Understanding Aspects of SEND: Conduct Disorder

1. What is Conduct Disorder? Conduct Disorder (CD) is a behavioural condition characterised by persistent patterns of antisocial, aggressive or defiant behaviour. It often manifests in childhood or adolescence and can significantly impact relationships, education and daily functioning. CD is more than occasional misbehaviour; it involves repeated violations of societal norms and the rights of others. The exact causes are multifaceted, involving genetic, environmental and social factors, such as trauma, neglect or inconsistent discipline. It is thought that around 5% of children aged between 5 and 16 have CD. (Independent July 2024)

2. How can Conduct Disorder present? Conduct Disorder can present differently based on age, environment and severity. Common behaviours include:

- **Aggression toward others:** Bullying, fighting or showing cruelty toward people or animals.

- **Deceptiveness:** Lying, manipulating or stealing to achieve goals.

- **Rule violations:** Skipping school, running away from home or breaking rules repeatedly.

- **Destructive behaviour:** Vandalising property or causing physical harm to belongings.

- **Disregard for consequences:** Taking risks without considering the potential harm to themselves or others.

- **Lack of empathy:** Showing little remorse or concern for the impact of their actions.

- **Difficulty with authority:** Frequent arguments, defiance or refusal to comply with adult requests.

3. Ways to help manage Conduct Disorder Supporting individuals with Conduct Disorder requires consistent, structured and empathetic approaches. Strategies include:

- **Set clear expectations and consequences:** Establish predictable rules and consequences for behaviours to create boundaries.

- **Encourage positive reinforcement:** Focus on rewarding good behaviour rather than concentrating on undesirable actions.

- **Teach emotional regulation skills:** Help the individual recognise and manage emotions like anger or frustration through techniques like mindfulness or breathing exercises.

- **Provide consistent routines:** Create a structured environment to reduce uncertainty and foster security.

- **Model appropriate behaviour:** Demonstrate healthy ways to resolve conflicts and express emotions.

- **Engage in therapy:** Encourage working with behavioural therapists or counsellors to address underlying causes and develop coping mechanisms.

- **Family involvement:** Encourage family-based therapy to improve communication, consistency and relationships at home.

4. Where to find out more

- **Child Mind Institute** (www.childmind.org): Provides resources and guidance for managing behavioural challenges like Conduct Disorder.

- **YoungMinds** (www.youngminds.org.uk): Offers support and information on mental health conditions affecting children and teens.

- Book recommendations:
  The Defiant Child by Dr. Douglas Riley
  Parenting the Strong-Willed Child by Rex Forehand and Nicholas Long
  Parenting Children with Conduct Disorder by Abraham Theresa