



Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

# Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT)

## Information for young people, parents and carers

## Is this treatment for you?

Do you ever feel confused about why you react the way you do? Or that you seem more 'sensitive' than other people you know? Do your emotions feel all over the place, like you have no control of them? And then you just act or do something without even thinking?

DBT suggests young people who present in this way are more emotionally vulnerable and become emotionally dysregulated. They have difficulty managing several, if not all, emotions. They are sensitive to events going on around them and they can get very distressed. The young people we work with start with higher intensity of emotions than the general population and it takes longer to get things back under control. If something else upsetting happens this will then cause another 'emotional spike'.

## How can we help?

The DBT service is a specialist provision for the assessment and treatment of young people who are experiencing intense emotions and emotional instability.

We support young people who are engaging in, and have a history of, self-harming behaviours, difficulty managing their emotions, acting on impulsive urges, and have difficulties within their relationships.

DBT is a form of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) which combines mindfulness with a focus on analysing and replacing less effective behaviours with more skilful behaviours. It is a supportive therapy which requires a joint working relationship between you and your therapist.

DBT is comprised of a weekly individual session, a 2 hour weekly skills group, access to phone coaching 8am-8pm daily, and a parents and carers group. These will be described in more detail throughout this booklet.

The aim of our service is to assess and treat; with the view that all young people will be supported to use more effective coping strategies. We aim to positively impact the young person's experience of mental health services, and enable them to gain coping skills to no longer need mental health service support.

When we feel upset or distressed we normally react automatically without always thinking about the consequences – as a result we can often get into a habit of using more negative coping strategies to manage.

When you use these negative coping strategies, you can then get caught up with negative feelings for engaging in them. This contributes to a vicious cycle being created, making it more likely for you to continue to engage in them.

To enable you to break this cycle you need to learn new skills to cope and manage differently.

### **How can DBT help?**

We aim to help with these negative cycles by using the model of DBT. A fundamental part of this therapy is the relationship between the young person and their therapist. Our first focus is on building on motivation and commitment.

The goal of our service is to support you to build a life worth living – this will mean something different to each individual.

However, in order to do this this it is likely to include:

- Decrease in suicide attempts
- Reduced intensity of suicidal ideation
- Reduced frequency and likelihood inpatient admission
- Reduce the frequency of self-harm
- Decreased impulsivity
- Improved mood
- Improved knowledge and ability to apply positive coping strategies

## What is DBT?

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) was originally developed to treat chronically suicidal adults diagnosed with borderline personality disorder (BPD). The Oxford Health DBT Service offers a comprehensive DBT package for young people and their carers who are presenting with risky behaviours, emotional dysregulation and relational difficulties. This therapy is based on a skills deficit model, focusing on enhancing the young person's knowledge and application of coping skills.

## What does dialectical mean?

A dialectic recognises that even when two things that are viewed as opposites they can both be true at the same time. This is helpful for people who have a tendency to think and behave in 'extremes', or in a very 'black & white' way.

## So, what do I get?

*DBT Pre-Treatment:* this involves 4-6 sessions with your therapist who will explain the DBT model, identify your goals, whilst assessing and strengthening your motivation. It's about you and your therapist working out what you want to gain from therapy so that there can be a genuine commitment from you to practice the strategies. You can then decide if you want to commit and engage in DBT.

*Medication Reviews:* many of our young people in treatment are also on medication. If this is the case then you will meet with your consultant and care-coordinator for these reviews as appropriate.

*Individual Sessions:* If you and your therapist agree that DBT is the treatment for you at this time you will meet them weekly for 1 hour. Here you will focus on your targets, which will help working towards your goals. Any life threatening behaviours will have to be tackled first with the aim to reduce this so we can start working on things getting in the way of you having a

good quality of life. You will be expected to complete a diary card as homework each week and a lot of skills practice.

*DBT Phone Coaching (8am-8pm):* This enables you to have access to a DBT therapist daily to support you in managing difficult or distressing situations. You can either call or text the clinician on telephone coaching.

*Weekly DBT Skills group:* This runs in the evening for 2 hours. There are 4 modules that are covered within the groups; mindfulness, distress tolerance, interpersonal effectiveness & emotion regulation. You will be expected to practice the skills outside of the group and complete homework set from the group. There can be up to 12 people in the skills group with 2 facilitators teaching.

*DBT Consult:* All therapists attend a weekly DBT consult where they will have an opportunity to discuss cases, receive support around risk management, and supervision around the direction of therapy. They may feedback on levels of motivation and commitment, achievements towards goals, and risk management. This ensures all therapists within the team have an awareness of all the young people in the programme and their current position in therapy.

## **How long does it last?**

Everyone will complete 1 rotation (completing all group modules once), lasting approximately nine months. Some young people may do this twice, as a result the length of treatment can be up to 18 months. An individualised treatment plan will be created to help you meet your agreed goals and targets.

## **How can it help?**

Once you have decided what your goals are, you will need to think with your therapist about what your targets are. The targets are like the stepping stones you need to complete

or manage to get closer to your goal. There 4 modules and each module has an aim:

- **Mindfulness:** addresses confusion about self; those times when you don't always know what you are thinking or feeling, or why you get upset.
- **Distress Tolerance:** skills to help you manage crisis situations; managing impulsivity – acting without thinking it all through.
- **Emotion Regulation:** helps you gain a better understanding and management of the fast and intense mood changes you experience, that feeling of your emotions 'all over the place'.
- **Interpersonal Effectiveness:** skills to manage patterns of difficulties in your relationships.

DBT is a continuous balancing act between change and acceptance but constantly moving forward holding both aspects in mind. You are the expert in YOU and we are the experts in DBT – together we can make changes.

### **Have you been referred to the 18-25 service?**

If you are over 18 years and transitioned from CAMHS services, your consultant care will remain within CAMHS services. If you came into the DBT programme following discharge from CAMHS services then your consultant care will be held within the Adult Mental Health Team (AMHT). If you have been referred to DBT and on the waitlist for assessment, then your care may remain with the AMHT or you may be discharged until assessment is completed. If you require support during this interim period then you will need to access this via the AMHT (if open to them) or your GP.

### **What do my parents or carers get?**

Your parents or carers can attend a parents group. We try, where possible, to run the parents group at the same time as the under 18s skills group.

The aim of this group is to increase parents'/carers knowledge and awareness around the skills being taught, also to support parents/carers helping their child use their coping skills in everyday situations. If you are over 18 years then your parents/carers may be invited to this dependant on capacity of the group.

## **Where does treatment take place?**

DBT is a county wide service. Your assessment will take place in one of the CAMHS clinics. The individual therapy you are offered will take place primarily in your local area, or as agreed with your therapist. Groups will take place in one of the CAMHS clinics.

## **Confidentiality**

We are all bound to respect a young person's confidentiality, however if you were to share something that puts you or someone else at risk then we may need to break this confidentiality. We will tell you if we are doing this.

You will be expected to sign up to a crisis plan which details the skills you find most helpful in certain situations. If staff are worried about your safety they will need to inform a parent or carer so they can help you manage this risk.

Your information and care will be shared within the DBT consult team so all the DBT therapists can get to know how things are for you and what might be helpful if you contact them when they are on DBT phone coaching.

## **Concerns and complaints**

We aim to provide you with a high quality service at all times. However, if you have any concerns, complaints or comments about your experience of our service then please tell a member of the team or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on freephone: 0800 328 7971.

If you would like to have information translated into a different language, please contact the Equality and Diversity Team at: [EqualityandInclusion@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](mailto:EqualityandInclusion@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)

**Arabic** يُرجى الاتصال بنا إذا كنتم ترغبون في الحصول على المعلومات بلغة أخرى أو بتسيق مختلف.

আপনি এই তথ্য অন্য ভাষায় বা আলাদা আকারে **Bengali** পেতে চাইলে অনুগ্রহ করে আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন।  
**Urdu** اگر آپ یہ معلومات دیگر زبان یا مختلف فارمیٹ میں چاہتے ہیں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

**Chinese** 若要以其他語言或格式提供這些資訊，請與我們聯繫

**Polish** Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innym formacie, skontaktuj się z nami.

**Portuguese** Queira contactar-nos se pretender as informações noutra idioma ou num formato diferente.

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