

All our information sheets are available to download free of charge because we believe that money should not be a barrier to getting the information you need when you need it.

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We want to make sure our resources are helpful. Please spend a few minutes giving us some feedback:
[Feedback form](#)

Positive risk taking

This section of the Family Carer Advocacy Pack is about positive risk taking and how risk assessments should enable your relative to do things instead of preventing them. The Mental Capacity Act says everybody aged 16 years old and over is entitled to make their own decisions and if they can't there is a process which should be followed which ensures that any decisions made on their behalf are in their best interests. People should always be supported to be involved in as much of the decision-making process as possible.

Safety versus happiness

There is a difference between keeping somebody safe and preventing them from being independent, allowing them to make choices and have control over their life. Unnecessary restrictions will ultimately impact on quality of life and could cause a decline in emotional and mental health and/or increase in behaviour described as challenging.



If your relative expresses an interest in doing something, the starting point should always be 'how can we make this happen'. A risk assessment should be a way of identifying what needs to happen to ensure your relative can do whatever it is they want to do, not to justify why they can't.

The Mental Capacity Act says that if your relative has the capacity to make a certain decision at a certain time then they should. This does not mean that as a family carer you cannot give advice, outline the benefits and risks of making a certain decision. Everyone asks for advice or a different view when making decisions and sometimes an opinion is given even if it isn't asked for. The pros and cons are weighed up using the information to hand and then a decision is made. This process should be no different for your relative.

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“What good is it making someone safe, if it merely makes them miserable?”.

(Source: Justice Munby, 2010)

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If your relative has shown an interest in a particular activity (e.g. going swimming) but they have been assessed as not having the capacity for instance to weigh up the pros and cons of this activity, this should not be a barrier to participation. Those who know them well (e.g. you as a family carer, other family members, friends, paid support staff) can provide information about past experiences, what worked and what didn't work, solutions that have been identified. Think about the following:

- What does your relative want to do and why, e.g. go swimming because it is an activity they used to enjoy
- If it is something that your relative used to do and it stopped, question why this happened. This provides useful information about what worked and didn't work. For example, if it stopped because there was an incident this can be explored further: was it just one incident, were there a number, what happened, was there any reflection to identify the cause?

Positive Risk Taking

By Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)



[Watch this video clip from SCIE about how positive risk-taking enabled Michelle to continue to participate in an activity she enjoyed, despite the first attempt resulting in behaviour described as challenging.](#) (starts at 10:19)

- Carry out a visit to the proposed location. Those who know your relative well will already be familiar with factors your relative may find challenging e.g. parking, entering a building, lighting, noise levels, waiting
- Identify a named person from the location who might be able to support you to find solutions, and help to arrange for instance reserved parking, entering the building via a different way, using the facility at a quiet time, booking in advance to avoid waiting. Remember that the Equality Act 2010 entitles your relative to reasonable adjustments
- Personal reasons should not influence whether your relative participates in their chosen activity, e.g. if paid support staff do not like swimming or they think your relative takes too long to get undressed/dressed
- Risk can change over time. For example, when somebody first learns to drive their risk of having an accident is higher and this is acknowledged by the insurance premium they must pay. Over time, with experience this risk decreases. The same principle applies when introducing your relative to new activities. Initially there needs to be more planning, additional staff, but over time as they become familiar with a situation any risks are likely to reduce
- What barriers are there related to resources (e.g. staffing, cost, transport)? Remember the Care Act places an obligation on local

authorities to follow the concept of wellbeing which includes participation in recreational activities.

- Control by your relative over their day-to-day life, physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

Benefits of positive risk taking

1. Opportunity to develop new skills
2. Builds confidence and self-esteem
3. Teaches responsibility
4. Promotes learning from experience
5. Sense of achievement and success (for your relative and those involved in supporting them)
6. Encourages independence, choice and control
7. Demonstrates that trying new activities can be a positive experience
8. Can result in opening up other opportunities, increase social experiences and community presence
9. Positive impact on emotional and mental health and depending on the activity, physical health

Making it happen

By The Challenging Behaviour Foundation

Read [this fact sheet from the Challenging Behaviour Foundation](#) which includes a matrix to help identify risk, the level of risk and how to find solutions



Read [this report about Positive Risk Taking](#)



Read [this webpage from Skills for Care which includes a video about supporting services to manage risk taking](#)





We are the charity for people with severe learning disabilities who display challenging behaviour. We make a difference to the lives of children and adults across the UK by:

- Providing information about challenging behaviour
- Organising peer support for family carers and professionals
- Giving information and support by phone or email
- Running workshops which reduce challenging behaviour

To access our information and support, call 01634 838739, email info@thecbf.org.uk, or visit our website: www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk

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