

Developing a multidisciplinary environmental assessment for children with challenging behaviour

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Referrals for children with challenging behaviour to the Social Care Occupational Therapy (SCOT) Service have increased. These referrals often request risk assessment and provision of environmental safeguards in the family home. The OTs working in the team are mindful of the potential restrictions of freedom these requests could imply.

The OTs in the service reviewed information from BILD and the Challenging Behaviour Foundation, as well as consulting relevant legislation and local and national guidance including:

- Brighton and Hove Procedure for the use of Restrictive Practices
- Mental Capacity Act
- Human Rights Act
- Children Act.

The OTs also consulted with colleagues in CAMHS, Social Work and Legal, as well as involving the local Parents and Carers' Council leading to the following decisions about environmental restrictions:

- A multidisciplinary assessment which takes into account the wellbeing of the child and family is needed.
- The agreed solution should be the least restrictive option possible and the child should be allowed some risk taking.

Process guidance and assessment form for Environmental Safeguards for Children were developed. Developing a clear pathway and assessment for environmental adaptations for challenging behaviour has encouraged a multidisciplinary approach to assessment and to always attempt to find the least restrictive options. The review system means that safeguards are in place to prevent the misuse of restrictive interventions and to ensure that they remain appropriate.

Requests for equipment that restricts a child's freedom of movement have been increasing nationally for children's OTs. Through our consultation with OTs in other parts of the country it became apparent that others were also struggling to get multidisciplinary input and to ensure that safety concerns are balanced with a child's right to freedom. This guidance and assessment form is a way of addressing these issues that other services may want to consider.

References

Children Act (1989, 2004). Available at:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents>.

Human Rights Act (1998). Available at:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/contents>.

Mental Capacity Act (2005). Available at:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/9/contents>.