

Youth justice custodial practice manual

Secure Services

How we deal with difficult behaviour

- Young people in custody may show difficult behaviours such as bullying, violence, refusing to go to education and programs, or property damage.
- The best approach is to encourage positive behaviours.
- When difficult behaviour occurs, these guidelines will help you respond.

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When to use this procedure

When a young person is showing difficult behaviours that may potentially harm them, other young people or staff, or may disrupt the unit as a whole.

What else you need to know

Make sure you have read and understood the following procedures:

- [How we work with young people in custody](#)
- [The importance of promoting positive behaviour](#)
- [Deliberate self harm and suicide prevention](#)
- [Preventing occupational violence and use of force](#)
- [Graffiti vandalism](#)

Staff responsibilities

Find your role below to see what your responsibilities are:

- [All staff](#)
- [Unit Coordinator](#)
- [Unit Manager](#)

All staff

At all times when working with young people

- Always act as a positive adult role model.
- Be aware of the backgrounds and needs of the young people you are working with, and how this may affect their view of themselves, the world around them and their behaviour.
- Be mindful of the need to establish positive working relationships with young people in order to work with them most effectively.
- Ensure you understand the techniques in the Preventing Occupational Violence training to de-escalate young people's problem behaviours.

Unit Coordinator

When supervising unit staff in their direct work with young people

- Monitor staff members' understanding of the young people they work with. If needed, identify opportunities to enhance staff members' knowledge and skills in working with this client group.
- Ensure that consequences for young people are appropriate for the behaviour.
- Ensure that staff engage positively with young people, and appropriately encourage and support young people to successfully complete their custodial sentence.
- Monitor and provide feedback on the skills and personal qualities staff bring to their work with young people.

- If staff need to improve their skills in this area, support them through identified training, increased supervision and peer support or other appropriate methods.

Unit Manager

When overseeing staff and their direct work with young people in the unit

- Ensure that the unit is running smoothly and all staff have a clear understanding of what is expected of them.
- Make timely decisions about grading young people's behaviour, calculating and administering fines, and a young person's access to programs, education and family.

The procedure in detail

- [Why do some young people in custody demonstrate difficult behaviours?](#)
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Why do some young people in custody demonstrate difficult behaviours?

Young people in custody may have a range of complex problems that can contribute to poor behaviour.

It is important that you are aware of factors related to a young person's past experiences which may contribute to their negative behaviours.

While this is not an excuse for difficult behaviours, it is useful to think about the kinds of experiences young people have had that have led them in to custody and that contribute to their behaviour.

The annual 'snapshot' of young people in custody conducted on a single day in 2012 showed that there are many factors that may influence their behaviour:

- 64 per cent have experienced abuse, trauma or neglect
- 35 per cent present with mental health problems
- 88 per cent use drugs; 91 per cent use alcohol
- 27 per cent have a history of self-harm or think about suicide
- 27 per cent have intellectual functioning issues
- 67 per cent had previously been suspended or expelled from school.
- 95 per cent aged 18 years or older did not reach year 12 level.

In addition, many young people in the precincts come from families where they may not have had positive role models or an opportunity to learn appropriate ways to behave.

These factors, along with the stress of being in custody and possible difficulty relating to adult authority figures, can lead to poor behaviour in young people.

Context for the Promoting Positive Behaviour approach

The overall approach to helping young people manage their behaviour is outlined in the section on the importance of promoting positive behaviour.

The response to negative behaviour occurs within the Promoting Positive Behaviour approach.

The best way to stop difficult behaviours is to encourage positive ones.

This means that:

- Staff act as positive role models, teaching young people how to behave by the way they behave themselves.

- Young people are kept busy with a structured day and a range of activities.
- Staff monitor young people's behaviour constantly.
- Positive behaviour is noticed and acknowledged with verbal feedback.
- An appropriate behavioural grade is allocated every day.
- Staff intervene early when difficult behaviours occur to stop them from escalating.
- Staff should be consistent in how they respond – young people can expect all workers to respond in a similar way, based on the consequences for behaviour outlined in this section.
- Difficult behaviours are used as an opportunity to highlight positive behaviour and discuss alternative ways to behave.

Difficult behaviours – definitions

Bullying and standover tactics

This involves aggressive behaviour against one young person by another or by a group of young people.

It is usually characterised by an imbalance of power, with the victim of the bullying behaviour having less power than the perpetrators.

You must be alert to the possibility of bullying of more vulnerable young people – they will often cover it up in fear of further harassment.

This includes standover behaviours and intimidation – where a young person uses threats, force or their own personal power to obtain something from another.

Bullying can be physical (hitting, kicking, throwing objects), verbal (name calling, derogatory comments) or social (obtaining items from others, exclusion from activities, isolation within the group, spreading rumours).

Bullying can be quite subtle and you need to be vigilant in identifying and responding to it.

Minor repetitive behaviours can sometimes have a major impact and may need to be addressed.

Disruptive behaviours

These behaviours are inappropriate for the setting or context or may be demonstrated in a bid to seek attention; they are disruptive to staff, other clients or the unit in general.

This includes being unreasonably noisy, throwing food or repetitive behaviours that annoy, embarrass or anger others.

The behaviour may not necessarily be dangerous, but it has the potential to annoy or unsettle other people or the whole unit.

The behaviour should be considered within the context of young people's ability to control how they act – for example, young people with an intellectual disability may demonstrate disruptive behaviours and may have only a limited ability to control them.

Refusing to go to education or programs

Sometimes a young person will refuse to go to a compulsory education or program session they are scheduled to attend.

This does not include participation in voluntary activities such as recreation or sport.

Education and program attendance is a vital part of rehabilitation for young people in custody.

Verbal abuse

This includes using words or gestures in a way that others find abusive or offensive, such as:

- swearing or using derogatory language directed at others
- using racist, sexist or homophobic terms
- using words or gestures to threaten others
- making comments of a sexual nature.

Incidents that have significant consequences for others or for the unit environment require a serious consequence.

Physical assault – Category One

- Assault that requires hospital in-patient treatment for the victim

Physical assault – Category Two

- Assault resulting in an injury that requires medical treatment

Property damage

- Any form of deliberate damage to property owned by the precinct, another young person or a staff member, including tagging walls and other surfaces

Found with prohibited items or found to be substance affected

- A young person is found in possession of prohibited items (either on their person, in their belongings or in their room) or is found to be substance affected
- Prohibited items include weapons, alcohol or other drugs, cigarette lighters or tobacco (at PYJP), medication that belongs to another person and money

Interfering with security arrangements

A young person has interfered with security arrangements, by, for example:

- tampering with locks
- touching staff keys/alarm/radio/safety equipment
- tampering with smoke detectors
- covering observation windows
- running away or hiding from staff within the precinct (outdoors and indoors).

The behaviour potentially results in a threat to security, even though this may not have been the intent.

Play-fighting

This occurs when young people pretend to fight with each other by wrestling or pretending to throw punches. Injuries can occur even in play, and play-fighting can easily become real, so this behaviour must be stopped.

Refusing to follow staff directions

Refusing to do what a staff member has asked or directed them to, for example their unit jobs, or have a shower.

Inappropriate sexual behaviour

Sexual behaviour that is inappropriate for the context, including:

- masturbation or persistent touching of their genitals in a public space
- exposing their genitals
- any form of forced sexual contact including touching another young person or staff member in a sexual way
- producing sexually explicit drawings, written material or graffiti
- use of sexual language or gestures to embarrass or threaten others.

Self-harm

Deliberate self-harm involves a person causing physical pain to themselves as a means of managing difficult emotions when experiencing pressure or stress.

Self-harming behaviours include cutting, burning, picking at the skin, swallowing toxic substances or pulling out hair.

Inappropriate sexual behaviour and self-harm are significant behaviours that require an individualised response and close collaboration with the health team.

They should trigger an immediate referral to the health service and development of an Individual Behaviour Management Plan.

Deciding which negative behaviours to respond to

Although there are specific negative behaviours that you must always respond to, such as violence or anything potentially harmful, some minor behaviours can at times be overlooked.

Constant reminders about negative behaviours can contribute to a young person's sense of learned helplessness, particularly if they have experienced this in their family. Many young people will just 'tune out' from constant staff reminders.

It may also add to your stress to feel you must constantly respond to every minor negative behaviour a young person demonstrates. Importantly, choosing to respond to every behaviour, no matter how small, may stop you from developing a constructive working relationship with a young person.

It is important to decide which behaviours have most impact on the young person and the people around them.

This should be done consistently, with the knowledge of all staff.

Examples of behaviour that can safely be overlooked are low-level swearing in conversations between young people or unit cleaning jobs that are not completed perfectly.

Behaviours to address

- Any behaviour that is physically harming another, or a threat to harm others or self
- Any abusive or inappropriate language directed at another
- Refusal to complete unit housework

Behaviours that can sometimes be overlooked

- Any behaviour that is a minor disruption but not harmful
- Swearing that is used in conversation but not directed at anyone
- Attempt at completing housework that is not completed perfectly

Immediate response to difficult behaviours

Once it has been decided that a particular behaviour cannot be ignored, you should address it consistently, whenever it is noticed.

All staff are responsible for addressing these behaviours; this should not be left to the Key Worker, Unit Coordinator or health service staff alone.

The most important consideration when intervening in any type of difficult behaviour is your safety and the safety of others in the immediate environment.

When intervening in any situation where young people are behaving in a difficult or aggressive way, try to use the skills and techniques that you learned in the Preventing Occupational Violence training.

Intervene early to prevent an escalation of behaviours, and ensure that other staff members are nearby and are able to support you. Send clear and consistent messages about what is and is not allowed in the unit.

It is important to make the young person aware of the effect that their behaviour has on others and the potential consequences for them – for example, remind them that continuously annoying other young people may result in them not having any friends and feeling isolated.

Your response should be aimed at encouraging the young person to stop the negative behaviours. It is often in your power to keep an incident from escalating by responding calmly and addressing the issues.

Sometimes providing a positive alternative is useful – you could ask a young person who is annoying others with noise and disruptive behaviour to come out into the kitchen to have a cup of coffee and a talk with you.

When addressing a young person's inappropriate behaviour, you should:

- Clearly tell the young person what is acceptable behaviour and what is not.
- Briefly explain why it is inappropriate.
- Make sure that any criticism is about the behaviour, not the person (for example, if a young person has lied, you should not call them a liar, but focus on the consequences of telling a lie).
- Give firm boundaries.
- Keep any commitments you make.

If the conflict is about a particular person or object, one way to overcome this and calm things down is to remove the individual or object that is upsetting the young person.

You also need to be aware of your own behaviour and use strategies to maintain control in difficult situations. Your reaction to an incident can often determine whether or not it escalates.

The section below gives tips and strategies to de-escalate difficult behaviours and manage your own response while doing so.

De-escalating problem behaviours – responding early

Responding to inappropriate behaviour occurs on a continuum from least-intrusive to most-intrusive interventions. An example of a less intrusive option would be taking a young person aside for a quiet conversation. Using restraint is an example of a highly intrusive option.

De-escalation strategies give you tools to address difficult behaviours. The aim is to intervene to prevent a serious incident from occurring.

Planned approach

It is important to have an approach planned for when inappropriate behaviour occurs.

Know the young person:

- What are their warning signs?
- What works and what does not work when their behaviour is escalating?

Staff should speak to other each other about strategies that have worked with particular young people and develop appropriate strategies.

Individual Behaviour Management Plans (IBMPs)

Where possible, you should implement strategies outlined in the IBMP, which will give you tips on how to interact and respond to an individual young person.

Where strategies are found to be ineffective, the Unit Coordinator and the Unit Health Coordinator should review the IBMP.

Deciding when to intervene

Some questions to consider when deciding whether the behaviour that is being demonstrated requires an intervention:

- Consider the nature of the behaviour – for example, is it typical of a young person: testing boundaries, risk taking?
- Consider whether the effect of the intervention may be more negative than the effects of the behaviour. Is it something that can safely be ignored?
- What is the context? For example:
 - What is the behaviour of the other young people in the unit?
 - How does it fit with the young person's personality and usual way of behaving?
 - How are other staff reacting?

Remain calm

Your reaction can often determine whether an incident escalates. Give yourself space and time to present a calm appearance.

- Use deep breathing to calm yourself down.
- Count to three – it slows you down and lets you think about your plan of action.
- If the young person begins to raise their voice, do not match their volume. Speak softly, but loud enough so you are heard.
- Talk to the young person in short, simple sentences.

Watch for young people's warning signs

Physical and behavioural signs can signal that a young person's behaviour is escalating. Be aware of young people's physical and behavioural signs – these can warn you that they are escalating.

By identifying and responding to warning signs, you can intervene promptly, and might prevent a serious incident from occurring.

Warning signs can vary, but some common ones are:

- breathing becomes shallow and rapid
- pacing
- clenching of fists
- eye contact becomes fixed
- they become withdrawn
- voice gets louder
- aggressive vocal tone
- answering back or swearing
- raising hands above shoulder height
- invading personal space; reducing the space between themselves and others.

De-escalating problem behaviours – practical tips

Listen

- Speak to the young person in a clear and calm manner — do not raise your voice or shout.
- Do not interrupt when a young person is talking.
- Listening will tell you what they want, and can make them feel that you understand them.
- Repeat back to the young person in a short statement to check what they mean, for example, 'Ben, are you feeling crowded?'
- When a young person is upset or escalating, let them know you're listening to them.

Body language

- Don't tell an agitated young person to 'calm down', this does not work.
- Instead, use calm, non-threatening body language and tone of voice.
- Provide space — don't crowd them.
- Remove others from the situation if possible. It helps to remove other young people or take the discussion into a different space like an office, as long as it is safe to do so.
- Encourage discussion and resolution, in safe circumstances, by remaining seated with the young person.
- If the young person appears to be escalating, you should position yourself with obstacles and objects between you and the young person, for example on the other side of unit furniture.

Think positively

- Be patient — an incident might feel like it has been going for ages, when in fact it has only been going for a few minutes.
- Try not to take difficult behaviour personally – it's usually about the young person, not you.
- Talk young people through frustrations and use problem-solving techniques. This may take a long time, but it teaches the young person self-management skills and may avoid more intrusive interventions.
- After the incident, seek supervision with the Unit Coordinator to discuss any issues that may arise for you.

Think of a plan

- Look around you and assess the environment.
- Where are the other clients?
- Are there staff nearby and can they assist you?

Talking the young person down

- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Use short sentences with simple and direct words.
- Give clear directions one at a time.
- Repeat your statements as the young person may not be listening clearly.
- Use their name when speaking with them.

Negotiation

In general it is important to defuse the situation and ensure worker safety before commencing a negotiation.

You cannot enter into negotiation until the situation has been defused.

If you are negotiating with a young person, try to calm the situation down first and stick to the main issue that needs to be addressed.

- Only one person should negotiate with the young person.
- Be patient.
- Adapt the approach to the individual.
- Be clear on what issue is being addressed.
- Consider the broader issues, not just the issue at hand.

Use humour

Humour can be used to calm a potentially difficult situation. Humour is often a good way of engaging young people and building rapport with them.

Laughter can diffuse a situation if used well.

Use your judgement and your knowledge of the client to decide if it's appropriate to use humour.

However, as humour might sometimes make the situation worse, you should try the following:

- Use your judgment about when it is appropriate.
- Keep it light, make a silly joke.
- Be positive in the use of humour - don't use sarcasm and don't target the young person by making the joke about their behaviour or appearance.
- Be aware that some young people might laugh when they are feeling uncomfortable – in this situation it would not be useful to make a joke or try to make them laugh.

Redirecting clients

Removing the young person away from a situation either physically or by giving them a different activity to do can prevent difficult behaviour from escalating.

- Redirect the young person to another activity.
- Take them for a walk (if approved by the Unit Supervisor and it is safe to do so.)
- If behaviour escalates, suggest doing an activity that you know the young person finds relaxing.
- Change something about the activity or the environment in order to change the behaviour.

Separating young people

Sometimes young people may need to be separated if there is conflict between them or if one young person is being targeted by others.

You can suggest that a young person engages in quiet time, or if the situation is escalating, suggest time out.

When separating young people, you should be conscious to put them in spaces so that they are not visible to each other. This allows them to cool down and settle their behaviour.

Young people might need to be separated and placed in an area away from one another. Be careful to remove them from each other's eye line.

You need to make sure it is safe to intervene to separate young people and should do this with another staff member available to assist you.

Quiet time

Quiet time is where a young person with settled behaviour requests to go to their bedroom to relax, study and so on.

The door can be locked at the young person's request however they must be let out as soon as they ask to leave.

Things to think about before imposing a consequence for behaviour

All actions have consequences, and in custodial precincts we try to minimise difficult behaviours through the consequences these behaviours attract.

However, in order to give young people the best chance of learning more appropriate ways to behave, proactive interventions should be used before a difficult behaviour escalates.

You should model appropriate behaviour through your own actions and by the way you respond to conflict and stressful situations. Regularly giving feedback on positive behaviours also encourages young people to continue to behave well.

Other ways to encourage positive behaviours include discussing the difficult behaviour with the young person and developing Individual Behaviour Management Plans.

Try a few options before deciding to give a consequence – give a reminder, help them with a task, give them a second chance to do better before giving them a natural consequence.

Behavioural conversations

Difficult behaviours can be used as an opportunity to have a useful conversation with a young person about what you expect from them.

When negative or destructive behaviours are shown, take the young person aside to allow for privacy and have a discussion with them about how they are behaving.

This should include talking about:

- Why they think they are acting in this way – what's happening for them?
- How their behaviour affects others – for example that when they shout and swear, the unit is disrupted, other people find them to be offensive and it may seem that they are becoming aggressive.
- What the consequences may be for them – for example a lower daily grade, cancellation of parole, manager's warning and/or cancellation of temporary leave.
- Alternatives and strategies they could put in place rather than behaving this way – for example, you could help them think of other ways to respond to someone who is hassling them other than shouting and swearing.
- What is generally expected of them as residents of the unit – discuss the types of behaviour that are needed, referring to the unit's rules and the young person's responsibilities.
- Think about the young person holistically – what are they trying to tell you with their behaviour?

If there is more than one difficult behaviour at once

When young people are demonstrating a range of difficult behaviours at once, you may find it hard to decide which behaviour to address first.

The most commonsense approach to this is to respond to the most problematic or significant behaviour first – usually this would be the one that is causing the most disruption.

It is also useful to consider the young person holistically, thinking about why they might be acting in this way and responding as much to the cause of the behaviour as to how it is demonstrated.

Linking with Individual Behaviour Management Plans

Some young people will also have Individual Behaviour Management Plans in place to address particular concerns that you and others may have about their behaviour.

Individual Behaviour Management Plans should be developed for, and with, young people who have difficulty in progressing from Bronze level because of their behaviour.

In addition, they should be considered for young people who:

- are the perpetrators of Category One or Two incidents
- are consistently engaging in disruptive behaviour
- have been identified as needing an Individual Incentive Program to address specific behaviours
- are identified by the health service as having a mental health issues and/or a disability that requires individual intervention
- are identified by the health service as needing a plan to address behavioural difficulties for their own safety and that of other young people, you or community members.

If you think a young person may benefit from having an Individual Behaviour Management Plan, you should raise this with the Unit Coordinator.

Individual Behaviour Management Plans must contain information on the young person's behavioural level, individual behaviours that should attract points and the incentives that are most meaningful to that young person.

Consequences for the young person

Consequences will not produce long-term behavioural change and may have unintended consequences, such as escalating an incident, increasing unwanted behaviours due to resentment by the young person, or damaging a positive working relationship that staff may have with a young person.

Using sanctions or consequences frequently can lead to behaviours just being controlled as opposed to modifying the behaviour.

However, the following behaviours may require consequences:

- bullying and standover tactics
- disruptive behaviours
- play-fighting
- refusing to go to education or programs
- refusing to follow staff directions
- verbal abuse
- physical assault
- property damage
- found with prohibited items or found to be substance affected
- interfering with security arrangements
- inappropriate sexual behaviour.

Consequences must be:

- used in limited circumstances
- used in conjunction with proactive measures
- given immediately or soon after the incident

- time-limited
- recorded clearly in case notes and communicated to other staff.

It is important that staff have the ability to impose meaningful consequences for negative behaviours. A natural consequence should always be considered, for example: a natural consequence for using a texta to tag a wall would be cleaning off the graffiti with a sponge and water.

Make sure that any consequences given for difficult behaviours don't impact on the basic entitlements young people have in custody.

When you impose a consequence, you should do so in the context of the overall Promoting Positive Behaviour approach.

Consequences for difficult behaviours should be used in conjunction with the positive strategies (such as regular feedback on positive behaviour, behavioural discussions), outlined in the Promoting Positive Behaviour framework. Difficult behaviours may limit the daily grade in the relevant PPB area.

Consequences should fit the behaviour

The severity of the consequence imposed should be matched to the significance and potential harm resulting from the behaviour.

Any decision to drop the young person to a lower PPB level must be authorised by the Unit Coordinator.

Consistency in responding to difficult behaviours is vital and consequences should not vary dramatically between staff members.

Types of consequences that can be used

Time out

Depending on its seriousness, time out can be used to interrupt the cycle of the behaviour. Time out should not be used for excessive periods of time. It is best to approach the young person while accompanied by another staff member.

Time out can occur in their bedroom, a separate section of the unit, a time out room or outdoor area. Under no circumstances is the young person to be locked in an area or led to believe they cannot exit the area of their own volition.

Once the young person has calmed down, provide them with positive reinforcement for regaining control, for example, 'That's great, John, you have calmed down. Are you ready to complete a thinking report?'

Thinking report

The thinking report is completed by young people, sometimes with the assistance of staff. You should provide an opportunity for the young person to complete a thinking report after an identified behaviour has been displayed, or after they are involved in an incident.

Having a young person complete a thinking report after a significant incident gives them an opportunity to reflect on their behaviour and allows you to assist them to develop more appropriate behaviour.

After the young person has completed the thinking report, provide an opportunity for the young person to go through the contents of the thinking report, discuss how they might have handled the situation differently, and discuss other strategies they could have utilised.

Impact on daily grade

When you meet with young people to decide on their daily grade, their behaviour in each area must be considered and discussed. Your discussion with the young person should cover both positive and difficult behaviours that have been observed by you and other staff during the day.

For example, if a young person had a number of incidents of harassing and teasing another young person during the day, you should spend time talking with them about 'Getting on with others' and their grade in this area might be quite low.

However, you should also explain how they can improve their grade in this area tomorrow.

Giving a low grade in the relevant area is part of the consequence for poor behaviour. Equally, the conversation this triggers with the young person is part of the consequence for this behaviour.

Any consequences that are developed at the precinct or unit level should occur within the overall PPB approach.

Warnings

Young people can receive warnings for significant behaviours.

Graduated warnings can be given to a young person, with the final warning being given by the General Manager.

If all attempts have been made to address the serious inappropriate behaviour of the young person, and the behaviour persists, the General Manager may recommend a formal warning by the Youth Parole or Youth Residential Board.

Significant incidents

When young people have been involved in a significant incident, all incident reporting guidelines must be followed.

Where a young person is involved in a Category One incident or a serious Category Two incident (where injuries were sustained) they will drop two levels.

Where a young person is involved in a Category Two incident, but their involvement was limited they will drop one level (from Gold to Silver or from Silver to Bronze).

Only the Unit Manager and the Unit Coordinator can approve dropping a young person to a lower level.

You should be clear with young people that violence towards others – staff members or other young people – will not be tolerated and will always be reported to police.

Fines

Fining young people for poor behaviour does not contribute to behaviour change.

Fines are a consequence of last resort and can only be used in response to serious property damage.

Case notes must demonstrate that other strategies have been tried before you resort to a fine; otherwise a fine will not be approved by the Unit Manager, who will determine the amount.

- All fines must be accompanied by an incident report; otherwise they will not be approved.
- Fines are set at a maximum of \$50.
- The amount should be appropriate to the amount of damage caused, yet should be set at a level where the young person has the potential to pay it off during their current sentence.
- The fine should equate to approximately five per cent of the cost of the damage. For example, if the damage would cost \$1,000 to repair, the fine would be set at \$50.

Repeat behaviour (such as compulsively engaging in graffiti) should not automatically result in numerous fines.

Instead, an Individual Behaviour Management Plan should be developed and implemented that focuses on redirecting young people, giving them materials to clean off the graffiti immediately and teaching them alternative coping strategies when they are feeling restless or anxious.

Half of a young person's savings amount can go towards fines. The rest must be saved. This is because if a young person feels that their situation is hopeless and that they will never pay off their fine or be able to access incentives, they are less likely to improve their behaviour.

Isolation

In order to prevent a young person from harming themselves or others, damaging property, attempting to escape, or threatening the security of the precinct, it might be necessary to place a young person in isolation.

Isolation (the most restrictive strategy) must only be used as a last resort and must be authorised by a manager. A young person must be released from isolation when they no longer pose an immediate threat to themselves, others or the precincts security.

When isolation is used regularly to respond to the behaviour of a client, an Individual Behaviour Management Plan must be developed and implemented to reduce the need for isolation.

Young people who need to be placed in isolation or display inappropriate, aggressive or violent behaviour must be referred to the health service. The health service should be actively involved with unit staff and others in assisting to develop and implement behaviour management strategies for these young people.

Refusal to go to education and programs

When a young person refuses to go to their compulsory education or programs, they should not be allowed to participate in alternative activities on the unit, such as playing computer games or participating in recreational programs.

During the time of the program, unless they are unwell, young people should be directed to undertake cleaning tasks such as scrubbing the walls, or picking up rubbish.

Access to programs and temporary leave

Dangerous behaviours should trigger a Program Risk Assessment to review tool use and should be factored into any Temporary Leave Risk Assessments.

Access to programs, education and contact with family are part of the overall rehabilitation of young people in custody. Any changes to a young person's level of access to programs, education or family can only occur with the approval of the Unit Manager.

Restoration

Following a significant incident, the unit staffing group should consider what is needed in order to minimise the impact of difficult behaviours, and to help the unit get back to normal.

You can help young people and the unit as a whole to return to normality following incidents of disruptive behaviour.

Restorative actions are those that help to restore relationships and good order in the unit. They also help the unit staff establish with young people the types of behaviour that are expected from them.

For example, at times when disruptive behaviour is a particular problem in the unit, it may be useful to hold a unit meeting or run an educational session to discuss the risks of disruptive behaviour and remind young people about positive behaviour. The Unit Health Coordinator will be able to assist with this.

If it's appropriate, you can help the young person learn how to apologise for their behaviour.

Other restorative strategies include:

- staff mediating between two or more young people who are in conflict with each other
- one young person apologising to another – verbally or in written form
- having a general discussion about acceptable behaviours in a unit meeting or other appropriate time.

Documentation – case notes

The behaviour, staff response and any consequences should be recorded in the young person's case notes, with a descriptive subject title used.

If a young person is displaying persistent and consistent behaviour, a Significant Event Case Note must be written. Where appropriate, an alert should be placed on CRIS and information included in the unit's Daily Safety Advice.

If a young person has an Individual Behaviour Management Plan, this must be reflected in their case notes and should be regularly reviewed.

Language

Be aware of the language used when writing a case note and ensure that you describe the difficult behaviour instead of labelling young people. Write what is seen without making judgements or projecting personal values.

Below are commonly used labels that you can consider changing so that you can give more information about difficult behaviours. It is more useful to describe the behaviour, rather than use a word that leaves it open to interpretation:

- Instead of **disruptive** you could write, 'James was slapping his hands against the floor while other young people were in the lounge room watching TV'.
- Instead of **defiant** you could write, 'Staff asked all young people to stack their chair after the meal, Sarah refused to do this'.
- Instead of **staff hopping** you could write, 'Chris asked several staff the same question and stopped when the last staff member he asked said yes without checking with the Unit Coordinator'.
- Instead of saying **he is in a bad space** you could write, 'Con quickly responded with anger and frustration during interaction with staff and his peers'.
- Instead of saying **he is in a good space** you could write, 'Nick responded readily to effort of staff to engage in conversation, he smiled, gave eye contact and initiated conversation'.
- Instead of **compliant, pleasant, nice or polite** you could write, 'Jessica engaged staff and peers in greetings, and socially normative behaviours such as saying 'please', 'thank you' and 'excuse me', and paused appropriately during conversation for verbal give and take'.
- Instead of **stripped room** you could write, 'Clare's room was modified to contain only the mattress, pillow and doona.'
- Instead of **rude** you could write, 'Luke swore at staff and gestured with his hands after being asked to clean up his plate at the table'.
- Instead of **testing limits** you could write, 'Jana stated that she was going to punch another young person with a smile on her face'.

Grievance procedures

Young people who believe they have been unfairly penalised for their behaviour can ask the Unit Coordinator to review the circumstances.

Having a fair and transparent approach means that young people have an opportunity to challenge decisions that have been made about their behaviour.

You should make sure that a young person who has been punished for their behaviour is aware of the grievance procedure.

The Unit Coordinator should speak to both the young person and the relevant worker and should check the Individual Behaviour Sheet and case notes. If the consequence (such as a lower daily grade) has not been documented, the Unit Coordinator will need to support the young person's version of events to ensure a transparent process.

Where the Unit Coordinator has made a determination that the young person does not agree with, they should be able to see the Unit Manager to discuss their point of view.

Additional Information

- [Responding to difficult behaviours poster \(24.1 KB, PDF\)](#)
- [Promoting positive behaviour - Grade guide \(76.0 KB, PDF\)](#)

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Authorised by: Ian Lanyon, Director Secure Services

Youth justice custodial practice manual

Secure Services

Graffiti vandalism

This procedure outlines strategies to deter young people from graffiti, and to manage graffiti that has occurred.

Click to hide all content

When to use this procedure

- At all times to prevent young people engaging in graffiti vandalism and to respond appropriately in youth justice precincts.

What else you need to know

Make sure you have read and understood the following procedures:

- [The importance of promoting positive behaviour](#)
- [How we deal with difficult behaviour](#)
- [Unit cleaning](#)
- [Significant Event Case Notes](#)

Staff responsibilities

Find your role below to see what your responsibilities are:

- [Night staff](#)
- [YJW1](#)
- [Unit Supervisor](#)
- [Unit Coordinator, Unit Manager and Operations Manager](#)
- [Unit Manager](#)
- [Health services](#)
- [Facilities staff](#)
- [Admission staff](#)

Night staff

During periods of lockdown at night

- Monitor young people while they are in their room and ensure that they do not graffiti.
- If they see them engaging in graffiti, speak to the young person and tell them to stop.
- Note the graffiti on the shift report so that the young person's Promoting Positive Behaviour grade (at Parkville) can be adjusted accordingly and a consequence can be provided.

YJW1

When a young person is admitted to the unit

- Ensure young people know that graffiti will not be tolerated and explain the consequences.
- Ask young people if they usually engage in graffiti in the community, and talk to them about ways they can express themselves appropriately. Give them materials such as a writing pad for their rooms.
- Ask them to pick a doona cover of their choice to use in their room.
- Complete the bedroom condition report before a new young person is admitted; discuss this with the young person and make sure they understand that graffiti is monitored.
- Complete the room condition checklist.

At all times

- Encourage young people to personalise their bedroom (in the designated areas) with pictures of family or art they have completed.

When graffiti is found

- If graffiti is found and you can identify which young person was responsible, direct them to clean it off. This is a natural consequence for the behaviour.
- If the graffiti is etched or scratched into a surface, advise them that they will receive the lowest grade in the behaviour management strategy (Promoting Positive Behaviour at PYJP).
- Develop and implement an Individual Behaviour Management Plan.
- Immediately put in a Fixit to ensure that the damage can be assessed by facilities staff and repaired.

Prior to lockdown

- Ensure young people have access to writing pads and paper, based on a risk assessment.

Unit Supervisor**At all times**

- Be accountable for the daily completion of the client bedroom inspection checklist and the bedroom inspection register as well as additional random inspections when required.

When graffiti is found

- Make sure staff complete a room condition report for every new client.
- Make sure staff complete the daily room inspection checklist.
- Put an Individual Behaviour Management Plan in place.
- Make sure the young person understands that they are expected to keep the precinct free from graffiti, and issue a supervisor's warning on the second instance.

Unit Coordinator, Unit Manager and Operations Manager**At all times**

- Be accountable for additional random inspections.
- Make sure young people understand that they are expected to keep the precinct free from graffiti, and tell them that graffiti vandalism will be noted in all reports given to the Youth Parole Board – which will impact young people's sentences.
- Put an Individual Behaviour Management Plan in place.

Unit Manager**At all times**

- Make sure that signs are displayed and maintained on the unit outlining the rules and expectations of the precinct.

Health services**When young people present with compulsive graffiti behaviour**

- In collaboration with youth justice staff, develop and implement an Individual Behaviour Management Plan that addresses the reasons why the young person has engaged in graffiti.

Facilities staff**On receipt of a Fixit**

- Promptly respond and assess the damage. All quick fixes should be completed immediately.

Admission staff

On admission to a precinct

- Provide a copy of **What I need to know** booklet to the young person and make sure they understand key points including explaining that graffiti is not tolerated.

The procedure in detail

- [Background](#)
- [Strategies to respond to graffiti vandalism](#)
- [Prevention](#)
- [Deterrence](#)
- [Staff and behavioural response](#)
- [Management of existing graffiti](#)

Background

The problems associated with graffiti vandalism in custodial environments contribute to a feeling of neglect and can have adverse effects on young people and staff.

There are several sub categories of graffiti vandalism, which include:

- **tagging** – a stylised personal signature, name, mark, symbol or logo usually written with a pen or marker
- **slogans** – wall scribbles that contain words or messages, often conveying offensive, racist, religious, sexual or opinionated messages
- **etching** – scratching into glass, plastic or paintwork with a rock, paperclip or other sharp implement.

Why is graffiti vandalism a problem?

The presence of graffiti in the units can:

- promote a perception among new admissions that property is not important
- create an unpleasant environment for staff and young people
- degrade the unit environment and promote a sense of disrespect for property that may result in further graffiti vandalism and destruction of property
- make an area look neglected, attracting more antisocial behaviour and graffiti
- impose a considerable financial cost to maintain and replace property.

Why do young people graffiti in custodial environments?

It is important to recognise that young people graffiti for a range of different reasons. Graffiti appears to happen because of anger or frustration, through boredom or lack of sense of ownership of a space, and to express identity. There are three main reasons why young people in custody graffiti.

- **Malicious graffiti** is damage done to express rage or frustration, possibly at authority, such as scratching paintwork because they are angry that they are in custody.
- **Inoffensive graffiti** is damage done to property regarded by young people as unimportant or of no value, such as ripping silicon around window frames in a room that they are not familiar with or because they are bored.
- **Tactical graffiti** is damage done to achieve another end, such as writing a gang's tag on the window to mark their territory.

When deciding how to respond, you should consider the reasons young people engage in graffiti. The most common targets for graffiti are walls, doors and windows.

Young people on remand are responsible for most of the graffiti in custody. Young people on a short stay have little incentive to keep their room free from graffiti.

Strategies to respond to graffiti vandalism

Responses to graffiti should be informed by the different motivations for graffiti. The response should focus on making young people not want to graffiti, instead of simply creating an environment where they can't.

This involves a multipronged approach. The response to graffiti has to take into account prevention, deterrence and management of graffiti, while considering the reasons why young people graffiti.

There are a number of existing practices critical to helping minimise the risk of graffiti. These include:

- the induction of young people
- room condition reports
- staff supervision
- linking graffiti with poor achievement in Promoting Positive Behaviour
- natural consequences including cleaning.

A difficulty when working with remand clients is that behaviour change takes time, and young people on remand are often only in custody on short stays.

It is important that remand staff are consistent in the message about what is appropriate and ensure they:

- actively supervise young people
- complete room condition reports
- give young people natural consequences when they graffiti.

Prevention

Prevention strategies such as changing the environment to limit access to surfaces to graffiti on can be effective for those young people on short remand stays. Strategies that target the environment should be used alongside behavioural strategies.

Environmental

Environmental strategies that should be considered include:

- the use of Crimsafe mesh in high-activity areas to see if it limits graffiti
- installing blackboards in common areas to provide a place where young people are allowed to graffiti
- limit access to pens and markers in programs, ensuring appropriate checks/registers are completed.

Environmental strategies are a response to malicious or tactical graffiti.

Deterrence

All staff must ensure that young people are aware of the rules when they are admitted into custody.

When a young person has been sentenced or is in a new unit, the rules should be provided to them again.

Induction and providing information

All young people entering custody must be made aware of the expectations and the consequences of negative behaviour including graffiti as part of the induction process.

This clearly establishes rules and expectations and helps the precincts to engage young people in the idea that they can make a positive contribution rather than a destructive one.

The Admissions Officer is responsible for giving the **What I need to know** booklet to young people.

Once the young person is settled into a unit, you must discuss the rules of the precinct as a part of their induction.

If the young person has been in custody before and is known to graffiti, immediately put an Individual Behaviour Management Plan in place to proactively respond to the behaviour.

Ask the young person why they graffiti so that you can respond adequately.

It is important to talk about the expectation to keep the precinct free from graffiti, and to ensure that young people know graffiti vandalism will be noted in all reports that are issued to the Youth Parole Board. This will have more impact on sentenced young people than those on remand.

Young people on remand often have limited understanding of the impact these reports may have on sentencing outcomes, so it is critical to talk to young people on remand about graffiti and explain that their behaviour while they are remanded can affect sentencing decisions made at later times.

Signs

The rules should be clearly outlined before young people graffiti, not after they have been caught.

Signs should be placed around the unit that state what is expected of young people in custody including the rules about graffiti.

It is the responsibility of the Unit Manager to ensure that signs are up and maintained on their unit.

Personalisation of bedrooms

Impersonal living environments including communal areas and bedrooms contribute to a lack of respect for the environment, and can actively

encourage graffiti if they are featureless, dull or uncared for.

Where appropriate, young people should be encouraged to personalise their surroundings, which will make them feel connected to and responsible for their space.

On admission, each young person should be able to select a doona cover of their choice.

Allowing personal effects such as posters and family photos encourages a sense of ownership of the space.

Art that is completed at school or drawings that are done on the weekends should be displayed where appropriate.

Blackboards

Installing blackboards in the unit will give young people an outlet to express themselves in a positive way.

Blackboards in bedrooms can alleviate boredom overnight and also allow young people to make the space their own and give their own identity to the room.

Improved feelings of ownership will minimise wanting to mark their territory.

The use of blackboards is a response for inoffensive graffiti.

Unit environment

Young people should be encouraged to complete artwork that can be placed on notice boards in the unit.

Studies have shown that if units are appealing physical spaces, painted with soft colours, and promote relaxation and stimulation, the presence of graffiti vandalism and other poor behaviours will be limited.

While the security needs in a custodial environment prevent some options for changing the environment, as much as possible the environment should be well maintained and staff should encourage artworks to be placed in the unit.

Daily room inspections

Room inspections must occur to ensure that graffiti is immediately identified and that there are consequences for the behaviour.

The Unit Supervisor must ensure that the checklist and the register are completed each day for every bedroom.

In addition to the daily inspections by unit staff, random inspections will be undertaken by the Unit Supervisor (two bedrooms per day), the Unit Manager (two bedrooms per week), and the Operations Manager (one bedroom per week) to ensure quality and compliance.

All inspections and their findings will be recorded in the bedroom inspection register.

The register will be audited on a regular basis with 100 per cent compliance required.

Staff and behavioural response

Staff supervision

Young people in custody are more prone than most to graffiti vandalism.

However, all staff have a major role in preventing graffiti through active supervision and engagement and a vigilant approach to what is happening in the environment.

You must be vigilant about reporting and monitoring graffiti vandalism.

Talk to young people who are known to graffiti, and find out why they graffiti, so that you can have an informed response.

For example, if the young person is bored at night in their room, give them appropriate means of expression such as a sketch pad or paper.

Make an agreement with the young person that states they understand that if they graffiti they will no longer have access to a sketch pad or writing materials.

Upon return from programs and education classes, appropriate searches must be completed to minimise the chance of scratching implements being brought into the unit.

Room condition reports

You must complete a room condition report for every new admission.

Take the time to adequately report on the room before a young person is admitted, and make sure both the Key Worker and the young person sign the report.

You must complete a room condition report every day, along with the room compliance checks.

These room condition reports should be linked directly with Promoting Positive Behaviour, and any new occurrence of graffiti should result on a low grade.

You have a critical role to play in completing condition reports.

Rather than simply noting the graffiti, engage the young person in a conversation about why they shouldn't graffiti, and link the behaviour with

a natural consequence.

If the graffiti is in the form of a scratch the young person should be directed to thoroughly clean their walls of their room anyway.

Chores

A chore of 'cleaning graffiti' should be included in the daily client chore list. This means that when graffiti appears around the unit and it is not clear who has done it, different young people are required to clean it. If there is no graffiti on a particular day, the young person on the graffiti cleaning duty should still be instructed to clean specific walls designated by staff.

You should ensure that buckets and scourers are available on the unit for this chore to be completed.

Prompting Positive Behaviour

Promoting Positive Behaviour is the behavioural change program that is used at Parkville. It is critical that young people are aware of this consequence on admission to remand so they know what the consequence of their behaviour is.

If young people graffiti their room, and if it can be cleaned off by the young person, they should be awarded the lowest grade in the category 'Looking after your self and your room' as the first response.

The achievements in 'Looking after yourself and your room' will be reflected in the PPB outcomes and progress graphs. The Parole Board will use this information and will frown on poor achievement in this behavioural area.

Young people who can maintain a clean, graffiti-free room should be awarded the highest grade possible.

Young people who engage in graffiti won't be able to progress up through the levels and access the incentives that are meaningful to them.

Young people who have added significant graffiti to their room, and who cannot clean it themselves, will be subject to an Individual Behaviour Management Plan.

Individual Behaviour Management Plans

Promoting Positive Behaviour provides incentives for good behaviour. When young people behave poorly, these incentives are minimised and they will only receive the basic entitlements.

As a consequence of receiving the lowest grade in 'Looking after yourself and your room', young people who graffiti must have an Individual Behaviour Management Plan (IBMP). This will be developed by the young person's Key Worker in consultation with the Unit Coordinator, the health worker and the young person.

The IBMP outlines strategies for both staff and the young person to use, as well as consequences and rewards.

It is also a therapeutic intervention to minimise the behaviour occurring again.

The IBMP should highlight the reason why the young person is engaging in graffiti behaviour.

It should focus on:

- redirecting young people
- giving them materials to clean off the graffiti immediately
- teaching them alternative coping strategies when they are feeling restless or anxious
- provide meaningful incentives if they refrain from graffiti
- outline the consequences if they don't comply with the IBMP.

The IBMP should be activated for a reasonable length of time and must be approved by the Unit Managers and signed by the young person, the Unit Coordinator and the Key Worker.

The IBMP must be added as an attachment to a case note on CRIS by the Unit Supervisor and added to the daily safety advice for the unit.

Consequences that can be considered

- The young person receives a natural consequence, such as cleaning off the graffiti, scrubbing walls.
- Extra unit cleaning chores are given.
- There is an impact on Promoting Positive Behaviour: 'Urgent action required' in 'Looking after yourself and your room'.
- The young person receives a Unit Supervisor's warning.
- The young person loses access to television in their bedroom at night and during afternoon lockdown. To make sure the young person is occupied in their room at night, you must give them an alternative like reminding them they can still use the radio and providing them with a book or writing paper and pencils.
- The young person's room is stripped back to necessities (as outlined in the *What I need to know* booklet), including standard issue doona cover where applicable.
- The young person is dropped to Bronze level of Promoting Positive Behaviour.
- The young person loses their weekly PPB incentives spend.
- Hierarchy of warnings are implementing, commencing with Unit Supervisor warning.
- The young person is fined.
- The young person is reported to Victoria Police for significant property damage.

Fines

Fining young people for poor behaviour does not contribute to behaviour change.

Fines are a consequence of last resort and can only be used in response to serious property damage.

Case notes **must** demonstrate that other strategies have been tried before you resort to a fine; otherwise a fine will not be approved by the Unit Manager, who will determine the amount.

- All fines must be accompanied by an incident report; otherwise they will not be approved.
- Fines are set at a maximum of \$50.
- The amount should be appropriate to the amount of damage caused, yet should be set at a level where the young person has the potential to pay it off during their current sentence.
- The fine should equate to approximately five per cent of the cost of the damage. For example, if the damage would cost \$1000 to repair, the fine would be set at \$50.

Repeat behaviour (such as compulsively engaging in graffiti) should not automatically result in numerous fines.

Instead, an IBMP should be developed and implemented that focuses on redirecting young people, giving them materials to clean off the graffiti immediately and teaching them alternative coping strategies when they are feeling restless or anxious.

Half of a young person's savings amount can go towards fines. The rest must be saved.

If a young person feels that their situation is hopeless and that they will never pay off their fine or be able to access incentives, they are less likely to improve their behaviour.

Incentives

Incentives must be tailored specifically to the young person and their interests. It is important to have a reward outlined so the young person knows what they are working towards.

Rewards should be identified on a continuum from small rewards for small changes in behaviour to larger rewards for achieving the goals set out in the IBMP.

Incentives may include:

- excellent result in 'looking after your self and your room' in PPB
- small items such as artist writing pad and pencils
- special dessert.

Graffiti art program

Other incentives for good behaviour for a whole unit could include access to a high-quality graffiti art program.

The program should teach art techniques and provide access to good-quality material, and allow young people to paint on legal walls or canvases; this would act as a reward for those young people who have not tagged or graffitied in the week.

Staff would be required to track those young people who are eligible to attend the class.

If young people think this is a good incentive, they won't want to miss it.

The Unit Manager is responsible for organising the art program as an incentive.

Management of existing graffiti

Cleaning

Research has shown that the sooner graffiti vandalism is removed, the less likelihood there is of repeat incidents.

The Broken Window Theory says that graffiti vandalism should be fixed as soon as it is noticed, which minimises the tendency for further graffiti and property damage to occur.

Natural consequences should always be considered where there is the means to clean the graffiti.

As soon as removable graffiti is spotted, the young person responsible should be directed to clean it, under supervision from staff.

If graffiti is in a common area and you are unsure who did it, the person on graffiti-cleaning chores for that day should clean the graffiti.

A designated graffiti-cleaning chore could be assigned to a different young person each day. All staff are responsible for managing graffiti and helping young people to clean it as soon as it is noticed.

Repairs/Fixit

When you find graffiti vandalism that cannot be removed by the young person, you must complete a Fixit to ensure that damage is quickly repaired.

Any urgent repairs must be entered on Fixit immediately, with all other repairs entered on Fixit before the end of the shift.

Additional Information

- [Example Individual Behaviour Management Plan - Graffiti \(172.0 KB, MS Word\)](#)
- [Individual Behaviour Management Plan - Graffiti \(169.5 KB, MS Word\)](#)

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Authorised by: Ian Lanyon, Director Secure Services

Youth justice custodial practice manual

Secure Services

Individual Behaviour Management Plans

- An Individual Behaviour Management Plan responds to a young person's behaviour that is persistent or is proving difficult for staff to respond to.
- You should develop an Individual Behaviour Management Plan if a young person's behaviour puts their own, other young people's or staff's safety at risk.
- Individual Behaviour Management Plans are designed to help the young person and staff to manage their behaviour.

Click to hide all content

When to use this procedure

When a young person's challenging behaviour is particularly persistent and/or difficult to respond to, an Individual Behaviour Management Plan can help the young person and staff to manage their behaviour.

What else you need to know

Make sure you have read and understood the following procedures:

- [How we work with young people in custody](#)
- [The importance of promoting positive behaviour](#)
- [How we deal with difficult behaviour](#)

Staff responsibilities

Find your role to see what your responsibilities are:

- [All staff](#)
- [Key Worker](#)
- [Night Staff](#)
- [Unit Manager](#)
- [Unit Coordinator](#)
- [Unit Supervisor](#)
- [Program staff](#)
- [Health services](#)

All staff

At all times when working with young people

- Be aware of the backgrounds and needs of the young people you are working with, and how this may impact on their view of themselves, the world around them and their behaviour.
- Be mindful of the need to establish positive working relationships with young people in order to work with them most effectively.
- Make sure you read the IBMPs for all young people on your unit to ensure consistency.

Key Worker

Daily

- If a young person has a single behaviour that is difficult to manage, discuss the behaviour with them and develop an IBMP in consultation with the Unit Coordinator and health staff.

Night Staff

At all times

- Make sure you read the IBMPs for all young people on your unit to ensure consistency.
-

Unit Manager

When overseeing staff and their direct work with young people on the unit

- Approve all IBMPs.
 - Ensure that all staff, including night and casual staff, know what the behaviour management strategies are and implement them consistently.
-

Unit Coordinator

When supervising unit staff in their direct work with young people

- Ensure that staff engage positively with young people, appropriately encourage and support young people to successfully complete their custodial sentence.
 - Monitor staff members' understanding of the young people they work with. If needed, find ways to give staff more knowledge and skills in working with this client group.
-

When a young person has an IBMP in place

- Jointly sign off all IBMPs with the key worker, health worker and young person.
-

Unit Supervisor

Daily

- Ensure that all staff on shift have read IBMPs for each young person. Discuss IBMPs with new or casual staff before they start their shift.
-

Program staff

Daily

- Find out which young people are on IBMPs so you can read the IBMP to ensure consistency.
-

Health services

When requested by the key worker or Unit Coordinator

- Attend discussions about the young person's behaviour and provide input on the strategies that are used. Sign off on IBMPs.
-

The procedure in detail

- [Introduction](#)
- [Before assessing the young person](#)
- [Develop a plan to manage the behaviour](#)
- [The importance of involving the young person in the development of the plan](#)

- [Monitoring and reviewing the plan](#)
- [Individual Behaviour Management Plans for remand clients](#)

Introduction

The Individual Behaviour Management Plan (IBMP) is tailored to an individual young person to address specific behavioural concerns. It is developed in collaboration with the health service.

IBMPs are in place for staff to help young people manage their own behaviour. They allow young people to understand and modify their behaviour, and they help staff by providing a less stressful and safer working environment.

Young people often display inappropriate behaviours during their stay in custody. These behaviours may be:

- pre-existing
- a reaction to the stress of being incarcerated
- directly or indirectly related to their offending
- a combination of the above.

The IBMP must identify:

- the targeted behaviour or issue of concern
- areas and circumstances where this behaviour is exhibited
- who or what the behaviour is aimed at
- the duration and frequency of the behaviour
- what interventions staff have tried so far
- responses to staff interventions.

Who creates the IBMP?

IBMPs are completed by the Key Worker in consultation with the young person and the Unit Coordinator.

The health service must also be consulted.

It is important that the young person knows what strategies will be implemented, so they understand what to expect of staff and what their own responsibilities and expectations are.

How long is the IBMP in place?

There is no time limit. The IBMP can be used for as long as it is useful for both staff and the young person.

Who reviews the IBMP?

The IBMP must be reviewed weekly by the Key Worker, young person, Unit Coordinator and in consultation with the health service.

Before assessing the young person

Prior to the plan being developed, you should identify the factors that could contribute to a young person's offending behaviour and their behaviour on the unit.

Good assessment includes gathering information about:

- the young person
- their offending behaviour
- their life circumstances and relationships
- their degree of social connectedness (such as peer group, school, neighbourhood, work and so on)
- any triggers or signs of escalating behaviours.

In the General Observation section of the IBMP template, clearly state the behaviours the young person is displaying.

It is important to be specific about the behaviours. For example: 'John graffiti's all the time' could be made clearer with specific details such as, 'John graffiti'd his bedroom on his first night in remand. The vandalism was in the form of tags in six spots in the bathroom'.

Develop a plan to manage the behaviour

The IBMP should highlight the reason why the young person is engaging in a particularly problematic behaviour. It should focus on:

- redirecting young people, giving them alternatives to the behaviour
- providing meaningful incentives if they refrain from the behaviour
- the consequences if they don't comply with the IBMP.

The IBMP should be put in place for a reasonable length of time. It must be approved by the Unit Managers and signed by the young person, the Unit Coordinator and the Key Worker.

The IBMP is added as an attachment to a case note on CRIS by the Unit Supervisor and added to the Daily Safety Advice for the unit.

The Key Worker, in conjunction with the young person and the Unit Coordinator, is responsible for the development and implementation of the IBMP and should ensure that all staff are familiar with the strategies and understand how to implement them.

You should consider the following factors when developing an IBMP:

- Identify the behaviour – be specific and clearly define the behaviour being targeted.
- Set realistic and achievable goals.
- Involve the young person in goal setting, which promotes motivation to change and allows the young person to set relevant goals for themselves.
- Ensure goals are measurable.

Use clear and simple strategies for all staff to follow. Clearly document what strategies will be used, so that staff who have never worked with a particular young person (such as casual staff) can pick up the strategies and implement them easily.

An IBMP will be more successful if all staff implement the same strategies consistently. This means the young person will receive the same messages from all staff, which should reduce the likelihood of young people playing staff off against each other.

The Key Worker should also consult with the health service and the Area Youth Justice Worker in developing and implementing Individual Behaviour Management Plans.

In the section of the template for 'Targeted behaviour', clearly state what behaviour is being targeted, including:

- identifying where the behaviour is occurring, and the circumstances
- asking the young person about the behaviour
- setting clear and achievable goals for the young person to work towards
- clearly documenting strategies required to manage the behaviours for all staff and the young person to follow.

For example the plan to manage behaviour for graffiti might look like this:

Targeted behaviour: graffiti

Why do I graffiti?

Talk to the young person to find out why they graffiti. Are they bored in their room at night? Are they angry because they are in custody? Do they do it mindlessly during the day? Are they trying to convey a message? The reason that they graffiti must inform the response and strategies for staff to use. For example:

I graffiti when I am bored during class and at night when there is nothing to do.

I graffiti in the kitchen because I didn't think anyone would notice.

The response should focus on helping the young person to decide not to graffiti, instead of simply creating an environment where they can't. This involves using a number of different strategies.

Examples of goals

To stop writing on the desks when I am in class and tagging my bedroom and the general unit area.

To use the black board in my room to express myself at night.

Example strategies for staff (list below)

Staff to complete a pat down search on return from programs, including looking in shoe treads and emptying pockets.

Staff will complete the daily room checklist with John present.

Sit down with John and go through the **What I need to know booklet** to make sure he understand all the information and the rules.

Encourage John to use the blackboards in the unit if he is feeling bored.

Staff will play table tennis and provide alternative activities if John appears bored or restless.

Staff will enforce the hierarchy of consequences if graffiti continues and rewards when improvement is made.

Example strategies for young person (list below)

- When I get frustrated with staff wanting to search me, I will count to ten in my head and focus on my breathing.
- The strategies that I will use when I feel bored include asking staff to play table tennis with me.
- If I find myself picking up pebbles and rocks when walking from programs I will not bring them into the unit.
- I will use the paper and pencil given to me at night to express how I am feeling.
- I understand that if I graffiti there are a number of consequences that will occur, including cleaning any graffiti I do.
- If I etch a surface, I will still be required to scrub walls in my unit.
- I understand that if I stop graffitiing, I will be rewarded with incentives that I choose.

Rewards and consequences

Ensure the rewards and consequences section clearly states what the rewards will be if the behaviour decreases or stops and what the consequences will be if the behaviour continues.

For positive change:

- You must give the young person positive verbal reinforcement for good behaviour – it is important for staff to notice when the behaviour decreases.
- Ask the young person what would be a meaningful incentive or consequence if they make changes (consider the young person's ability and level of maturity when deciding on the time period).

For example:

Consequences might look like this:

I understand that if I continue to graffiti, the consequences will include:

- cleaning the graffiti if it is removable; even if it is not removable, I will have to clean walls in the unit
- receiving an 'urgent action required' in looking after myself in Promoting Positive Behaviour
- on the third instance I will lose the use of my television.

Rewards might look like this:

I understand that if I minimise my graffiti and can stop completely my rewards will be:

- excellent achievement in 'looking after myself and my room' in Promoting Positive Behaviour
- access to a special magazine of my choice
- artist drawing pad and watercolour pencils.

The importance of involving the young person in the development of the plan

Actively involving the young person in the development of their IBMP encourages ownership and accountability.

It also helps the young person to identify strategies that support their return to the community.

Make sure inappropriate behaviours are made clear to the young person; be clear about why they are inappropriate and the consequences involved.

Talk to the young person about their progress and involve them in any changes to their behaviour management plan.

You should always follow through with all commitments made with young people.

Monitoring and reviewing the plan

The Unit Manager is responsible for ensuring that all staff, including night and casual staff, are familiar with the behaviour management strategies and are consistent in implementing them.

The Unit Coordinator and the Key Worker should do the following:

- Set a review date.
- Review the IBMP and identify what does and doesn't work.
- Adapt strategies that are not working.
- Ensure that all staff are aware that strategies have changed.
- Consult and meet regularly with the young person, staff and other people involved in reviewing the plan.
- Seek input and advice from the health service during the young person's stay.
- Document and communicate to all staff how the plan is progressing, for example through handovers, team meetings and communication book and case notes.
- Record in case notes observations of successful or unsuccessful strategies and discuss this when reviewing the progress of the plan.
- After consultation with the key worker and the health service assessing the progress of the young person, the unit manager can authorise that an individual behaviour management plan can be discontinued.

Individual Behaviour Management Plans for remand clients

- An IBMP for young people in remand can focus on behaviours displayed during the remand period, but must not focus on alleged offending behaviour. Young people in remand are not convicted, and staff should not make assumptions about the alleged offences for which they were remanded.
- The same criteria for developing IBNPs apply to young people in remand, regardless of the length of the remand period.

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Authorised by: Ian Lanyon, Director Secure Services

Youth justice custodial practice manual

Secure Services

Managing sexualised behaviour

- This procedure gives you practical strategies to use when working with young people who engage in inappropriate sexual behaviours.
- You need to be alert to inappropriate or unsafe behaviours among young people and act immediately to ensure they do not continue.
- This helps to maintain a safe environment and ensures that young people and staff in the precincts are protected from dangerous behaviours.

Click to hide all content

When to use this procedure

- At all times to model appropriate behaviour and to monitor young people's behaviour.
- When responding to young people's inappropriate sexual behaviours.

What else you need to know

Make sure you have read and understood the following procedures:

- [Promoting positive behaviour](#)
- [How we deal with difficult behaviour](#)
- [Professional behaviour and boundaries](#)
- [Individual Behaviour Management Plans](#)
- [Observation of young people in custody](#)

Staff responsibilities

Find your role below to see what your responsibilities are:

- [General Manager, Operations Manager and Unit Manager](#)
- [All staff](#)
- [Unit Coordinator](#)
- [Health services](#)

General Manager, Operations Manager and Unit Manager

At all times

- Ensure that unit staff are appropriately trained and supervised to undertake their work with young people, including responding to inappropriate sexual behaviours.

All staff

At all times

- Be aware of the potential for inappropriate sexual behaviours to occur and be prepared to act quickly to discourage them.
- Follow the 'Flags' to determine what the appropriate response is to specific sexualised behaviours.

Unit Coordinator

When young people are engaged in inappropriate sexual behaviours

- Collaborate with Key Workers and the health service to develop, implement and monitor Individual Behaviour Management Plans.

Health services

As required

- Provide information sessions to staff and young people on what is appropriate and inappropriate sexual behaviour in a custodial context.

When young people engage in inappropriate sexual behaviours

- On referral, assess the young person for consideration of a specialist response. Provide advice to unit management. Consult with the unit on the development of an Individual Behaviour Management Plan.

The procedure in detail

- [Background](#)
- [Preventing inappropriate sexual behaviours](#)
- [Flagging inappropriate sexual behaviours](#)
- [How to respond to inappropriate behaviours](#)
- [Specific groups of young people](#)
- [Supporting therapeutic interventions for sexualised behaviour](#)

Background

This procedure provides staff with practical strategies for working with young people who engage in inappropriate sexual behaviours in custody. It focuses on intervening in lower-level behaviours before they become more serious.

Young people in the youth justice system come from a variety of backgrounds. Some have had exposure to violence in their home and may have been physically, emotionally or sexually abused. A small proportion of young people has been convicted of sex offences and will be involved in Male Adolescent Program for Positive Sexuality (MAPPS).

These experiences can contribute to their behaviour in the precinct – including engaging in inappropriate sexual behaviours – and you need to know what strategies are available to help you manage these behaviours.

Preventing inappropriate sexual behaviours

Any strategies to address inappropriate behaviour in custody must take place within the Promoting Positive Behaviour approach. The central principle of this approach is noticing when young people are behaving well and giving them immediate positive feedback and encouragement.

The following tips help staff and precinct management to provide a custodial environment that is safe and that discourages inappropriate sexual behaviour.

- **Set and maintain professional behaviour and boundaries.** Make sure that you act within the professional behaviour and boundaries required of staff in the custodial precinct. Be aware of your surroundings and be mindful that most types of physical contact are unacceptable within the precinct environment. Be professional, honest, assertive and consistent.
- **Have clear rules and talk about them often.** Rules about touch, bullying and abuse should be clear and be frequently communicated to all in the precinct. Use daily unit meetings as an opportunity to talk about these rules and explain why they are there.
- **Model healthy ways of acting.** As a pro-social role model, be sure that your interactions with young people and other staff members model healthy relationships. Discourage jokes and anecdotes that, directly or indirectly, make it easier for sexual behaviours to occur.
- **Act on your suspicions.** You may sometimes feel that something is not right in the environment, but may not be sure what the problem is. Speak with other staff and managers about your concerns. They may share your suspicions and, together, you can work out a plan to monitor the situation more closely and determine an appropriate response.

Flagging inappropriate sexual behaviours

If inappropriate sexual behaviours occur, it is important that the response is immediate and targeted appropriately. Any actions taken and the results of those actions should be documented in case notes or an Individual Behaviour Management Plan, so that all staff know about the

strategies and future plans to prevent the behaviour.

Because of the duty of care and the risk involved if sexual relationships develop between young people (or between a young person and visitors), the only sexual behaviour allowed in custody is age-appropriate masturbation in a private bedroom.

Sexual experimentation among adolescents is a typical developmental milestone and also occurs outside of custodial settings. It is important to manage sexualised experimentation, as it is not appropriate in a public setting and any coercion or abusive behaviours must be stopped. You should however be aware of the difference between experimentation and sexual behaviours that are harmful or abusive.

The diagram below sets out behaviours that we are concerned about when they occur in custody and the actions that are needed if they do occur.

- **Orange Flag behaviours** are of some concern and require reaction and monitoring. Orange flag behaviours could be warning signs of more abusive behaviours.
- **Red Flag behaviours** are those behaviours that are abusive and potentially illegal.
- **Black Flag behaviours** are behaviours that are clearly illegal.

Orange Flag (of concern – requires referral to health services)

Orange Flag sexual behaviours involve being disrespectful of others in sexual ways – they need to be monitored closely as more challenging sexual behaviours may develop. Often, Orange Flag behaviours are concerning because of their persistence. They can include:

- persistently attempting to embarrass others with sexual language
- a single occurrence of flashing
- sexually aggressive obscenities, persistent sexually explicit jokes or obscene gestures
- sexually explicit or sexually aggressive drawings
- pulling down other young people's pants, touching girls' breasts, touching genital region through clothes
- feeling own genitals provocatively
- attempts to put staff in compromising positions (for example asking staff to open their door while the young person is naked)
- excessive flirting
- being consumed with interest in sexual erotica or pornography
- sexual graffiti (especially chronic and impacting on individuals).

Red Flag (potentially illegal – requires assessment)

Red Flag behaviours are more explicit, aggressive and humiliating sexual behaviours. They are abusive and can be illegal. Red Flag sexual behaviours include:

- explicit sex talk with a younger child
- touching the genitals of another person
- using sexual terms to degrade another person
- stealing underwear
- chronic preoccupation with sexually aggressive pornography
- compulsive masturbation (especially in public)
- sexual activity with other young people or visitors.

Black Flag (clearly illegal and abusive behaviours)

Black Flag behaviours are clearly not normal healthy adolescent sexual behaviours and require an immediate reporting response. Black Flag behaviours include:

- forced sexual contact
- obscene telephone calls
- chronic voyeurism (peeping)
- exhibitionism and frottage (brushing up against people in a sexual way)
- sexual activity with a younger person (where there is a significant age difference)
- sexual contact with animals
- genital injury to others
- sexual harassment.

How to respond to inappropriate behaviours

Responses to Orange Flag behaviours

Immediate response

Label and react:

- Be specific about the behaviour that is not acceptable and tell the young person to stop.
- Indicate that the behaviour can be upsetting to others.
- Suggest an alternative way to behave that is appropriate in the situation.

Ongoing response

- Continue to provide opportunities to learn appropriate social behaviours.
- If the behaviours are frequent, an Individual Behaviour Management Plan should be developed in consultation with the health service.
- Monitor and watch for any increase in the behaviour. If the behaviour increases, the response must also be increased.

Report and refer

- Complete a Significant Event Case Note on the behaviour, the staff response and how the young person responded
- Consult with the health service and involve them in developing an appropriate response to the young person

Responses to Red Flag behaviours

Immediate response

Confront and stop:

- Be specific about the behaviour that is not acceptable and tell the young person to stop.
- Tell the young person they are not allowed to engage in that behaviour again and that the behaviour will be noted and reported.
- If behaviour occurs during a visit, discontinue the visit.
- Inform the Unit Manager.
- Initiate a Category Two Client Incident Report.

Ongoing response

- If the behaviour continues, the response must be increased and it is appropriate to refer to the health service for further assessment. An Individual Behaviour Management Plan should be developed.
- If the behaviour was targeted specifically at another young person or group of young people, consider whether they need support to deal with the behaviour and arrange an appropriate referral.
- Discuss options with the Unit Manager to support staff to manage the behaviour (such as discussion in staff meeting with a health services staff member present).

Report and refer

- Case note the behaviour, the staff response and the young person's response.
- Complete a Client Incident Report or Significant Event Case Note.
- Ensure the young person's case notes for the day refer to the incident and cross reference with the Client Incident Report.
- Make a referral to the health service.

Responses to Black Flag behaviours

Immediate response

Report and refer:

- Separate the young person who has engaged in the abusive sexual behaviour from others and move them to a safe place where they can be watched, on observation, until a management plan is determined.
- Attend to the immediate needs of any victims. Complete first aid if required and attend to medical needs by notifying the health staff. Remove the victim or victims to a safe environment if needed. Place the young person/s on observations until the health service staff can assess them
- Contact line management.
- If the victim is a staff member arrange appropriate staff support. See the section on supporting staff following violent incidents for further information.
- If the victim is a visitor or other person ensure that support is offered.
- The most senior manager present should take responsibility for contacting the police.

Report

- Complete a Category One Client Incident Report.
- Ensure the client's case notes for the day refer to the incident and cross reference with the Client Incident Report.
- Staff may need to be interviewed about Black Flag incidents. Their line manager will inform them of any requirements and support them through this process.

Specific groups of young people

There are a number of groups of young people who may require specialised attention if they engage in inappropriate sexual behaviours.

Young people with an intellectual disability, acquired brain injury, mental health condition or an autism spectrum disorder may require assistance from specialist services. However, the immediate responses outlined above still apply. The response should only vary if:

- a health worker has recommended otherwise
- the recommended response is clearly documented in an Individual Behaviour Management Plan.

Supporting therapeutic interventions for sexualised behaviour

If a young person is receiving assistance from a health worker or other counsellor, the strategies used in supervising them on the unit should be consistent with therapeutic strategies.

Specialist interventions will be more effective if they are supported by unit staff. Unit staff can support therapeutic interventions in a number of ways:

- Clarify communication channels to express any concerns that you have about a young person. For example whether to express any concerns you have directly with the health service or whether this should occur through the Unit Coordinator.
- Where young people have regular contact with health service, MAPPs or another program, they should contribute to the development of an Individual Behaviour Management Plan.
- Do not shame the young person about their behaviour. Be aware that stress can considerably slow down progress and can impact on the young person's motivation to work with a specialist or counsellor.
- If staff have a strong reaction to young people's inappropriate sexual behaviours, they should seek opportunities to discuss this in supervision, through the Clinical Supervision Program or with the Employee Assistance Program.
- Understand that these issues are complex and there is not a 'one size fits all' solution to addressing young people's inappropriate behaviours.
- Encourage all young people to be accountable for their actions and model this to young people as a pro-social adult role model.

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Youth justice custodial practice manual

Secure Services

Preventing occupational violence and use of force

- Secure Services is committed to improving standards of care for young people in custodial precincts, and also to creating an injury-free work place, as far as is reasonably possible.
- The Preventing Occupational Violence framework establishes a process for managing incidents or potential incidents.
- It provides preventive strategies for managing behaviour, resolving conflict and preventing occupational violence.

Click to hide all content

When to use this procedure

- You should be aware of the Preventing Occupational Violence framework at all times when working in the precincts.

What else you need to know

Make sure you have read and understood the following procedures:

- [How we work with young people in custody](#)
- [The importance of promoting positive behaviour](#)
- [How we deal with difficult behaviour](#)

Staff responsibilities

Find your role below to see what your responsibilities are:

- [All staff](#)
- [Unit Coordinator](#)
- [Unit Manager](#)
- [Preventing Occupational Violence Trainers](#)

All staff

At all times when working with young people

- Be aware of the backgrounds and needs of the young people you are working with, and how this may impact on their view of themselves, the world around them and their behaviour. Be mindful of the need to establish positive working relationships with young people in order to work with them most effectively.
- Be proactive in getting to know young people on the unit in order to understand their behaviours.
- Willingly participate in regular training sessions which will benefit all staff in developing their skills and knowledge in preventing occupational violence. Be proactive in these training sessions, which are designed for all staff to become highly skilled in the management of difficult behaviours.

Unit Coordinator

When supervising unit staff in their direct work with young people

- Monitor staff members' understanding of the young people they work with. If needed, identify opportunities to enhance staff members' knowledge and skills in working with this client group.
- Ensure that staff engage positively with young people, appropriately encourage and support young people to successfully complete their custodial sentence.
- Monitor and provide feedback on the skills and personal qualities they bring to their work with young people.
- If staff need to improve their skills in this area, support them through identified training, increased supervision, peer support or other appropriate methods.

- Ensure staff are actively attending training sessions regularly and understand concepts and applications.

Unit Manager

At all times

- Make sure the unit environment and staffing group is conducive to encouraging a non-violent climate.
-

Preventing Occupational Violence Trainers

At all times

- Promote a training environment which enables staff to be proactive in their own learning and participation.
-

The procedure in detail

Overview

It is important to understand and implement a proactive risk assessment framework when managing all situations with young people.

Preventing Occupational Violence (POV) is all about putting in place strategies to defuse and manage potentially aggressive incidents.

POV uses a proactive and preventive approach rather than a reactive approach, giving you access to ongoing skill development in a range of preventive strategies such as:

- de-escalation techniques
- conflict management
- listening
- strategic communication skills
- mindfulness techniques to help you identify and address behaviours, events and environments that may trigger violent situations.

This program is designed to give you more confidence to manage potentially violent or dangerous client situations and help you make better judgements, which will lead to fewer, or better managed, incidents.

You cannot start work with young people until you have completed the Preventing Occupational Violence training and been found competent.

Additional Information

- [Preventing Occupational Violence - Participant guide \(534.1 KB, PDF\)](#)

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