

21 April 2023

Staff training in Applied Behaviour Analysis

I see that your organisation is on record as promoting PBS. Can you please tell me the level of training your staff have in Applied Behaviour Analysis? I ask because the founders of PBS have indicated the following in personal communication with one of my students:

"PBS is grounded in ABA, and from my view you cannot claim to be doing PBS without full engagement with the principles and practices associate with behavior analysis. I encourage you to look at Sailor, Dunlap, Sugai & Horner (2009) Handbook of Positive Behavior Support." (Rob Horner)

We are unsure who the founders of PBS are in the context of this query. However, whilst ABA is one of the areas which have influenced the development of PBS practices and approaches, it is important to note that promoting services which have cultures of Positive Behaviour Support are wider than the theories and application of applied Behaviour analysis. PBS first emerged in the 1980s in response to rising concern over the use of punishment and restrictive strategies in intensive ABA practices (National Autistic Society).

Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) is a values-led approach to care, involving working in partnership with people, treating them with dignity and respect and enabling them to have a better quality of life (British Institute for learning Disabilities BiLD).

It is known that having additional difficulties in a person's life, (for example a learning disability, or a head injury or an illness or traumatic experiences), may place them at increased risk of developing or displaying behaviours that challenge. These can be a sign of increased distress, or difficulties in making their needs known, which can then pose a challenge their your own wellbeing, or that of others or the environment in which they live. Co-morbidity with a neuro-disability such as autism, or mental health problems may all increase the risk of such challenges.

However PBS is not only important in the context of challenging behaviour. PBS emerged from three major sources: normalization/inclusion movement, person-centred values and applied behavioural analysis. The first two sources are the corner stones for ensuring that care across systems is delivered in a PBS framework. PBS is based on a set of four principles which include enabling: **inclusion, choice, participation and equality of opportunity**. These principles should inform all care of someone with a learning disability, regardless of any experience of behaviours that challenge.

21 April 2023

Clients who don't display challenging behaviour should still expect to live with the principles of PBS, ensuring they have access to meaningful activities, least restrictions on their lives and loving relationships.

The psychological principles of applied behavioural analysis are helpful in supporting the development of Positive Behaviour Support Plans in more complex presentations, where behaviours that challenge are more likely to be seen and to be a reflection of distress. They need to be considered alongside trauma, attachment and other psychological frameworks, and framed and analysed within a formulation of the presenting difficulties.

PBS provides the right support for a person, their family and friends to help people lead a meaningful life and learn new skills without unnecessary restrictions. It is not simply about getting rid of problematic behaviour. With the right support at the right time the likelihood of behaviour that challenges is reduced.

The promotion of PBS is particularly relevant and promoted within BHSCT ID services and all staff have an introduction to the principles and practices promoting a PBS service at induction and further training is offered by other opportunities through our the services. The trust has partnerships with BiLD, having used their PBS e-learning course in the past and supporting the BiLD PBS Coaches programme, along with a number of staff engaged in their BTEC Diploma in Practice Leadership. Training is also delivered by Psychological Services.

With regards to more specialist application of PBS in the development of PBS Plans, which are individually specific, these are led by Psychological services in collaboration with other ID staff, carers and service users as appropriate. This involves input from a multidisciplinary team including Psychologists, Behaviour Practitioners, Occupational Therapists and Speech & Language Therapists. All bring a range of professional skills which support the development of individual PBS Plans and the service promotes ongoing professional development in a range of areas which will support clients and services including areas such as the implications of trauma on behaviour and training in intensive interaction.

There are a range of training more relevant to this specific question and these include: Doctorate in Clinical Psychology, Msc Applied Behaviour Analysis, Tizard Post Grad Diploma in PBS, BTEC Level 5 Diploma in PBS via Cardiff University.