

Implementing Positive Behaviour Support in Early Childhood Education and Care

PBS-ECEC



Policy and Strategy Toolkit

The Policy and Strategy Toolkit includes a set of strategies based on:

- a collection of lessons learned and challenges during the PBS-ECEC train the trainers program and implementation of PW-PBS in the participating countries
- promising practices with concrete and practical examples
- policy recommendations
- easy-to-use tools for ECEC professionals and policymakers to adequately and efficiently implement PW-PBS

When exploring this Toolkit, all the recommendations interconnect and are interdependent in such a way that they build on each other. Their full implementation across educational settings and systems is expected to create a synergistic effect.

1 To implement PW-PBS, it is fundamental to promote continuous professional development

Continuous professional development (CPD), in addition to solid initial education and training, is essential for the successful implementation of Programme-Wide Positive Development Support (PW-PBS) in early childhood education and care (ECEC). CPD ensures high-quality education and support for children. As our understanding of child development evolves, ECEC professionals need to stay up-to-date on the latest research and best practices. CPD empowers ECEC professionals with the attitudes, knowledge, and skills to adapt to diverse learning needs, establish positive relationships, use innovative pedagogical strategies, and create nurturing environments. Participation in CPD programmes keeps professionals informed about trends in research, allowing them to implement new strategies as well as the systems necessary to promote young children's socioemotional learning and to prevent and mitigate challenging behaviours. An in-depth understanding of PW-PBS principles and strategies, a common understanding among the ECEC team members, and specific teaching skills are required to ensure the successful implementation of the PW-PBS approach with high fidelity.



2 PW-PBS implementation requires a long-term process

Implementing Programme-Wide Positive Behaviour Support (PW-PBS) requires time to achieve a sustainable impact across various levels (children, families, professionals, ECEC settings, communities) and desired outcomes (socioemotional learning, health, learning, and positive school climate). The duration of implementation can vary depending on the specific needs and goals of each ECEC setting, but typically, over a year is required for full integration. Continuous evaluations, updates, and fidelity checks are necessary to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of PW-PBS systems and practices. Commitment from all stakeholders (administration, professionals, children, parents, and the wider community) creates a positive and supportive school culture for long-term success. Educational stakeholders must consider adequate and reasonable timelines and define policies that support long-term implementation. An extended timeframe enables professionals to learn and develop necessary skills, support each other in becoming proficient in the approach, and refine PW-PBS practices to adapt to children's evolving needs. Prolonged commitment allows interventions to become truly embedded in ECEC daily life, creating a positive and supportive environment with lasting effects on children's development and behaviour.

3 Implementing PW-PBS in preschools requires involving parents as part of the educational team

Children's socioemotional learning (SEL) and the prevention of challenging behaviours can be optimised through positive family-ECEC partnerships. Parents significantly influence child development, and their insights during Programme-Wide Positive Behaviour Support (PW-PBS) implementation enable tailored approaches to meet each child's needs. Working in partnerships with families at all tiers of the intervention is central to PW-PBS, ensuring continuity and consistency across contexts. Professionals are invited to cultivate skills that help enhance family engagement and create genuine positive partnerships. Collaborative efforts between parents and professionals create a holistic approach to the prevention of socioemotional challenges and promotion of SEL. Moreover, by providing parents with PW-PBS training and resources, the family-ECEC synergies can be strengthened, promoting consistent, positive approaches that benefit children's development and empower families as part of the educational team.





4 The implementation of PW-PBS is based on the development of collaborative practices and partnerships, at multiple levels, among educational stakeholders

For a successful and enduring Programme-Wide Positive Behaviour Support (PW-PBS) implementation, collaborative efforts involving stakeholders at all levels, from classrooms to the community, are crucial. An engaged, collaborative workforce forms the foundation of the PW-PBS approach. In ECEC settings, effective communication, collaborative atmosphere, and democratic leadership promote consistency in pedagogical strategies and practices. Engagement and consistency stem from shared visions and goals regarding the support of socioemotional development for both children and professionals (please see our PBS-ECEC Key Resources section). Therefore, all PW-PBS phases – assessment, training, and implementation – should involve all professionals and families.

5 Promote an inclusive approach based on multi-tiered systems of support at all levels (centre-level, local, national)

Every school should address the diverse needs of all children with a positive approach, encompassing multiple developmental dimensions (e.g., cognitive, psychomotor, and socioemotional). This involves implementing a school-wide multi-tiered support system and shifting from a remedial to a preventive approach. Inclusive educational systems support all children regardless of abilities or backgrounds, promoting participation, fostering accessible learning environments, and providing the necessary resources for success. A multi-tiered support system promotes inclusive environments, organising supports equitably. This includes a universal level of support, addressing all children, a selective level of support to complement the previous, for a limited number of children, and an additional support level for children with significant and persistent difficulties requiring individualised intervention. This system can be legislated nationally, recommended by local policymakers, or implemented at the ECEC setting level.



6 Leadership teams play a central role in coordinating, guiding and supporting the ECEC setting teams throughout all phases of the PW-PBS implementation

The implementation of Programme-Wide Positive Behaviour Support (PW-PBS) is led by a leadership team, comprising various professionals, in each ECEC centre. This team organises, integrates, and coordinates the implementation of effective strategies and practices. Well-prepared, highly engaged, and supportive leadership promotes common ground at the level of vision (beliefs and values), theoretical underpinnings, and pedagogical practices. Leadership teams are also responsible for facilitating communication and providing ongoing professional development and resources to professionals, guaranteeing spaces for reflecting and debating the progress and challenges encountered. Ultimately, knowledgeable and committed leadership promotes professionals' autonomy and participation, which accounts for the sustainability of outputs for both professionals and children. The preparation and support for leadership in ECEC settings are central to providing the conditions for the successful implementation of PW-PBS. The preparation of leaders is intended to help sustain a highly informed and intentional exercise of pedagogical leadership focused on promoting the learning and well-being of children and professionals.

7 The promotion of children's SEL should be clearly emphasised in ECEC national curricula and guidelines, as well as ECEC centres' educational projects

The promotion of children's socioemotional learning (SEL) should be clearly emphasised in ECEC national curricula and guidelines, in line with European policies and frameworks that stress the core relevance of key personal, social, and emotional competencies. This entails defining national policy frameworks that clearly acknowledge a holistic understanding of children's learning and development, and an integrated approach to professional action in ECEC settings. Additionally, the successful implementation of Programme-Wide Positive Behaviour Support (PW-PBS) encompasses the definition of a common philosophy that should be clearly stated in the educational projects of ECEC institutions. Explicit written guidelines create a common vision and coherence throughout all phases and processes of the implementation of PW-PBS in ECEC centres and school systems. Policy recommendations at the national, local, and central levels guide these phases and processes and facilitate their transformation into consistent and effective daily practices.



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