

Talking therapies

This factsheet gives information about talking therapies. It explains the different kinds of treatment available and how to get them. This factsheet explains how you can get treatment on the NHS and privately.



KEY POINTS

- Talking therapy involves talking about problems with a trained professional. These problems are usually linked to your mental and emotional health.
- Talking therapies try to figure out what may have caused your problems in the first place and learn ways of managing them.
- There are different types of talking therapy. Finding the right therapy will depend on your problem, what is available in your area and what you want.
- Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is widely available on the NHS. CBT focusses on the “here and now”. CBT looks at how automatic thoughts can affect how you feel and aims to change these.
- Psychotherapy is another type of talking therapy. Psychotherapy focuses on your early relationships and experiences and how they impact on current relationships.
- You will need to go to your GP or key health care professional, such as a social worker or nurse, to get therapy on the NHS.
- You can find a private therapist, prices range from £50-£100 an hour. Some therapists are willing to offer reduced rates if you are on a low income.
- You can get talking therapy from a therapist, social worker, nurse, psychologist, psychiatrist or wellbeing practitioner. You should only get therapy from someone who is properly trained.

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1. What is talking therapy?

Talking therapy is a general term to describe any psychological therapy that involves talking. This includes:

- counselling
- psychotherapy
- cognitive behaviour therapy
- dialectical behaviour therapy.

People find talking therapies useful to treat mental health or behavioural problems. Talking therapy can either be used on its own or with medication.

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2. What can I expect from talking therapy?

At the start of therapy you will talk to a therapist about what your problems are. The therapist will ask you specific questions to try and figure out your therapy needs what is blocking your recovery.

These questions help your therapist come up with a treatment plan for your therapy. You and your therapist should agree:

- what you expect from one another,
- your commitment to the therapy, and
- how to end the therapy if you want to.

You can go to individual one-to-one therapy or group therapy. Some therapies will be a combination of one-to-one and group sessions. The length of therapy will vary from four sessions to 18 months depending on the type of therapy.

3. Are there different types of talking therapies?

There are many different types of talking therapies. Below is a list of some of the most common types.

Counselling

Counselling is a common therapy you can get through your GP. Counselling is for people who are generally well but are going through a difficult time such as bereavement, relationship breakdown, redundancy or other life changing events. Usually you can only get a certain number of counselling sessions (6 to 12 sessions). You can expect your counsellor to help you to understand how you are feeling.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

CBT can help you to change how you think ('cognitive') and what you do ('behaviour'), which are both linked to how you feel. CBT looks at problems and difficulties in the 'here and now' more than your past or childhood. CBT will help you understand how you think about yourself, the world and other people and how that affects your reaction to situations.¹

Below are some of the problems and conditions CBT is often useful for treating.

- Poor anger control
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Post traumatic stress disorder
- Panic attacks
- Psychosis
- Phobias

CBT is widely available on the NHS. CBT should only be delivered by someone who is properly trained such as a therapist, nurse or social worker. Sessions are usually weekly and last an hour. An average number of sessions is 4 to 15 but this depends on what you need. There is more information [below](#) on the recommended number of CBT sessions.

You can do CBT on your computer at home. This is called Computerised Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (cCBT). Research has shown some cCBT programmes help to treat mild depression and anxiety.²

The Department of Health recommends that a psychological wellbeing practitioner guides you through cCBT. The NHS recommends cCBT courses which you can do under the supervision of your GP or a wellbeing practitioner.

- [Living Life to the Full Interactive](#) is a CBT-based course for overcoming mild to moderate depression and anxiety. You

complete the six-session course under the supervision of your GP or a qualified therapist.

- [Overcoming Bulimia](#) is an online CBT-based course to help people with [bulimia](#) and other [eating disorders](#). The course includes eight sessions, which you complete at your own pace.
- [Overcoming Anorexia](#) is an online course, based on CBT, for carers of people with [anorexia nervosa](#).
- [MoodGYM](#) is a free self-help computer programme to teach CBT skills to anyone at risk of having depression and anxiety. MoodGym is an independent resource developed and delivered by the Australian National University, and users are able to access the site free of charge. It has five sections and interactive game, anxiety and depression assessments, downloadable relaxation audio, a workbook and feedback assessment.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) gives guidance on treatment for the NHS. It recommends www.beatingtheblues.co.uk for depression or www.fearfighter.com for anxiety.

Your local NHS Trust has to make these available to you unless there is a good clinical reason not to.³ If you have any problems accessing cCBT contact your local Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). You can also contact the Rethink Mental Illness Advice Service, our details are at the end of this factsheet.

Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy looks at how your early or past experiences affect you now.⁴ There are different types of psychotherapy. Psychotherapy is not like counselling or CBT. Psychotherapy helps you understand yourself more and is done over a longer time period. Psychotherapy can be useful for people who have a long term or recurring problem.

As you may be expected to talk about possibly difficult or upsetting events you may feel psychotherapy is not suitable for you. If you are considering psychotherapy you should talk to the therapist about what to expect before you start.

Family intervention Programme (FIP) / Multisystemic Therapy (MST)

Family intervention programmes (FIP) were originally set up to help families deal with a relative who has drug, alcohol or gambling addictions, eating disorders or other harmful behaviour.

The FIP has been adapted to help families caring for someone with schizophrenia. Research shows that family interventions may reduce the risk of relapse and going back into hospital for people with schizophrenia.⁵

Some local authorities or NHS Trusts offer Multisystemic Therapy (MST).⁶ MST aims to help families with similar problems as FIP. MST is helpful when there is a young family member who behaves in a difficult or harmful way. FIP and MST are based on an individual or group changing their

behaviour by learning from other people in social situations. A therapist comes to your house and works with your whole family to tackle these problems. A therapist may come several times a week for three to six months depending on your needs.

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) is a form of talking therapy for people with borderline personality disorder ⁷ and significant self harming behaviour.

During DBT you learn how to control your behaviour and cope with distress. You learn how to reduce harmful behaviours like self harm and also how to deal with relationship problems. You would be expected to go to group sessions, one-to-one sessions, and education groups. You are offered telephone support between sessions during DBT. NICE says DBT can be helpful for people with borderline personality disorder but your local NHS Trust may not offer it. You can contact your local PALS to find out if your local trust offers DBT.

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4. Are there other types of therapy?

Creative therapies

Creative therapies use areas such as art and drama to:

- make you more in touch with how you feel,
- improve how you communicate with other people,
- make you feel less anxious, or
- make you feel better about yourself.

Art therapy encourages you to express emotion and explore your problems using a wide range of art materials. Art therapy can be helpful to people who may have difficulty expressing themselves in words.⁸

Drama therapy uses drama or theatrical techniques (such as roleplay, mime, story telling) to help you express yourself and understand how you feel.⁹

There is a very wide range of other therapies available and the one that suits you may not be in the list above. You can get a more information about different therapies available by contacting the [UK Council For Psychotherapy](#) or [British Association of Counselling and psychotherapy](#). Their details are at the end of this factsheet.

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5. How do I get therapy?

NHS therapy

The main way to get therapy on the NHS is to talk to your GP or mental health worker. If you are under a community mental health team your care coordinator or psychiatrist will be responsible for organising NHS therapy. If you are not with a community mental health team your GP will be responsible for helping you get therapy. After you talk about what you want they can pass your details to a therapist or local therapy service, this is called a referral.

You should tell whoever is making the referral if you would like a particular type of therapy. You can then talk about what is available in your area and he or she can pass your details to the most appropriate service.

Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT)

The Government's 'Improving Access to Psychological Therapies' (IAPT) programme has made psychological therapy more available on the NHS. IAPT services mainly offer CBT for anxiety and depression.

The service can be run by the local NHS Trust or a non-NHS agency, like Rethink Mental Illness, who work with the local NHS Trust. IAPT should be available in your area. You can often self refer or ask your GP to refer you. To find out more about who is providing the IAPT service in your area contact your GP, local [PALS](#) service or go on the [IAPT Website](#).

Private therapy

You can choose to pay to see a therapist privately. The benefits of private therapy are:

- you have more choice,
- there will be shorter waiting times, and
- you can be more flexible about who you go to.

However, the clear drawback is the cost, the average price of a session is £50 upwards. Some therapists have a sliding scale and have reduced fees for people on low incomes. You can find organisations that hold lists of therapists that offer private therapy at the end of this factsheet.

You may be able to see a counsellor at a local mental health group, such as Rethink Mental Illness or Mind. You may not need a GP referral but this depends on what services are available in your area. For more information go to www.rethink.org or www.mind.org.uk.

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6. Are there guidelines on talking therapy for different mental illnesses?

NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) produces guidance for the NHS on how to treat certain health conditions. This section looks at what NICE recommends for some of the most common

mental illnesses. You can see all the NICE guidance at www.nice.org if your condition is not on the list or you could talk to your mental health worker.

Depression

NICE recommends cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) to treat depression.¹⁰ The length of treatment and the type of CBT will depend on how severe your symptoms are. For mild to moderate depression you may be offered self help, computerised CBT or six to eight sessions of one-to-one CBT. If you have moderate to severe depression you should be offered 16-20 sessions of CBT. If you have moderate to severe depression your doctor may give you medication as well as talking therapy. You may be offered psychotherapy or counselling but this depends on what is available in your area.

NICE recommends that once you are well you are offered mindfulness-based CBT to stop you from becoming unwell again. You should be offered this if you have had 3 or more bouts of depression in the past.¹¹ Mindfulness CBT helps you to focus on the present moment. It can help you understand your thoughts and feelings and enjoy the world around you.¹²

Anxiety Disorders

NICE recommends that your doctor should offer you psychological therapies and medication if you have anxiety. CBT and applied relaxation are usually weekly for about three to four months.

NICE recommends CBT to treat moderate to severe anxiety.¹³ You can also be given medication, However, NICE recommends talking therapies for long term recovery. You should get a choice of treatment but will depend on what is available in your area. If you have generalised anxiety disorder you should be offered at least five to seven sessions increasing to 12-15 for more serious symptoms.

Schizophrenia

NICE recommends you should be offered psychological therapy in addition to medication if you have schizophrenia. Your therapy should aim to reduce your symptoms, reduce feelings of distress, improve your coping skills and improve your quality of life.¹⁴ There are different types of psychological treatments which you might be able to get.

Bipolar disorder

If you have bipolar disorder and you are relatively stable but still have some symptoms you should be offered psychological treatment. CBT and psychoeducation should be offered for long term treatment of bipolar.¹⁵

The type of psychological therapy that would suit you will depend on your symptoms. You should discuss psychological therapy with your health care professional.

Borderline Personality Disorder

NICE recommends that if you have borderline personality disorder you should still get health and social care services. You should not be offered brief psychological treatment (less than 3 months). You should get therapy sessions which suit your need and fit around your other commitments.¹⁶

NICE does not recommend one particular talking therapy. Some of the therapies available are Mentalization Based Therapy (MBT), Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) and Cognitive Analytical Therapy (CAT). These can all help people with borderline personality disorder. What you are offered will depend on what is available in your local NHS trust. You should receive information about psychological therapies you are being offered before you start the therapy.

You can find out more about these conditions in the following factsheets:

- Anxiety Disorders
- Bipolar Disorder
- Borderline personality disorder
- Depression
- Schizophrenia
- Borderline Personality Disorder

at www.rethink.org/factsheets. Or call 0121 522 7007 and ask for a copy to be sent to you.

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7. What if I have problems getting therapy on the NHS?

You may come across some problems getting talking therapy on the NHS. Some of these problems can include:

- long waiting lists,
- you did not get enough sessions,
- your GP does not understand mental health conditions or treatment,
- talking therapy is not included in your care plan,
- your care coordinator does not think you need therapy, or
- the therapy you want is not available in your local area.

There are some things you can do such as:

- get the support of an advocate,
- ask for a second opinion of your treatment plan,
- ask for a review of your care plan approach, or
- make a complaint.

You can find out more about:

- **Advocacy**

- **The Care Programme Approach (CPA)**
- **Complaints**
- **Second opinions**

at www.rethink.org. Or call 0121 522 7007 and ask for a copy to be sent to you.

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8. How do I choose a talking therapy?

The therapy you choose will depend on a few things. You need to think about what you want to get out of your talking therapy and also what is most helpful for your mental illness. How much private or NHS therapy will help you depends on the therapeutic relationship you and your therapist develop.

How do I choose a private therapist?

If you are considering seeing a therapist privately:

- your mental health team should not automatically discharge you if you are getting private therapy. However, you are unlikely to then get talking therapy on the NHS.
- make sure that the therapist belongs to a registered body and is qualified (see the section below).

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9. Are therapists regulated and accredited?

There is no standard regulation system for therapists. So someone can advertise themselves and work as a therapist without being checked.

If you are thinking about using a private therapist, it is important to look into their qualifications. Therapists can get a certificate or accreditation, which shows that they meet certain standards.

Therapists choose to be checked, or regulated, and 'accreditation bodies' do this checking. It is important to check that your therapist is registered with an accreditation body. All accredited therapists must show that they meet certain standards such as:

- having appropriate training and qualifications,
- working to a code of ethics, and
- having a complaints procedure.¹⁷

In the UK, the main accreditation bodies are:

- Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC)
- British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)
- UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP)

- British Psychological Society (BPS)
- UK Register of Counsellors and Psychotherapists (UKRCP).

These organisations provide lists of accredited therapists and you can find details of their websites below.

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10. Are there any risks associated with talking therapy?

Below are some things that can happen during therapy.

- Sometimes talking about your problems can make you feel worse before you get better.
- If you are focussing on your relationships during your therapy, this could make you feel worse about them to begin with.
- Strong feelings may come up in therapy and you may feel vulnerable or angry.
- You may become dependent on your therapist and feel very attached to them.

It is important to have a trained therapist as they will understand all of these risks. The therapist is responsible for keeping an eye on these things and making sure the therapy and you are safe.

You should not feel unheard, humiliated or used during therapy sessions. It is important to remember that therapy is supposed to help you.

Can I end the therapy?

You can choose to stop therapy if you feel that it is not helping you or if it does not feel right for you. A good therapist will regularly check that you are getting something out of it and will suggest ending the therapy if you are not.

You should trust your instincts and think about ending therapy if you continue to feel worse. It is important to tell your therapist if you want to stop therapy so you can do this properly.

If you feel a therapist has behaved inappropriately you should think about reporting them to their regulatory body. Below are some example of inappropriate behaviour.

- Sexual comments or behaviour towards you
- Offensive language or statements, this can be about race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation to name a few
- Not respecting your right to privacy
- Breaking any of the rules which have been agreed at the start of therapy

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Organisations with lists of private therapists

UK Council of Psychotherapy

UKCP holds the national register of psychotherapists, psychotherapists who can work with children and young people and psychotherapeutic counsellors.

Telephone: 0207 014 99 55

Address: 2nd Floor Edward House, 2 Wakely Street, London, EC1 7LT

Email: info@ukcp.org.uk

Website: www.psychotherapy.org.uk

British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy

BACP is a professional body representing counselling and psychotherapy with over 40,000 members.

Telephone : 01455 883300

Address: BACP House, Unit 15 St John's Business Park, Lutterworth, Leicestershire, LE17 4HB

Email: bacp@bacp.co.uk

Web: www.bacp.co.uk

British Psychotherapists Foundation

The BPF aims to increase public knowledge and understanding of the benefits of psychotherapy through information on their website, a range of public courses and events and outreach work in schools and other settings.

Telephone 0208 452 98 23

Address: 37 Mapesbury Road, London, NW2 4HJ

Email: via [website](http://www.bap-psychotherapy.org)

Website: www.bap-psychotherapy.org

British Psychological Society

Professional association for psychologists

Telephone: 0116 254 95 68

Address: St Andrews House, 48 Princess Road East, Leicester, LE1 7DR

Email: enquiry@bps.org.uk

Website: www.bps.org.uk

British Psychoanalytic Council

The British Psychoanalytic Council is a professional association and voluntary regulator of the psychoanalytic psychotherapy profession. They have a register of practitioners who have to follow an ethical code and meet their fitness to practise standards.

Telephone: 0207 861 9240

Address: Unit 7, 19-23 Wedmore Street, London, N19 4RU

Email: mail@psychoanalytic-council.org

Website: www.bpc.org.uk

British Association for Behavioural & Cognitive Psychotherapies

The British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies (BABCP) is a multi-disciplinary interest group for people involved in the practice and theory of behavioural and cognitive psychotherapy.

Telephone: 0161 705 4304

Address: Imperial House, Hornby Street, Bury, Lancashire BL9 5BN

Email: babcp@babcp.com

Website: www.babcp.org.uk

British Association of Art Therapists

The British Association of Art Therapists (BAAT) is the professional organisation for art therapists in the United Kingdom and has its own Code of Ethics of Professional Practice.

Telephone: 0207 686 4216

Address: 24-27 White Lion Street, London, N1 9PD

Email: info@baat.org

Website: www.baat.org

Health and Care Professions Council

The HCPC are a regulator, and were set up to protect the public. To do this, they keep a register of health and care professionals who meet their standards for their training, professional skills, behaviour and health.

Telephone: 0845 300 6184

Address: Park House, 184 Kennington Park Road, London, SE11 4BU,

Website: www.hpc-uk.org/

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¹ Royal College of Psychiatrists. *Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)* www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinfoforall/treatments/cbt.aspx [Accessed February 2016]

² National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2008) Computerised cognitive behaviour therapy for depression and anxiety. Review of Technology Appraisal 51. London: National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence.

³ National Health Service. Self Help Therapies [internet] 2016 www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/self-help-therapies.aspx [Accessed February 2016]

⁴ UK Council for Psychotherapy. *Psychodynamic psychotherapy*. www.psychotherapy.org.uk/iqs/dbitemid.644/sfa.view/different_types_of_psychotherapy.html (accessed 06/01/2014)

⁵ Pharoah F, Mari J, Rathbone J, Wong W. Family intervention for schizophrenia. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2010, Issue 12. Art. No.: CD000088. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD000088.pub3

⁶ National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. Antisocial behaviour and conduct disorders in children and young people; recognition, intervention and management 2013.

www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg158/resources/antisocial-behaviour-and-

[conduct-disorders-in-children-and-young-people-recognition-and-management-35109638019781](#) [Accessed February 2016]

⁷ National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. Borderline personality disorder: recognition and management CG78. London: National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence

⁸ West London NHS Trust. *Art Therapy*. www.wlmht.nhs.uk/patients-and-carers/treatments/art-therapy/ [Accessed February 2016]

⁹ The British Association of Dramatherapist. *Dramatherapy*. <https://badth.org.uk/dtherapy> [Accessed February 2016]

¹⁰ National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. Depression in adults: The treatment and management of depression in adults CG90.

<http://publications.nice.org.uk/depression-in-adults-cg90> [Accessed February 2016]

¹¹ As note 10 para 1.9.8.1

¹² National Health Service. *Mindfulness*. www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/pages/mindfulness.aspx [Accessed February 2016]

¹³ National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. Generalised anxiety disorder and panic disorder in adults: management CG113.

www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg113 [Accessed February 2016]

¹⁴ National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. Psychosis and schizophrenia in adults QS80. www.nice.org.uk/guidance/gs80 [Accessed February 2016]

¹⁵ National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. Bipolar disorder: assessment and management CG185. www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg185 [Accessed February 2016]

¹⁶ As note 7

¹⁷ The UK Council for Psychotherapy. *Complaints*. www.psychotherapy.org.uk/complaints [Accessed February 2016]

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Last updated February 2016

Next update February 2019

This factsheet is available
in large print.



Rethink Mental Illness Advice Service

Phone 0300 5000 927

**Monday to Friday, 9:30am to 4pm
(excluding bank holidays)**

Email advice@rethink.org

Did this help?

We'd love to know if this information helped you.

Drop us a line at: feedback@rethink.org

or write to us at Rethink Mental Illness:

RAIS
PO Box 17106
Birmingham B9 9LL

or call us on 0300 5000 927.

We're open 9:30am to 4pm
Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays)



**Leading the way to a better
quality of life for everyone
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 www.rethink.org

Need more help?

Go to www.rethink.org for information on symptoms, treatments, money and benefits and your rights.

Don't have access to the web?

Call us on 0121 522 7007. We are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, and we will send you the information you need in the post.

Need to talk to an adviser?

If you need practical advice, call us on 0300 5000 927 between 9:30am to 4pm, Monday to Friday. Our specialist advisers can help you with queries like how to apply for benefits, get access to care or make a complaint.

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