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Afterword: Knowing where we are heading by knowing where we have been

Tony Osgood & Peter Baker

Professor Jim Mansell (1952-2012) was fond of reminding his colleagues and students that, to paraphrase the philosopher George Santayana, those who fail to learn from history are likely to repeat its errors. In the UK we have much evidence that innovations and new policies relating to intellectual disability support fundamentally rely on ordinary people to implement everyday best practice, and that what we know works is often hard to put into action by anyone other than those who daily support individuals.

In 2001, *Valuing People*, a Government White Paper concerning how to provide best support to people with intellectual disabilities, recommended the adoption of person-centred plans in order to begin building services and support around the person. In 2019, good person-centred plans are rarely found. People spend a good deal of time talking about being person-centred and yet we see the growth of private hospitals and assessment units across the UK, few of which can legitimately claim to be person-centred. It is almost as if the hard-learned lessons from abuse scandals of the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and since have been forgotten by those purchasing such provision, and those offering such provision. When a monetary value is given to people requiring support, too often the values we espouse walk when the money talks. PBS cannot limit itself to behaviour, because the central tenet of it is delivering quality of life *regardless* of challenging behaviour. Challenging behaviour is not a barrier but a call for better support, and PBS is for those who are passionate about changing for the better the experiences of people living in receiving services, the staff supporting them, and families advocating for the best practice for those they love. PBS is not for the faint-hearted.

In such a climate PBS has been heralded and introduced widely. What is often said to be PBS is no such thing, but is rather a relabeling of old ways of working. This means unless we have a clear definition of what good PBS looks like, it will be easy to claim anything is PBS: doing so will discredit PBS in much the same way as person-centred planning has been. This makes the work of the PBS Academy so important. The Academy provides clear definitions of what PBS *should* look like – namely, people leading active and enviable lives of high quality, where challenging behaviour is not a barrier to community, relationships, and control of their own lives.

PBS is more than completing an assessment, and far more than implementing a mosaic of support strategies that amend or avoid predictors of challenging behaviour, teach alternatives to challenging behaviour, and resolve conflicts with some dignity in a way that can mend ruptured relationships. PBS is an approach to deliver a good quality of life. If an approach does not explicitly improve the lived experience of people it aims to support and enable, then it really is not PBS, no matter what it claims.

As it moves forward, PBS cannot afford to forget its own past, and the lessons to be learned. PBS cannot afford to turn a blind eye to quality of life in its pursuit of reliable data, and it

must stick to its values as well as its graphs. It must be clear it is a blend of values and science, and be willing to speak up when it encounters poor practice.

We hope that this book begins your journey to think creatively, act in a person-centred manner, support in an evidence-based manner, and enjoy working with some of the most remarkable humans you will ever be likely to spend time with.