

October 2017

POSITIVE BEHAVIOURAL SUPPORT (PBS) IMPACT OF THE PBS ACADEMY

**Louise Denne, Senior Research Fellow,
Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal
and Research (CEDAR), University of Warwick**

About this briefing

Positive Behavioural Support (PBS) aims to improve the quality of life of people with learning disabilities who are at risk of displaying behaviour that challenges. It focuses on understanding why individuals exhibit challenging behaviour and uses that information to reduce the likelihood of it occurring.

The Positive Behavioural Support (PBS) Academy is a collective of organisations and individuals in the UK working together to promote and raise standards in the use of PBS as a framework for supporting individuals with learning disabilities. This briefing provides an overview of the impact of the PBS Academy and makes recommendations for extending the reach of its work.

Context

PBS, or components of PBS, have been recommended in several recent UK policy documents and professional guidelines, including the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines for Challenging Behaviour (2015). PBS also has a role to play in addressing key

Policy implications

- The lack of a workforce development strategy, underpinned by evidence-based strategies like PBS, is leading to practice of variable quality in the learning disability care sector.
- Turnover in adult social care is estimated to be 25.4% (Skills for Care, 2015), with much care provided by family and other unpaid carers. Designing and putting in place a sustainable workforce development plan for this population is a huge challenge.
- Research presented in this briefing suggests there is a role for a national body for PBS in the UK, with a focus on individual and workforce development and raising standards in service delivery. The PBS Academy currently exists in an informal capacity, with no formal organisational or governance structure.
- The Care Quality Commission could also adopt a set of PBS Standards, with a view to conducting formal inspections of organisations delivering PBS.
- The remit of a national body could be wider than PBS, incorporating a strategic focus on challenging behaviour.

challenges in the Department of Health sponsored *Transforming Care* policy programme, which aims to support more people to live in the community and has a specific goal of reducing the number of mental health hospital beds for people with a learning disability by 35-50% by 2019. Thirty-eight Transforming Care Partnership plans across England include references to PBS.

Despite the widespread promotion of PBS in the policy arena, there is limited understanding about what this approach actually entails. This is significant because approximately 50,000 individuals with learning disabilities in England are considered to display challenging behaviour. Almost half of this number have been identified with 'severe' challenging behaviour.

PBS Competence Framework

The UK PBS Competence Framework was published by the PBS Academy in 2015. It provides guidance to practitioners on delivering best practice PBS to people with learning disabilities who are at risk of behaviour that challenges. The framework lists the competencies that define best practice, enabling practitioners to benefit from professional development and occupational standards.

The PBS Academy has produced resources tailored to specific stakeholder groups, such as support workers, service providers, commissioners and family carers, to help them put the competence framework into practice.

In addition, the Academy's work includes a PBS workforce development model, the development of PBS standards for accrediting training and services providers, and resources for people with learning disabilities.

Impact of the PBS Academy: Key findings and implications

Researchers at the University of Warwick and the Challenging Behaviour Foundation surveyed 349 carers, practitioners, trainees, and academics to evaluate the effectiveness of the PBS Academy to date. Ninety per cent of respondents rated the PBS Competence Framework as either 'very useful' or 'useful'. They reported that they had used the framework and other resources for a variety of different purposes, including informing the development of PBS services and workforce development and training.

The respondents also suggested areas for the PBS Academy to focus on in the future. There was a perceived need for PBS to be more widely available in services for people with a learning disability, and suggestions to inspect services providing PBS and to establish a regulatory body for trained PBS practitioners. Additional themes that emerged included supporting an increase in knowledge and practice of PBS, and connecting more with other professional organisations and family carers.

Conclusion

The survey findings suggest that the PBS Academy has generally been effective in meeting its objectives and that there is a role for an organisation serving similar functions in the UK in future, to extend the reach of its work. The challenge now is scaling up the delivery of PBS to improve the quality of life of people with learning disability and their families. Identifying the continued need and gaps in current resource provision provides a good basis on which to develop a more strategic national approach to PBS and challenging behaviour.

Further information

For further information and for a copy of the PBS Academy Evaluation and Impact Study, as well as PBS Academy resources, please go to www.pbsacademy.org.uk.

The views contained in this briefing do not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Warwick.



Photo credit: Peter van der Kruk

Contact the researcher

Louise Denne, Senior Research Fellow,
Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal
and Research (CEDAR), University of Warwick
L.Denne@warwick.ac.uk

This policy briefing was supported by the ESRC Impact Acceleration Account (grant reference ES/M500434/1).

