

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

What is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy?

Cognitive Behavioural Therapies, or CBT, are a range of talking therapies based on the theory that thoughts, feelings, what we do and how our body feels are all connected. If we change one of these we can alter the others.

When people feel worried or distressed we often fall into patterns of thinking and responding (such as maintenance cycles or vicious cycles) which can worsen how we feel. CBT works to help us notice and change problematic thinking styles or behaviour patterns so we can feel better. CBT has lots of strategies that can help people in the here and now.

NICE recommends CBT in the treatment of the following conditions:

- Anxiety disorders (including panic attacks and post-traumatic stress disorder)
- Depression
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Schizophrenia and psychosis
- Bipolar disorder

There is also good evidence that CBT is helpful in treating many other conditions, including:

- Chronic fatigue
- Chronic pain
- Physical symptoms without a medical diagnosis
- Sleep difficulties
- Anger management

CBT is effective in treating all ages of clients.

What do Cognitive Behavioural Therapists do?

CBT therapists can offer individual sessions or lead CBT as part of a group. The number of sessions depends on the difficulty the client needs help with. This will usually be between six and twenty sessions, typically of an hour long.

CBT therapists help clients to notice any patterns in thinking or behaviours which might be keeping problems going and can offer information about different CBT techniques to help the people they work with.

CBT therapists discuss the client's specific difficulties and set goals for them to achieve. Therapists will not make decisions for the client, but will help them decide what difficulties they want to work on in order to help improve their situation.

Therapist work in a wide range of settings, including hospitals and clinics. Therapy can be provided over the phone, or face to face, or with written or computer-based packages.

How do I train?

Training to be a CBT therapist is generally at a post-graduate level. Usually CBT therapists are trained on university-based courses to the level of a Post-Graduate (Level 7) Diploma. University criteria for the courses usually require you to have had previous undergraduate mental health training and experience first and an undergraduate degree. The link below gives a list of courses that provide some, or all, of the training necessary to contribute towards an individual becoming BABCP accredited as a CBT therapist:

[Visit the British Association of Art Therapists for information on Accredited Courses \(https://www.babcp.com/Training/Accredited-Courses.aspx\)](https://www.babcp.com/Training/Accredited-Courses.aspx)

To apply for accreditation, you first need to have a professional background recognised by the BABCP in mental health. This is called a Core Profession. Below is a link to a list of recognised Core Professions:

[Visit the British Association of Art Therapists for information on Core Profession Accreditations \(https://www.babcp.com/Accreditation/Core-Profession.aspx\)](https://www.babcp.com/Accreditation/Core-Profession.aspx)

If your prior mental health profession is not listed or you do not fully meet the criteria, there is also the [Knowledge Skills & Attitudes \(KSA\) Route to Accreditation \(https://www.babcp.com/Accreditation/CBP/KSA.aspx\)](https://www.babcp.com/Accreditation/CBP/KSA.aspx).

CBT training courses will be organised differently and over different timescales – IAPT Post Graduate Diplomas are usually run over one year intensively, although others can be offered over 2 years part-time. Participants will be expected in most courses to be on placement in a suitable mental health team.

Entry Requirements

Entry & Experience Requirements

- Previous undergraduate degree
- Qualification as in other professional capacities eg: Nursing, Occupation Therapist, Clinical Psychologist, Counselling Psychologist or Social Worker
- If you don't have a Core Profession then you will need to complete Knowledge, Skills & Attitudes (KSA) to demonstrate professional competence

Previous Experience Required

- Experience working in the field of mental health

Skills and knowledge required

- Counselling skills including active listening and a non-judgemental approach
 - Knowledge of psychology
 - The ability to understand people's reactions
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- Active listening skills
- Patience and the ability to remain calm in stressful situations
- Sensitivity and understanding
- The ability to accept criticism and work well under pressure
- Excellent verbal communication skills
- To be able to use a computer and the main software packages competently

Career Prospects

CBT Therapists work in a range of settings; the NHS being the most prominent. Within this context, CBT therapists can work in a range of services, from primary care (IAPT) to inpatient mental health hospitals, as well as in secondary care, such as in an Integrated Psychological Therapies team in a Community Mental Health Team, physical health settings or specialist psychological therapy services (for example in a trauma service or an eating disorders service).

CBT therapists also work in private settings, voluntary settings, schools/colleges, prisons/forensic settings, as part of Employee Assistance Programmes, for corporations, with occupational health departments and self-employed in independent practice. CBT therapists can also work in the academic sector, teaching and training on established psychology programmes, as well as in supervising other practitioners.

Training as a CBT therapist can open up further opportunities in different modalities of therapy, including third-wave therapies such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Compassion Focussed Therapy and Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR).

Whilst training on an IAPT course you will be paid at Band 6 (£31,365 per year). On qualification usually therapists are paid at Band 7 (£38,890 per year). There is scope for CBT therapists to be paid more, but this usually coincides with taking more management and supervisory roles.

Any other relevant information

We have addressed some common questions about CBT therapists in the leaflet titled “FAQs/Differences amongst professions”.

Useful Organisations

[The British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies](https://www.babcp.com/Default.aspx)
(<https://www.babcp.com/Default.aspx>)

[The National Careers Service - Cognitive behavioural therapist](https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/job-profiles/cognitive-behavioural-therapist)
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