

To the Editor,

We are writing in response to the article by Hassiotis et al. (2018) entitled *Clinical outcomes of staff training in positive behaviour support to reduce challenging behaviour in adults with intellectual disability: cluster randomised controlled trial* (BJP 212, 161–168). We respectfully request that you publish this letter in The British Journal of Psychiatry.

Hassiotis et al. stated that their aim was to evaluate the effects of training in Positive Behavioural Support (PBS) on challenging behaviour. While we welcome research in PBS, we have concerns about the conclusions that have been drawn from this study.

The authors describe how, after having received 6 days of training in PBS, NHS professionals – including speech and language therapists, nurses and occupational therapists – implemented PBS interventions in community services for people with intellectual disabilities. It was stated that in order to align with best practice, interventions were required to include 4 key components: functional assessment, observational data, a PBS plan, and a goodness-of-fit checklist. However, out of a possible total of 108 interventions, only 33 (30.5%) included all 4 key components. Forty-seven interventions (43.5%) included between 1 and 3 components, and in the remaining 28 cases (26%), no paperwork was submitted.

All PBS plans were rated by an independent assessor as being of poor quality, and, crucially, no information was gathered on whether or not they were actually implemented. In the absence of data concerning implementation, it is possible that the behaviour change strategies detailed in PBS plans were never actually used in services. The authors' conclusion that PBS did not reduce challenging behavior is therefore unsupported.

In view of the study's limitations – and, in particular, the absence of evidence that the intervention it set out to assess (PBS) was actually implemented – the extent to which any meaningful conclusions can be drawn is questionable.

Yours faithfully,

Positive Behaviour Support Special Interest Group, UK Society for Behaviour Analysis