

UCL INSIGHTS: RESEARCH BRIEFING

Does staff training in Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) reduce challenging behaviour in adults with intellectual disability?

Background

- People with Intellectual Disability (ID) have significant impairments in cognitive, social and practical skills.
- Between 10-15% of adults with ID also show challenging behaviour, with aggression the commonest type of challenging behaviour.
- Challenging behaviour is associated with long-term hospitalisation (often out-of-area), restrictive care practices and neglect as well as increased service use and prescription of antipsychotic medication.
- This research is about a randomised control trial to evaluate the clinical and cost effectiveness of staff training in PBS.

What is Positive Behaviour Support?

- PBS is a widespread treatment approach for challenging behaviour in adults with intellectual disability, a multicomponent approach focused on reducing challenging behaviour and improving quality of life in people with ID and other populations.
- Focused on identifying and understanding the individuals' behaviour and context in which the behaviour occurs in order to provide a personalised positive behaviour support plan for each individual.
- PBS was recently recommended for intellectual disabilities services in the UK by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE).

What is the current evidence on Positive Behaviour Support?

- Longitudinal findings from observational studies have shown that training paid care staff in PBS can reduce challenging behaviour.
- A pilot study of a specialist team delivering PBS including Applied Behavioural Analysis reported significant reduction in challenging behaviour at 6 and 24 months.

- A systematic review on outcomes of training staff in PBS concluded that the training of paid care staff increases their competence in managing challenging behaviour, reduces the use of restrictive practices and reliance on other professional support but does not improve participant quality of life.
- A 26-month follow up study of 5-year rolling training in PBS for paid carers found no effect in reducing in challenging behaviour.
- Other researchers have begun to investigate mindfulness based PBS training to reduce restrictive practices, improve staff job satisfaction and reduce challenging behaviour in care homes.

Conclusions from the study

- 246 people took part in 23 teams across England over 12 months; challenging behaviour reduced in both arms of the study.
- Offering training in PBS beyond what is already available within community ID services does not provide added benefits in reducing challenging behaviour, family or paid carers outcomes, use of psychotropic medication, or community engagement.
- A main challenge in the study was implementation; therapists found the paperwork related to PBS delivery time-consuming and functional analysis and application of behavioural techniques were the most difficult to achieve.
- Identification and evaluation of other treatment approaches are urgently needed.

AUTHORS

Prof Angela Hassiotis, Division of Psychiatry

Dr Michaela Poppe, Division of Psychiatry

Sarah Chaytor, UCL Public Policy

Katherine Welch, UCL Public Policy