Data Collection

The Place of Data Collection

- One of the key components of applied behaviour analysis is data collection

- Data informs what interventions we choose (i.e., based on the function of behaviour)

- Data informs if the selected intervention is effective in reducing the behaviour of concern

- There is need to collect information about the behaviour before the interventions are introduced (this is called "baseline data") so we have something with which to compare the data after the intervention has been introduced.

- Data increases the accountability to the individual and their support network regarding the interventions being selected

- There is need to be clear about what is included in the definition of the behaviour of concern. This means focusing on what is observable and what is included in the definition. For example, what does physical aggression include—hitting, punching, kicking, biting, scratching? Descriptions need to be as complete as possible.

- It is also important to collect data regarding when the behaviour is NOT happening. This tells us the factors that lead to success and recognize that people do not engage in the maladaptive behaviour all the time.

- There are two forms of data collection: direct and indirect:

  (i) Direct data collection is anything that requires direct investigation of the behaviour that can be evaluated. We are observing the behaviour and writing down details about what happens before, during and after the behaviour.

  (ii) Indirect data collection comes for another source and not necessarily from seeing the behaviour directly. For example, you are not seeing the behaviour, but asking staff to report on what they see (i.e., their opinion about when the behaviour happens).

[Information Sheet No. 28 has a corresponding Challenge Sheet No. C28]