

Behaviour: Practical Support at Home and School

Understanding behaviour after acquired brain injury

After a childhood acquired brain injury, recognising changes and making sense of the world can feel overwhelming.

For many children, this confusion shows through changes in behaviour.

Behaviour is often a way of communicating distress, frustration, tiredness, or unmet needs, rather than intentional defiance.

Every child is different, and what works for one child may not work for another.

Start with prevention

Preventing behaviour is often more effective than reacting after it has happened.

It can help to:

- Identify what triggers a behaviour
- Ask the child how they are feeling, for example using a scale of 1–10
- Notice patterns over time, such as certain times, places, or activities

Once triggers are understood, it may be possible to:

- Avoid certain situations
- Adapt activities
- Offer an alternative before behaviour escalates

Reacting after the event is often less effective, especially if the child struggles to understand why an adult is upset or responds strongly.

Respond calmly and consistently

When behaviour does occur:

- Try to respond in a neutral, predictable way
- Avoid reacting with anger or excessive attention
- Keep responses consistent across home and school

Consistency helps children feel safe and understand what to expect, even though behaviour may temporarily worsen before it improves.





Be consistent

Focusing on one behaviour at a time is usually more effective than trying to change everything at once. Consistency is key:

- All adults should respond in the same way
- Giving in occasionally can unintentionally reinforce behaviour
- Improvement takes time, and it is important not to give up too early

Use positive reinforcement

Praising and reinforcing positive behaviour is often more effective than punishment.

Helpful approaches include:

- Noticing and praising positive behaviour
- Ignoring minor negative behaviour where appropriate
- Using specific praise, explaining what you are pleased about

This helps the child understand what behaviour is expected and valued.

Measure progress

Change takes time, and progress can be easy to miss. Keeping a simple record can help track patterns and improvements, including:

- What the behaviour was
- What happened before, during, and after
- How adults responded

Sharing this information between home and school can help identify patterns and ensure consistent support.

Other things to consider

Behaviour can also be affected by:

- Fatigue
- Sensory sensitivities
- Changes in routine
- Emotional overload

Looking at the whole picture can help make behaviour easier to understand and manage



Support from the Child Brain Injury Trust

We offer free support, training, and resources for families and schools, including:

- Online learning sessions and webinars
- Advice from experienced Child and Family Support Coordinators
- Practical guidance tailored to individual needs

Find out more at



childbraininjurytrust.org.uk

Get in touch



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SO THEY CAN LEARN, THRIVE, AND FEEL UNDERSTOOD.**

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