

UK Mindfulness Centres Collaboration

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) Teacher Training for NHS Talking Therapies (formerly IAPT) Services

2026-2027



Introduction and context

Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) is an evidence-based group intervention recommended by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence for the treatment for mild to moderate depression (NICE: 2022) and for relapse prevention for recurrent depression (NICE: 2004, 2009, 2022). The NICE guidelines for wellbeing at work (NICE: 2022) also recommend that "all employees" should be given access to mindfulness courses to support wellbeing. We have been delivering NHS England/Health Education England commissioned MBCT training for High-Intensity therapists working in NHS TT Services (formerly IAPT) since 2018. This training is designed to increase access to MBCT in those services across England.

The training currently on offer is for the 8th cohort and will be delivered fully online as one site across England. Those who have not done an MBCT course as a participant will be offered that opportunity online from Jan to March 2026 and the training will then run from March 26 to March 2027. NHS Talking Therapies services are invited to apply to the training programme in their assigned locality.

Who is eligible to apply for this training?

This training is for High Intensity, CBT therapists who have worked in an NHS Talking Therapies Service as CBT therapists for at least one year, High Intensity, fully BABCP accredited CBT therapists or Step 3 counsellors who have completed the Counselling for Depression TT training. Applicants must be working in NHS TT Services.

Teaching MBCT requires a personal interest and experience in mindfulness meditation practices. Applicants are therefore required to demonstrate a commitment to an ongoing, regular personal mindfulness practice and will ideally have participated in an MBCT group as a participant. If applicants have not done MBCT as participants themselves, the training programme provides groups for trainees to attend online from Jan to March 2026. They will need to do this even if they have already done a different 8 week programme like MBSR or MSC.

MBCT Training

The training programme consists of 12 online days of required training (plus 2 optional, recommended days), a 5-day residential retreat, daily personal mindfulness practice and reflection, and supervised teaching of 2 MBCT groups in trainees' own services. This takes place over one year, although sometimes due to personal events or service issues, this can take a few months longer. (For more details about the training, please refer to the *Training Curriculum*).

Teaching days

Eleven days are held from March-July 2026 plus 1 day in Jan/Feb 2027.

Day 1 orients trainees to the structure and key requirements of the Training and covers the theories and values underpinning MBCT: equality and diversity in mindfulness practice and the cognitive and contemplative underpinning theories.

Days 2-9 cover each of the 8 sessions of MBCT using a tripartite format: trainers demonstrate key features of each group session and then explain the theoretical underpinnings and rationales for each element; this is then followed by trainees practising those same elements in small groups and receiving intensive feedback from peers and trainers.

Day 10 covers the Expert by Experience perspective, use of supervision, the research evidence for MBCT, outcome monitoring, recruitment to MBCT groups, teaching in different contexts (eg on different online platforms and face to face, adapting to make the programme neurodiverse-friendly, and assessment of competence.

In addition, there is a further day online, specifically focused on developing the skill of Inquiry in MBCT. This is often the area of teaching trainees find hardest so an additional day has been provided.

In Jan/Feb 2027 (dates TBC with the trainee group), there is a 1-day workshop. This allows trainees to consolidate what they have learnt having taught one MBCT group and to support the delivery of their 2nd MBCT group which will be submitted for assessment.

Additional optional support is provided through the following days: Foundations of Mindfulness with John Peacock (9th October 2026 online) and the Sussex Mindfulness Centre annual conference (15th May 2026, Friends Meeting House, Brighton). SiTT Groups (<https://www.sitt.community/>) are also available to support the ongoing practice and reflection of trainee and qualified MBCT teachers.

5 day residential retreat

Trainees must attend a 5 day, mostly silent, mindfulness practice retreat. This is generously funded by NHS England. The training collaboration puts on a bespoke retreat for the trainee group at Ammerdown retreat centre (<https://www.ammerdown.org/>) near Bath which is scheduled for 20-25th September 2026. Other retreat options will be considered for those who have good reason to be unable to make these dates, or who have health or carer responsibilities that make this impossible to do. All retreats will be funded by the training programme up to the same value as the Ammerdown retreat although trainees will be responsible for the payment of any cancellation fees.

Teaching 2 MBCT groups

Trainees teach 2 MBCT groups in trainees' services face to face or online with 6 hours of supervision per MBCT group provided by the training programme. They teach the groups either with a fellow trainee from their service or with a more experienced BAMBA-registered, MBCT teacher if one is working in that service, or if not, then services agree to buy a teacher in with guidance from the training programme.

Training programme completion

Trainees complete the training when they fulfil the requirements of the course, including:

- 90% attendance at the required training days, and submission of any required reflective accounts.

- An assessment of competence in teaching MBCT based on a video recorded submission to assess all sessions of an MBCT group using the Mindfulness-based Interventions Teaching Assessment Criteria (MBI-TAC).
- Submission of group outcome data and training programme evaluations.
- Completion of a training programme evaluation survey.
- Acceptance onto the register of MBCT teachers held by the British Association of Mindfulness-Based Approaches (BAMBA).

Trainees need to achieve 'competence' on 5 out of the 6 domains of the MBI-TAC and not lower than the 'Advanced Beginner' category in the 6th domain. Trainees not achieving 'competence' on their assessment will be guided for re-submitting a second and final assessment following a subsequently taught group. Trainees not achieving 'competence' on re-assessment will be deemed to have not passed the training and will not be able to teach MBCT in NHS Talking Therapies Services.

Completing this training course enables graduates to meet the training criteria required by the national Good Practice Guidelines (GPGs) in teaching mindfulness-based approaches: <https://bamba.org.uk/good-practice-guidelines/> and to join the register of mindfulness teachers held by the British Association of Mindfulness-Based Approaches (BAMBA). Joining the BAMBA register is a requirement set by NHS England for all MBCT teachers in NHS Talking Therapies (see p.100, Appendix A, of the NHS TT manual: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/the-improving-access-to-psychological-therapies-manual/>). Please note that ongoing requirements for the BAMBA register for CPD, supervision, personal practice and retreat must be met each year to maintain registration.

Application process

Services may have already agreed with NHS England on a provisional number of trainee places. NHS England has given approval for that number to be slightly increased if services have one or two additional people they want to put forward for the training, provided the selected list is approved by NHSE. All applicants are subject to a selection process involving an application form and online interview by the training programme staff. The service lead also needs to complete a single application form to cover all the applicants from their service. The training programme and NHS England want to allocate places equitably across the country and also support services to build sustainable MBCT capacity. Our experience is that services that sustain MBCT provision tend to have at least 2 MBCT teachers. The training itself requires either 2 trainees to run their training MBCT groups together or run their training groups with a more experienced MBCT teacher in the service.

- Step 1: Applicants and service leads read this training information document.
- Step 2: The Head of Service identifies suitable trainees from within their service equal to, or slightly greater than, the number agreed with NHS England.
- Step 3: The Head of Service completes a *service application form*.
- Step 4: Each NHS TT staff member put forward as a prospective trainee by their Head of Service completes a *trainee application form*.
- Step 5: The *service application form* and *trainee application form(s)* with *Equality Monitoring form(s)* are all submitted together to the relevant training site (see table below for information).

Application forms should be completed electronically and emailed to the relevant training lead **by 5pm on Fri 17th October 2025**. Shortlisted applicants will be interviewed online from October to December 2025. We will aim to inform applicants of the outcome by December 2025/early January 2026.

Geographical Area covered	Training Venue	Training dates for 2026.	Email address for completed application forms	Contact details for further information/ questions about this training
South England (Greater London, Kent, Isle of Wight, Surrey, E.Sussex, W.Sussex, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Somerset, Bristol, Gloucestershire, Swindon, Wiltshire, Dorset, Devon, Cornwall) Central England (Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Peterborough, Norfolk, Suffolk, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Rutland, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Midlands) North England (Yorkshire, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, County Durham, Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Merseyside, Cumbria, Isle of Man)	ONLINE	Day 1 March 17th Day 2 April 22nd Day 3 April 29th Inquiry Day- May 5th Day 4 May 20th Day 5 May 27th Day 6 June 3rd Day 7 June 10th Day 8 June 17th Day 9 June 24th Day 10 July 2nd	spft.smc@nhs.net Kate Feenan: Kathryn.Feenan@nottshc.nhs.uk (back up: Tim Sweeney tim.sweeney@nottshc.nhs.uk) tewv.mindfulness@nhs.net	Robert Marx robert.marx@nhs.net or Ruth Sequeira ruth.sequeira@nhs.net Kate Feenan: Kathryn.Feenan@nottshc.nhs.uk or Tim Sweeney tim.sweeney@nottshc.nhs.uk Paul Bernard paul.bernard@nhs.net and Jo Cromarty jo.cromarty@nhs.net