

### Self-injury rewarded by escape from demands

Nathan was a 21-year-old man with Cornelia de Lange syndrome. We visited him at his day centre and observed him for about four hours over the course of a typical day. Before we arrived we had been told by his parents that he sometimes engaged in self-injurious behaviour. When spending time with him it seemed that he would be more likely to self-injure when demands were made of him. The demands that were made mainly took the form of asking him to take part in particular activities or to move to other locations in the day centre. Following our visit we carried out a statistical analysis in which we looked at all the incidents of self-injury that Nathan showed. The graph below shows how just prior to his self-injurious incidents, the probability of demands occurring (black line) increased in comparison to the average level of demands over the day (grey line). Following the self-injury, the probability of demands quickly decreased. It is likely therefore, that his self-injury led to a withdrawal of demands by his carers and thus negatively reinforced (rewarded) the behaviour.

