

## **Parents Matter: Understanding and supporting parents of young people with mental health difficulties**

This course, designed for clinicians who meet parents of children with mental health difficulties - either via direct work with children and young people (CYP) experiencing mental health challenges, or in adult mental health contexts. Grounded in published evidence syntheses, including systematic reviews and meta-analyses, this course draws on key insights from research into the psychological well-being, lived experiences, and support needs of parents of CYP with mental health difficulties. These findings highlight the emotional, psychological, and practical burdens parents face, which can impact their own well-being, as well as their child.

The course equips clinicians with the skills and strategies needed to holistically support parents—acknowledging their experiences, fostering empathy, and implementing evidence-based interventions to enhance parental well-being. Emphasizing the importance of seeing parents not just as caregivers but as people with their own needs, roles, and challenges, this program helps clinicians provide truly comprehensive, family-centered care.

The course is divided into two parts:

### **Part 1: Understanding Parental Needs and Challenges**

This session introduces participants to the evidence-based insights on the lived experiences of parents whose CYP face mental health challenges. It explores their psychological and emotional struggles, systemic barriers, and the impact on family dynamics. Participants will engage in group activities including empathy mapping and case study discussions to develop a deeper understanding of parental perspectives, and learn practical communication techniques to provide effective and compassionate support.

### **Part 2: Practical Strategies to Support Parents**

Building on the foundation from Part 1, this session focuses on practical, evidence-based strategies for supporting parents. Participants will explore interventions that promote parental well-being, such as self-care techniques, peer support, and psycho-education. The session also addresses the importance of cultural sensitivity and maintaining professional boundaries while fostering collaborative family care.

This will achieve the planned learning objectives to:

1) Understand the psychological, emotional, and practical challenges faced by parents of CYP with mental health difficulties, based on evidence from published systematic reviews and meta-analyses.

2) Know how to apply evidence-based strategies to engage with parents empathetically and effectively, fostering trust and reducing parental distress.

3) Identify the interconnected factors that influence parental well-being, such as self-care, emotional regulation, and systemic barriers, and learn strategies to address these through targeted clinical interventions.

4) Recognize the importance of cultural competency and professional boundaries in providing effective support to parents from diverse backgrounds.