

Positive Behavioural Support (PBS) and the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act

[Note: Positive Behavioural Support (PBS) is an internationally known term and should not be confused with 'Positive Behavioural Management (PBM), which is the name of one of the BILD accredited physical intervention methods]

Positive Behavioural Support (PBS) is an ethical, evidence-based approach. It is person-centred and proactive in that it focuses on improvements in individuals' quality of life and prevention of challenging behaviour. PBS is a comprehensive, values-led approach that is accepted internationally as current best practice and, following the Winterbourne View scandal, is specifically recommended by the Department of Health in numerous recent guidance documents as part of the ambitious transformation agenda across client groups (e.g. people with mental illness, dementia, acquired brain injury, learning disabilities, and vulnerable children).

The adoption of PBS has also been recommended by the Learning Disability Advisory Group to the Welsh Government. The comprehensiveness of the PBS approach stands in line with the direction of Welsh social policy over the last thirty years and is in full accord with the new Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act, in that it:

- promotes physical and emotional well-being,
- addresses physical and mental health issues,
- emphasises personal and skill development
- supports and encourages family and personal relationships
- provides opportunities for social well-being and inclusion
- promotes human rights, dignity and respect
- enhances living accommodation and the person-environment fit

PBS uses the least restrictive interventions and totally rejects any use of punishment. As such, it is accepted as the most effective protection for vulnerable people at risk of abuse and neglect.

PBS can provide the tools and framework for the principles embedded in the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act to be translated into practice. Key aspects are explored in a little more detail below:

PBS is values led

The key aim of PBS is to help vulnerable people to have the same human rights and opportunities as other people, and to be treated fairly, with compassion, kindness, dignity and respect. It focuses on what services, carers and professionals need to do to meet individual people's needs in the best ways possible.

PBS focuses on improving quality of life

PBS defines a good quality of life as what most people would want on a day to day basis, such as a comfortable home, contact with family and friends, engagement in a wide range of activities, such as running a home, work and leisure, as an accepted and equal member of the community, free from pain, distress and abuse. PBS helps people to do more things for themselves. It includes 'Active Support' which helps carers to give people more opportunities to learn, practice their skills and abilities and participate more fully in daily life. This helps people to maintain or develop independence as far as possible, which increases dignity and self-esteem.

By enhancing these aspects, PBS improves quality of life not just for the individuals but also for their carers.

PBS is inclusive

PBS assessments and interventions are designed with the active involvement of key people in the person's life. These are the people who know the person best and actually put PBS into operation. They, therefore, need to understand and agree with all that has to be done.

PBS is person-centred

The starting point is to get a clear picture of the person, how the person copes with their environment and gets the things they require. This allows their unique needs, aspirations, experiences and strengths to be recognised and puts them at the centre of their care, and gives them a voice and control over the outcomes they want to achieve.

PBS is a long-term approach

PBS is not a short-term intervention but a long-term approach. It requires changes in the person's environment and concerns the person's development and whole lifestyle. These improvements need to be maintained so that the person continues to have a good life.

PBS is evidence-based

PBS is evidence-based in two ways. Firstly, there is growing research that shows it improves quality of life and reduces behaviours that challenge, and that this is maintained over time.

Secondly, PBS is evidence-based at every stage, as it is based on information about the individual from initial assessment through to checking if the intervention plan is working in practice.

PBS is a framework for multi-component intervention

PBS is not a single intervention. In order to meet each person's unique needs, it may include a wide range of methods and therapies such as value-based behavioural approaches, physical and mental health treatments, communication systems, Active Support, skill teaching, activity planning, goal setting, behaviour management procedures, staff and carer training and stress management.

PBS is a collaborative approach

PBS builds strong partnerships between agencies, with a particular emphasis on joint working between health and social care, and innovation with the third sector

PBS is a three-stage intervention approach:

1. Primary prevention focuses on person-centred ways of improving quality of life, and guides what the person's carers should do to help them in the most effective way. This mirrors Sustainable Social Services which emphasises that what frontline staff do on a day-to-day basis makes the ultimate difference in quality of care outcomes. Primary prevention is the main part of PBS intervention and, when this works well, there may be no need to put the other two stages into operation.
2. Secondary Prevention is used if a person starts to become agitated, which indicates that things aren't quite right for them. Calming, distracting or problem-solving approaches remove the need for the person to use behaviours that challenge to exert control or express their feelings.
3. If secondary prevention fails, then Reactive Strategies are used to manage any challenging behaviour that may occur, in a safe and ethical way.

PBS is proactive because, although it includes ethical reactive strategies, it places the greatest emphasis on Primary Prevention, which enhances quality of life and pays attention to the person's health and wellbeing, to ensure things go right for most of the time. Many current services are opposite to this, where the main focus is on restrictive interventions, which are used in reaction to challenging behaviour **after** things have gone wrong.

PBS as early intervention

Widespread adoption of PBS would increase the availability of preventative services in the community, where the emphasis is on early identification and intervention to minimise escalation of critical need.

PBS is a skilled approach

For successful widespread implementation, staff and carers will require specialised training in PBS and support, and many organisations may need to undergo cultural change. Indeed, the adoption of PBS can be a driver for such cultural shift so that different things are done rather than the same things done differently. Wales is at some advantage, as several agencies have been developing the PBS approach and associated training, and an active All Wales Community of Practice has existed for some years.