

When Behaviour Communication Becomes a Language

We understand behaviour as a **language** that must be learned, interpreted, and responded to with fluency if care is to be truly person-led and holistic in practice.



In dementia care, we often say that *behaviour is communication*. It's a compassionate phrase, and it matters. But on its own, it is not enough.

At Launex, we agree that behaviour is communication — **and we go further**. We understand behaviour as a **language** that must be learned, interpreted, and responded to with fluency if care is to be truly person-led and holistic in practice.

As dementia progresses, spoken language is often the first system to falter. Words fragment and access to vocabulary becomes unreliable. What does not disappear is the need to express the full human range — fear and safety, pain and comfort, protest and trust, identity, connection, joy, humour, affection, intimacy, and desire.

When words are no longer dependable, these experiences move into the body — into movement, proximity-seeking, touch, resistance, repetition, withdrawal, laughter, flirtation, or sexual expression. Behaviour becomes the medium through which the person continues to speak.

When we describe behaviour as “communication” but do not treat it as a language, we often respond instinctively rather than interpretively. We reassure, redirect, distract, or contain. When behaviour persists — whether distress or pleasure — it is labelled inappropriate or risky, not because it is unclear, but because **we are not fluent**.

Language has patterns. It has consistency. It follows rules shaped by neurology, emotional memory, sensory processing, attachment, and loss of agency. This applies just as much to expressions of happiness and sexuality as it does to expressions of fear or distress.

Person-led care cannot exist without interpretation.

If behaviour is saying “*this feels unsafe*,” we must slow down.

If behaviour is saying “*this brings me comfort or pleasure*,” we must not rush to suppress it simply because it makes others uncomfortable.

At Launex, we teach families and professionals to **read behaviour as language** — not to stop it or sanitise it, but to understand what is being said so care can respond with dignity, consent, and respect.

This is where holistic care becomes real. Not quieter people. Not restricted humanity. But deeper listening — to the language that remains when words are gone.