li>• About to explode / exploding</li><li>• Can't take anymore / needs help</li><li>• Heart racing</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Body becoming tense (shoulders raised, neck stiff)</li><li>• Breathing quickening</li><li>• Facial expressions changing</li><li>• Absconding</li><li>• Defiant</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stomach churning</li><li>• Starting to become tense</li><li>• Feeling unwell but not sure why</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Laughing inappropriately</li><li>• Disengaged</li><li>• Inappropriate interactions</li><li>• Getting a little louder</li><li>• Not listening to instructions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Body is buzzing</li><li>• Erratic movements</li><li>• Starting to become over-stimulated</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Smiling</li><li>• Engaged</li><li>• Positive interactions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Happy</li><li>• Level / Balanced / Regulated</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Drowsy</li><li>• Not engaged</li><li>• Crying</li><li>• Meltdown</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tired</li><li>• Wanting to be alone</li><li>• No one cares about me</li></ul>



## Appendix 3

# Child Support Plan

Headings change to suit the child's needs

<b>Behaviour of Concern:</b> (Leading to)		
<b>Personal Profile</b>	<b>What escalates me?</b>	<b>I find it hard when?</b>
<b>Strategies to prevent behaviour</b>	<b>What calms me down?</b>	<b>When I'm upset I need</b>
<b>My Interests</b>		

Early Childhood Centres

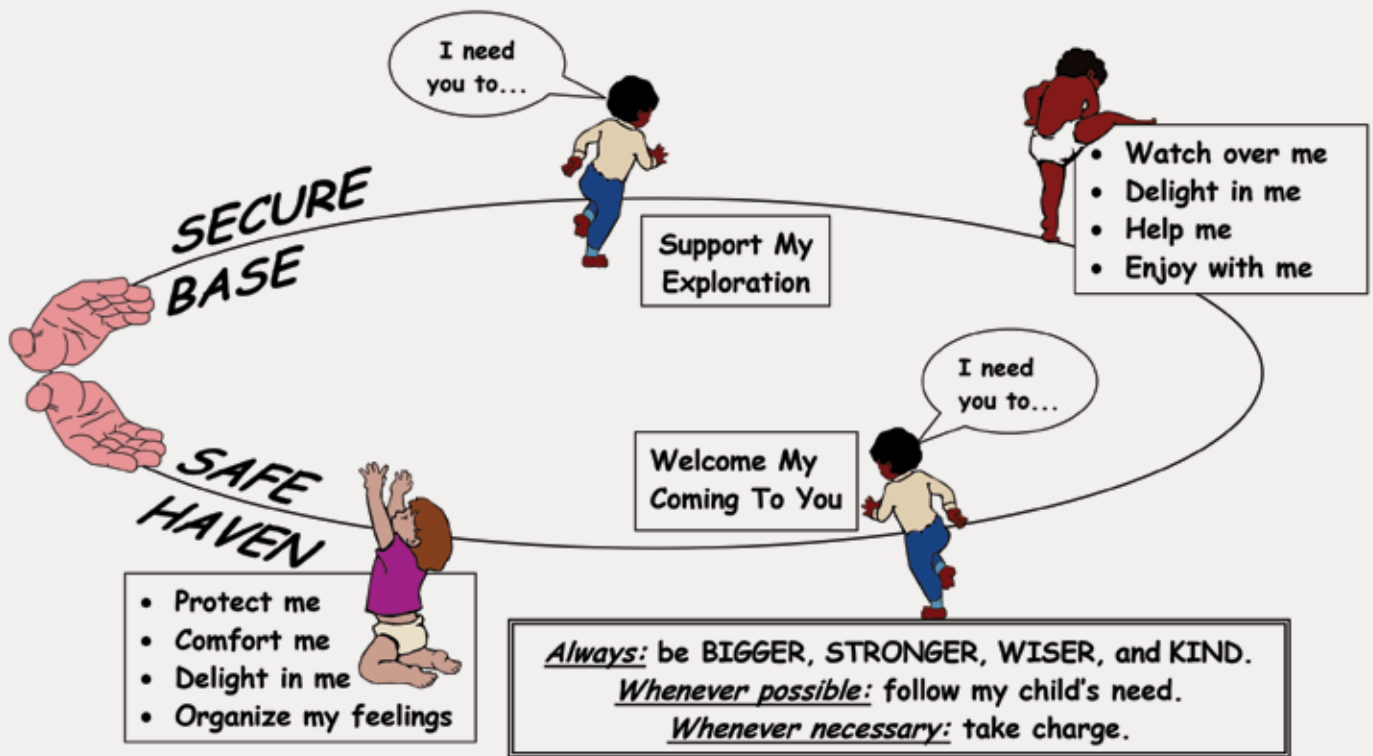
Outside School  
Hours Care

Appendix

# Circle of Security

## CIRCLE OF SECURITY

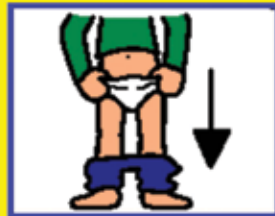
PARENT ATTENDING TO THE CHILD'S NEEDS



© 1998 Cooper, Hoffman, Marvin, & Powell  
circleofsecurity.org

# Social Story – Toileting

Pull down underwear



Sit down on toilet



Get toilet paper

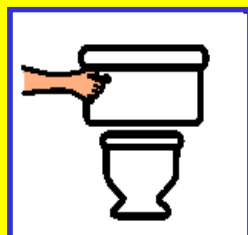


## Social Story – Toileting cont.

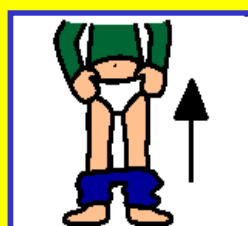
Put toilet paper in toilet



Flush toilet



Pull up pants

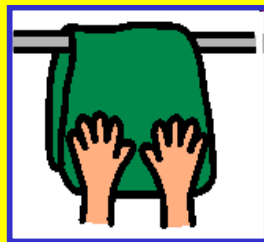




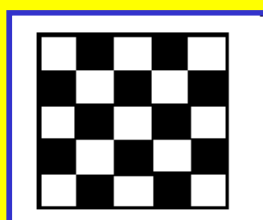
Wash hands



Dry hands

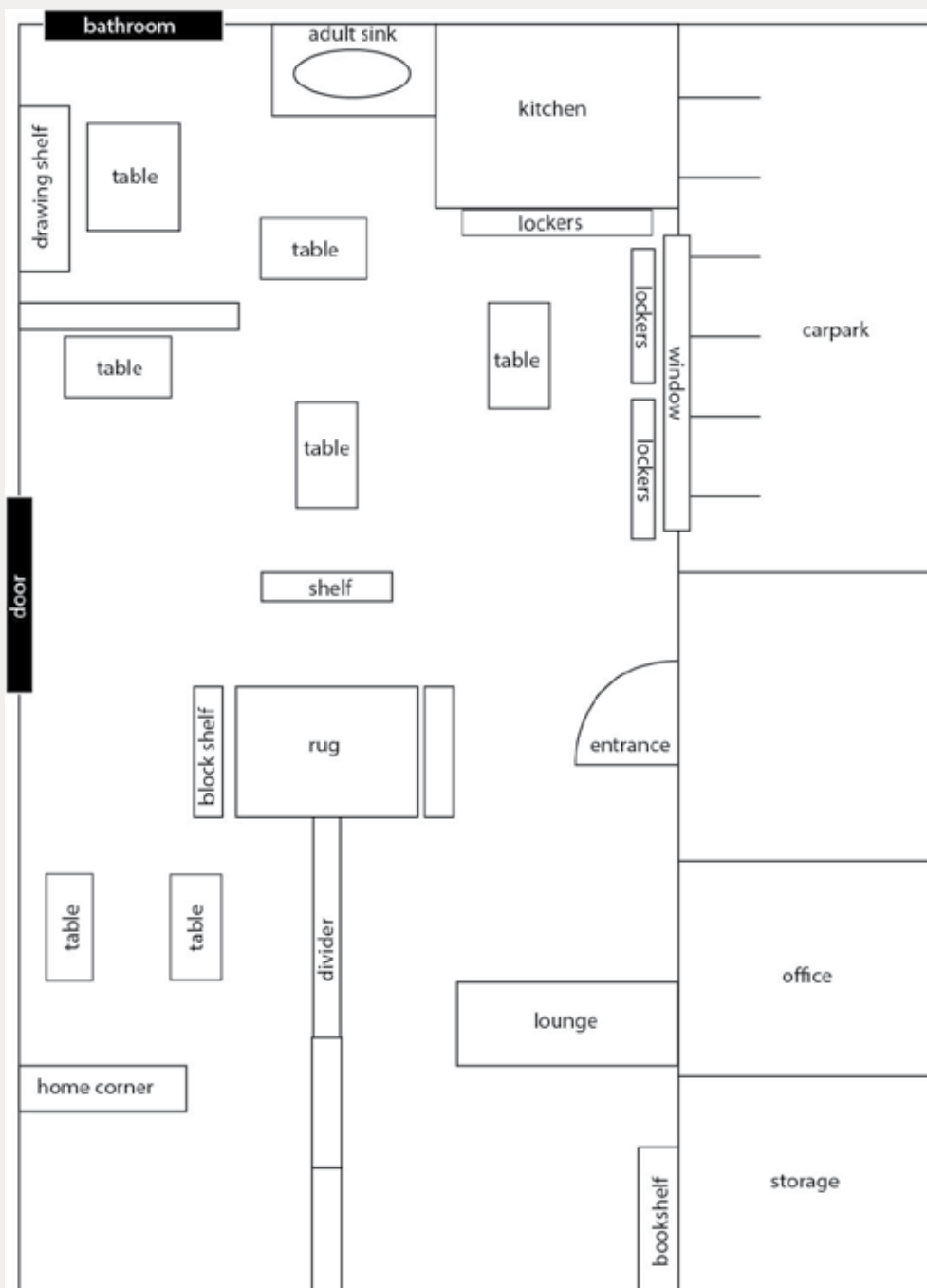


Finished. Good work!

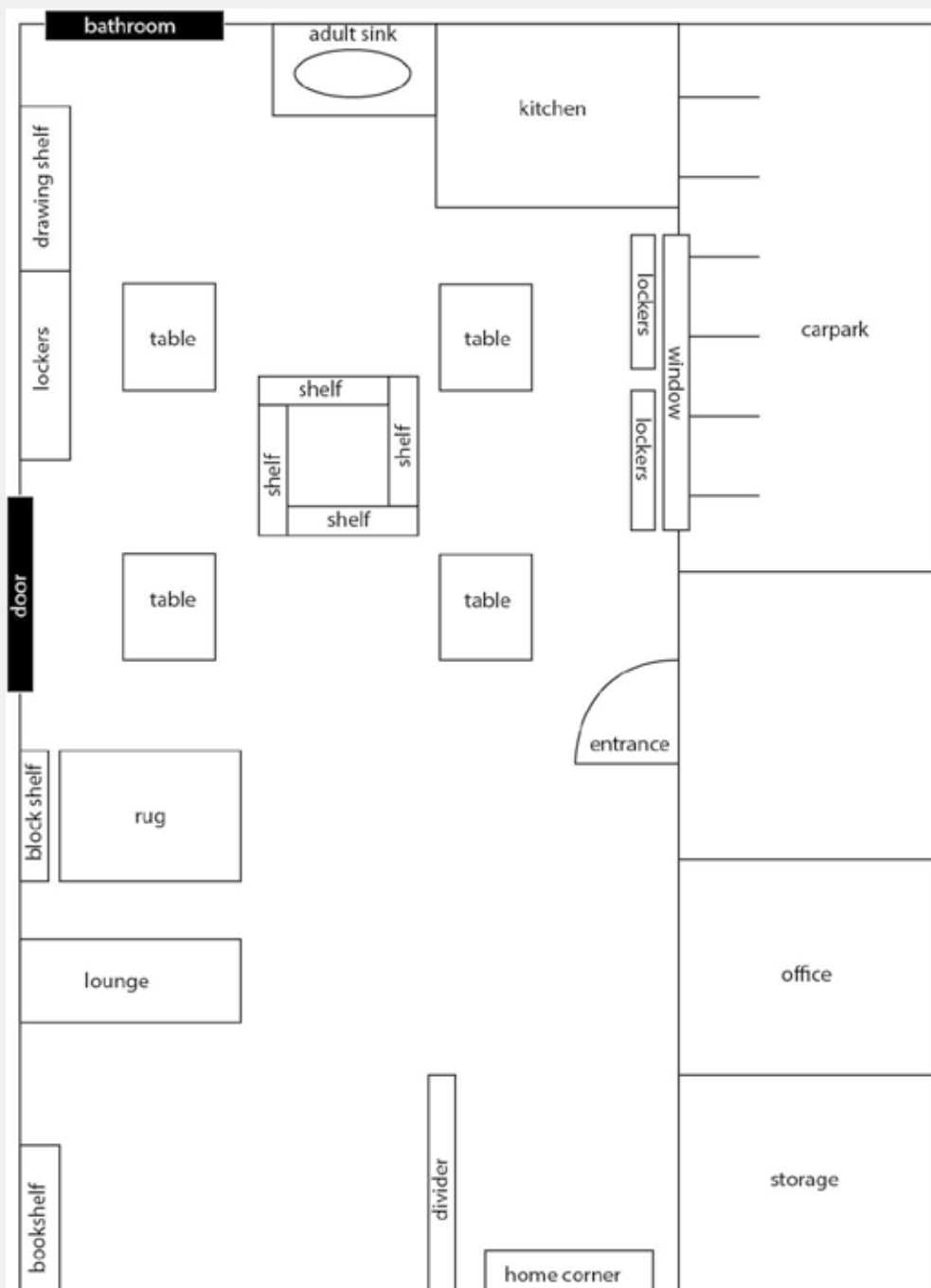


# Room layout changes at Kiama Stars of the Future Early Learning Centre

## Before changes



# After changes



## Appendix 7

# Useful links and resources

A Package of Information for Managing Challenging Behaviour  
[centresupport.com.au](http://centresupport.com.au)

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ACECQA  
[acecqa.gov.au](http://acecqa.gov.au)

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Autism Spectrum Australia  
[autismspectrum.org.au](http://autismspectrum.org.au)

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Cerebral Palsy Alliance  
[cerebralpalsy.org.au](http://cerebralpalsy.org.au)

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Early Childhood Australia  
[earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au](http://earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au)

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ECIA NSW/ACT Inclusion Tool  
[ecia-nsw.org.au](http://ecia-nsw.org.au)

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Learning Links  
[learninglinks.org.au](http://learninglinks.org.au)

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PALS Social Skills Program  
[palsprogram.com.au](http://palsprogram.com.au)

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Raising Children  
[raisingchildren.net.au](http://raisingchildren.net.au)

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The Autism Advisory and Support Service  
[aass.org.au](http://aass.org.au)

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The Circle of Security: Roadmap to building supportive relationships  
[earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au](http://earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au)

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Understanding Children's Behaviour: Self-Guided Learning Package  
[gowrievictoria.org.au](http://gowrievictoria.org.au)

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Visual Aids for Learning  
[visualaidsforlearning.com](http://visualaidsforlearning.com)

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