Distress Brief Intervention
Connected Compassionate Support

Programme Manager's Six Monthly Report
April 22 – September 22
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SUMMARY

a. **Purpose:** The DBI Programme Manager is required to produce a six monthly progress report to the Distress Brief Intervention (DBI) Programme Board in support of the effective governance and implementation of the DBI programme. This is issue 12 covering the period April 2022 to September 2023. This report builds on the previous reports which can be found at http://www.dbi.scot/resources/progress-reports/

b. **Mental Health Strategy**: The Scottish Government (SG) is focused on improving responses to people in distress[1].

c. **DBI Programme**: The Scottish Government established an original pilot DBI programme, which is hosted by Health and Social Care North Lanarkshire (H&SCNL) and South Lanarkshire Health & Social Care Partnership (SLH&SCP). The DBI approach was initially being piloted over 53-months (November 2016 to March 2021) in four sites across Scotland, led by: 1. Penumbra in Aberdeen, 2. Change Mental Health (formerly Support In Mind Scotland) in Inverness, 3. Scottish Borders Health & Social Care Partnership, 4. North & South Lanarkshire as above.

d. **Programme for Government September 2018:** Building on the excellent progress of the initial pilot programme, the programme was extended during 2019 as part of Scottish Governments Programme for Government[2], across three complementary parts:

- **Part 1 Extension to 16-17 year olds**: following a period of engagement, review and development, the DBI programme extended to those aged 16 and 17 years in Lanarkshire and Scottish Borders in May 2019 and Aberdeen and Inverness in July 2019 for existing front-line pathways. In doing so it is increasing understanding of how DBI impacts on young people, families and local service provision in support of part 2 below. DBI is now delivered as standard to those aged 16 and over.
- **Part 2 Scoping DBI for 15 years and Younger:** programme commenced in October 2019, led by the University of Glasgow and supported through a DBI Children & Young People Advisory Group, to undertake a scoping exercise to review the applicability of DBI for those aged 15 years and younger to produce recommendations for consideration of further extension by April 2020. This strand of work was paused in March 2020 due to the COVID 19 pandemic however it resumed in June 2020, with recommendations set out in July 2020 to test the delivery of DBI in a controlled way for 14-15 year olds, which were approved by the DBI Programme Board. Development, planning and preparation subsequently took place, with DBI commencing live testing in Lanarkshire (now four schools) in February 2021 and Aberdeen (now two schools) in May 2021, with referrals coming from Education (trained pupil support teachers) supported by local Child and Adolescence Mental Health colleagues. An early insights and observation report from this controlled testing was produced by University of Glasgow in November 2021, showing encouraging outcomes and insights, with recommendations being used to support improvement. The test sites of Inverness and West Dunbartonshire are at the final stages of preparation for implementation and Scottish Borders test site are considering the opportunity to become part of this early test, in preparation for the independent evaluation commencing early March 2023.
- **Part 3: DBI Associate Programme**: a DBI associate programme has been established for other regions to benefit from the learning, infrastructure, training, tools and collaborations to embed DBI within existing programmes, with the first associate site (Moray) established and delivering DBI since July 2019. A number of H&SCPs expressed interest in the DBI programme during 2019 and were at varying stages of reflection,

[1] Scottish Government. *Mental Health Strategy 2012–15*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government; 2012: http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2012/08/9714
[1] Scottish Government, *Suicide Prevention Strategy 2013-16.* Edinburgh: Scottish Government; 2013: http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2013/12/7616
[1] http://www.dbi.scot/resources/
[1] Scottish Government (2017) Mental Health Strategy for Scotland 2017-2027 – A 10 year vision, Edinburgh: Scottish Government: http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00516047.pdf
[2] https://www.dbi.scot/general/scottish-government-support-to-expand-dbi-to-under-18s/
[2] Scottish Government, Programme for Government Delivery Plan: https://www.gov.scot/publications/programme-government-delivery-plan-mental-health/pages/0/

discussion and development. During the period following the immediate onset of the COVID 19 pandemic, the communication regarding the associate programme paused as both the DBI Central Team and regional areas focussed on the immediate and emergency planning required. However, communication and planning was quickly re-established across the regions who wish to progress, seeing DBI as even more important as part of the COVID 19 recovery response. Significant progress has been made with NHS24 now a live DBI Associate Pathway. In addition, the DBI community is delighted to welcome:

- North, South and East Ayrshire H&SCPs, taking a whole NHS Ayrshire & Arran approach and Inverclyde H&SCPs who went live for referrals in January 2021, Midlothian H&SCP went live in October 2021, with Dumfries & Galloway following in November 2021. Orkney H&SCP went live in January 2022, which was also a significant landmark for DBI as our first completely Island H&SCP, made of 70 Islands, 20 of which are inhabited, with a small population of just over 22,000. Through being DBI's first co-produced model, delivered jointly by Penumbra and the Blide Trust, who are the prominent third sector mental health provider on the Island, they have been able to deliver DBI Orkney which remains consistent with the DBI model. Shortly following Orkney, West Dunbartonshire went live in March 2022.
- Angus, Perth & Kinross and Dundee City H&SCPs, taking a whole Tayside approach, went live in April 2022, Edinburgh City H&SCP went live in June 2022, and Aberdeenshire H&SCP and Argyll & Bute H&SCP went live in July 2022
- Furthermore, East Lothian H&SCP, Western Isles H&SCP, Fife H&SCP, Clackmannanshire & Stirling H&SCP, East Dunbartonshire H&SCP and Glasgow City H&SCP are committed to going live for DBI provisionally between March and July 2023.
- The remaining 5 H&SCPs are at varying stages of discussion and development. We will continue to work closely with all 31 H&SCP in support of DBI being embedded across Scotland by March 2024.
- In addition, there has been a great deal of interest from across the globe including, Australia, Wales, North & South Ireland and England, supported by University of Glasgow. This has provided excellent opportunities for collaboration and shared learning, with significant interest in taking the DBI model to their populations. Although not responsibility of the Scottish Government's DBI programme, we have been delighted to learn and work with colleagues outside Scotland, which has seen the first non-Scottish DBI services go live in Tees, Esk and Wear NHS Trust in September last month, with a local mental health third sector provider, Mental Health Concern commissioned to deliver the service.

e. **NHS24 National Pathway:** The First Minister announce (on 14th April 2020) a national DBI COVID 19 Response. Since the 8th June 2020, anyone who phones the NHS24 Mental Health Hub in emotional distress from anywhere in Scotland *and* who does not need emergency clinical intervention *and* is assessed as appropriate for referral to DBI, can now be referred to the DBI Programme for further support[3]. This enables more people across Scotland to benefit from the connected compassionate support DBI has created. The vision, collaborative culture and programme infrastructure has been harnessed in support of the effective delivery of the DBI COVID 19 response programme.[4]

f. **Scottish Governments 'Protecting Scotland, Renewing Scotland, the Governments Programme for Scotland, 2020-21'[5] (published September 2020)** committed to *"extend the DBI programme across Scotland, for a transitional period to 2024, at which point we expect it to be fully embedded by Boards."* In addition, the Scottish Governments **Mental Health – Scotland's Transition and Recover Plan[6] (published October 2020)** committed to "*embed, develop and evaluate the move to a national, physically distanced*

[3] https://www.dbi.scot/general/dbi-helping-people-cope-during-covid-19/
[4] https://www.dbi.scot/resources/briefing-papers/
[5] https://www.gov.scot/publications/protecting-scotland-renewing-scotland-governments-programme-scotland-2020-2021/
[6] https://www.gov.scot/publications/mental-health-scotlands-transition-recovery-summary/

*approach to the Distress Brief Intervention programme. We will work with partners to develop a **blended model** of face-to-face, telephonic and digital contact that efficiently provides a person centred response".* The DBI Programme Board is overseeing this transition, led by the DBI Central Team and supported by the DBI community.

g. **Acceleration:** In August 2021, the Scottish Government approved plans to accelerate key elements of DBI programme development in support of Scottish Government response set out in *Protecting Scotland, Renewing Scotland, the Governments Programme for Scotland, 2020-21' (published September 2020)* and *Mental Health – Scotland's Transition and Recover Plan (published October 2020).* This will see increased access to DBI for people in distress across Scotland. Through working with the national Mental Health Collaborative (NHS24, Scottish Ambulance Service & Police Scotland), direct referral to DBI from both Police Scotland and SAS national contact points is being incrementally established, building on the existing national NHS24 DBI pathway, enabling integrated, well co-ordinated, effective and efficient access to connected compassionate support for people across Scotland. This new referral pathway went live on the 31st January 2022, commencing with SAS. Whilst the national referral pathway is open for Police Scotland, actual referrals will commence in early 2023 once information sharing requirements are complete. In addition, the University of Glasgow are leading the development of the digitisation of the DBI person centred toolkit, in support of the blended model of delivery as committed to in the SG's Transition and Recovery Plan and the Development of a Scottish Distress Intervention Training Module, which will empower and enable a wide range of organisation across Scotland to provide a compassionate and effective response to people in distress at point of contact and more people to experience connected compassionate support.

h. **DBI Aim:** The overarching aim of the DBI programme is to provide a framework for improved inter-agency co-ordination, collaboration and co-operation across a wide range of care settings, interventions and community supports, towards the shared goal of providing connected compassionate support to people presenting in distress.

i. **The DBI 'Ask Once Get Help Fast' Approach has Two Levels**. DBI Level 1 is provided by front line staff such as Emergency Departments (ED), Police Scotland (PS), Primary Care and Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) and involves a compassionate response, signposting and offer of referral, seamlessly with confidence and clarity to a DBI Level 2 service. DBI Level 2 is provided by commissioned and trained third sector staff who contact the person within 24-hours of referral and provide compassionate community-based problem solving support, wellness and distress management planning, supported connections and signposting for a period of up to 14 days, support can and does go beyond 14 days based person delivery and individual need. The current DBI Level 2 providers are LifeLink, The Richmond Fellowship Scotland, Lanarkshire Association for Mental Health, Change Mental Health, Penumbra, Scottish Association for Mental Health and the Blide Trust Orkney.

j. **Governance:** A DBI Central Team of Programme Manager, Deputy Programme Manager, and Administrator has been established by the host organisation, supported by a DBI Clinical Lead (sessional), DBI Children and Young Persons Advisor (sessional), DBI Clinical Co-ordinator (part time), Principal Data Analyst and Senior Data Analyst (part time). The Scottish Government has established a national DBI Programme Board. In addition, a Scottish Government DBI Policy and Governance Group has been established, where the DBI Central team report direct to Scottish Government Policy leads in support of effective implementation. Each partnership site and associate site has established DBI Implementation Groups. SAS and PS have established DBI Implementation Groups. This structure has ensured that key stakeholders are involved and that local provision is embedded and connected with, and respectful of, related and complimentary programmes. A Level 2 & Lead Agency Providers Forum, enables agencies and colleagues across Scotland to come together to share and learn together and support each other through peer support.

k. **Time-line:** The programme board has set out a time-line, which synchronises all programme elements. Improvement science underpins the approach through controlled and incremental implementation, which enables learning and continuous improvement throughout the duration of the programme with a more accurate picture of 'real time' demand and capacity.

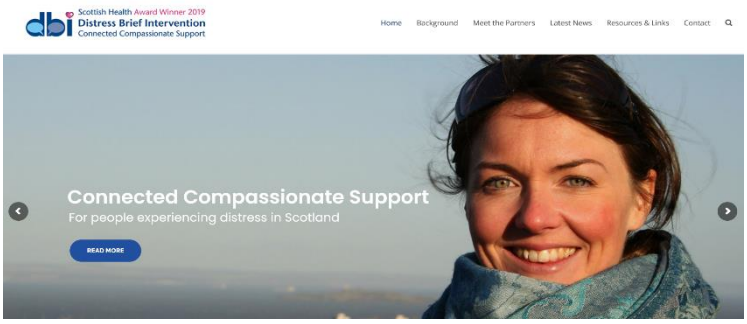
l. **Evaluation:** The DBI collaborative evaluation team of the Nursing Midwifery and Allied Health Professions Research Unit at the University of Stirling, ScotCen, The Mental Health Foundation and Glasgow Caledonian University published the independent evaluation report

for the pilot programme in the last period (31st May 2022), recommending the roll out of DBI across Scotland. For full & summary pilot report visit: https://www.dbi.scot/news/independent-evaluation-recommends-further-roll-out-of-dbi-across-scotland/. The Nursing Midwifery and Allied Health Professions Research Unit at the University of Stirling led the evaluation of the DBI COVID 19 response (NHS24 Pathway). The smaller DBI COVID team published their DBI COVID 19 Response final report in the last reporting period too (21st September 2022), which showed that DBI had adapted and embedded successfully with NHS24 during the pandemic. For full & summary extended (NHS 24) report visit: https://www.dbi.scot/news/independent-evaluation-reports-dbis-successful-adaption/. There will be further independent evaluations for the Under 18s elements of the programme as well as the DIMES project (Impact of a Distress Brief Intervention on Suicidal Ideation, Suicide Attempts and Self-harm in the immediate, short and longer term).

m. Intervention & Training: The University of Glasgow's Institute of Health & Wellbeing (UoG) has produced the DBI training and supporting elements, through a systematic programme of development. This work has supported training of staff and the implementation of DBI across the partnership sites, which includes on-going testing and refinement. Over 2,100 frontline staff have received either the DBI Level 1 e-learning module or trainer-facilitated classroom training across all four partnership pilot sites. Over 100 current staff across the seven DBI Level 2 provider organisations have been trained in DBI Level 2. In addition, the UoG have developed sustainable and supportive systems and materials for the on-going delivery and monitoring of the training, supported by the DBI Central Team. In addition, the UoG have led the engagement process and reviewed the literature in support of the adaptation of DBI for the extension to 16-17 year olds. The UoG have also adapted both the Level 1 and Level 2 DBI training and tools to include specific COVID 19 components to complement the existing resources. To date: Over 200 NHS 24 Mental Health Hub staff and managers have participated in the DBI Level 1 training, including three trained trainers building future sustainability. The UoG have also adapted, and delivered the additional complimentary Level 1 and Level 2 training and support tools in support of the test of DBI for those aged 15 and under, working closely with DBI Children & Young People's Advisory Group and Children & Young Persons Advisor.

n. Collaborative Infrastructure: The collaborative infrastructure, tools and systems have been established, in support of the effective delivery of DBI, respecting information governance requirements.

o. Communication: A website has been established to provide ease of access to information, www.dbi.scot. The site has been improved to ensure it meets the requirements of the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018. The latest news section is updated regularly as is home page to reflects the national COVID 19 guidance with links to related national programmes. The DBI community continue to share and learn with the broader communities of interest and ensure connectivity. In addition, the DBI community is increasingly linking and learning with a broader international community of interest around distress and DBI including colleagues from England, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland and Australia.



p. Reflective Practice: A DBI Clinical Co-ordinator gives dedicated time to the DBI Central Team in support of working with all DBI providers to share best practice in relation to providing support, supervision and reflective practice, who together have produced a supportive frame-work, with supportive self-assessment tools and training.

q. Key Landmarks: All of this infrastructure, legacy and sustainable development exist to support and embed the implementation of DBI at a local level. Through strong governance structures, effective programme management, a commitment to improve the response to distress in Scotland, underpinned by collaboration and hard work, the DBI programme has achieved its objectives set out for phase 1, planning (November 2016 to May 2017), phase 2,

Implementation: Controlled Testing (June 2017 to September 2017), phase 3, Controlled Implementation (October 2017 to March 2018) and phase 4, Full Scale Implementation, up-scaling across all four pilot site regions and referring to six locally commissioned DBI Level 2 third sector providers (Penumbra, Lifelink, Lanarkshire Association for Mental Health, The Richmond Fellowship Scotland, Scottish Association for Mental Health, Change Mental Health since March 2018 and more recently the Blide Trust Orkney). In addition, the programme has met all key landmarks in support of the extension of DBI as above, with the programme receiving referrals for 16-17 year olds since May 2019 and although there was a slight delay due to the pandemic, the testing of DBI for those aged 14-15 years of age commenced in February 2021. Associate DBI sites are now live and growing with DBI being delivered in 20 H&SCPs, with six more H&SCPs preparing to go live by the summer of 2023, and the remaining 5 at various stages of discussion and planning. Since the 8th June 2020, anyone who phones the NHS24 Mental Health Hub in emotional distress from anywhere in Scotland *and* who does not need emergency clinical intervention *and* is assessed as appropriate for referral to DBI, can now be referred to the DBI Programme for further support.

r. **Outcomes & Experiences So Far:** Independent evaluation were commissioned and reported in the last period, see section 'I'. The following observations drawn from engagement and routine performance data are shared below:

Training: The training programmes are helping to build workforce skills, knowledge and confidence. The staff delivering both Level 1 and Level 2 DBI report improvements in collaborative working and an improved culture of compassion. Staff also report improved staff experience through being able to meet the needs of people in distress through the option of being able to refer people to DBI.

Outcomes: There were a total of 32,814 referrals to the DBI Level 2 service across the four pilot sites, the associate sites, the NHS 24 extension and national PS and SAS acceleration programme, up to the 30th September 2022, and this includes 26,082 referrals received between 1st March 2020 and 30th September 2022, during the COVID-19 period. These numbers include a total of 10,469 referrals which have been received via the Mental Health Hub at NHS24 and 103 referrals from the newly opened Scottish Ambulance Service national pathway. The continuous incremental and considered implementation of DBI has seen the number of the referrals per month rise to around 1,069, (for the period from 1st April 2022 to 30th September 2022), compared to the monthly average for 2018 of 151, 323 in 2019, 574 in 2020 and 898 in 2021. The early observations show a high level of engagement in the DBI programme by those referred, with average levels of distress reducing. Those who had presented in distress previously and prior to DBI also subjectively reported a much improved experience through DBI.

s. **Case Studies:** Case studies are gathered as a powerful means of sharing the real life experience of providing and receiving DBI support. The independent evaluation has highlighted that front-line service providers really value seeing the difference that their immediate support and onward referral makes to those with whom they have contact. In addition, our collaborators at See Me have encouraged a greater focus on learning from the lived experience, which also seen training adapted to include greater lived experience included.

t. **Reflection, Development & Acknowledgement:** The DBI community has demonstrated incredible commitment, innovation, flexibility, creativity and adaptability in how it has responded to the pandemic, with all involved mobilising their collective assets, not only maintaining the provision of connected compassionate support during these challenging times but expanding its reach at significant pace and scale, whilst taking forward the associate and children and young person's elements. The contribution of all involved is acknowledged and greatly appreciated.

u. **Moving Forward:** The programme now continues controlled and incremental implementation. In addition, the testing of DBI for those aged under 15 years will continue, alongside the scaling up of the associate programme across other regions of Scotland. The national NHS24 response will ensure national access to DBI via NHS24, supported via the continued incremental opening up of direct referral to DBI from both Police Scotland and SAS national contact points. In addition, the University of Glasgow will continue to lead the development of the digitisation of the DBI person centred toolkit, in support of the blended model of delivery

and the Development of a Scottish Distress Intervention Training Module. The publication of the final independent evaluations of both the core and COVID 19 (NHS24) programmes will support and inform continuous improvement in the next reporting period and support the transition plans through to March 2024.

Cost of Living Crisis: Analysis of the DBI dataset shows that for all elements of the programme combined, the proportion of DBI referrals where money worries has been recorded as a contributory factor, has increased from 16.7% for quarter ending May 2021 to 22.7% for quarter ending May 2022. For the NHS 24 national extension specifically, the proportion of DBI referrals where money worries have been recorded as a contributory factor, has increased from 24.1% for quarter ending May 2021 to 30.4% for quarter ending May 2022. The other contributory factors that relate to cost of living, housing worries, employment issues and homelessness, have not shown an evident rise to this point, but this will continue to be monitored. The DBI level 2 data up to the end of September 2022 has not been finalised yet, but once the data to this point is available, this analysis will be updated.

With this in mind, the DBI community have been sharing national resources with the DBI community and collaborating with Money & Pension Services and Scottish Government colleagues in support of delivering the best possible support and advice around money and welfare issues.