

A black and white photograph of a woman with her hair in a bun, wearing glasses and a dark top, sitting at a desk and writing on a document. The background is slightly blurred, showing a window and a patterned chair.

Arranging and paying for training in positive behavioural support

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Introduction

Adult social care staff, including managers, need to have the right skills and knowledge to support people who display, or are at risk of displaying, behaviours which challenge.

This guide is for people involved in designing, delivering and/or commissioning positive behavioural support training in adult social care organisations.

It explains what staff need to know and do to deliver high-quality positive behavioural support (PBS); outlines standards for PBS training and gives you tips about commissioning and/or designing PBS training.

The information in the guide will help you arrange training that meets the needs of the people you support, staff and service.

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1. Background: what is positive behavioural support?

Positive behavioural support (PBS) is an evidence-informed, human rights-based framework for supporting people to live meaningful, fulfilling, and inclusive lives. It focuses on creating capable and supportive environments in which people are understood, valued and supported in ways that work for them.

PBS is a way of:

- recognising that behaviour is a form of communication, shaped by a person's experiences, relationships, and environment. Behaviours of concern often indicate that something in the person's life is not working well for them
- looking beyond the behaviour of concern to understand the person's strengths, preferences, and needs. It focuses on changing the environment and support provided rather than attempting to change the person
- continually evolving and is co-developed with people who draw on care and support, their families, and those who support them.

At the heart of good PBS is a commitment to enhancing quality of life for the person and their

circle of support. PBS recognises the harmful impact and unnecessary restrictive practices can have on people's lives and actively works to reduce and avoid their use.

PBS is an ongoing and evolving system of support that must be embedded across everyday practice, leadership, and organisational culture. It should not be delivered as a stand-alone intervention or short-term programme.

The impact of good PBS is seen in improved quality of life, meaningful engagement, increased participation and a reduction in restrictive practices. Success should be judged not only by the reduction of incidents, but by peoples lived experience and how support makes them feel.

For adult social care organisations, this means that PBS training must go beyond awareness-raising or crisis response. Effective PBS learning supports staff and leaders to understand people well, adapt environments and support, reflect on practice, and work together to create the conditions in which people can thrive.

What does good PBS look like?

Good PBS is characterised by a practical tool, developed by practitioners and people who draw on care and support, that helps individuals, teams and organisations understand and reflect on what

high-quality PBS practice involves. The tool supports people to recognise the key features of good practice, consider how well these elements are embedded, and use this insight to guide reflection, discussion and continuous improvement. Used alongside this guidance, it helps ensure that PBS practice remains consistent, values-led and effective across individual, team and organisational levels.

The UK PBS Alliance and Bild have produced a [resource to help individuals, teams and organisations clearly understand what good PBS looks like.](#)

It is important to clearly distinguish between training that includes restrictive practices and Positive Behaviour Support training, as they serve different purposes and are governed by different standards.

PBS training is quality assured through a PBS peer review process aligned to the PBS Academy competence framework and PBS Academy Training Standards. In contrast, training that includes restrictive practices, such as physical interventions, is concerned with safety in situations of immediate risk and must meet the Restraint Reduction Network (RRN) Training Standards through BILD ACT certification.

Download the [full statement](#) which explains the difference between training that includes restrictive practices and PBS training.

How can PBS support an individual?

Good PBS is a prevention framework that has four core components:

It is values-led

PBS supports human rights and promotes respect, dignity, inclusion and a life without unnecessary restriction. PBS does not use punishment or aversive procedures. It means treating people equally and working in partnership with the person and their family to make things better for everyone.

Its focus is on improving the quality of life for people and those who support them

PBS provides the right support at the right time so people can lead a meaningful and interesting life.

It is a way of understanding the support a person needs to have a good life

It uses evidence and different methods to gather information to understand people's strengths needs and preferences to work out what their behaviour is communicating if they are unable to tell us. It

improves support and empowers the person to use better and less harmful ways to get their needs met.

It is a system approach

Once a person's needs are understood, PBS uses a range of approaches that work together to improve their quality of life. This may involve adapting support, training staff, and updating organisational structures and culture. Because these elements must operate consistently and be reviewed regularly, PBS functions as a whole-system approach rather than a single intervention.

How can you put PBS into practice?

To put PBS into practice you need to ensure that:

- the organisation demonstrates the right values, a commitment to good support, and the creation of capable, supportive environments
- everyone understands the theory behind PBS and their role
- there is meaningful participation from people who need care and support and/or their families
- staff receive high-quality training and there is good practice leadership in services to enable them to translate the theory into practice
- there is ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the process and the impact on people's quality of life.

2. Principles for arranging positive behavioural support training

When you're arranging or commissioning PBS training, consider the following principles to ensure learning is ethical, effective, proportionate, and leads to improved quality of life outcomes

Principle 1: Quality and competence of trainers

Training should be delivered by suitably experienced, qualified and competent trainers and include opportunities for reflection, discussion, practice-based learning and ongoing development to support consistent, safe, and ethical practice over time.

Principle 2: Relevance and proportionality

Training should be based on current developments and direction of PBS and the actual needs of the individual(s) being supported.

Training should be proportionate to people's roles, responsibilities, and the complexity of the support required, with greater depth and assessment for those with leadership, advisory or specialist roles

Principle 3: Organisational alignment

Training should be consistent with your organisation's policies and procedures and supported by its culture and practices.

PBS training should not be commissioned as a stand-alone intervention, but embedded within organisational systems for practice leadership, supervision, reflective learning and quality assurance.

Principle 4: Human rights, prevention and capable environments

Training should promote an empathic and human rights-based approach, with a clear focus on prevention, understanding people's needs and building capable and supportive environments. Training should support staff to understand why people may experience distress and actively work to reduce and avoid the use of restrictive practices wherever possible

Principle 5: Assessment and impact

Learners should be assessed at the end of training, and in the longer term, to ensure that they can apply learning in practice and that it leads to improved outcomes for people, including enhanced quality of life and reduced reliance on restrictive practices.

Principle 6: Involvement of people and families

People who need care and support, families and carers should be meaningfully involved in planning

their own support and, where possible, in the co-design, delivery and evaluation of PBS training.

3. What should staff know about positive behavioural support?

PBS training should equip all staff with the skills, knowledge and values set out in the PBS Academy Competence Framework (PBS Academy, 2024). It must also follow the PBS Academy Training Standards (PBS Academy, 2017) to ensure learning can be applied safely and effectively in everyday practice. These standards guide everyone involved in designing, commissioning or delivering PBS training and set the minimum expectations that all PBS learning should meet.

They can be used to:

- develop a whole organisation approach to PBS
- design training and/or education about PBS
- develop assessment tools to evaluate individual and group performance.

[Download the framework](#)

[Download the standards](#)

What should staff learn?

Learners should understand how to work in a positive, person centred and non-aversive way, this includes developing the knowledge, skills and values required to:

- understand the ethical and values-based foundations of PBS, including human rights, dignity and respect
- recognise behaviour as a form of communication and respond with curiosity when things do not appear to be working
- contribute to the development of capable and supportive environments that reduce distress and support participation
- implement behaviour support plans effectively and consistently, where these are required
- record, share and use information to support learning, reflection and improvement
- demonstrate good practice and challenge poor or unsafe practice in line with organisational expectations

PBS learning should help staff understand the unique needs and experiences of each person, including factors like disability, mental health,

trauma, sensory differences and physical health, and how these may contribute to distress. It should emphasise understanding individuals in their social and environmental context rather than relying on diagnostic labels.

PBS learning should also connect with broader adult social care development pathways. Staff can build skills through in-house training, qualifications, mentoring, supervised practice and ongoing professional development, with options to progress into more specialist learning where needed.

There are currently seven qualifications for adult social care:

These qualifications provide opportunities to build and evidence PBS-related knowledge and skills at different stages of a career, depending on role and responsibility.

- [Level 2 Adult Social Care Certificate](#)
- [Level 3 Diploma in Adult Care](#)
- [Level 4 Diploma in Adult Care](#)
- [Level 4 Certificate in Principles of Leadership and Management for Adult Care](#)
- [Level 5 Diploma in Leading and Managing an Adult Care Service](#)
- [Level 5 Certificate of Fundamental Knowledge in Commissioning for Wellbeing](#)
- [Level 5 Award in Understanding Digital Leadership in Adult Social Care](#)

4. Who should attend training?

It's important that everyone involved in the development, leadership and delivery of PBS can access learning that is appropriate to their role. This includes people who need care and support, families, advocates, support staff, practice leaders, managers and senior leaders.

The following minimum expectations describe the level and focus of PBS learning required for different roles. PBS training should be proportionate to responsibility, influence on practice and involvement in decision making.

- All support staff should receive PBS training focused on everyday support, understanding distress, creating capable environments, and working non-aversively. Training should be refreshed at least annually and monitored through supervision, observation, and feedback.
- Practice leaders and first-line leaders should complete, or be working towards, more in-depth PBS learning, including practice-based development, coaching skills, supervised application, and supporting others to embed PBS in daily practice.

- Staff involved in assessing, designing, or advising on PBS should complete externally validated PBS training with both theory- and practice-based assignments, assessed at RQF level 5 or above.
- Bank, agency, casual and self-employed staff should receive PBS training consistent with that provided to the wider team.
- People drawing on care and support, families, carers, and wider supporters should be offered proportionate PBS learning, including opportunities to understand PBS values and contribute to planning and shaping support.
- All staff developing or implementing PBS strategies should receive regular supervision from someone with more extensive PBS experience, including opportunities for reflection and feedback.
- Consultants should be supervised by someone with a relevant postgraduate qualification, such as applied behaviour analysis, PBS or clinical psychology.
- Where physical intervention is used, staff must receive annually updated certified training, understand the Mental Capacity Act, and ensure

this sits within a proportionate, legally authorised PBS and restraint-reduction approach.

- At least one member of the executive team or board should have PBS experience. Senior leaders must understand PBS, their legal and ethical responsibilities, and how leadership decisions influence everyday practice.
- Registered Nurses in Learning Disabilities (RNLDs) should have an awareness of positive approaches to behaviour support, including PBS. Many RNLDs build their competence through practice experience, mentorship and further education. Some RNLDs further use this development route to progress and become UK Certified Behaviour Analysts.

As well as training, good PBS needs to be supported by ongoing development, including:

- all staff involved in the development or implementation of PBS strategies should receive supervision from an individual with more extensive PBS training and experience
- the learning must be supported by the culture of the organisation, including good practice management (including debriefing and

- supervision) and joint working with relevant professionals
- staff must also be trained to enable and empower people, support people to 'self-care' and provide active support
 - the outcomes of the learning should be assessed and evaluated.

Many people find it useful to join a local or national PBS community of practice, to access peer support and keep up to-date with best practice. You can find a list of local contacts at

<https://www.bild.org.uk/pbsa-communities/>

5. Choosing the right learning provider

You may choose to commission an external learning provider to deliver PBS training or develop your own staff as trainers. It is important to ensure that those delivering, supporting, and overseeing PBS learning are suitably qualified, competent, and experienced.

PBS learning often involves a combination of roles, including those who deliver formal training, those who support practice-based learning and supervision, and those responsible for workforce

development and quality assurance. Expectations should be clear for each of these roles.

Those responsible for delivering PBS training should satisfy all the following:

- demonstrate competence in PBS in line with the PBS Academy Competence Framework, for example through a recognised qualification or accredited learning pathway, such as a diploma or certification in PBS, a BSc in PBS, or a postgraduate qualification in applied behaviour analysis or a related field.
- demonstrate competence in the delivery of learning, evidenced through one or more of the following:
 - recognised award such as ENB 997 or 998 (Teaching and Assessing in Clinical Practice)
 - Level 3 Award or Level 4 Certificate in Education and Training
 - Level 5 Diploma in Education and Training
 - qualified teacher status or registration with the Higher Education Academy
 - a professional health, social care, or education qualification that includes training others as part of required competencies.
- have experience in the delivery of practice-based training

Those responsible for workforce development and organisational learning should:

- demonstrate competence in PBS, for example, a recognised qualification in PBS or behaviour analysis, or equivalent.
- undertake train the trainer, coaching and/or practice leadership training.
- experience in the delivery of practice-based training.
- ensure that supervised practice occurs and that there are clear processes to ensure effective recording and monitoring of supervised practice hours by participants.
- evidence a commitment to their own continuing professional development and ensure that their training needs are met, including updating their qualifications and/or training where relevant.
- undertake external refresher courses and keeping records of their continuing professional development activities.

Questions to ask a learning provider

We recommend using a Skills for Care quality-assured provider when commissioning PBS learning. The following questions can help you assess whether learning provision is appropriate, ethical, and effective for your organisation.

- Can they evidence bespoke learning to meet the specific needs of the individual or service?
- What qualifications do the people delivering the learning have – has the person attended a university accredited course on PBS? Do they have a teaching qualification?
- How does the learning provider ensure that PBS training is embedded into everyday practice, rather than delivered as a one-off course?
- Can they provide examples of services that have previously applied the learning?
- Does the proportion of the training content conform to the balance of proactive/reactive strategies in the individual's support plan, and include any restrictive practices that are planned?
- Does the learning provider have a system of feedback or testimonials that you can check?

- Does the learning contain an element of competence testing, for example observations or role play testing, as well as verbal competence and reflection?
- Does the learning provider have a system in place to feed back about learners who are unsafe in their practice?
- Is the learning consistent with, or integral to, the process of functional analysis and formulation?
- Can the learning provider offer support to your organisation following the learning provision?
- Can they help with plans or suggestions about how training and learning should be monitored to make sure that it's working in practice?
- Has the learning provider been accredited by undertaking a rigorous external process?

Training accreditation

Currently there is no single scheme to regulate or accredit PBS training courses. However, commissioners and providers should seek assurance that PBS learning is aligned with recognised frameworks, subject to external scrutiny, and regularly reviewed.

Accreditation is not mandatory. However, you might feel more confident contracting with trainers who are quality assured in some way, and some service specifications or contracts ask for this.

PBS Peer Review

The [peer review process](#) is organised by Skills for Care. To have their training reviewed, organisations must commit to providing a peer review for another organisation at least twice a year.

All organisations involved should be familiar with the PBS competency framework and PBS Academy Training Standards which gives you an understanding of the things that you need to know and the things that you need to do when delivering best practice PBS to persons with intellectual disabilities and behaviours that challenge.

Skills for Care quality assured training and courses

The Quality Assured Care Learning Service reviews training provider and course quality, making sure training is accessible, high-quality, and meets the needs of both the workforce and people who draw on care and support.

All the training providers, courses and accredited qualifications in this list have been quality assured through the Quality Assured Care Learning Service and are on the list of [eligible training courses and qualifications](#) which accompanies the [Learning and Development Support Scheme for the adult social care workforce: a guide for employers](#).

[Find quality assured providers and courses.](#)

Positive behavioural support training

See a [list of training providers](#) reviewed by Skills for Care to provide PBS training.

Skills for Health Quality Assurance Audits

Skills for Health, the sector skills council for healthcare, has launched a new [Quality Assurance Audit](#) service to replace its long running Quality Mark programme.

Behaviour Analyst Certification Board (BACB)

[BACB](#) is a non-profit corporation established to meet professional credentialing needs identified by behaviour analysts, governments, and consumers of behaviour analysis services.

Awarding organisations

Awarding organisations accredit RQF qualifications.

6. Paying for training

The service specification, contract and funding arrangements for any service offering PBS, should recognise the requirements in this guide.

There are additional sources of funding that you could access:

The Learning and Development Support Scheme (LDSS) enables adult social care employers to claim back money towards the costs of their staff completing a range of adult social care qualifications and learning programmes. [Find out more on our website.](#)

You can also contact your [local Skills for Care area team](#). Our locality managers work with adult social care providers at a local level, as well as a wide range of other partners within the local health and care systems. They have a good understanding of what is happening in your area and will know about current and upcoming opportunities, including training and support that may be relevant to you or your organisation.

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