

Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy in IAPT

Background

MBCT has been recommended in NICE guidelines for people with and recurrent depression since 2004. In recent NICE guidelines (2022) MBCT is also recommended for people with a new episode of less severe depression.

Since 2018 Health Education England (HEE) have supported a training programme for MBCT teachers in IAPT, aiming to make MBCT available to people accessing IAPT services. This training runs annually and is provided free to IAPT staff.

Benefits of MBCT in IAPT services

MBCT is a cost-effective group-based intervention that can be delivered in an online and/or in-person format. Evidence supports its use in IAPT for people with recurring depression, both as an approach for preventing future episodes, as well as reducing depressive symptoms and supporting patients into recovery.

NHS England are committed to supporting increased availability of this intervention through delivery in IAPT services. Over the past 4 years approximately 150 IAPT therapists have been trained through HEE funded training and are now running groups in IAPT services across the country.

How you can support your staff to bring MBCT to patients.

Achieving the successful integration of MBCT in IAPT requires consideration and planning in order to ensure effective and sustainable delivery into services. Managers can support staff during training and establishment of clinical groups in the following ways:

- Recognise the significant personal commitment demonstrated by staff undergoing MBCT training and teaching. MBCT teachers are required to maintain a daily mindfulness practice.
- MBCT sessions are two hours per week over eight weeks. In addition to teaching, time is needed to prepare sessions, meet with co-teachers to plan and debrief from sessions, meet supervision requirements, patient screening and writing notes etc. Recognising time required to carry out these commitments supports staff in delivering this intervention optimally.
- Recognising the value of MBCT in IAPT services and how this can transform patients distress enables staff to feel supported in undertaking this challenging but rewarding work.

In summary, MBCT is an invaluable addition to mental health services offered by IAPT. National guidelines recommend its use and patients routinely describe the potentially life-changing benefits arising from attendance on MBCT courses. As a complex intervention MBCT requires staff and managerial recognition and commitment in order to ensure that this is available to all patients who may benefit from this effective, evidence-based treatment.

