

# An Introduction to Active Support

A guide to supporting children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities

By Bev Ashman and Julie Beadle-Brown



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# Introduction

These materials are primarily based on the *Person-centred Active Support* training materials written by Jim Mansell, Julie Beadle-Brown, Bev Ashman and John Ockenden and first published by Pavilion Publishing in 2004. However, they also draw on more recent publications and on experience of implementing active support in practice.

One of the things that we know from many years of implementing active support in organisations, as well as from research, is that in order for staff to develop the skills to provide this type of support consistently, they need to have knowledge of the principles of active support, the rationale for why it is important and the language to think about and explain to others why they work in this way. This can be achieved through classroom based training, or through reading materials provided on paper or online. Ideally this would include the opportunity to discuss what they are learning and to apply it to the people they support. However they also need to have the opportunity to try out the methods they learn about with someone who is more experienced and skilled to guide them. This is done through hands-on training, usually with the people they are supporting on a day-to-day basis. Skills and knowledge are then maintained and improved over time through practice and ongoing coaching, modelling, supervision and team work – what we call practice leadership.

As such, this booklet is not designed to be someone's only exposure to active support training but rather to give staff an awareness of its key principles and its importance that is then supplemented by further classroom or small group training and hands-on/interactive training. The booklet can be used either as part of an induction pack or just as a standalone resource for interested individuals. It is written to be accessible to staff in services of any description (including registered care services, day services, schools and employment support services), those providing personal assistance in people's homes and to parents, volunteers or others providing support in a wide range of contexts. It is part of a suite of resources that are now available on active support. More information on these is provided in the resources and references section of this booklet (see p38).

The term 'intellectual disability' is used in this booklet as the internationally accepted term. It is the same as learning disability, which is more commonly used in the UK context. The term 'intellectual and developmental disabilities' is used to encompass those who have other conditions such as autism but who many not have an intellectual disability. The term 'active support' is used throughout this booklet as a shortened form of the term 'Person centred active support' which was introduced in 2004 to highlight the connection between active support and other person centred approaches and to avoid limiting its implementation to group settings.