

Halton Positive Behaviour Support Service

The current service is the result of a service development process to build a case that a positive behaviour support service would be a worthwhile investment to

- increase quality of life outcomes for individuals
- reduce the incidence of high-cost/poor outcome placements.

An evidence-based business case was built over two years for the current service, which continues to grow as its benefits are appreciated by commissioners.

The current model

The service is entirely consistent with the recommendations of the Mansell report(s) and with the need to respond effectively to the post-Winterbourne agenda.

Maria Saville (BCBA) is the Principal Manager in a team hosted by Halton Borough Council serving a range of local commissioners including the host borough

- St Helens and Halton CCGs
- Knowsley, St Helen's and Halton local authorities

The service has been designed to work across children and adult services and has core functions of early intervention as well as crisis resolution and placement development.

The service has the following staff

- 6 Behaviour Analysts (all have an MSc in Applied Behaviour Analysis)
- 3 Assistant Behaviour Analysts (who have completed or are undertaking the MSc)
- 5 FTE support workers (two of whom are completing the MSc)

The underlying assumption of the service is that behaviour that challenges services is a result of the environment which a person inhabits and to which they are responding. If the environment (including the people they encounter) is empathetic to their needs and communication, their need to resort to challenging behaviour will be less likely. So the service seeks to promote a thorough understanding of the person and to develop strategies with which other people can support them to avoid them becoming anxious or frustrated and to help them learn more acceptable ways of communicating

Considerable effort has been put into establishing referral pathways for both children and adults across different organisations and geographical boundaries. A great deal of work goes into establishing and maintaining relationships with other specialist services including those provided by the NHS. The aim is to ensure that pathways remain effective. Some joint assessments are undertaken to ensure the right service responds.

The service

The service is intended as a very specialist service for those with highly complex needs although it can respond on a preventative basis as a form of early intervention where it is thought that there are risks of complex needs developing.

Referrals are accepted by a behaviour analyst who will draw up a positive behaviour support plan for someone, in partnership with all of the people with whom they interact – family, service staff, places they need to go – their personal network. Once the plan is up and running, the support workers monitor whether it is being properly implemented by the person's network. This is the case regardless of people's age.

Most children live in family settings and access services such as school and short break services on a part time basis, whereas most adults who present with serious challenging behaviour are supported entirely by paid carers. Thus although there is some age-specialisation within the team, the service can also follow individuals through various aged-based transitions.

In fact the team is commissioned to work with different people in each area: in some they work with adults with learning disabilities only; in others, they work with all ages of people. They are also undertaking some work with older people who do not have learning disabilities. One analyst is 'attached' to a school which makes a high number of referrals due to the needs of the children attending. In schools, the service promotes the use of the Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills (ABLLS-R) framework which assesses across 25 areas of competency making it easier to understand which skill areas need additional support.

The origins

Paul McWade (Operational Director Commissioning and Complex Care – Halton Borough Council) had experience of the benefits of behaviour analytic approaches, and so looked to introduce them to Halton and its partners. He commissioned work from Dr Sandy Toogood¹ which yielded good results for the people concerned. Over time, Paul built up a body of evidence about the effectiveness of positive behavioural support.

Paul developed a business case for presentation to NHS commissioners and Local Authorities, initially as a joint project between the Council and Halton & St Helens PCT (Dave Sweeney). The business case was based on available examples of best practice, the views of key stakeholders and a detailed audit of need. The business case was that -

Financial benefits are likely to arise from the following sources:

1. People otherwise requiring placement in expensive out of area placements are supported locally – i.e. prevention of placement.
2. People already placed out of county are repatriated with support of this service.
3. Reduction of local demand for in-patient assessment and treatment services, as people are better supported in the community, allowing scaling down of provision.
4. Reduction of costs associated with maintaining placements at a distance.

¹ Senior Lecturer in Applied Behaviour Analysis, Bangor University

http://www.bangor.ac.uk/psychology/research/staff_profile.php?person=sandy_toogood

Qualitative benefits will arise from:

1. Reducing the detrimental effects of challenging behaviour and improving the quality of life for people themselves
2. Reduced stress and improved quality of life for family carers and others accessing services.
3. Improved services that are more responsive to individual needs

The future

The team wants to explore how to better measure the outcomes of the service and would also like to find funding to enable a detailed analysis of cost effectiveness. They had hoped to do this with an academic partner but at present it remains an ambition. The service is also undertaking early stage behaviour analytic work with those with dementia, and has a team member in Halton Borough Council's multi-agency safeguarding hub. Work here includes reviewing placements funded through the NHS.

Further Information

Maria Saville, the service leader and Principal Manager is very happy to be contacted by people who want further information

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