



Deputy Liam Quaide,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

27th May 2025

PQ Number: 24832/25

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health the current status and recent developments in the public provision of dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) services across Ireland, including any expansion of DBT teams, training initiatives, data on the availability of individual and group therapy, and support for families and carers over the past year; and if she will make a statement on the matter. -Liam Quaide

Dear Deputy Quaide,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) is an evidence based intervention for individuals with severe difficulties with emotion and behaviour regulation. Individuals who avail of DBT often present with suicidal and/or self harm behaviour. They may have been given a diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder or Emotionally Unstable Personality Disorder within secondary care mental health services. Many randomised controlled trials have repeatedly demonstrated the efficacy of DBT, both from a client outcome perspective as well as from a service utilisation perspective.

DBT is a team treatment which has 5 modalities.

1. **Group Skills Training Sessions** focuses on teaching clients mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotion regulation and interpersonal effectiveness skills. Skills training is similar to a class and is delivered by two clinicians, for 2.5 hours weekly.
2. **Individual Therapy Sessions** occur on a weekly basis to motivate and build commitment with the clients, to teach cognitive and behavioural skills to reduce self-harm and target behaviours.
3. **Between session consultation (also known as phone coaching)** telephone contact with the individual therapist is available between individual therapy sessions, to coach clients to generalise the skills being learned into their everyday lives. This is offered subject to the therapist's own personal limits and availability.
4. **Consultation meeting for clinicians:** this is a formal weekly meeting of the entire DBT team which supports therapists in delivering DBT consistent with the principles of the model.
5. **Environmental intervention:** supporting the client's family, caregivers, and/or professional supports to understand and interact more effectively with the client and enhance their progress. This varies by programme, but may include the Family Connections 12-session group programme for family caregivers.



In addition to comprehensive DBT programmes involving all five modes of treatment, the group skills training component can also be delivered as a standalone intervention with service users who present with moderate difficulties with emotion dysregulation but do not present with behavioural dysregulation such as self-harm or suicidal behaviours, which would require comprehensive DBT. DBT skills-only interventions typically involve the service user attending weekly group skills training delivered by members of the DBT consultation team, without concurrent DBT individual therapy or telephone coaching.

The following is a breakdown of DBT teams running comprehensive DBT (all five modalities) and DBT Group Skills training programmes in each CHO area. This includes DBT programmes in Adult Mental Health (AMH) settings, as well as Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS) settings

CHO 1: Four teams offering comprehensive DBT (Donegal AMH, Donegal CAMHS, Sligo/Leitrim AMH & Cavan/Monaghan AMH).

CHO 2: 5 Teams offering comprehensive DBT (East Galway AMH, Galway University Hospital AMH, Roscommon AMH, Connaught CAMHS, Mayo AMH)

CHO 3: 2 teams offering comprehensive DBT (Clare AMH, Limerick AMH)

CHO 4: 8 teams offering comprehensive DBT (Cork County AMH covering North Cork and West Cork, North Lee AMH, South Lee AMH, North Kerry AMH, South Kerry AMH, North Cork CAMHS, North Lee CAMHS, South Lee/West Cork CAMHS) and one team offering DBT group skills training only. (Kerry CAMHS). The teams working in the adult services in North Lee, South Lee, North Kerry and South Kerry offer Group Skills training programmes also.

CHO 5: 1 team offering comprehensive DBT (Waterford AMH)

CHO 6: 2 teams offering comprehensive DBT (Lucena Clinic, SJOG). A Group Skills training programme is also offered.

CHO 7: 3 teams offered offering comprehensive DBT (Linn Dara CAMHS, Dublin South Central AMH, North Kildare AMH) one team has paused their programme since January 2025 (mid Kildare AMH)

CHO 8: 6 teams offering comprehensive DBT (Meath CAMHS, Longford/Westmeath CAMHS, Louth CAMHS, Athlone AMH, Mullingar AMH, Westmeath AMH), an additional 2 teams paused their programmes mid 2024 (Louth AMH, Meath AMH)

CHO 9: 1 team offering comprehensive DBT (Evolve Team, North Dublin AMH) and 1 team paused prior to 2024 (Swords/Balbriggan AMH). The Evolve team also offers a Group Skills training programme.

In total, 32 teams run comprehensive DBT programmes. One team offers a Group Skills training programme only. Four teams have paused due to staffing issues.

A DBT programme is also running in the Central Mental Hospital and an adapted DBT programme for individuals with an intellectual disability is also running in the Brothers of Charity Service (Western Region).



New Comprehensive DBT programmes began running in Clare and Limerick in 2024.

Two teams from the addiction services in North Dublin (one adult and one CAMHS team) also trained in 2024 but are not yet operational.

Training:

The below is an overview of each of the core DBT training modules offered by the HSE DBT Training Team, as well as numbers of staff who have participated in each module in 2024 and to date in 2025. The training team can train to capacity but only those staff who are released by line management and who are willing to undertake the training with a commitment to providing the intervention.

Module 1: Introduction to DBT

This one day introductory session outlines the core principles and features of DBT and reviews the evidence for DBT's effectiveness in treating problems such as deliberate self-harm, suicidal behaviour, severe emotional dysregulation and borderline personality disorder/emotionally unstable personality disorder.

Clinicians trained in Module 1 in 2024 & to date in 2025.

2024	2025
61	20

Module 2: Applying Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) Principles in Healthcare

This one day session covers how to better understand the experience of someone with severe emotion dysregulation using DBT principles of acceptance, change, and dialectics. How to effectively support someone who is in emotional crisis in routine clinical practice. And how to optimise the effectiveness of clinical engagement with clients with severe emotional dysregulation in the attendee's current role.

Clinicians trained in Module 2 in 2024 & to date in 2025.

2024	2025
64	19

Module 3: Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) Group Skills Training

This four day training provides a thorough grounding in the delivery of DBT skills, which will enable therapists to offer DBT group skills training as part of a comprehensive DBT programme, or as a stand-alone intervention in a service. It builds on modules 1 & 2 of DBT training, with an in-depth focus on teaching the skills contained in each of the core skills domains (mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotional regulation, interpersonal effectiveness and middle path) and how to lead/co-lead an adherent skills training group. A blend of didactic and experiential learning is offered.



Clinicians trained in Module 3 in 2024 & to date in 2025.

<i>2024</i>	<i>2025</i>
104	31

Module 4: Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) Individual Therapy Training

This four day training is intended to provide a thorough grounding in the theory and practice of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT), which will enable therapists to offer individual therapy as a member of a DBT team. It will build on modules 1, 2, and 3 of DBT training, with a focus on the structure, strategies and functions involved in DBT individual therapy, and skills generalisation strategies (telephone coaching).

Clinicians trained in Module 4 in 2024 & to date in 2025.

<i>2024</i>	<i>2025</i>
64	15

Clinician Connections

Clinician Connections' (CC) has been offered as a one day workshop for clinicians who routinely work with clients who present with severe emotion dysregulation. It is derived from Family Connections (FC; Fruzzetti & Hoffman, 2004), which is described below. Specifically, CC includes the following modules: understanding emotion dysregulation; relationship mindfulness; validation skills; and problem management skills. All modules were adapted so that the focus was on the treatment system. The clinicians delivering the programme are FC leaders and trainers.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Training</i>
<i>10th February 2025</i>	<i>One day training with staff who offer residential placements to young adults, many of whom experience emotion dysregulation.</i>

First Responder Connections

A version of Clinician Connections (CC) was adapted for First Responders. This one day workshop was first run with members of An Garda Síochana in 2022. It aims to support Gardaí in understanding emotion and behaviour dysregulation. This one day workshop was offered to An Garda Síochana in August 2024 and again in February 2025.

Early intervention/ Collaboration with Psychological Counsellors in Higher Education in Ireland (PCHEI)

In recognition of the prevalence of emotion dysregulation difficulties among students in higher education in Ireland, the HSE DBT Training Team has been collaborating with PCHEI throughout 2024 and 2025 by training psychological counsellors in third level institutions in Ireland to deliver abbreviated DBT skills training programmes (with a focus on emotion regulation).



	Part 1: Introductory 2 day training (online)	Part 2: Three day DBT Group Skills training (in person)
Psychological Counsellors in Third Level Institutions in Munster	June 2024	September 2024
Psychological Counsellors in Third Level Institutions in Leinster	October 2024	January 2025
Psychological Counsellors in Third Level Institutions in Connaught/Ulster	May 2025	Scheduled for June 2025

Orientation to DBT workshops

These three hour presentations provided an overview of what DBT is, outcomes related to its delivery, and issues related to effective implementation of DBT in both Adult Mental Health and CAMHS teams.

This workshop is available to interested clinicians employed as mental health professionals, other frontline healthcare workers, service managers, administrators, general practitioners, and students in mental health settings.

Three hundred and one people attended these workshops held in October 2024 and February 2025.

Quality Assurance/Supervision/Fidelity

DBT Teams across the HSE have availed of expert supervision since 2014 which supports teams to enhance their motivation to continue delivering DBT as well as providing technical guidance to allow DBT therapists to work towards and maintain adherence.

Expert supervision is currently provided to 31 teams in Ireland. Some teams receive this supervision on a fortnightly basis while others prefer to receive this consultation monthly. This supervision and model fidelity input has been further augmented by training focussed on orientation to specific feedback domains within individual therapy sessions, as well as review and discussion of simulated session recordings and how the DBT session feedback form can be used to enhance effectiveness of individual therapy sessions. In 2024 and in 2025 to date, seven two hour DBT fidelity workshops have been run. These have been open to all clinicians offering DBT individual therapy on DBT teams across the HSE.



Family Connections

The challenges facing family members and significant others of individuals with severe emotion dysregulation, are often of such a magnitude that they can, over time, deplete a person's capacity to cope effectively. Family Connections (FC) is a DBT-informed 12-week group for adult family members/ significant others of a person with severe emotion dysregulation. It is held for 2 hours a week for 12 weeks. All group participants are over 18 years. In each session, participants will have the opportunity to increase their understanding and consider new skills to cope more effectively in response to their loved one's dysregulation. The skills are discussed and practiced in the session. This programme is facilitated by two trained FC Leaders, who may be mental health clinicians and/or family members.

Family Connections Leader Training is a 3 day course which is typically offered once per year. Mental health professionals can train to be FC Leaders and family members who have completed their own FC course can also train to lead an FC programme. Family Connections Leaders do not have to be DBT trained therapists.

Family Connections runs in counties Donegal (AMH & CAMHS, Sligo/Leitrim AMH & CAMHS, Galway/Roscommon AMH & CAMHS, Cork AMH & CAMHS, Kerry AMH, Dublin AMH & CAMHS, Kildare CAMHS, Mayo CAMHS and Limerick CAMHS).

In 2024, 46 new therapists & 1 family member trained to be FC Leaders. These FC leaders are based in Dublin, Kildare, Cork, Mayo, Galway, Sligo/Leitrim, Longford/Westmeath.

In 2025, 55 new therapists and 3 family members trained to be FC leaders. These FC Leaders are based in Sligo/Leitrim, Longform/Westmeath, Donegal, Dublin, Galway, Mayo, Limerick, Tipperary, Cork Kerry, Kildare.

FC Alumni Group

In recognition of the importance of supporting families with skills generalisation, a National FC Alumni Drop-in Forum was established on 16th December 2024. A further alumni forum

session was held on 24th March. Quarterly sessions are planned going forward. Any family member/loved one who has completed FC is welcome to attend these sessions. FC leaders are also welcome. The purpose of these sessions is to select a topic from FC and revise the content, as well as including supplementary information to further support learning and skills generalisation.

I trust this information is of assistance to you

Yours Sincerely,

Paul Braham
Senior Operations Manager (Area DON)
Access and Integration; HSE Mental Health Services