

## Resources

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**Avon and Wiltshire  
Mental Health Partnership**  
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# Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT)

This is one of a series of information leaflets  
on psychological therapies for service users.  
The therapy is described, what it involves,  
and the kinds of problem it may be  
helpful for.

**you matter, we care**

## What is Cognitive Analytic Therapy? (CAT)

CAT is a form of one to one psychotherapy usually occurring over 8 - 24 sessions.

Therapy involves trying to understand how we currently cope with emotional distress and difficulties in relationships with others.

The meetings will involve the therapist writing you a letter and using diagrams to describe unhelpful patterns of behaviour and to find other ways of responding to these difficult situations.

## Who may benefit from CAT?

CAT is used for a range of difficulties such as depression, anxiety and relationship problems. In particular, it has been used to work with hard to help problems such as eating disorders and personality disorders.

It is useful for people who have become stuck in unhelpful patterns of behaviour or relationships, and where other therapies have come up against a block.

You need to be motivated to engage in therapy and prepared to some extent to explore your childhood experience

## What to expect

CAT is an active therapy. You will normally be expected to keep a diary and to do some homework between sessions.

There will be some filling in of questionnaires at the beginning of therapy.

The therapist will

- help you to recognise patterns of behaviour and to understand where these have come from.

They will do this by paying attention to how you are in the sessions, past events in your life and how you reacted to them, and the way that you are now in your everyday life.

- write a letter to try to sum up the main patterns and the targets of therapy
- will also use diagrams to describe the main patterns of behaviour, thinking and feelings that you wish to change.

You and the therapist

- will jointly agree upon the main targets for the therapy.
- will look for other patterns of coping.

Over time you will try to change the way you react, replacing the old patterns.

## What happens after CAT?

At the end of therapy, the therapist will write a letter to you to offer their thoughts about the therapy and you will be encouraged to give your own feedback to the therapist.

There will be a follow up session after the end of the main therapy to assess the effects.