

**Wales Mental Health in Primary Care  
(WaMH in PC)  
Bursary Bid 2008**

**Cardiff & Vale NHS Trust  
Primary Care Mental Health Liaison  
Service**

**The Stress Control Course**

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*The Service will make its' application for a WaHM in PC bursary under  
Category 5 - Promoting Mental Health & Wellbeing.*

**Eligibility under Category 5**

We believe that the development of the Stress Control Course in Cardiff & the Vale has helped & continues to promote mental health and general wellbeing to the people of Wales.

The course material has a strong evidence base & the emphasis is on the importance of both mental & physical health, which reflects the values stated in Designed for Life (2005). The course is facilitated primarily by the NHS but can only function because of our partners in the voluntary sector, business community & local authority educational institutions, links which we intend to strengthen in the future. The course is easy to access & it supports recovery, empowerment, self-management & maintenance of mental & physical health & well-being. Students are encouraged to bring carers, friends, family members, colleagues or contacts along to participate in the course or recommend the course to them in line with the principles of good practice as stated in the Welsh Declaration for Mental Health & Wellbeing.

## Bursary application

With access to increased funding the intention is to train more people to deliver the course more frequently & in a greater range of locations. The plan is to involve CMHT staff in order to provide the service for the general population in each locality of Cardiff & the Vale.

Funding from WaHM in PC is being sought for equipment & training to support the expansion of the Stress Control Course. Display boards would aid promotion of the course at community events and would improve help raise awareness of the course. Venue costs are negotiated to keep them to a minimum, but there will be costs incurred in offering a course on Saturdays that will allow access to people who work during the week. Having access to books from the Book Prescription Scheme will allow course facilitators to direct students to further material that may consolidate the skills & knowledge learned during the course.

If this WaHM in PC Bursary application is successful, the monies will be used to purchase the following:

- Nobo Flexion portable projector screen (800mm foldaway) x2
- Laptop x1
- Projector x1
- CD player x1
- Extension lead x1
- Set of bibliotherapy books x2
- Display boards to promote course at events
- 2 day "Training for Trainers" @ Cardiff University (12 participants)
- Venue costs for Saturday course

## The Stress Control Course to date

The Stress Control Course has been running successfully in its current format at adult education & community centres in the West of Cardiff for the past 5 years. The course is free of charge; it is a 6 session course with each session lasting 2 hours. The course provides open access (via self referral) to group CBT at primary care level, as recommended in the NICE guidelines for anxiety & depression (2004) & in line with IAPT (2006). The course has been designed to help people learn to control their stress better by using specific CBT techniques taught on the course. Participants on the course are referred to as “students.” Current course facilitators are from Cardiff & Vale NHS Trust or from the voluntary sector. They are all experienced in working with people with mental health issues. Each week, students are given course materials in the form of a handbook. Homework is set between sessions. The 6 sessions are structured as follows:

- Learning about stress
- Controlling your body
- Controlling your thoughts
- Controlling your actions
- Controlling your panic & controlling sleep problems
- Controlling your depression & controlling your future

The course also promotes the importance of improving physical health and promotes other initiatives within the 6 week course, such as the Expert Patient Programme, Book Prescription Scheme, Walk for Health and the National Exercise Referral Scheme.

The course is fully audited using pre & post course Hospital Anxiety & Depression Scale (HADs) assessments & student satisfaction questionnaires. Retention figures & satisfaction scores have been consistently high to date. Recently, due to growing demand, a waiting list has had to be initiated. However, students are directed to other courses, where possible. GPs are routinely sent a summary of participants’ progress following their completion of the course.

### **Aims of the Stress Control Course**

The general aims of the Stress Control course are to improve access for all, to low level psychological interventions & normalise stress related problems within the general population. Specifically the aim is to continue to expand provision of this course to include all areas of Cardiff & the Vale of Glamorgan.

The key aims of this course are to enable individuals to manage anxiety & the related problems of panic, insomnia & depression more effectively, thereby supporting the promotion of better mental & physical health within the community. This could potentially reduce demand on primary care for help with mild to moderate conditions & also reduce referrals into secondary care by tackling issues with an early intervention, before moderate to severe problems develop. Another aim would be to possibly reduce both reliance & expenditure on prescriptions of antidepressants & anxiolytic medications in primary care.

### **Planned outcomes**

Presently the course is delivered in a variety of community settings but primarily adult education centres. However church halls and local business Enterprise Centres and Community First buildings have been used in order to maximise access. Currently the courses are arranged on a term-by-term basis. Recently, because of increased demand, steps have been taken to coordinate delivery with bi-annual bookings into the adult education centres identified. The courses are delivered at different times of day and days of the week to maximise access. It is planned to expand service delivery to the weekends and to continue to discover convenient venues to increase access. Lack of equipment & trained staff to deliver the course are constraints on the expansion of the service. We believe the stress management course achieves the Gold Standard WaHM in PC endeavours to promote, in that the course is person-centred, equitable and empowering.

## Supporting evidence

### **Effectiveness**

The effectiveness of the Stress Control course was confirmed by White et al (1992), in a randomised comparison of three different versions with a placebo (subconscious retraining), and a waiting list control group. All conditions, placebo included, showed highly significant within-group change at 6-month follow-up, and highly significant improvement compared to the waiting list. At 2-year follow-up (White, 1998b), 66% of people showed clinically significant change.

Local piloting of Stress Control in 2001 and 2002 concluded that it produced encouraging outcomes in a heterogeneous group, many of whom had complex and longstanding difficulties, was highly acceptable to patients, as evidenced by retention and attendance rates, and that mental health nurses, suitably prepared, are capable of delivering the intervention (Wood et al, 2005).

A randomised controlled trial comparing Stress Control with the current standard intervention, Anxiety Management Group treatment, was carried out in 2002 and 2003. This concluded that both were significantly more effective than a waiting list control, were equally clinically effective, but that Stress Control was significantly more cost effective (Kitchiner et al, 2008).

Local piloting in primary care settings was carried out in 2003 and 2004. This produced similar clinical outcomes to the earlier pilot study (Wood et al, 2006). More than 80% of people had clinical levels of anxiety, and just fewer than 60% were also clinically depressed. About 40% of people improved to a non-clinical level of problems, and there was an average improvement from considerably above to well below clinical levels on measures of wellbeing, symptoms, functioning and risk. Very high levels of student satisfaction were expressed.

## Quotes from students

“Found the course very informative and helpful. Both [teacher] and [teacher] were helpful, friendly and knowledgeable.”

“I enjoyed the course, it was very informative. I will use what I have been shown with great enthusiasm. Thank you.”

[. . . “the teachers . . .] are both very friendly and helpful. I’m glad that they took the course.”

“Before the course I didn’t know what to do, I was in such a state, I thought the only solution was medication and I was against this. My problem is still there but I am in control.”

“Both [teacher] and [teacher] were very understanding. I wasn’t singled out so didn’t feel silly in any way.”

“Helped me a lot. Knowledge of why you feel a certain way helps to control and overcome it.”

“Helped me to see my problem from a different perspective. Thank you very much for the positive yet sympathetic way the lectures were presented.”

“It is certainly a very valuable course but one which I feel that I would have benefited from about 5 years ago, when I was in a desperate state. Unfortunately no one told me about such things then.”

“. . . I feel that my commitment was worthwhile, although I was not at breaking point, I did not want to reach it before I looked for help. I feel a much stronger person, and know now if I get any unwanted doubts about myself what to do about them. Practising the sleep techniques, not doing too bad. Feel I can and will regain my natural ability to cope.”

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