Hi, I’m Theresa Kirwan and I’m a Positive Behaviour Support Practitioner. I’ve been working with people with deafblindness for over six years.

Positive behaviour support is an evidence-based, person-centred approach that enhances quality of life by understanding and addressing the underlying causes of behaviours of concern. It focuses on proactive strategies, including skill development, environment adjustments, and equipping support people with effective tools. Positive behaviour support promotes independence, well-being, and dignity, while reducing the need for restrictive practices.

People with deafblindness, particularly those with congenital deafblindness and limited formal communication methods, may use behaviours of concern to communicate unmet needs, discomfort or distress. Recognising these behaviours helps guide appropriate support and intervention.

Some key points about behaviours of concern:

* They are a form of communication, not just actions to be managed.
* They can be physical, for example aggression, self-injury, verbal, for example yelling, and threats, social, for example withdrawal or refusal to engage, or emotional, for example anxiety, and distress.
* They may indicate pain, frustration, sensory overload or unmet needs.
* Understanding the cause leads to person-centred, proactive support.

Behaviours of concern might be used by the person with deafblindness because:

* They are seeking a connection
* They want something like food, cigarettes, an object or a preferred activity
* They want to avoid or escape an unpleasant stimuli or activity which creates discomfort, anxiety or stress
* They are seeking or regulating a sensory experience

In my role as a positive behaviour support practitioner, I work with individuals and their support system, including the family, educators, support workers, therapists and other professionals to:

* Develop an interim behaviour support plan, which focuses on safety, risk management and least restrictive practices
* Undertake a thorough functional behaviour assessment, which identifies the causes of behaviours to guide interventions
* Develop a comprehensive behaviour support plan, incorporating long-term strategies based on the functional behaviour assessment, including skill development and environmental adjustments.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme ( NDIS) provides funding for Positive Behaviour Support under the Improved Relationships category in the Capacity Building Supports budget. This funding is designed to support deafblind individuals who display behaviours of concern that may impact their quality of life, relationships, or community participation