

Hitting

Background information

Firstly, with any behaviour that keeps occurring, it is important to try to establish why the behaviour is happening. It can be useful to know that the behaviour will only keep happening if it continues to meet the child's needs. In order to try to manage and reduce the behaviour, it is really useful to find out what the trigger or function of the behaviour is. Once this is identified, it is much easier to know how and where to support the child, what skills to teach the child or how to adapt the environment to support their needs.

First things first

There may be few reasons why this is happening and it could be a combination of all:

- They lack social imagination and do not yet understand that other people have feelings.
- Their developmental delay may mean that they are very much at the “Me/mine” stage.
- It may be through frustration at their inability to communicate
- It may be for sensory feedback; they may be enjoying the sensation or the noise.
- They may hit because they enjoy the reaction that they are getting. (From adult or child)

Use an ABC chart where you can keep a record of behaviour. This will help you to identify any patterns and perhaps what the triggers or function may be. This will help you to choose an appropriate way to tackle the hitting. (See tips on behaviour)

Strategies

- Make sure all staff respond consistently; have an agreed strategy. (Share with family, too)
- Limit your response as much as possible just in case your response is reinforcing the behaviour. Use calm, monotone voice and redirect to appropriate behaviour.
- It is useful to say the child's name first and to say what you want from the child. “Ben, kind hands” or “Ben, stop”
- Use a visual aid when the behaviour occurs e.g. a “stop” sign- this needs to be immediate.
- Reward as much as possible with positive attention when the behaviour is not occurring; even if initially this is when they are standing still! This needs to be very frequently initially (as

often as every few seconds, dependent on the child's needs). This can be lessened as more positive behaviour is observed.

- If there is a particular trigger in the environment or routine that leads to the behaviour, look at how the opportunity can be reduced if possible. (This could be reviewed when the behaviour is lessening.)
- Provide extra physical activities that will give sensory feedback. These could include, playdough, pushing/pulling large equipment, swinging, play on a gym ball. (More suggestions on "Sensory issues" tip sheet.

Useful websites & further reading

- <https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachemnt/earllysupportbehaviourfinal.pdf>
- <https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/>