

De-escalatory Practices

General principles of safer working practice include:

- Knowing the child or young person you are working with:
 - What are the early warning signs that they are finding it difficult to regulate their emotions? What will you observe them doing or saying?
 - What are their interests and motivators?
 - What could be used to distract or divert attention?
 - What are the effective calming activities and de-escalation strategies?
 - What should be avoided? What escalates the situation?
- Avoiding confrontation, for example standing toe to toe, stand a little to the side instead
- When approaching a child or young person, approach from the side. Approaching from the front may be perceived as an aggressive act. Approaching from behind may startle;
- Keep your feet hip width apart with your knees slightly flexed, arms at your side, palms open (rather than closed in a fist);
- Monitor your own body language, avoiding dominating eye contact and jaw tension;
- Try to remain calm, be aware of your own emotional and behavioural responses;
- Remember that sometimes the hardest, but best thing to do is nothing, to allow the situation to de-escalate naturally;
- When they step backwards – do the same;
- Step backwards in demanding situations – give the person space and time;
- Turn your body so that you are side-on in relation to the child or young person with only your head facing them;
Check with the first adult to respond as to whether they need support or not, if not, give everyone space by leaving the area;
- Where it is necessary and safer to do so, remove other people from the area.

In some cases, where children or young people present a foreseeable and significant risk of physical harm to themselves or others, it is advised that staff receive relevant training in Behaviour Support Strategies (BSS). Further advice around this can be sought from the Educational Psychologist through the Joint Support Team forum.