Key considerations in physical interventions

A framework for good practice

BILD has contributed to a framework of good practice in relation to the use of physical interventions since 1996, when the first edition of ‘Physical Interventions: A policy framework’, Harris et al (1996), was published.

This publication set out a framework that organisations could follow when developing policy in relation to the use of physical interventions. The Policy Framework was well received by professionals and continues to be a popular publication, having been revised and updated in 2008.

In 1999 the BBC broadcast the McIntyre Undercover programme where investigative journalist Donal McIntyre exposed the abuse of people with learning disabilities by care staff that used excessive force and inappropriate methods to manage behaviour.

Between 2002 and 2006 BILD received grants from two government departments to continue the work in relation to developing standards and frameworks for best practice and the accreditation of training in the field of physical interventions.

The BILD Physical Interventions Accreditation Scheme launched in 2002 and is underpinned by the BILD Code of Practice, first published in 2001 and the Joint Guidance 2002.

The third edition of the Code of Practice was published in 2010 and placed an emphasis on the reduction of physical interventions a change reflected in its new title: ‘The BILD Code of Practice: for the use and reduction of physical interventions.’

There are now over 30 organisations in the BILD accreditation scheme, all are organisations that deliver training in behaviour support and management which include the use of physical skills. Information on the scheme can be found at: www.bild.org.uk/behavioursupport.htm

Training and use of physical interventions

The training and use of physical interventions remains contentious and opinions will always be divided in terms of the use of such skills within human services. Around half of people with learning disabilities who exhibit challenging behaviour may be exposed to physical interventions (Harris 1993: Emerson 2003), a sad statistic to consider. Never the less, it remains an important area to debate especially given the evidence of recent enquiries such as those a Sutton and Merton and Cornwall which highlighted the use of restraint practices to abuse vulnerable people.
Creating a framework of support for people who challenge

Organisations must consider developing proactive frameworks for supporting people who exhibit behaviours that present a challenge. This will include developing organisational policy frameworks which reflect organisational need and take account of the needs of vulnerable people.

Organisations have a responsibility for ensuring that staff have the appropriate skills to assess people's behaviour on an individual basis and develop positive behaviour support plans with the aim of reducing the need to use physical interventions. Any training in physical skills must be well directed and based on actual need within the organisation; this can be done by undertaking a behaviour audit and risk assessment across the organisation.

Primarily, organisations should develop models of support that focus on the prevention of socially invalid behaviour rather than the management of such behaviour. This can be done through:

- Improving skills within the workforce and delivering focussed training
- Developing appropriate polices to support a framework for service delivery
- Developing and supporting an appropriate culture and ethos which places people at the centre of their care
- Improving communication and access to interpreters and accessible information
- Emphasising good practice and sharing good practice across services
- Focussing on peoples individual needs and ensuring these can be met
- Offering appropriate support to employees
- Delivering care within a framework that acknowledges and protects people's
human rights. Including the rights of employees

- Implementing procedures to reduce and eliminate the use of restraint and seclusion
- Ensuring that systems to review critical incidents and the use of restrictive practices, including physical interventions are ‘fit for purpose’

An overused phrase, ‘the use of physical interventions must always be last resort’ is often misunderstood, mainly because the human aspect is forgotten within human services and we focus instead on ‘managing out the problem’ rather than ‘understanding people’, so we train staff in physical skills and it becomes the ‘tool of preference’. In this case prevention is better than cure for all involved.

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References


