

## Report for FPSA

Name: Naomi Cooley MBACP  
Position: CAMHS Mental Health Practitioner

Course: University Advanced Diploma in Cognitive Behavioural Skills and Studies  
(Not a Licence to Practice)

Provider: University of Derby

Duration: 1 year part time

Completed: August 2017

I would like to thank FPSA for their generous funding, without which I could not have undertaken this training.

### Course overview

The University of Derby markets this Level 6 Advanced Diploma as an entry level course aimed at multi-disciplinary practitioners looking to apply current and up to date, evidence based, theoretical approaches and practical skills informed by CB theory. My intake of students included RMNs and RGNs, dentists, counsellors, and support workers, who, like myself, were looking to incorporate CB theory into their existing practice. Other individuals had taken the course to qualify for entry onto post-graduate CBT/High Intensity IAPT practitioner training. Students could take the diploma as a whole, or sign up for one-off modules.

The tri-modular diploma was taught online. Each module was led by a tutor, who offered online support via email and webinars. The modules were made up of 10 weekly units, comprised of teaching materials, individual and group activities, and further reading and research suggestions. There was a requirement to upload work onto personal blogs, and students were also encouraged to share ideas and thoughts via the tutor-moderated discussion boards. Formative and Summative assessment took place through the submission of written assignments.

### Modules

Module 1 was entitled Contemporary Approaches within Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. It focused on two third-wave CB theories; Compassion Focused Therapy and Mindfulness. As well as the online units and activities, students were also required to work in groups to produce a 10 minute video that highlighted CB skills from the perspective of either CFT or Mindfulness. Some groups chose to meet online via video conferencing technology, others, like my group, met in person to film. Summative assessment required a critical analysis of one of the approaches, as well as a critical evaluation of how we integrated the theory into our video submission.

The practitioner-client relationship formed the focus of Module 2: Relationships Informed by Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. The units looked at the theories, processes, and contexts of such relationships, as well as the practitioner and client variables that can influence them. Later units also considered how to develop and maintain the therapeutic alliance, as well as how to repair possible ruptures. Critical analysis of a video of a CB practitioner in session formed the first half of the summative assessment. The second half comprised a critical evaluation of our own practice.

The third module, Working with People with Distress and Disorder, considered the historical, political, social and cultural ways people have tried to make sense of psychological distress and disorder. Units examined the history of mental health stigma, as well as contemporary issues. Cause, diagnosis, treatment (including CBT), and recovery, were considered in depth, as well as risk management, referral and advocacy. For summative assessment, students were required to produce an information resource on a mental health disorder, which they then had to critically evaluate.

### My experience

The course has given me a wider understanding of historical and contemporary mental health issues, within which to ground my work. I use insights gained from studying CFT and Mindfulness in my practice, particularly about the impact of shame and guilt, and how visualisations, meditative breathing, and relaxation techniques can aid recovery. One recommendation I made to course leaders was for Module 2 to be taught first, as some students reported feeling overwhelmed studying CFT and Mindfulness in relation to CBT, when they were completely new to CB theory. Having completed the course, I am now considering applying for post-graduate CBT/High Intensity IAPT practitioner training, which beforehand I would not be able to do.