



**care bridge**  
— specialists —

**For autistic individuals to succeed in this world, they need to find their strengths and the people that will help them get to their hopes and dreams. In order to do so, the ability to make and keep friends is a must. Amongst those friends, there must be mentors to show them the way. A capable and supportive environment where they can learn from their mistakes is what we as a society need to create for them.**

Bill Wong, Autistic Occupational Therapist



At Care Bridge Specialists our positive and preventative support reduces the frequency and severity of challenging behaviour by creating environments that are CAPABLE rather than challenging. Our knowledge around capable environments what they are and how to create them, allows us to see the whole picture around a person and expands our ability to provide effective person-centred care. This in turn:

- Increases the quality of life for the people we are privileged to support
- Reduces the need for and use of restrictive practises
- Increases the well-being of our Staff and Specialist Practitioners
- Reduces the likelihood of a placement breakdown.

### **What Are Capable Environments and Why Are They So Important?**

Capable environments are the foundation of good support.

All behaviour, including behaviour that challenges need to be understood in the context of the internal and external environment, taking into account factors WITHIN (such as physical health, mental health, thoughts, feelings, strengths and weaknesses) and AROUND (such as their physical and social world, Is it busy? Is it

noisy? Does it smell? Is it safe?). All these factors influence how a person will respond in a specific situation and whether they are likely to repeat that response again or not.

If our Care Bridge Specialist Practitioners can understand the context in which behaviour and responses occur and what it achieves for a person then they can reduce the need for a person to engage in behaviours that might be challenging and support them to learn other ways to get their needs met.

This means making changes to their environment that promotes:

- Communication
- Positive Interaction
- Skills building
- Engagement

To do this we observe and address how a person is currently being communicated with and interacted with and we consider things such as how the environment meets a person's sensory, physical and emotional needs. Are their healthcare needs being met? Are their current interventions and strategies promoting a reflective and positive approach?

Our role isn't to "fix" the individual it is to change the environment around a person to improve their quality of life and to enable and empower them to live as happily and as independently as possible.

## **The 9 Key Areas for Focus**

When we are working with existing support teams either in a hospital setting prior to a transition or if we are called in to support a long-term care provider at risk of a placement breakdown the Care Bridge Specialist Approach to capable environments focuses on the following key areas:

### **1. POSITIVE SOCIAL INTERACTION**

How are those that are supporting a person interacting with him/her? What kind of language is being used when they talk about them? Are they thinking and engaging in the most meaningful way?

### **2. COMMUNICATION SUPPORT**

How is the person being supported to effectively communicate their wants and needs?

### **3. SUPPORT FOR PARTICIPATION IN MEANINGFUL ACTIVITY**

Is this person being offered varied activities and do they have time to do the things that they enjoy?

### **4. PROVISION OF PREDICATBLE AND CONSISTENT ROUTINES**

What is in place to help the person understand their day and to ensure consistent support?

### **5. MAINTAINING AND ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS**

Is the person encouraged to make links in the community and to develop and maintain links with their family and their friends?

**6. ENCOURAGING INDEPENDENCE**

How is the person being supported to become as independent with the overall aim to reduce their reliance on staff and family as much as possible?

**7. ENCOURAGING CHOICE MAKING**

Is the person being encouraged to make choices in a meaningful way for them?

**8. PERSONAL CARE AND HEALTH SUPPORT**

Is consistent support provided for personal care and does the person have access to healthcare?

**9. PROVISION OF AN ACCEPTABLE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

Does the physical environment meet the persons physical and sensory needs?

We also recognise that if we are going to create a capable environment around a person, we need to consider not just the direct environment but the support for our staff and the values and culture of our organisation. We ensure that our Specialist Practitioners are mindful and skilful in what they do and we support them with an Intensive Support Team (IST) that is made up of 5 clinical professionals; a Registered Mental Health Nurse (RMN), a Registered Learning Disability Nurse (RNLD), a Registered General Nurse (RGN), a Board-Certified Behaviour Analyst (BCBA) and a PBS Lead.

On an ongoing basis our IST reflects, coaches and advises on the support we are providing and helps to structure what is working well and what could be working better. Whether reviewing and updating PBS plans, sharing insights and recommendations around positive interactions and skills or providing help around a specific event such as a transition our IST and Specialists Practitioners are one team and aligned in their commitment to make a real impact and change lives for the better.