The impact of the BILD Centre for the Advancement of PBS (CAPBS) coaches programme on changing workplace practice: Part 1 – Coaches' views: practice paper

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Introduction

BILD's coaches programme aims to develop practice leaders who can coach staff to implement PBS working practices to reduce the likelihood of behaviours that challenge. Practice leadership, which involves coaching staff in their usual working environment has been shown to be an effective way to implement and maintain PBS (Beadle-Brown, et al, 2015; Beadle-Brown, et al, 2013; Bould et al, 2018; Deveau and Leitch, 2016; Lowe et al, 2010; Macdonald et al, 2018).

The coaches programme is informed by contemporary research and good practice (Gore et al, 2013; Hastings et al, 2013) for supporting people whose behaviour challenges services. The programme is delivered by a mix of teaching methods, eg classroom, workshop, e-learning, videos, exercises, discussion and work-based practice assignments. The ratio of workshop learning and practice learning hours equates approximately to those specified in the PBS Training Standards (PBS Academy, 2017).

Over 250 PBS coaches programmes have been delivered in the UK, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand since 2015. Following a review of content and delivery in 2017, the programme now comprises four days of face-to-face blended learning. A series of practice-based assignments constitute the formative assessment with a final summative project assignment being completed within six months (80 practice learning hours). Programme learning outcomes and general PBS competencies are assessed in six ways:

1. Participation and contribution to discussions, group work and teaching sessions

2. Preparation and presentation of a session plan for teaching session on a self-selected element of PBS

3. Presentation of a theoretical aspect of PBS in accessible language

4. A short written assessment demonstrating knowledge of course concepts

5. Preparation of an action plan to transfer learning into the workplace with progress updates

6. A final practice-based project assignment that requires coaches to implement PBS (or a defined element of PBS), describe the process, collect and analyse data to evaluate impact and produce a report.

Table 1 shows how the assessment methods relate to the learning outcomes.

[Insert table 1 about here]

This paper briefly reports the views of coaches on the implementation of PBS in practice. Although the views of participants at the end of learning sessions are valid as an indication of training acceptability, a more rigorous evaluation of the impact of training should be undertaken in the 'real environment' focusing on the implementation of skills and knowledge acquired in training (Denne et al, 2015; Lowe et al, 2007) because these do not always transfer into practice (Smith et al, 1992). We intend to do that in the future.

What we did and how it was done

A survey was designed by the first and third authors using survey software (Qualitrics.com). Questions were designed to gather information about the coaches' experience and report on how they applied their learning in everyday practice. The survey comprised 31 items in multiple-choice, free entry text, and 5-point Likert scales. Respondents rated:

- agreement with 10 statements about their experience of the programme

- degree of confidence on 26 items (see *Table 3*)

- agreement on 4 statements regarding organisational support, networking and other personal development

The survey was conducted anonymously and took 20–30 minutes to complete. PBS coaches trained during the years 2015–2019 (n=122) were invited to a web-based survey in April 2019. Thirty-four surveys were returned, a response rate of 28%. The survey was re-issued in March 2020. Previous respondents were not required to complete the survey for a second time. Twenty-six additional responses were received making a total of 60 returns and a response rate of 49%. Survey results were analysed by the third author with ethics approval from the University of Kent. The number of respondents for each item differs because some respondents did not answer all questions.

Results

[Insert table 2 job roles about here]

Most of the respondents worked for charity sector organisations or not for profit organisations (n=33, 66%). Respondents worked in schools, residential and day services, CAMHs teams, forensic units and inpatient services, and had a range of job roles (see *Table 2*).

Satisfaction (N=48)
Most coaches were satisfied with the training provided: 80% strongly agreed that it was well delivered and accessible; 76% said the length was right; 89% found the resources helpful; and 92% would recommend the training to other organisations or potential coaches.

[Insert Table 3 Confidence Levels about here]

Confidence
Table 3 shows that coaches reported high levels of confidence on most items and were very confident in: explaining the importance of improving quality of life and its relationship to reductions on behaviours of concern, (n=39, 77.5%); explaining the functions of behaviour (n=38, 69%); reducing the level of anxiety experienced by autistic people (n=38, 62.5 %,); helping staff to monitor and record challenging behaviour and responses (n=35,61.5%,); and identifying restrictive practices (n=38, 60%). Confidence ratings for 'very' and 'quite' were (n=39 75%–97.5%) across all items. Participants' prior experience was not a factor.

Most coaches were confident in explaining aspects of PBS to their managers (n=36, 30%), said they were very confident to support managers to develop an action plan to implement PBS, and were very confident (n=30, 42.5%; with a further 32.5% who were quite confident) in explaining the importance of practice leadership.

Impact on practice (N=46)
Ninety-one per cent of coaches agreed they had applied at least one element of PBS in practice and 95% said that the training had helped them to support staff to work more effectively.

Working with other staff to implement PBS (N=21)
All coaches had worked with other staff to implement PBS and (n=21, 43%) had worked with over 100 members of staff.

Implementation of action plans (N=40)
Forty-seven per cent of coaches reported having implemented between 50% and 100% of their action plans and 42% had implemented between 25% and 50%. Ten per cent had implemented fewer than 25% of their plans. The main barrier identified was the time they were able to allocate to complete the actions due to competing job priorities.

Organisational Support (N=39)
Most coaches (79%) felt well supported by their organisation; 62% had opportunities to network and share practice, and 66% felt they had opportunities to develop more skills after the training.

Discussion
Most coaches reported high levels of confidence in explaining PBS concepts to colleagues and managers, which is key to transferring knowledge into working practice (Cromwell and Kolb, 2004). This was encouraging as these are key factors in successfully embedding PBS in organisational systems (Beadle- Brown et al, 2015: Bigby and Beadle-Brown, 2018; Bould et al, 2018).

Most coaches believed they had had a positive impact on their colleagues' PBS practice and that this had a positive impact on the lives of people with learning disabilities, autism or both.

Most coaches reported difficulties implementing action plans, which is consistent with problems associated with implementing new ways of working and PBS workforce development (Denne et al, in press). Over a third of respondents reported not having had opportunities to network or develop skills further, indicating that some organisations may view implementing PBS as a simplistic, one-off training event (Denne et al, 2015), rather than a process of organisational, cultural and workforce development. This prompted the recent formation of the Coaches Community of Practice.

Lower levels of confidence were reported in supporting senior managers to understand and implement PBS, suggesting manager involvement may require additional ways of working. Recent enhancements are:

- strengthening recommendations for ongoing CPD for coaches

- providing additional learning materials post-training on dedicated social media

- reviewing, updating and adding new content on capable environments

- adding new training modules for senior managers and providing advice on how coaches can help integrate PBS approaches at senior organisational levels

Limitations

The absence of a baseline test of coaches' PBS knowledge prior to undertaking the programme and the absence of empirical data on changes in the lives of the people with learning disabilities are major limitations. Respondents were self-selecting and just under a half of potential respondents completed the survey so how representative the findings are remains unclear. Coaches' perspectives do, however, offer useful insights into how training should develop. A strength of the exercise is the coaches' proximity to practice and those delivering PBS interventions. The coaches programme was also evaluated independently by the Tizard Centre, University of Kent and scored 85%, the second highest score out of 18 PBS training programmes in the UK (Carson and Baker, 2018).

Summary

Despite limitations, survey results have helped the coaches programme to develop, and, although not perfect, the survey is an example of training evaluation in health and social care, which is still rare in the field (Lowe et al, 2007; Denne et al, 2015). The next phase of evaluation will objectively examine the impact coaches have had on outcomes for people with behaviours that challenge.

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Table 1: Learning outcomes and assessment methods

Learning outcome 1	Describe the development and component parts of the PBS framework and demonstrate knowledge of the key areas	Assessment methods 1, 2, 3 & 4
Learning outcome 2	Analyse aspects of organisational implementation of PBS and relate them to their service or organisation	Assessment methods 1, 3, 5 & 6
Learning outcome 3	Develop an action plan to transfer learning into the workplace	Assessment methods 1, 5 & 6
Learning outcome 4	Prepare resources to support workforce competence	Assessment methods 1, 2 & 6
Learning outcome 5	Demonstrate how to use coaching to improve practice standards	Assessment methods 1 & 6

Table 2: Participants' Job Roles (n=36)

Behaviour adviser/specialist/PBS lead/Behaviour support team manager	5
Assistant head/Vice principal	4
Senior support worker, registered manager	6
Speech and language therapist, team leader, support worker,	6
Director, trainer, clinical nurse, senior manager – quality, school principal, CAMHS mental health practitioner, case supervisor, care assistant, quality improvement officer, psychologist, expert by experience	15

Table 3 Confidence levels after training (ranked in order of very confident)

RANK	Confidence statements after training	N	Very confident	Quite confident

1	Explaining the importance of improving quality of life and its relationship to reductions on behaviours of concern	39	77.5%	20%
2	Explaining the functions of behaviour	38	69.2%	28.2%
3	Reducing the level of anxiety experienced by autistic people	38	62.5%	32.5%
4	Helping staff to monitor and record challenging behaviour and responses	35	61.5%	28.2%
5	Ability to identify whether restrictive practices are in place and appropriate and least restrictive	38	60%	35%
6	Explaining PBS values	39	57.5%	40 %
6	Coaching staff to support people to engage in meaningful activities and relationships	38	57.5%	37.5%
7	Explaining the main components of PBS to someone else	37	55%	37.5%
8	Signposting people to resources to help them understand more about PBS	39	53.8%	33.3%
9	Explaining to managers the importance of providing emotional support to staff	37	52.5%	40%
9	Teaching a skill to someone you support	38	52.5 %	42.%
10	Identifying reactive strategies	36	50%	40%
10	Identifying proactive strategies	39	50%	47.5%
10	Supporting other staff to reduce restrictive practices	38	50%	45%
11	Supporting staff to implement behavioural support plans (BSP)	35	48.7%	41%
12	Providing feedback to staff on their practice	39	47.5%	50%
13	Auditing a behaviour support plan	34	45%	40%
14	Supporting staff to implement plans that improve well being	36	43.6%	48.7%
14	Explaining links between PBS and other elements eg Active Support	34	43.6 %	43.6%
15	Helping other staff to teach a skill to someone they support	39	42.5%	55%
15	Explaining the importance of practice leadership to managers	30	42.5%	32.5%
16	Measuring progress for individuals	36	40%	50%
17	Explaining to senior managers how to embed PBS in organisations	31	35%	42.5%
18	Explaining difference between using preventative (eg removing or avoiding triggers) and developmental (eg teaching skills &/or using Active Support) proactive strategies	33	30.8%	53.8%
19	Supporting managers to develop an action plan	36	30%	52.5 %
19	Explaining to others what is meant by a 'capable environment'	31	30%	47.5%