

Briefing and FAQs: EMDR national curriculum and NHS-funded training for adult IAPT, adult community mental and specialist perinatal Mental Health Services

Updated: 13/2/2022

Overview

Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR) is a specific psychological therapy recommended by NICE for Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in adults. It focuses on processing and re-evaluating traumatic memories whilst the service user or patient at the same time performs side-to-side eye movements or other forms of stimulation (listening to tones or tapping). The therapy allows a service user to reduce the impact of these distressing memories on their emotional wellbeing.

EMDR is recommended by NICE as one of the evidence-based psychological therapies to treat adults with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), complex PTSD and significant symptoms of PTSD.

The EMDR method itself has a clear set of protocols designed for experienced therapists to add to their practice. Short training programmes has been developed by a variety of organisations to teach these protocols.

The brevity of these training programmes make them an attractive option for services wishing to upskill their existing psychological therapy workforce in a NICE-recommended intervention. In addition, EMDR training is popular with practitioners as a CPD opportunity.

However, the ease and speed of some commercially available EMDR training can be misleading. To successfully train and practice being an EMDR practitioner, two pivotal pre-requisites are required:

1. The individual practitioner must have a demonstrable foundation of experience in providing one-to-one psychotherapy, as well as their initial qualification in mental health. This is so the practitioner has a strong psychotherapeutic skill set to build upon with the EMDR method. EMDR training does not train people to be

therapists, it trains people in the specific EMDR method to integrate into their existing therapy practice.

2. The individual practitioner must be working within a team where they can regularly provide a substantial amount of EMDR therapy and be professionally supervised and supported by a recognised EMDR practitioner with extensive experience. This is to ensure the effectiveness of EMDR within teams and services with vulnerable and traumatised patients. Many trained in EMDR never go on to practice at all, and even fewer complete a recognised EMDR accreditation, partly because of short supply of recognised supervisors.

In practice, these requirements can be difficult to evidence and achieve, but they are fundamental for patient safety and the efficacy of the EMDR intervention.

To support the expansion of mental health delivery in response to the NHS Long Term Plan, NHS England (NHSE) aims to ensure a suitable level of availability of NHS EMDR practitioners. Health Education England (HEE) has also collaborated with partners to deliver a new and comprehensive NHS EMDR training programme.

As a result, a new national [NHS EMDR curriculum](#), aligned with the [EMDR competence framework](#), has been developed by a clinically led-multidisciplinary working group with input from EMDR and other clinical experts. It ensures EMDR practitioners will be trained to the highest standards and complete a period of practice under specialist supervision to deliver as recommended by NICE and achieve full accreditation in the approach.

HEE expects to procure one or more education providers with the ability to deliver the new 24-month NHS-funded EMDR training programme starting in 2023. This programme will be for aspiring NHS EMDR practitioners working across NHS adult IAPT, adult community mental health services and specialist perinatal mental health services¹.

To provide stakeholders and partners with further clarity about the new NHS-funded EMDR training programme and curriculum requirements, we have produced a set of frequently asked questions (FAQs) in this document. We will aim to keep these FAQs updated on the [HEE IAPT webpage](#).

If you have any further questions, contact mentalhealth@hee.nhs.uk.

¹ Comprising specialist perinatal mental health services, including Mother and Baby Units, community perinatal mental health teams and maternal mental health services

FAQS:

1. What is the new NHS EMDR national curriculum?

The new [NHS EMDR National Curriculum](#) is a new integrated training providing all the EMDR training content and specialist supervision required to achieve EMDR practitioner accreditation with EMDR Europe. It can be viewed on the [HEE IAPT webpage](#).

2. Who should be put forward for the new EMDR national curriculum training?

People should be selected for the training who meet all the following criteria:

1. Work in one of the eligible services (IAPT, adult community mental health, or specialist perinatal mental health services).
2. Have one of the recognised registrations for entry.
3. Will be released from other duties to deliver a significant amount of EMDR provision during and after training (a minimum of 0.4 wte EMDR delivery. Any less is not a good return on investment).
4. Are employed in a service where they will have access to at least 25 cases for EMDR treatment over 24 months, which will allow the trainee to achieve full EMDR Europe accreditation standard by the end of the training.

The full entry criteria for the new training pathway are listed in the NHS EMDR national curriculum. Therapists with an interest in and job plans which would allow continuing beyond practitioner accreditation to become EMDR supervisors should be considered for prioritisation into this training, to support future delivery.

3. How is this different to existing EMDR training?

The main differences from other commercially available EMDR training courses are:

1. The entry requirements for this new programme have been defined to operationalise in a transparent way the need for practitioners training in EMDR to have training and extensive experience in 1:1 psychological therapy. Potential applicants must therefore already be registered with one of the psychological therapy registers listed below:
 - o HCPC registered Clinical, Counselling, Educational or Forensic Psychologist
 - o BABCP Accredited CBT Therapist
 - o GMC registered medical psychotherapist having completed higher specialist training in psychotherapy
 - o British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) Accredited

- o United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) Registered as a Psychotherapist or Psychotherapeutic Counsellor
 - o Association of Christian Counsellors Accreditation
 - o National Counselling Society Accredited Professional registrant
 - o British Psychoanalytic Council Registered.
2. The learning content in this new programme focuses exclusively on EMDR as recommended by NICE guidance (for PTSD, complex PTSD and significant symptoms of PTSD), and does not extend beyond this.
 3. Successful completion of this new programme requires a more formal assessment of competence based on video recordings of practice.
 4. The new NHS-funded EMDR training programme spans 24 months, which incorporates the traditional training days across a period of 6 months, coupled with an additional 18 months of formal supervision.

4. Why has the new NHS EMDR training been designed this way?

The new NHS EMDR training programme will not only provide the best return on investment for EMDR practitioners and education providers, but it will also enhance sustainability, and create an environment to support the next generation of EMDR supervisors.

There are various unique features in the new training programme, which include:

- 1) Clearer eligibility entry requirements:
 - a) Previously mental health professionals such as nurses, social workers and allied health professionals working in mental health facing roles were eligible for NHS-funded EMDR training if they had training in and significant experience in delivering one to one psychotherapy, with this being assessed by each commercial EMDR training in isolation.
 - b) In practice, this was difficult to quantify and evidence reliably and was often based on testimony from a line manager, who may themselves not have fully appreciated the underpinning knowledge required on which to base the EMDR method.
 - c) The safest and most reliable way to evidence this for entry to the new training programme was the registration and/or accreditation with a recognised psychological therapy body or association in the UK. Many nurses, social workers and allied health professionals are registered with these bodies, and those with significant training and experience in psychological therapy will be able to register with one.

- 2) Alignment to NICE Guidance:
 - a) The new NHS-funded EMDR training programme ensures close adherence to NICE, which does not recommend EMDR for conditions other than where the PTSD symptoms are the primary problem.

- 3) Formal assessment of competence:
 - a) The assessment during the new NHS-funded EMDR training programme has been brought into line with other NHS commissioned psychological therapies training programmes and is designed to ensure specific competence in the method – through expert ratings of live or recorded observation of practice, using a recognised competence scale.

- 4) Integrated supervision period:
 - a) This new NHS-funded EMDR training programme does not assume practitioners will be able to organise and develop their own supervision networks and the opportunity for practice.
 - b) It is appreciated this ongoing support and supervision is not a ‘nice to have’ but a fundamental requirement for achieving competence in EMDR, and so it has been incorporated into the training.
 - c) In this way, this programme ensures developing practitioners are supported to consolidate and develop their practice.

5) Why are only mental health professionals with professional training and experience in delivering psychological therapy able to apply for this EMDR training?

The NHS EMDR training programme has been designed to align with the [EMDR competence framework](#). It is not intended to provide the core professional competences or generic therapeutic competences within this framework.

These are required as a pre-requisite to joining the training, which focuses on delivering the specific EMDR intervention competences. The qualification requirements for entry are the chosen markers of having achieved these competences for entry to the programme.

5. I’m already a current EMDR practitioner, what does this mean for me?

If you are currently providing safe and competent EMDR therapy to your patients, you should continue to deliver this.

In time, if you are providing EMDR to NHS patients (either because you work formally for the NHS, or because you’re providing an NHS commissioned service) you may be asked by your service to evidence how your knowledge, skills, and experience are aligned and consistent with a specified standard of practice and qualification.

6. I would like to train in EMDR, but I am not registered with one of the professional bodies on the eligibility list, what does this mean for me?

You may be able to register with one of the listed professional bodies, depending on your qualifications and experience. You would then be eligible to apply for the NHS EMDR training, if your service supports this.

7. I am a manager in an NHS team or service, and I want our service/team to offer EMDR, what does this mean for me?

NHS services funded to take up the new NHS EMDR training programme are:

- adult community mental health teams
- IAPT services
- perinatal mental health specialist teams

Managers from these teams can identify appropriate individuals within the team to put forward for EMDR training based on:

- their wish to employ EMDR as part of their practice
- work in a role where they could in future provide EMDR supervision to others
- meet the psychological therapies registration requirements for entry
- an identified and significant portion of their role (0.4 WTE or greater) will be focused on delivering EMDR
- an appropriate locally based professional supervisor to ensure safe practice in the team during their 24-month training (the training course will provide specialist EMDR supervision), and access to at least 25 cases across two years which they can provide EMDR to during their programme.
- The capacity to release them for the required learning across two years.

If and when these requirements are all in place, you can agree to apply for them to apply for training.

8. I don't meet the criteria you outline. Can I get my NHS organisation to fund me or self-fund on a commercially available short EMDR course?

Completing the new NHS-funded EMDR training programme is considered the best practice option for NHS practice. However, both NHS England and HEE appreciate and understand other EMDR courses are available and have their place.

Further clinical governance guidance will be provided in due course by the NHS England national IAPT, adult and community mental health and specialist perinatal mental health teams on the required criteria for EMDR practice for those undertaking commercially available EMDR courses in these pathways.

9. Why isn't there a greater capacity for training places?

The new NHS-Funded EMDR training programme focuses on quality and the development of practitioners who become EMDR UK Accredited Practitioners, therefore enhancing sustainability and creating a pipeline of future EMDR supervisors. The scale of the programme is limited by the availability of the specialist EMDR supervision from EMDR Consultants provided as part of the programme.

Completing the NHS-funded EMDR training programme is considered the best practice option for services wishing to train specialists who will become future EMDR supervisors. Other EMDR UK accredited EMDR courses remain available and provide an alternate first step on the route to practice, although the post-training supervision capacity should be reviewed carefully to ensure this is available within the service, before staff access these courses.

In addition, there is now [national clinical governance guidance](#) available on the Future NHS platform highlighting required criteria for EMDR practice for those undertaking other EMDR courses. These should be read carefully before commissioning or embarking on other EMDR training courses, to ensure the person undertaking the training will be able to practice on completion.

10. Why are therapists with an interest in becoming EMDR supervisors being prioritised?

To allow safe and effective wider access to EMDR in the future, we will need more people able to supervise therapists delivering EMDR. Developing more accredited EMDR practitioners with EMDR Europe will support this.

11. Why is access to the new NHS-funded EMDR training programme not being extended to other services, like children's and young people's teams?

This new learning is being targeted at those teams and services most ready to provide evidence-based NICE recommended treatments to their patients. This means the NHS will have a strong and sustainable foundation of practitioners and the next generation of supervisors to promote the delivery of EMDR.

Expansion of access to EMDR therapies to include other patient groups and services will be based on NICE guidance and the review of the outcomes and implementation of this new programme.

12. What will be the governance arrangements for practitioners who have undertaken different EMDR training and will complete the new NHS-funded EMDR training?

People who have undertaken other EMDR training will continue to practice under existing clinical and professional governance arrangements.

NHS England aim to publish implementation guidance for EMDR in IAPT, adult community mental health and specialist perinatal mental health services in due course. This guidance will cover existing practitioners, those undertaking the new NHS EMDR training, and those undertaking commercial EMDR training.

13. If I complete this new NHS-funded EMDR training programme, does this mean I will not be eligible for further NHS-funded psychological professions training for two years after the training as per the new funded training policy?

The new NHS EMDR training is an 'upskilling' training. It does not enable a change of occupation. The two-year funding policy applies to any second 'upskilling' NHS-funded psychological training.

For example, a clinical psychologist may undertake an upskilling training in Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) but would not be eligible for a second NHS-funded upskilling training (for example, EMDR) until the two-year period has passed from the expected completion date of the first 'upskilling' training (DBT). To find out more, visit [HEE's psychological professions funding webpage](#).