

Guidance for managers and MBCT teachers and MBI Practitioners in interpreting the national good practice guidelines for teaching mindfulness-based courses and on clarifying Trust governance for the delivery of MBIs and MBCT.

Context

MBCT teachers and MBI Practitioners Mindfulness teachers approved by the Trust to run Mindfulness-based Interventions must meet the Trust's governance requirements for doing so. This includes meeting the national Good Practice Guidelines (GPG) plus Sussex Partnership's own additional criteria. These can both be found here:

<http://sussexmindfulnesscentre.nhs.uk/practice-and-governance/mindfulness-governance/>.

The GPGs state that teachers must participate in

'annual residential teacher-led mindfulness meditation retreats' and that in relation to CPD, they must commit to develop as mindfulness teachers by engaging in 'further training, keeping up to date with the evidence base, recording and reflecting on teaching sessions, participation in web forums etc'. National FAQs explaining these points can be found here:

<http://sussexmindfulnesscentre.nhs.uk/practice-and-governance/mindfulness-governance/>.

However, additional guidance is given below when translating this into our local Sussex Partnership context.

Retreat

The FAQs for GPGs state: "In ideal circumstances, a retreat would be a minimum of five consecutive days to give teachers an opportunity to experience the kinds of processes that might arise for their participants. Where personal situations require it, this may be separated into shorter periods."

The mindfulness literature repeatedly states that one of the key mechanisms for effective teaching is the teacher's own embodiment of their own mindfulness practice. Periodic retreats are essential for deepening a teacher's own practice, and the experience of an extended meditation time is particularly necessary for teachers who might lead 'all days' or day retreats which are part of some courses. However, the Trust is unlikely to be able to provide either work time or money to support retreats.

Teacher-led retreats are available at various centres across the country, including some in various locations in Sussex, London and at other centres in the south of England. Retreats are available for anything from one day upwards. Many advertised retreats are either for a weekend or for between 5 and 10 days. Costs vary between retreats that are entirely free and ask for any donation that a person can contribute, up to retreats that cost about £700 for a week.

To be aligned with the national guidance, we recommend that MBCT teachers ideally attend approximately five days of annual retreat. This would preferably be in one residential block as this allows for an extended deepening; however, where personal circumstances do not permit this, an alternative may be to attend two weekends or a series of day retreats. Where all other options are unavailable to someone, it would even be possible to conduct a day retreat at home using guidance from experienced teachers who can be widely accessed via CDs or online. The principles are that mindfulness teachers take time to deepen their practice in time that is specifically set aside for this purpose and is not just an activity that would be done anyway but is conducted mindfully. Teachers should give themselves an opportunity to remain connected to a practice that continues to feel alive and developing in themselves. Teachers should be willing to make a commitment to their practice that goes at least beyond what they are asking the participants in their own groups to do.

## CPD

There is no universal rule on CPD time entitlement within Sussex Partnership. However the Trust is committed to supporting the CPD requirements for staff to maintain accreditations and develop and maintain competences required to do their jobs effectively. This includes maintaining the primary accreditation in the core mental health profession of staff, as well as any secondary accreditations or competences that are required in their role. For example, in many cases this means a total of 4-6 days of attendance at CPD events per year for psychologists and psychological therapists, with other CPD activity taking place in the work place e.g. through reading, teaching, writing, etc. Access to CPD events within these principles is a matter for local agreement with managers and clinical leads.

The Sussex Mindfulness Centre (SMC) now has a fairly extensive programme of master classes and conferences (see <http://sussexmindfulnesscentre.nhs.uk/events/> and these are currently being offered free to Trust-approved MBCT teachers and MBI Practitioners, so the expectation would be that teachers would attend at least some of these events annually. Mindfulness events elsewhere are unlikely to be funded, and should not be funded when an equivalent event can be offered by SMC.

The FAQs for the national Good Practice Guidelines state that 'teachers are advised to engage in a minimum of 30 hours of mindfulness CPD per year to keep abreast of the evolution of mindfulness teaching and to uphold agreed standards'. Guidance is given as to the kind of elements that would need to form part of the CPD. Some of this would include attendance at training days, and other elements such as keeping up with the evidence base and recording and reflecting on teaching sessions can be done in the workplace, alone or with guidance from supervisors or other mentors.

Our recommendation is that newly trained and 'Trust-approved' MBCT teachers would be expected to have more CPD than more experienced teachers. It would seem reasonable to expect newly trained and approved teachers (i.e. in the first 3 years) to undertake about 4 or 5 days of Mindfulness CPD per year, with more experienced teachers undertaking more like 2 to 3 days. However, this is only a rough guide and will depend on the particular development needs of individual teachers and their training and development context more broadly (e.g. the demands of their other accreditations and any other current training). MBI Practitioners or MBCT teachers who are doing very little teaching could be expected to have less CPD – 1 day per year may be reasonable for this group.

The total CPD should comprise at least 1 day of face to face training such as a SMC master class. Other days could be made up through reading, listening to podcasts or online material, writing material for mindfulness journals, newsletters or internal documents, preparing and delivering new material for teaching, presentations or conferences, attending regional mindfulness gatherings or special interest groups, attending mindfulness business meetings, or accessing mindfulness-informed mentoring (separate from supervision). The chosen CPD should meet an identified learning need.

The Mindfulness-based interventions Practice Network  
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