

Implementing Positive Behaviour Support at the Witherslack Group

A case study showing how BILD is supporting organisations to implement Positive Behaviour Support (PBS)



Introduction

The Witherslack Group provides education and care to children and young people with special educational needs. They have a number of schools, children's homes and integrated therapeutic provision centres that provide a service to over 500 children aged 4 to 19.

This case study describes how Witherslack Group and BILD worked together to successfully reduce restrictive practices within their services, and introduce a culture of Positive Behaviour Support.

Context for working with BILD

The Witherslack Group wanted to reduce their use of restrictive practices, specifically the frequency and duration of restraints as well as use of the most restrictive forms (eg prone restraint). They also wanted to improve the skills and understanding of the staff around Positive Behaviour Support approaches, particularly in the areas of understanding functionality and post incident learning and support.

BILD's work with Witherslack

Agreeing the initial aims

In September 2015 BILD conducted a review across six Witherslack Group sites. Broadly, the review wanted to find out what elements of PBS were in place in the Witherslack Group to enable the reduction of the unnecessary use of restrictive practices, how effective were they and what could be improved or needed to be developed?

Six services were selected by Witherslack Group to be the focus of the evaluation; including three schools, one learning centre and two children's homes. They were mainly based in the North West of England, with the exception of one school in Oxfordshire. They were selected as they represented the range of their existing provisions. All of the provisions support children with social, emotional and mental health needs and children who are on the autistic spectrum.

The review took the form of:

- Desk review of policy, procedures and training materials
- Review of existing data sources – incident and RPI data, training database
- Electronic questionnaires for staff (including Therapy Team)
- Questionnaire for family
- Focus group with children

The review adopted a case study approach, the purpose of this was to provide an overview of the behaviour support planning process from development to implementation (focusing on one case/child), and to include the lived experience of the plan for various stakeholders.

This approach included:

- Review of Behaviour Support Plans
- Observations of Behaviour Support Plan and policy implementation in practice
- Interviews with key stakeholders (staff, therapist, family, social worker – where available)
- Evaluation matrix for each service (covering five core areas relating to PBS training, planning, implementation and support for staff)
- Organisational level – David Allen and David Colton organisational tools

The review was completed by April 2016, and feedback was presented to the Witherslack Group Board in June 2016.

Findings of the review

The review found that staff felt generally confident managing crisis behaviour, but they needed to move from 'restrain well to restrain less' (Allen 2009). There was good engagement and involvement with families, and some good examples of supportive

environments which could be used as models of good practice. However their policy and processes had a heavy weighting on risk and reactive behaviour management, inconsistent with Witherslack Group's aim of reducing restrictive practices and introducing PBS. Input from the therapy team was valued, but levels of support were inconsistent. Staff had knowledge gaps in understanding the causes/functions of behaviour and Behaviour Support Plans were weak in some areas.

In summary, some organisational processes, including policies and staff training, were weighted to reinforce crisis management rather than enable a preventive culture.

Actions following the review

Witherslack Group made a commitment to understanding and using PBS approaches, so a number of actions took place.

An organisation strategy was developed and PBS principles become the 'golden thread' through policy and procedures. An integrative model for assessment was developed that includes multi component strategies that work to support reduction of the behaviour, clearly set out in Behaviour Support Plans. Baseline measures were chosen and targets set against them for the next 3-5 years.

Witherslack Group commissioned CAPBS at BILD to deliver a series of Coaches Programmes, which took place from September to December 2016. 41 Coaches across the Witherslack Group have now been trained, 10 of whom are also trained to do basic functional assessments. A definition of the Coaches' role was developed and distributed to all Coaches and line managers. Witherslack Group Coaches' Network was created with regional cluster support from the SBI (Safeguarding, Behaviour and Inclusion) team.

All Witherslack Group employees undertook 'Introduction to PBS' training in October 2016 and mandatory 'Introduction to PBS' training was developed for all new staff. Introduction to PBS training is always delivered to new staff before they receive training from Team Teach using a reactive PI model.

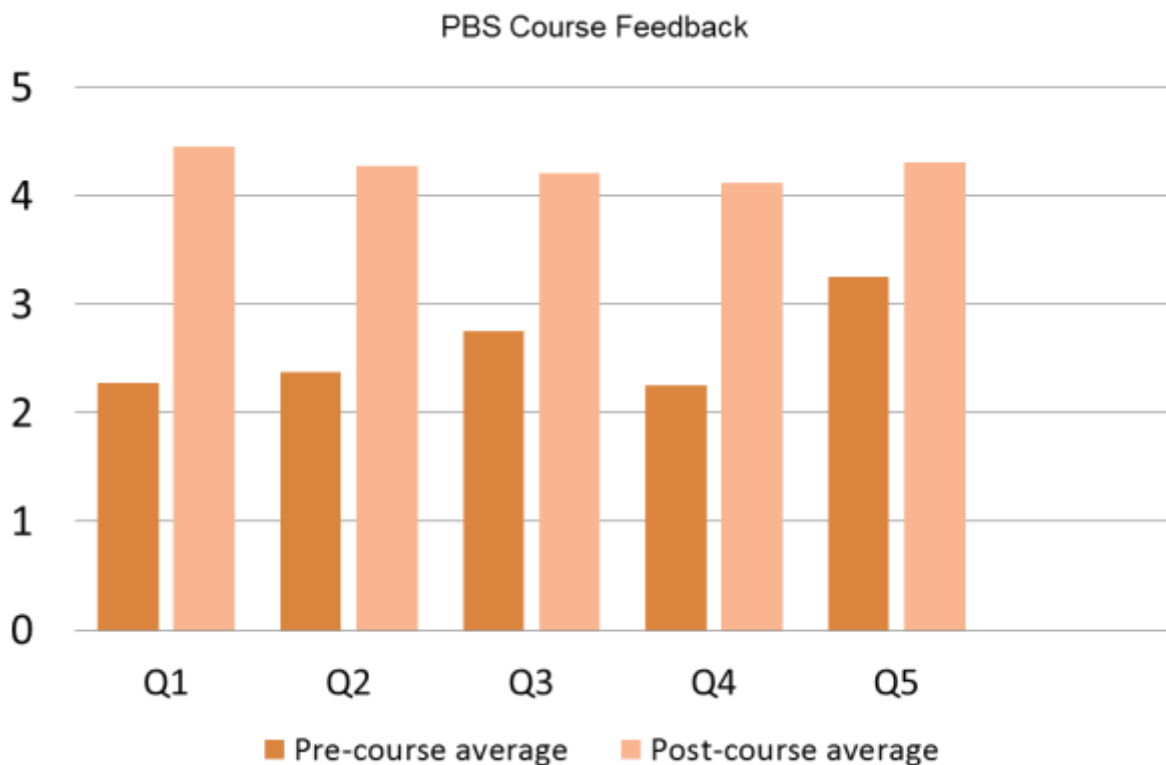
In January 2017 a Strategy Implementation Group was formed. There was to be no use of prone restraint in residential services, and its use was to be phased out in schools by July 2017.

The results

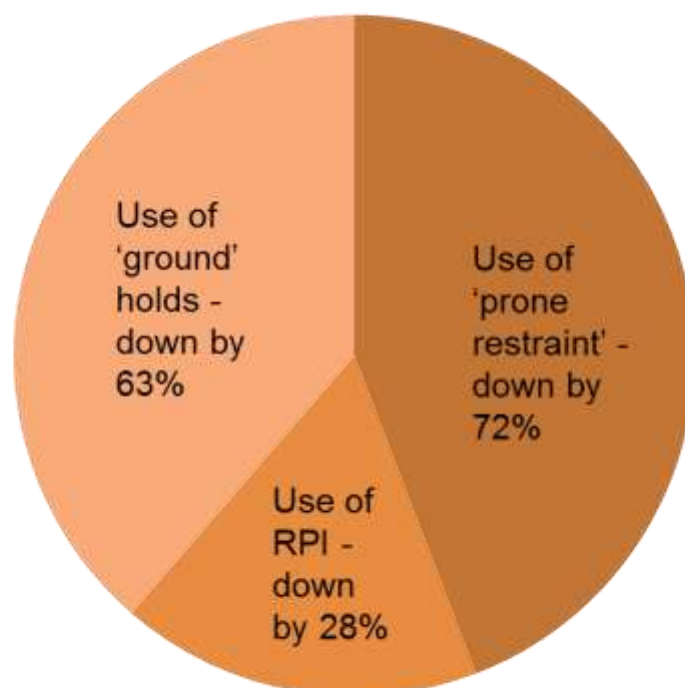
All staff were asked to rate their confidence around PBS and managing behaviour both before and after the coaches programme between 0-5. Five was very confident and 0 was not confident at all. Below are the questions they were asked:

- Q1: How confident you feel about your ability to list the key values that underpin the Witherslack Group.
- Q2: How confident you feel about your ability to explain the concept of Positive Behaviour Support
- Q3: How confident you feel in your ability to explain what behaviours of concern may be and why they may occur
- Q4: How confident you feel in your ability to explain the functions of behaviours of concern
- Q5: How confident you feel in your ability to manage behaviour that people may perceive as challenging

The bar chart below shows a considerable improvement in their confidence in their abilities after the Coaches Programmes.



Overall reduction in restrictive practice, September 2016 – January 2017



Feedback from people who work at Witherslack Group

"It has totally changed how I look at behaviour and has helped me to focus on finding solutions not just problems!" – Teacher

"There is a totally different atmosphere and staff feel more confident when dealing with challenging behaviour." – Teacher

"Understanding there is a function behind every behaviour allows you to see past the behaviour and seek out the root cause of it." – Teaching Assistant

"We all look at things differently now, making sure our practice isn't institutionalised and children and staff seem more relaxed as less sanctions are issued and less restraints are happening." – Residential Support Worker

"We feel that there is a massive difference in the school environment this year and xxx has been so much happier and more settled. He has begun to bond with pupils in his class and the non-confrontational manner in which staff have managed his behaviour has really reduced his anxiety. He has loved doing the school newsletter and the enrichment activities on a Friday. The pastoral support this year has been excellent." – Parent

Factors contributing to the success of the project

Witherslack Group were clear about what they wanted to achieve, and believed that CAPBS could help them to achieve this. They had the courage to commission the robust review from CAPBS, had confidence in the findings and were willing to act on them.

Next steps

As a result of this project, Witherslack Group have agreed the following actions to help them move forward:

- The initiative requires embedding so it is well understood by the staff and becomes 'custom and practice'
- Staff development sessions to become a priority in order to upskill teams
- Introduction to 'Life Space Interview' process for child and young person debriefs
- Child and adult post incident debriefs to be developed that split the initial supportive debrief with a more robust incident review within three working days
- PBS plans for each child which now include restraint reduction plans
- Personalised child/young person PBS plans
- Mandatory use of the BSP audit tool
- Mandatory use of the PBS plan evaluation and review document
- Coaches to start using the BILD 'Organisational self-assessment development tool for Positive Behaviour Support (PBS)' framework from September 2017
- Routine collection of non-physical intervention restrictive practice data from all settings

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