

WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

Bristol Intensive PBS Service for children with learning disabilities at risk of school exclusion.

Facilitator: Freddy Jackson Brown

Outcomes from the session:

- Described the setting up and implementation of an intensive Positive Behaviour Support Service (PBSS) to support children with behaviour that challenges in special schools. Presented some of the assessment tools and intervention protocols used and the outcomes they led to. Presented a summary of the financial savings delivered by the PBSS.
- Looked at systemic and commissioning barriers to evidence based practice and discussed what we can do to change things.

Background:

Positive behaviour support (PBS) is a person centered, evidence-based framework for supporting people with learning disabilities with behaviour that challenges. It is widely used across a range of mainstream and specialist school and community settings. This workshop will present a model for a PBS service in specialist learning disability schools in the UK. Over an eight-year period, 12 children with learning disabilities, whose challenging behaviour placed them at risk of school breakdown, were supported by a team of PBS trained staff in their local school setting. By improving their independence and communication skills, 10 children stayed in their local school with improved participation and reduced levels of support over time. Two children moved into residential school placements. Financial analysis indicated significant savings accrued. The PBS framework can be an effective approach for supporting children with learning disabilities with behaviour that challenges to stay in their local schools and communities.

Issues/Questions raised in discussion

Questions about the Bristol service

- Q: Were staff trained in physical interventions/how to maintain their own safety?
A: No, we took a clear decision not to use physical interventions with our children and instead to seek to organise the environment so we could withdraw. However, there were times when this was difficult and some additional training in breakaway techniques would have been helpful.
- Q: Were all the schools using the service special schools?
A: No, the majority were special schools, but we did work in a mainstream school with a specialist resource base

- Q: Who funded the service?
A: A joint LA and CCG budget. *This used to include education and social care but the education part has now been removed due to new commissioning arrangements.*
- Q: How did you get staff and different agencies on board?
A: *With varying degrees of success. Sometimes had to fit in with the ways that schools did things even if it did not suit the service. Used regular planning meetings with key stakeholders*
- Q: How long did you work with each child?
A: *We work with the children for as long as is needed before actively working to fade ourselves out and re-integrate the children back into class alongside their peers.*

The schools system

- It is difficult to maintain the children's skills when PBSS stops working with them. Often their skills have dropped away and challenging behaviour has increased again when the PBSS is no longer working with them as the work has not been embedded within schools.
- The school National Curriculum assessment system does not provide a useful framework for children with learning disabilities as P scales are too big and not focused on key functional skills (e.g., imitation). Schools need to use tools like VB -Mapp to chart the smaller steps and there should be more curriculum guidance around this.
- Ofsted culture provides disincentives for schools to work with children with learning disabilities and behaviours that challenge, especially where a school is in notice to improve/special measures and Head and Deputy jobs are under threat.
- The curriculum needs to be ambitious yet also realistic and to ensure that children with learning disabilities are equipped with the skills they need for life, not just educational targets.
- The school environment can be challenging for children with learning disabilities, having to change class and teacher each year.
- Schools are now commissioning services themselves rather than LAs which makes it even more difficult to provide PBS in schools.

The role of teachers

- Teachers need to understand the importance of functional skills acquisition and to have space within the curriculum to teach it
- Teachers need to understand the importance of generalising skills across settings
- Teachers often wait for CB to reduce before they can teach a child but it is the teaching of new skills which reduces the CB.

- In some areas CAMHS are working without a psychological formulation and without an understanding of the child's onward developmental needs – they are surprised when they get older.

Providing the right support

- Important to get the psychological formulation right at the beginning.
- Important to work with families where they are involved in a child's life – would be good to see services working across school and home, not treating the two environments as separate.
- Need to change the role of schools so they are actively teaching skills acquisition.

Actions agreed

- Raise the issues discussed with DfE and Ofsted – how can the schools system better support PBS for children with learning disabilities and behaviours that challenge? Include issue of training for Ofsted inspectors. (CB-NSG)
- Take this question to the JIP sub-group on children and young people. (Jacqui and Amanda)
- Need to share evidence of what is happening in Bristol and to encourage Special Schools to adopt this approach, sharing tools such as VB-Mapps. Need to show schools “what's in it for them” and how it can help them to meet their targets. (As a first step include Bristol service within Early Intervention Project case study document)
- As well as trying to change what happens in the current system, need to try and change the system – influence as part of campaigning in advance of 2015 election. (all)