



## **Behaviour support policy**

### **Introduction**

At Symphysis, our primary goal is to provide a safe, nurturing, and therapeutic environment for children who require Play Therapy services. We recognise that children may sometimes exhibit challenging behaviours during their sessions, and it is essential to address these behaviours effectively while maintaining a child-centred and trauma-informed approach. However, there is a common understanding by all those that work with children that sometimes children respond to difficult feelings that arise within the process of therapy, as children battle with understanding their feelings and experiences.

All behaviour, whether verbal or non-verbal, conscious or subconscious, serves as a form of communication, conveying thoughts, feelings, or intentions. All therapists at Symphysis respect that all behaviour, whether regardless of the presentation is communication. Therapists seek to understand and respond to behaviour therapeutically in line with child-centred practice.

This policy outlines our guidelines and procedures for managing challenging behaviour in our practice.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to all therapists, staff, and individuals working in connection with Symphysis (employed, contracted or working on behalf of Symphysis). It is designed to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to maintain the integrity of our practice.

### **Definitions**

#### **Challenging Behaviour**

Challenging behaviour refers to any conduct that disrupts the therapeutic process, endangers the child, the therapist, or other individuals, or negatively impacts the overall therapeutic experience. Challenging behaviours may include, but are not limited to, physical aggression, verbal aggression, self-harm, property destruction, or excessive non-compliance.

### **Guidelines for Addressing Challenging Behaviour.**

**Child-Centred Approach:** Our primary focus is on the well-being and emotional growth of the child. Therapists will adopt a child-centred approach when addressing challenging behaviours, emphasising empathy, understanding, and patience.

**Safety:** The safety of the child and others is paramount. Therapists will take immediate action to ensure the physical and emotional safety of everyone involved. If a child poses an imminent threat to themselves or others, therapists will follow established safety protocols.

**Communication:** Therapists will maintain open and honest communication with the child and their caregivers/parents. Clear and age-appropriate explanations will be provided regarding the consequences of challenging behaviour. Consequences may include the play therapy session ending earlier, a meeting with parents or carers before play therapy sessions can continue and other safety measures that may be necessary to keep the child, the therapist and others safe.

**Assessment:** Therapists will assess the underlying causes of challenging behaviour, considering any potential triggers, trauma, or emotional distress that may be contributing to these behaviours and use this information to inform the way in which they work with the child.

**Behavioural Support Plan:** A personalised behavioural support plan may be developed for the child if persistent challenging behaviour is identified. This plan will be developed collaboratively with the child's caregivers and will outline strategies for managing and reducing challenging behaviour.

**Consultation and Supervision:** In complex cases, therapists may seek consultation or supervision from experienced colleagues or clinical supervisors to ensure the most effective and ethical response to challenging behaviour.

**Documentation:** All incidents of challenging behaviour, along with the therapist's response, will be documented thoroughly and securely in the child's clinical record, following legal and ethical guidelines. These can be made available to parent upon request.

**Reflection and learning:** Following a significant incident of difficult behaviour the adults that were involved within the incident will reflect on the incident having the opportunity to reflect their thoughts and feelings following the incident. During the reflective period the team at Symphysis will identify what had triggered the incident, if anything could have been done differently and whether any additional support need to be put in place to ensure that the incident does not take place again such as shorter sessions, having an additional adult in the room or taking regular breaks within the session. As always, Symphysis will understand what learning can be taken from the incident and use it to inform practices in the future.

## **Use of force**

In our therapy practice, the use of force is strictly prohibited and contrary to our commitment to providing a safe and supportive environment for all clients. Our therapists are trained to employ non-coercive, empathetic, and compassionate approaches to address challenging behaviours, ensuring that the therapeutic process remains respectful and conducive to positive outcomes.

However, the use of force may be used when absolutely necessary as a **LAST RESORT** to ensure the immediate safety of the child/ young person or the therapist.

## **Safeguarding:**

In the case where a child's challenging behaviour provokes concerns which may be described as being of a safeguarding or child protection matter, the therapist will adhere to the Symphysis safeguarding/ child protection policy and procedure.

## **Confidentiality**

Information regarding challenging behaviours and behavioural support plans will be treated with the utmost confidentiality, in accordance with legal and ethical requirements. Only individuals directly involved in the child's care will have access to this information.

## **Conclusion**

Symphysis is committed to providing high-quality Play Therapy services while ensuring the safety and well-being of every child we serve. By following this Challenging Behaviour Policy, we aim to create a therapeutic environment where children can explore, heal, and grow in a secure and supportive setting.

This policy is subject to periodic review and updates to ensure its continued effectiveness in addressing challenging behaviours in a child-centred and trauma-informed manner.

**If you have any questions or queries regarding this policy and procedure, please speak to Lee Smith- his contact details can be found on the organisations website.**