Course Brochure

Enhanced Evidence-Based Practice (EEBP) for Children and Young People’s Mental Health Practitioners

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# Introduction

The Enhanced Evidence-Based Practice (EEBP) training is tailored to professionals working in Children and Young People’s Mental Health (CYP MH) services. Its primary aim is to augment the professionals’ capabilities in assessment and to support the administration of brief, low-intensity, evidence-based interventions for mild conditions, such as anxiety, depression and behavioural issues. This programme is especially beneficial for staff who have not previously received training centred on the mental health of children and young people. Central to the EEBP training is the fostering of core competencies universally acknowledged as essential, such as working with diversity, championing inclusivity, implementing routine outcome measures and competently addressing self-harm.

# Programme aims

The primary aim of this programme is to enhance outcomes and care experiences for children and young people within the broader mental health framework. This is achieved by training professionals to conduct safe and proficient assessments and to implement brief interventions. The goal is to ensure that all staff members in CYP MH services possess foundational competencies. These competencies will empower them to assess and implement evidence-based treatments for mild conditions, under the guidance of a senior and suitably qualified colleague.

An essential aspect of the programme is the emphasis on conducting comprehensive assessments early on. Recognising and understanding presenting issues at the initial stages, then treating them with evidence-based approaches or directing them to more suitable treatments, will undoubtedly improve outcomes for children and young people. Furthermore, enhancing the skillset of staff not only elevates the quality and efficiency of services but also bolsters staff’s agency within their teams.

This training aligns with the overarching policy objective of equipping a broader and more diverse workforce with the requisite skills and knowledge to pivot care towards prevention and early intervention. The vision is that by diversifying the skills of multidisciplinary teams and prioritising preventative measures and early diagnosis, the strain on specialist services will be reduced. This programme serves both as an entryway to advanced training for aspiring psychological professionals and as a foundation for trainees to collaborate effectively with other psychological professionals in service models that encompass assessment, goal-setting, progress monitoring and outcomes assessment.

By offering a starting point for non-degree trainees, the EEBP course presents a tangible avenue to broaden access to training, particularly for groups currently under-represented in the workforce in relation to the clinical population they serve. The EEBP training aligns with the ambitions of the NHS Long Term Plan and the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan.

# Who is the course for?

**Figure 1.** **The percentage of services where employees have accessed the EEBP training in the North West from January 2014 to March 2023**

The EEBP course is tailored to individuals working within CYP MH services. This includes professionals from the NHS, local authorities, educational institutions and the third sector who have not undergone training in evidence-based therapies. Participants who have enrolled in the course include mental health nurses, learning disability nurses, general nurses, paediatric nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, youth workers, counsellors, and workers from eating disorder units, drug and alcohol services and inpatient services. For a detailed breakdown of the participants by service, please refer to Figure 1.

# The EEBP course

The EEBP course caters to a diverse range of students. Depending on their prior qualifications, students can enrol in the course at either the postgraduate or graduate certificate level. Additionally, for people who may not meet the standard prerequisites but are actively involved in roles addressing the mental health challenges of children and young people, the course can be pursued as part of their continuing professional development.

The EEBP curriculum is structured into three primary units:

* Module 1: Core Skills Module – Core skills for working with children and young people with mental health challenges
* Module 2: Engagement and Assessment – Engagement and assessment skills for working with children and young people with mental health challenges
* Module 3: Evidence-Informed Interventions – Evidence-based interventions for children and young people exhibiting mild presentations of anxiety, depression and behavioural issues.

Designed as a part-time endeavour, the programme spans 1 year and features 15 structured teaching days alongside 10 work-based learning days. A detailed breakdown can be viewed in Table 1. Furthermore, students are mandated to video-record their clinical assessments and interventions, involving at least 2 children or young people experiencing anxiety and/or depression over multiple sessions. To successfully complete the programme, it is necessary for the relevant CYP MH service to ensure that students receive a minimum of 15 hours of case supervision by a clinician with appropriate qualifications.

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| **Structured teaching days** | **Work-based learning days** |
| Introduction to course  | Welcome session, portfolio, treatment models |
| Introduction to supervision, library induction, work-based learning preparation | Participation, engagement and assessment |
| Participation, engagement and collaboration | Risk assessment, using supervision |
| Assessment 1: core skills, information-gathering, risk | Basic diagnostic framework |
| Assessment 2: routine outcome measures (ROMs) analysis, shared understanding | Functional analysis, using routine outcome measures |
| Diagnosis, formulation, introduction to psychoeducation | Evidence-informed interventions |
| Delivering a worry management intervention | Working with anxiety |
| Delivering a behavioural activation intervention  | Working with parents |
| Delivering an exposure intervention | Behavioural activation |
| Bringing it all together | Working with worry |
| Working with parents/carers | Worry, promoting healthy lifestyles |
| Guided self-help and promoting healthy lifestyles | Review of learning, working creatively |
| Review of learning, skills workshop | Presentations (assessment) |
| Positive endings, relapse prevention | Relapse prevention, portfolio, skills |
| Presentations (assessment) | Review of learning, positive endings |

**Table 1. An example of EEBP curriculum teaching day content**

The assessment criteria for the EEBP course are comprehensive. They include a video submission highlighting a thorough risk assessment of a child or young person, a video demonstration of an evidence-based intervention session with a young individual dealing with anxiety or depression, a detailed case presentation, a reflective journal and a professional portfolio.

Informed by a holistic bio-psychosocial philosophy, the course serves as a nexus among diverse professions within a multidisciplinary team.

The transformative effects of the EEBP training are evident through its skills audits before and after the course, which highlight an elevation in trainees’ mental health literacy. This improved comprehension encompasses a deeper understanding of mental health challenges, a knowledge of the methodologies to enhance mental wellbeing, and the confidence to either offer direct aid or guide individuals to appropriate resources. An ancillary benefit is the dissolution of negative stigmas associated with CYP MH.

# The offer

The course is available at no cost to participants, with tuition fees fully funded by NHS England workforce training and education. However, it is the responsibility of the individual services to ensure uninterrupted operation while their candidates attend the training sessions.

# Regional information

**The** **North West Collaborative**

Since its inception in 2014, the North West Collaborative has trained 364 professionals through the EEBP course. A pause was placed on the programme between 2019 and 2021 due to the cessation of central funding. However, in response to its notable success and at the behest of our service partners, the programme was revived in 2021 within the North West region, supported by an alternative funding source. Between 2014 and 2018, the overwhelming demand prompted the North West Collaborative to offer 2 intakes annually. Over the past 2 years, funding has allowed for only 1 intake per annum, although the demand remains high enough to justify doubling this. It is important to note, however, that our current funding mechanism is not sustainable in the long term.

The EEBP course, managed by the North West Collaborative, has been sought after since its launch. Our service partners consistently express high demand for course placements. It is widely perceived as a foundational introduction to evidence-based work with children and young people. Service managers readily acknowledge the programme’s value, citing that graduates become significantly more effective team members, adept at assessments, contributing more to the team, delivering impactful interventions, and redirecting cases to more suitable services when needed.

Furthermore, the EEBP course encourages a culture of focused supervision and case management, fostering the growth of skills and expertise at this tier. A skills audit before and after the course for all participants shows a marked increase in interest, confidence and proficiency, especially concerning engagements with young individuals presenting with depression, anxiety and behavioural issues. It is noteworthy that 27% of trainees have progressed to more advanced training. Impressively, over 70% have not only successfully completed the course but also continue to contribute to CYP MH services. For further details, please see Figure 2.

**Figure 2. The percentage of trainees in different employment after accessing the EEBP course**

Service managers consistently recognise the value of the EEBP course. They point out that it offers both graduates and non-graduates a fresh entry point into the mental health workforce. Furthermore, the course has been instrumental in retaining staff, elevating their job satisfaction and significantly improving the experiences of children and young people who use these services.

The resounding feedback from services is that the EEBP course is indispensable for professionals. Its capability to be offered at various award levels ensures that all professionals in mental health settings working with children and young people have the chance to refine their skills. This has been especially transformative for many who have not pursued higher education, with numerous individuals subsequently advancing to more specialised training, bolstered by their renewed self-assurance.

It is a reality that children and young people with mental health challenges often encounter workers without formal qualifications, especially in third-sector services. We are firmly convinced that granting these workers access to training like the EEBP course will lead to more evidence-based, outcome-driven and cost-effective mental health care delivery.

# Summary

In the realm of mental health, the overarching goal is to pivot care more towards early intervention and prevention, within community settings, while emphasising the vital generalist and core skills required to cater to children and young people with mental health concerns. The EEBP course epitomises this vision.

Aligned with the objectives of the NHS Long Term Plan, the EEBP course augments existing frameworks. It fosters the cultivation of enhanced generalist and core skills, offers both pre- and post-registration development, and paves pathways to professional qualifications, especially for workers without prior professional affiliation. This foundation empowers mental health professionals to pursue higher, more specialized training, tailored to their foundational knowledge.

Training remains a pivotal strategy in introducing new evidence-based practices in CYP MH services. To fulfil the ambitions articulated in the NHS Long Term Plan and to harness the advantages of innovative methodologies, there is an imperative to expand capacity, adapt operational tactics and bridge projected shortfalls while bolstering labour efficiency. Elevating the skillsets of the workforce is crucial. The EEBP course not only enhances core competencies but also provides pathways to advanced training and registration as healthcare professionals. By broadening entry opportunities into CYP MH services and offering efficient educational trajectories, it is possible to improve workforce accessibility and diversification, and facilitate the progression of trainees at the same time. Such a comprehensive approach ensures that educational and training agendas remain seamlessly integrated into operational, strategic, financial and workforce planning.

# Case stories/success stories

“I started the EEBP course in 2014. It literally changed my life. After qualifying as an RMN, I worked in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). I learned how to do thorough assessments, formulations and some evidence-based interventions. I loved it, I really felt I was making a difference to the young people I was working with. It gave me the confidence to apply for and complete the postgraduate diploma in cognitive behavioural therapy. I now supervise people who are on that course. I love my work so much. I really owe all that to EEBP!”
**(CBT Therapist and Supervisor, CAMHS)**

“I am a youth worker and the EEBP course has really helped me understand what is going on for the people I work with. I can do assessments better and am aware of what I can and can’t do. I use measures all the time now too. I am going to apply for the CYWP [children and young people’s wellbeing practitioner] training this year as a few people I work with have gone on to do that and they can work with a larger number of presenting problems than I can.”
**(Youth Worker, North West County Council Youth and Community Service)**

“As a service manager, I have sent numerous staff on the EEBP course. It’s a no brainer! All of them become much more confident, productive, have more agency and many want to go on and do further training. We’ve had lots go on to the cognitive behavioural therapy, interpersonal psychotherapy for depressed adolescents, parenting, children and young people's wellbeing practitioner and educational wellbeing practitioner trainings. All have stayed working in our service or area. I think it’s one of the most powerful and transformative training courses around.”
**(Clinical Services Manager, North West CYP MH)**