

Positive behaviour support training for staff for treating challenging behaviour in people with intellectual disabilities: a cluster RCT

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Plain English summary

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Many people with intellectual disability (ID) display behaviour described as challenging. This often leads to overmedication, restraint or extended stays in inpatient care. Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) is a person-centred approach that aims to improve people's quality of life and reduce challenging behaviour. We carried out this study to find out if training professionals from community ID services in PBS reduced challenging behaviour in adults with ID.

A total of 246 participants with ID and challenging behaviour from 23 ID teams in England took part in the study. Teams were allocated by chance to receive face-to-face training (11 teams) or treatment as usual only (12 teams). We carried out assessments of participants' levels of challenging behaviour, mental health, family and paid carer burden, use of services and quality of life, before they started the study and after 6 and 12 months. We were able to carry out one final assessment after 36 months to find out if the PBS training had a longer-term impact on behaviour. We examined the cost of delivering PBS to participants, and assessed whether or not the training was put into practice and delivered as intended. We also explored the experiences of participants, carers, ID service managers, therapists and PBS trainers involved in the study.

We found no difference in participants' challenging behaviour and other measures between the two arms of the study over 12 and 36 months.

Staff training in PBS may be cost-effective over 12 months but was not shown to be cost-effective at 36 months.

Only two-thirds of the participants in the intervention arm had received any PBS. The therapists reported an increased knowledge of PBS carers, and adults with ID thought that PBS helped with their support but therapists found several challenges in its delivery.

Future research should explore how PBS can be effectively delivered in the NHS.

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