

Certificate in Understanding Distressed Behaviour in Children

Course Overview

While it is normal for children to test boundaries as they grow and develop independence, some behaviours are more persistent, intense or concerning. Distressed behaviour can appear as anger, withdrawal, difficulty concentrating, verbal or physical aggression, reluctance to engage socially, self-harm, or actions that may place the child or others at risk. These behaviours are often linked to complex underlying causes and, if left unsupported, may contribute to further emotional or mental health challenges as the child grows. This online short course provides learners with an essential understanding of what distressed behaviour is, why it may occur, and how adults can respond appropriately and supportively. Learners will explore a range of contributing factors, including life experiences, emotional wellbeing, and the wider social environment. The course also helps learners consider how additional needs—such as learning disabilities, sensory processing differences, autism, and mental health conditions—can influence how distressed behaviour is expressed and understood. In addition, the course introduces key UK legislation and guidance that underpin best practice when supporting children who display distressed behaviour. This ensures learners are aware of the principles that shape safe, lawful and compassionate approaches within educational, healthcare and social care settings. Who is this course for? This course is suitable for anyone who would like to build a solid understanding of distressed behaviour in children, including: Parents, carers and guardians Teachers, TAs, early years practitioners or school support staff Youth workers, support workers or those exploring careers involving children or young people Individuals with little or no previous knowledge who want to develop confidence in this area Anyone planning to work in settings where understanding behaviour is essential It is particularly valuable for those wishing to broaden their awareness of child development, behaviour, and supportive intervention strategies. Why choose this course? Fully online, allowing flexible study around other commitments Builds foundational knowledge with no prior experience required Supports career development in education, childcare, health or social care Provides insight into legal responsibilities and good practice Helps learners understand how to recognise and respond to distressed behaviour safely and effectively Important Information If you have previously completed Behaviour that Challenges in Children, you will not be eligible for this course.

What you will learn

Unit 1 – Awareness of Distressed Behaviour in Children This unit introduces what distressed behaviour is and explores the different ways it can present in children. Learners examine who may experience distressed behaviour, how it can be assessed, and the potential impact it can have on a child's wellbeing, development and relationships. Unit 2 – Principles of Intervention When Working with Children Who Display Distressed Behaviour This unit focuses on practical approaches for supporting children who display distressed behaviour. It covers positive strategies, how to record incidents accurately, ways to reduce or mitigate distressed behaviour, and the circumstances in which physical intervention may be used safely and appropriately. Unit 3 – Distressed Behaviour and Mental Health in Children Learners gain an understanding of different mental health characteristics in children and how these may be linked to distressed behaviour. The unit also explores effective support strategies for children with mental health conditions who display distressed behaviour. Unit 4 – Distressed Behaviour and Learning Disabilities in Children This unit looks at the characteristics of learning disabilities, how these may influence a child's behaviour, and the types of distressed behaviour commonly associated with learning disabilities. Learners also explore supportive approaches tailored to children with learning disabilities. Unit 5 – Distressed Behaviour, Sensory Processing Conditions and Autism Spectrum Conditions Learners explore sensory processing needs and autism spectrum conditions, including how these influence communication, interaction and behaviour. The unit outlines common distressed behaviours linked to sensory or autistic experiences and provides guidance on supportive responses and adjustments. Unit 6 – Legislation and Guidance for Supporting Children Displaying Distressed Behaviour This unit covers the key UK legislation relevant to supporting children who display distressed behaviour. Learners examine legal responsibilities, human rights considerations and the wider sources of support available across education, health and social care settings

Entry Requirements

You must be aged over 19 at the start of the academic year and be a British Citizen or have right to study status. Some areas on England we are unable to fund, but we can check eligibility at application and signpost where required.

Course Progression

How This Course Benefits You Personally: Build confidence in understanding why children show distressed behaviour and learn practical techniques to respond calmly and supportively. This helps create more positive relationships and a safer, more settled environment at home or in everyday life. Professionally: Gain essential skills valued across childcare, education, youth work and health social care. You'll learn how to assess behaviour, record incidents, use supportive strategies and understand key legislation—strengthening your practice and boosting your employability. Ideal Follow-Up Course A perfect next step is the Level 2 Certificate in Understanding Children and Young People's Mental Health, which builds on the mental-health-related learning covered in this course's units.

What Happens Next

Course Details

Course Code	P01074
Start Date	Various
Study Hours	Part Time
Duration	Various
Campus	DISTANCE
Level	2

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