



What is Positive Behaviour Support?

In the first of our guides for families, we discuss what Positive Behaviour support is.

Positive Behaviour Support is:

“An approach that blends values about the rights of people with disabilities with a practical science about how learning and behaviour change occur”

Horner, 2000.

Imagine if you could stop someone's challenging behaviour by improving their quality of life and increasing skills.

Positive Behaviour Support is a structured approach to supporting people when there are challenging behaviours, moving the focus away from what is challenging to supporting positive behaviours. Challenging behaviours are assessed to identify what they mean for the person, and then support is given to develop alternative skills to meet this purpose.



“...making environments more enabling and supporting skills to develop”

When faced with challenging behaviours your first thoughts may be about how you can respond to these behaviours.

Typically, responses in these situations include:

- making places safe, e.g. removing things that could be used to harm others or could be damaged by the person
- stopping people from going to public places in case anything should go wrong
- and using consequence strategies, such as exclusion or time-out.

These are natural responses, but when this is the only plan it can lead to people being restricted, making it harder for them to get what they want or need. It can lead to people only getting negative attention, with reduced chances to do positive things, which can often lead to behaviours getting worse.

Instead of looking to stop challenging behaviours, Positive Behaviour Support starts by understanding why people do these behaviours. We do everything for a reason.

The aim of Positive Behaviour Support is to try to support people to meet their needs in different ways. This is done by making environments more enabling and supporting skills to develop. The focus is not the challenging behaviours. These naturally reduce as a positive side effect of increasing and supporting independence.

Positive Behaviour Support approaches also avoid negative responses or approaches that the person doesn't like. These are called "punishment" or "consequences". People learn better from positive results of when they do the things well. Learning from negative consequences does not support constructive building of independence.

What is Positive Behaviour Support based upon?

Positive Behaviour Support is an application of behaviour science, known as Applied Behaviour Analysis. This is the science of learning and it is used to understand the purpose of behaviour and how to support people to develop skills. The goal of this skill development is to achieve valued goals, giving people better quality of life.

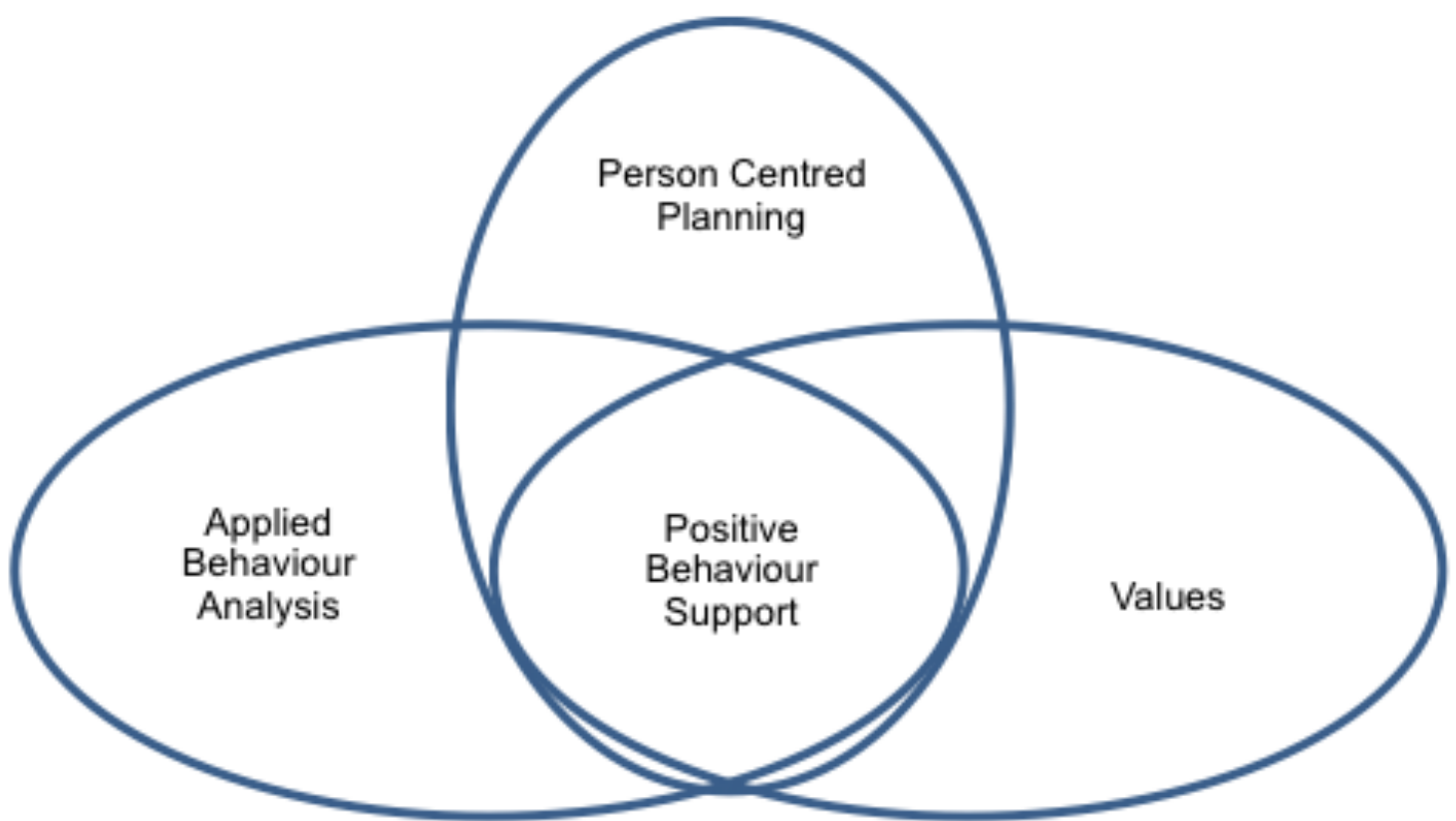
The valued goals that underpin Positive Behaviour Support have been described best by John O'Brien (1988):

Value	What this means
Meaningful relationships	Being part of the family, keeping friendships and developing meaningful relationships.
Meaningful community participation	Being part of the community, including being a neighbour, knowing local people, using local facilities, and taking part in local events.
Meaningful choice	Everyone can make some choices. If someone can't make choices we should teach them to. Whilst this learning happens those who know the person well work together to agree what they would prefer
Building competence	Everyone can be supported to learn new skills throughout their lives, be involved in any task so long as they receive the right level of support.
Respect	People have the right to be valued and not to be treated as a second class citizen. Positive behaviour support aims to promote. This can mean adapting places to minimise the effects of disability and enhance ability.





Positive Behaviour Support is a person centred approach. It uses the science of Applied Behaviour Analysis to help the person to learn. This learning is to support the person to achieve valued goals. It is essential that these goals are important to the person. The diagram below illustrates how this comes together.



Based upon Carr, et al (2002) "Evolution of an Applied Science".

Key Points

- PBS looks at what is challenging behaviour for. It then looks at how the person can differently meet this need, by making environments more enabling or by supporting skill development.
- When people increase skills then challenging behaviours reduce naturally.
- PBS always avoids negative consequences and approaches that the person wouldn't like.
- PBS is based upon Applied Behaviour Analysis, the science of learning.
- PBS also uses values that promote the right to good quality of life, with the person at the centre of all plans

Thinking Points

- If you had a headache but couldn't tell anyone, what would you do?
- When things go wrong and you feel stressed, how do you respond?
- Can you think of a time when you have found an easier way to do something? Now you have learnt this new, easier way would you go back and do things the way you used to? For example, now you know how to use a sat nav would you go back to using a map for directions?