

01 Understanding Positive Behaviour Support

Positive Behaviour Support, or PBS, is person centred framework which can support people with a range of different needs to live a life that is meaningful and of value to them. PBS is especially helpful when used to support people with learning disabilities who are at risk of being excluded or restricted. At the heart of PBS is the understanding that all behaviour has meaning. When the person is engaging in behaviours of concern, they are communicating in the most effective way they have that something is not right for them.





PBS is regarded as best practice and has been recommended in many government documents and good practice guidance in the U.K. and worldwide

The overarching aim and goal of PBS is to support the person to flourish; to enhance the person's wellbeing. PBS is inherently person centred because support is shaped by the person's life experiences, their preferences, and what really works for them. Although often used to support people who can display behaviours that raise concern, this should never be the focus. We should be thinking **holistically** about the person's quality of life and how we can enhance it; changes to the person's patterns of behaviour often occur as a natural side effect of this.

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The person being supported

PBS keeps the person being supported at the centre of all decision-making. Support is shaped by the person's life experiences, their preferences and the approach is holistic.

Using PBS

PBS is about making all aspects of the environment a better fit for the person. This will involve taking into consideration the person's likes and dislikes, how they communicate, and what is important to them. It will also involve understanding the kinds of things they find difficult and what makes them feel better in those situations. PBS is about supporting the person to develop skills and different ways of behaving that will support their wellbeing. PBS is not about labelling or blaming or trying to change or punish the person.

Coproduction and **collaboration** are especially important values of PBS; the person, their family and circle of support should be involved in every aspect. This means helping to identify what works and what does not, deciding on goals to work on, writing the PBS plan and reviewing how effective it is. As well as core information from family, the PBS plan is likely to include contributions from a range of people who may be involved, for example Speech and Language or Occupational Therapy, Nursing, or Psychiatry.



PBS usually involves **Functional Behaviour Assessment** before a plan is developed and should involve working with the person and important people in their life to develop a shared understanding of strengths and needs, things that work well and things the person can find difficult. If there are behaviours that are limiting the person's opportunities to live a life that is meaningful to them, the assessment should include information on this; what the behaviour looks like, the situations in which it is most likely to occur and information about what the behaviour helps the person to achieve. The person coordinating the assessment and plan development should take time to get to know the person and to observe how they interact with their environment across different times and situations.

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PBS plans

PBS plans should include all of the important information to help the person to thrive. The plan may include detail on how to communicate and interact with the person in a meaningful way, how to support their sensory needs, how they enjoy spending their time, and other things that are important to their physical and psychological wellbeing. You should also expect to see information on any skills the person is being supported to develop, such as different ways to communicate, or coping strategies. The plan should also include clear information about situations or events the person struggles with and any helpful ways to minimise their impact. Creating an environment that supports a person to flourish, while minimising the conditions related to behaviours of concern is called a 'Proactive' approach. A PBS plan should be largely focused on **Proactive Strategies**; what is important to the person, what the person can find difficult and how to manage or minimise it, and any skills the person is being supported to develop.

Although the greatest proportion of the person's plan should focus on creating the right environment for the person to thrive in, it is important that we know how to support the person when they are distressed in a way that is helpful, respectful and maintains safety. These are known as **Reactive Strategies**. Reactive Strategies do not need to include restricting the person in any way but if they do, there needs to be a strong emphasis on reducing restraint and restriction.



PBS plans are living documents, they should be reviewed, amended and updated regularly to reflect changes that occur for the person. Some people misunderstand and think the plan is all about how the person should behave, but really it is about how everyone supporting the person should help. It's about how those supporting the person should behave, not making judgements about the person supported.

When implemented consistently, a PBS plan should enhance the person's quality of life and help those who care for the person deepen their understanding of the things that matter; what is important to the person and for the person.

If the support your son or daughter receives does not look like our description as above, then it is not good PBS. We hope this information will help parents know what questions to ask, and to be confident that they should be fully involved in co-producing the PBS solutions. NB there is also a further information sheet in this series focussing on key questions families can ask).

A PBS plan is about how **those supporting the person** should behave

Further information

For local general support for families and carers contact
All Wales Forum: www.allwalesforum.org.uk

For support with behaviour that challenges contact
Challenging Behaviour Foundation:
www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk

See *Additional Resources* document for more information.

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