

Welcome to Matchability 😊

It's common to feel confused about the words people use when talking about "behaviour support" or "behaviour therapy." They sound similar, but they're actually quite different roles.

This short guide helps explain the difference.

Behaviour Support Practitioner

A Behaviour Support Practitioner works with people who show behaviours of concern (like aggression, running away, or self-injury). Their goal is to improve the person's quality of life and reduce risk in a safe and respectful way.

They focus on:

- Understanding why the behaviour happens (using assessments and data) - Looking at what's working and what's not in the person's environment
- Developing a Behaviour Support Plan (BSP)
- Supporting teams, families and support workers to follow the plan
- Making sure any restrictive practices (like locks or medications) are only used if absolutely needed and follow the rules
- Helping the person build skills in everyday life (like choice-making, communication, or calming strategies). They often do not usually work directly with the person every week. Instead, they support the whole team to make changes that work in real life. This approach is rights-based, person-centred, and looks at the broader context of someone's life.

Behaviour Therapist

A Behaviour Therapist usually works in a more clinical or teaching role, focusing on teaching new skills (especially for children or people with developmental disabilities).

They often:

- Work 1-on-1 with the person
- Use structured techniques (like prompts, visuals, rewards)
- Teach specific skills like talking, playing, or following routines
- Work in sessions: at home, school, or therapy rooms. This kind of therapy is often used in early intervention or when building communication and learning skills. It's different from behaviour support, which focuses on understanding and changing the environment, not just the person.

So, What's the Key Differences?

Behaviour Support Practitioner	Behaviour Therapist
Focus on quality of life and reducing risk	Focus on teaching new skills directly
Supports the whole team	Works directly with the person
Writes behaviour plans based on assessment	Delivers structured therapy sessions
Works across homes, schools and services	Often works in sessions or programs
Looks at rights, trauma, history, health, environment	Looks at learning, motivation and teaching new behaviour
Is often limited in hours available in funding, with skills taught to others or the person contained in the behaviour support plan for others to follow	May be self-funded or have weekly or multiple weekly sessions of direct teaching

Which One Does Your Family Need?

Sometimes a person might need both. For example, A therapist to help with learning new skills. A behaviour support practitioner to reduce risky behaviours and build a better daily routine. Behaviour support is not about "fixing" people, it's about building better supports around them.

If you'd like to know more, please get in touch with us.