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## NEURODEVELOPMENTAL TEAM CONWY AND DENBIGHSHIRE

### Positive Behaviour Reward Systems

#### What is a positive behaviour reward system?

Using reward systems can be an effective way to support your child's behaviour. Reward systems focus on the behaviour we want to see by rewarding children/young people when they display those target behaviours.

Reward systems can be used in a variety of different ways which make them appropriate for children and young people of all ages. For example sticker charts can work well for younger children whereas for young people chore lists and pocket money may be more motivational.

#### Why do we use a reward system?

Reward systems can:

- Improve your child's positive behaviour
- Reduce challenging behaviour
- Build your child/young person's confidence and self-esteem
- Support your child/young person's independence
- Teach responsibility



#### How to use a positive behaviour reward system?

##### 1) **Select the behaviours you want to change – be specific!**

It is important to be specific with the behaviours you choose. For example goals such as “be good all day” are vague and difficult for children to achieve. Instead try and target specific behaviours e.g. “brush my teeth twice a day”. It is best to start with one or two behaviours (e.g. share toys with sibling, sleep in own bed all night) at a time as selecting too many targets can feel overwhelming for the child.

## 2) Choose your chart

There are many different ways of using positive behaviour reward charts. You can see some examples at the bottom of this page. There is no right or wrong when it comes to choosing your reward chart. It is about choosing the way that works best for you and your family. Involving your child in the decision making process can help them to stay interested and to take ownership of the system. Sticker charts often work well for younger children whereas point based systems can be better for older children.

## 3) Explain the system

Explain how the system will work. Be clear about the expectations e.g., “Every time you brush your teeth you will get a sticker. When you have 10 stickers you can swap them for your magazine.” It is important that your child understands exactly what they need to do to earn their reward and that you agree what the reward will be beforehand.

## 4) Choose rewards that motivate your child! Choose a reward which will be motivating for your child. Rewards can be anything, which your child enjoys; this could be a favourite food item, a toy, a special trip out or more time doing something they enjoy. The rewards don't have to be expensive or cost anything at all! It is a good idea to include them in choosing their reward. This doesn't mean giving them free rein to choose anything at all. Decide what you are happy to spend or to do and give them the option e.g. “You can choose either a magazine or an ice cream”, “You can either have a book or a puzzle”, “You can either stay up 30 minutes later on Saturday night or have 30 more minute's computer time”.

Allowing the child to choose what their reward is, will motivate them to work hard for that reward. For some children choosing a reward ahead of time can be more motivational than working for a mystery prize.

It is best to choose small rewards which can be earned quickly or the child can lose motivation.

### Things you could use:

- Paper
- Scissors
- Magazines/internet for visual pictures
- Blue tac or Velcro sticker
- Stickers of choice
- Laminator (optional)
- Picture cards

You can access free visuals and tools from: [\(Twinkl resource link\)](#)

### Reward Ideas:

- Special time with friends or family
- Extra time on a high interest activity
- Having a sleep over
- Extra/longer visit the park
- Low cost crafts activity or baking
- Treat from the pound store
- New book, puzzle or magazine
- Later bedtime on Friday night
- Choosing the family film
- Choosing something special for tea

### 5) Display the chart

Agree where you are going to keep the reward chart. It can be best to keep the chart somewhere that everyone can see it, such as on the fridge. Having the chart visible will remind the child about their targets and remind the parents to fill it in.

### 6) Be consistent

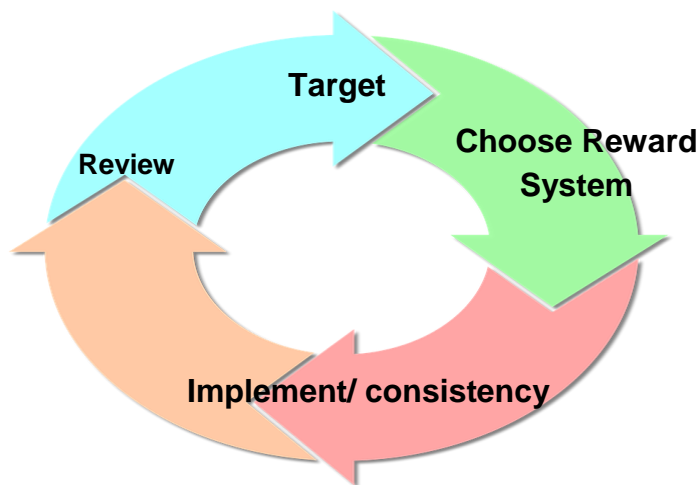
The most important thing is to be consistent. One of the main reasons that reward charts stop working is because they are not used consistently. It can make children feel really demotivated if parents forget to give them stickers for doing their target behaviour. If you are out and about and don't have your stickers to hand, try making a note on your phone to remind you to add it to the chart when you get home.

### 7) Follow through

It is important to follow through with the agreed terms of the chart. For example if you promise the child a new magazine when they get 5 stars, it is important that they get what they have been promised. On the other hand if your child needs 5 stars and they only get 3 then it is important not to give in and reward them anyway.

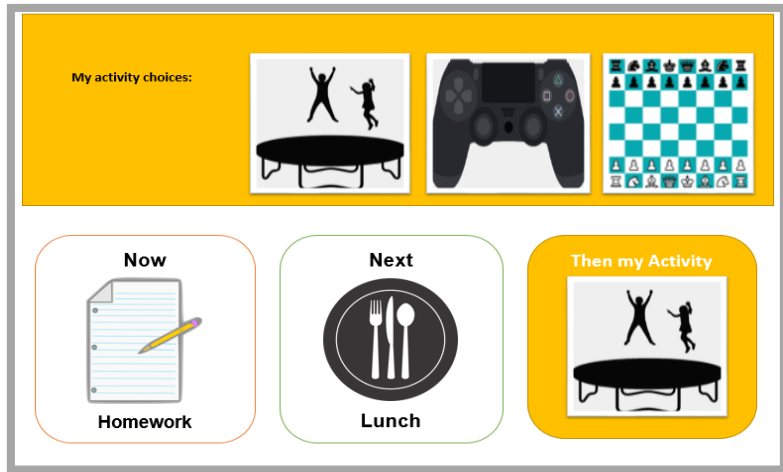
### 8) Review the targets

After a while, your child will be doing their target behaviour most of the time without much effort. This is the time to add a new target to the reward chart. Choose another specific and achievable target and follow the same steps with this new behaviour. Eventually as your child grows they may no longer need a reward chart and instead verbal praise may be enough to keep them on track.



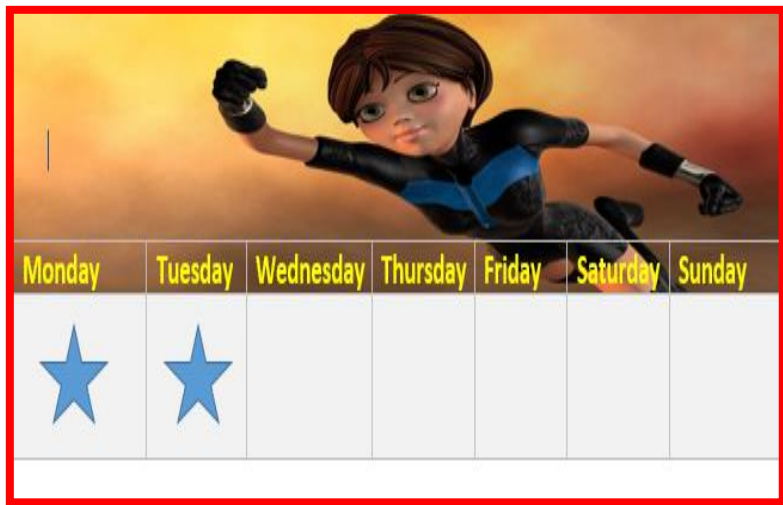
## Different Kinds of Reward Systems

There is no right or wrong reward system to choose. It is about choosing the system that will work best for your family. Here are some ideas of what your reward system could look like:



### Now, Next and Then boards

- This visual strategy can be used across various situations such as to support routine and managing change
- Now/next boards can be really helpful for helping children stay on track when doing tasks they find tricky.
- Unlike other reward systems, the reward is earned as soon as the child has completed the target tasks e.g. “now we are reading our book, next we will eat lunch then it is time for the trampoline”.



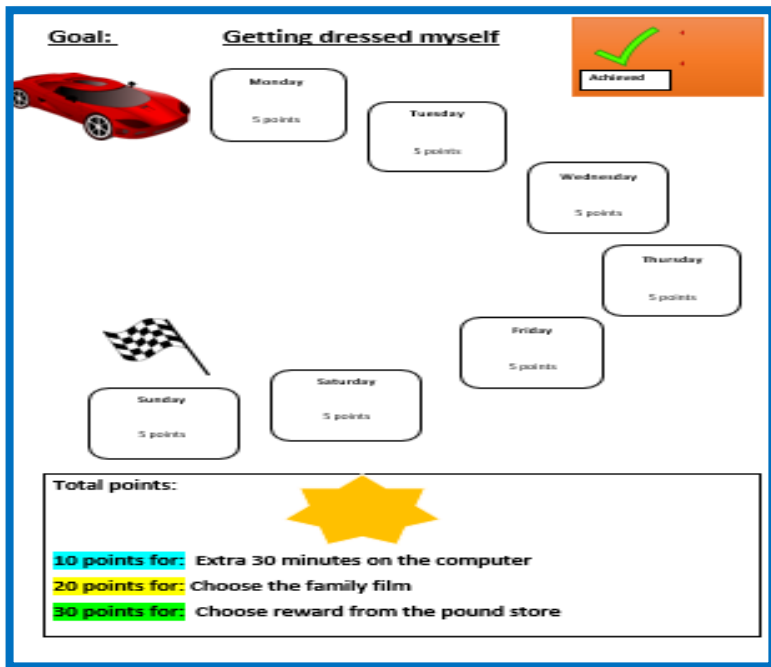
### Sticker Chart

- Sticker charts are a popular choice for many children.
- The child will get a sticker every time they display a target behaviour. They can then exchange those stickers for a reward.
- It can be nice to let your child choose the stickers, so every time they display their target behaviour, they are getting a mini reward by choosing their sticker.



## Token Systems

- Token systems are similar to sticker charts but can be more appealing to older children.
- You can include your child in choosing their tokens. This could be something that is of interest to them such as a car, train, smiley face or a symbol such as a star.
- Some people have pictures of tokens that they stick to the chart other draw the outline and the young person can then colour the shape in every time they display their target behaviour.
- Token systems can also work well alongside behavioural contracts and house rules (more information below).



## Point Systems

- Point systems can be great for children who have a good understanding of numbers.
- Point systems can be styled any way you like. They can be colourful with pictures of items of interest or a more subtle table with a tally of points.
- Point systems can include a tiered reward system to help keep the child/young person motivated for bigger rewards e.g. 10 points = 30 minutes on computer game, 20 points = £3, 30 points = trip to the cinema.

Chore	Dishes	Washing away	Clean Bathroom
			
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

When I have done my Chores, I will get:  
1 Hour of Screen Time \*

## Chore Lists

- Older children and young people may generally be well behaved at home but may not really be taking responsibility for helping out around the house.
- Chore lists can be a great way to encourage children/young people to help around the home
- Doing chores can teach children/young people responsibility, time management and independent living skills which will be really important for them as they grow up
- Completing a short list of simple chores (e.g. putting the plates in the dishwasher, preparing their packed lunch and put their clothes away in the wardrobe) each day/week can then earn your child/young person rewards.
- Rewards could be things such as computer time, pocket money or later bedtime or curfew.

## Reward Jars



- This system can be a great way for children/young people to visually see their progress.
- Children/young people are allowed to place an object into the jar every time they display their target behaviour.
- Objects could be things like marbles, buttons or pebbles.
- It is important not to select objects which are too small or jars which are too big as you want the reward to be achievable over a relatively short period of time.
- Reward jars can be helpful when you are targeting more than one behaviour as they often take longer to reach the reward.
- Reward jars are also great to use with siblings. All the children/young people can add to the jar for their good behaviour. They can also be good for encouraging team work amongst siblings.
- Marking smaller rewards out on the jar can be really helpful for children/young people to keep them motivated to achieve their reward.

**Please be advised that small objects are a choking hazards and therefore should be used with care and supervised at all times. Do not use this system if the child is prone to placing items in their mouth. You can however, use larger objects for children for example blocks, toy cars or puzzle pieces.**



### Behaviour Contract

I....., agree to change:

.....

When I successfully complete the contract, I will get:

.....

If I do not make the changes, I will have to:

.....

### Behaviour Contract

- Behaviour contracts can be useful for older children or children with good language and literacy skills.
  - Behaviour contracts outline clearly the behaviours which are and which are not acceptable in the home.
  - It is really important to include the child/young person in creating the behaviour contract.
  - Including the child/young person will give them the opportunity to share how they feel about the conditions and encourage them to take ownership of it.
  - Make sure that the behaviours in the contract are achievable. If they are too hard the child/young person will quickly lose motivation.
  - Behavioural contracts outline what rewards can be offered from good behaviour
  - Behavioural contracts can be used alongside other more visual rewards systems like the ones mentioned above.
  - Avoid changing the contract once it has been agreed.
- Set clear goals and timelines for the behavioural contract e.g. to be reviewed in 1 week.



## House Rules

- Though not a reward system in itself, house rules can be really useful for supporting positive behaviour in the home.
- House rules can be a great way of ensuring that everyone in the home is clear about what is and what is not acceptable.
- Clear expectations and boundaries can make everyone feel more relaxed and secure.
- Include the child/young person in the creation of the house rules. This will help them feel motivated to follow them.
- House rules are for everyone in the house to follow – not just the child/young person
- It is best to lead by example and your child/young person will be able to see how things should be done e.g. if the house rule is “we use our inside voices – we do not scream and shout” it is important that parents avoiding shouting as much as possible.
- Do not change the rules once they have been established, unless it is agreed by everyone in the house.
- House rules can be used alongside other reward systems like the ones mentioned above.

## Top tips

### 1) Make the reward achievable and motivational

It is really important that the targets are achievable. Set realistic goals to help your child stay motivated. Instead of setting big goals like “be good all week”, choose small goals that your child will be able to do e.g. “share the T.V. with your brother”. Make sure the targets aren’t too difficult. Focus on one specific behaviour at a time.

### 2) Make it clear – the behaviour and the stickers required

Make sure you are clear about exactly what the child needs to do to earn the reward. Let them know exactly how many stickers are required and exactly what they need to do to earn a sticker. E.g. “You need 5 stickers to get your new puzzle. To get a sticker you need to stay in your own bed all night.”

### 3) Keep their eye on the prize!

It can be helpful to have the reward on display somewhere out of reach such as on top of the fridge to remind the child what they are working for. If behaviour starts to slip simply pointing to the reward can be enough of a prompt to help your child remember what they need to do.



#### **4) Remember to use the chart**

It is important to be consistent! Remember to use the chart every time your child does their target behaviour. It can be tricky to remember but lack of consistency is the most common reason that reward charts stop working.

#### **5) Link the sticker to the target behaviour**

As soon as your child does their target behaviour praise them straight away! If you are out and about make sure to give your child the sticker as soon as you get home. Some parents find it helpful to add a reminder to their phone. Make a big deal about adding a sticker to their chart and give them lots of praise. Give them specific feedback so they know exactly what they did to earn their sticker e.g. "You are getting this sticker because you got ready for school on time this morning", "Well done! I am really proud of you for getting ready all by yourself", "You have showed me that you are really responsible", "If you can get ready for school on time every morning this week you can get more stickers and then you can earn that new puzzle!" It can be helpful to count how many stickers your child already has and recap how many they need e.g. "Wow! You already have 1, 2, 3 stickers! You need 5 to get your reward. That means you only need two more! Good job!"

#### **6) Be positive**

Reward charts focus on good behaviour. Focussing on the behaviour we want to see more of, often gives the best results! If your child misbehaves, do not take stickers away that they have already earned. This can be really demotivating. For example if your child has been good all week and earned enough stickers for their reward then they misbehave on the last day, it is important that the child still gets their reward. If your child is having a bad day try reminding them about the behaviour you want to see e.g. "Show me your good sharing". This is often more effective than telling your child what you don't want them to do e.g. "Don't fight".

#### **7) Reward Charts are not bribes**

Some parents are concerned that reward charts are essentially bribing their child. Bribing your child occurs in the moment, e.g. "if you get in the car right now I will give you a chocolate biscuit". Bribing your child increases the likelihood that they will behave in a way that challenges us again. Children learn that when they use a behaviour that challenges us they then get a reward e.g. a chocolate biscuit. Reward charts are different because the target behaviour is agreed in advance e.g. the child knows that they need to get in the car on time to get their sticker and earn their reward. This then motivates the child not to display the challenging behaviour in the first place. They then learn that good behaviour is what earns them a reward.

## Useful Links

[Home - Awtistiaeth Cymru | Autism Wales | National Autism Team](#) (advice sheets on challenging behaviours, ABC charts and free picture cards)

[link to ADHD Foundation: https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk/information/parents/](https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk/information/parents/) (advice sheets, hints and tips for children with ADHD)

[Free resources on Twinkl: https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resources/class-management/certificates-and-awards/reward-charts](https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resources/class-management/certificates-and-awards/reward-charts) (access to free reward charts and picture cards)

[Online parenting: https://inourplace.co.uk/](https://inourplace.co.uk/) (access to free online Parenting training in Conwy and Denbighshire)

[Parenting online course: https://solihullapproachparenting.com/](https://solihullapproachparenting.com/) (information on the Solihull approach and advice sheets)

Conwy family services:

[Conwy family centres: www.conwy.gov.uk/familycentres](http://www.conwy.gov.uk/familycentres)

Denbighshire family services:

[Denbighshires support: https://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en/resident/health-and-social-care/children-young-people-and-families/family-support/families-first.aspx](https://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en/resident/health-and-social-care/children-young-people-and-families/family-support/families-first.aspx)

**Reward chart Systems leaflet by Sarah Roberts (Specialist Speech and Language Therapist) and Emma Bilson (Specialist health Care Support Worker) Completed 14<sup>th</sup> September 2021**