

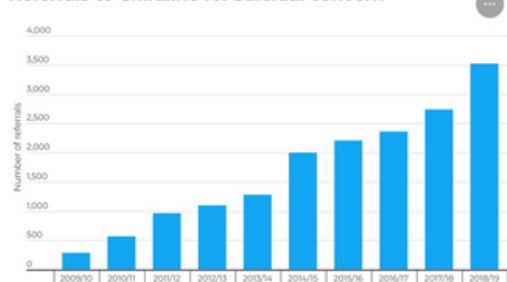
DBT in Denbighshire Schools | Denbighshire County Council

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Background:

Suicide is a leading cause of death for young people and until the emergence of an adapted DBT protocol for this group there has been no evidence-based intervention to address their problems.

Referrals to Childline for suicidal concern



Objectives:

- Research established evidence-based DBT Skills Training Group programmes in Ireland / USA / Canada. We wanted an evidence-based model aimed at CYP at risk of self-injury and/or suicide
- Implement a DBT pilot project in 2018 with assistance from Bangor University and the Churchill Fellowship. DBT delivered as part of the statutory School-Based Counselling service provision.

Methodology:

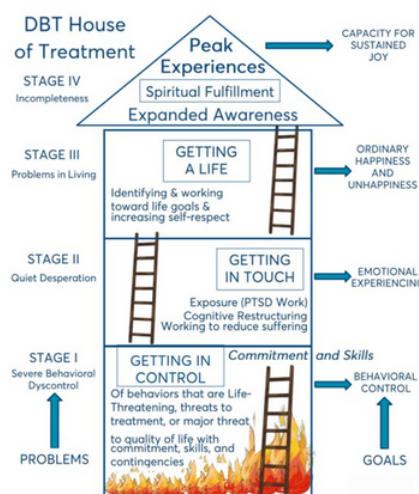
- Research evidence demonstrating effectiveness of specific DBT interventions in clinical practice
- Undertake a specific exploration of adaptations of DBT for children and adolescents
- Understand how programmes have flourished in non-clinical settings and especially in school communities
- Visit and experience successful programmes by visiting relevant centres of excellence
- Meet with developers and practitioners to gain an insight into the challenges encountered and the adaptations they have made
- Develop professional relationships that facilitate detailed discussion and will be valuable in developing interventions in the UK

Case Study:

- Female, 15 years old. Year 10 at mainstream school.
- Emotion dysregulation. Lack of trust and dissociation. Ongoing Self-injury and suicide attempts.
- Experienced/witnessed domestic violence in childhood (father towards mother).
- Feeling anxious, not trusting others, becoming withdrawn and at times dissociated. Possible signs of potential PTSD re. her belief – ‘world is dangerous – I am not competent to deal with it’
- Signs of improvement in the way that she appeared less distant during skills groups and in 1:1 sessions. She reduced self-harm and suicidal thoughts since the beginning of the program.
- Building a Life Worth Living’ Goal. Finding motivation re goal directed behaviours to engage at school – wanting to achieve autonomy / independence as an adult

Implementation:

- Young people make a commitment to attend a DBT Skills Group for 2.5 hrs. a week over one academic year. Skills groups run at 2 mainstream and one special (ASD) school
- Young people learn skills from the 5 modules: Core Mindfulness, Interpersonal Effectiveness Distress Tolerance, Emotion Regulation, Middle Path (Dialectics)
- Individual weekly psychotherapy informed by the young persons DBT Diary Card (full programme)
- Weekly therapist consultation team
- Focused skills application by phone coaching
- Families can be supported to understand and support their adolescent children



Stage I

Obtain behavioural control for clients experiencing life-threatening symptoms such as suicidal thinking, suicidal behaviour and self-injury.

Stage II

Experience emotions and decrease avoidance.

Stages III & IV

Solving ordinary life problems and addressing feelings of incompleteness, develop a sense of meaning and connection within the world they live in.

Impact:

Young people CORE Average score at DBT Pre-Treatment April 2024 = 22.7/40

Average score on DBT group completion February 2025 = 15.1/40

This represents an average percentage reduction of over 33% for the whole group of 9 young people.

