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Acute Paediatric
Mental Health

Centre guide

Children and Young People: Acute Psychiatric and Psychosocial Emergencies (CYP APEx)

Contents

What is CYP APEx? **1**

Why run CYP APEx? **2**

What will it cost to run CYP APEx? **3**

What can the candidates expect? **5**

What are the benefits? **6**

Next steps **7**

Testimonials **8**

What is CYP APEX



CYP APEX is a specialist course designed with the primary aim of equipping healthcare professionals with the skills, knowledge, confidence and attitude to manage and care for children and young people experiencing acute psychiatric or psychosocial emergencies. The course focuses on the immediate management of crisis through a structured approach, underpinned by the principle that all behaviour is a form of communication.



All Behaviour is Communication

The blended learning package combines a course manual, interactive e-modules, workshops, lectures, simulations and practical demonstrations. Key topics covered include:

- De-escalation techniques
- Managing overdose and selfharm presentations
- Recognising and responding to confusion and aggression
- Securing safety for patients and staff
- Approaches to individuals who appear intoxicated or are behaving strangely

Why run CYP APEX?



Recent data from a cohort study in England (Ward et al 2025) suggests admissions to acute paediatric wards for mental health concerns have increased by 65% (between 2012- 2022). Approximately 50% of these are due to self harm and admissions for CYP with eating disorders/disordered eating have increased by over 500%.*

Looking after/keeping safe CYP in distress is not the exclusive responsibility of mental health professionals. This responsibility falls to anyone who works with CYP (health, education, social care, voluntary sector). Therefore, for all of us working in one way or another with CYP in distress, it is vital we have a shared understanding and language. Only then can we most effectively support CYP and their families/carers at these high-risk times.

The course is multiprofessional with an emphasis on team working across physical and mental health professionals and learning with, from and about each other. CYP APEX is ideal for emergency physicians, psychiatrists, emergency and mental health nurses, paramedics and other crisis care professionals.

The course helps clinicians:

- Build rapport quickly and safely with young people in crisis.
- Apply trauma-informed, developmentally appropriate communication strategies.
- Work effectively with parents, carers, and accompanying adults during high-stress encounters.



*Admission to acute medical wards for mental health concerns among children and young people in England from 2012 to 2022: a cohort study - The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health

What will it cost to run the course?



The list below will help you estimate everything required to run the CYP APEx course at a venue outside ALSG. All costs will vary depending on the centre, as some of the equipment may be available in-house.

Lectures/workshop/reflection equipment

- Data projector and computer/laptop/speakers per room
- Flipchart/whiteboard and pens
- PowerPoint presentations from teaching materials folder for lectures and workshops

Simulated patients (actors)

Predicted simulated patient costings based on the acting agency ALSG use. For a full course of 24 candidates organised into four groups is approximately £2400, broken down as follows:

- £240 per full day/per actor
- £120 per half day/per actor

Day one - £1080

- 4 Patient actors required all day (08:45 – 17:15)
- 1 Parent/carer actor required half a day (13:50 – 17:15)

Day two - £1320

- 4 Patient actors and 1 Parent/carer actor required all day (09.30–16.30)
- 1 Parent/carer actor required half a day (14:15 - 16.30)

What will it cost to run the course?



Simulations/Workshops and Faculty Demonstration

- Examination bed per simulation room
- Sensory box per simulation room
- Ear defenders or Headphones per simulation room
- Belts/wire/chargers/long socks (enough for each candidate to practise cutting each item)
- Manikins for ligature session x 2 per room
- Pillows and blankets per simulation room
- Ligature cutter packs (one per room) each including the below cutters plus a pair of tough cut scissors



ALSG fees payable pre course at course registration stage

- CYP APEx administration fee £80 per person
- CYP APEx course manual £25 per person

What can the candidates expect?

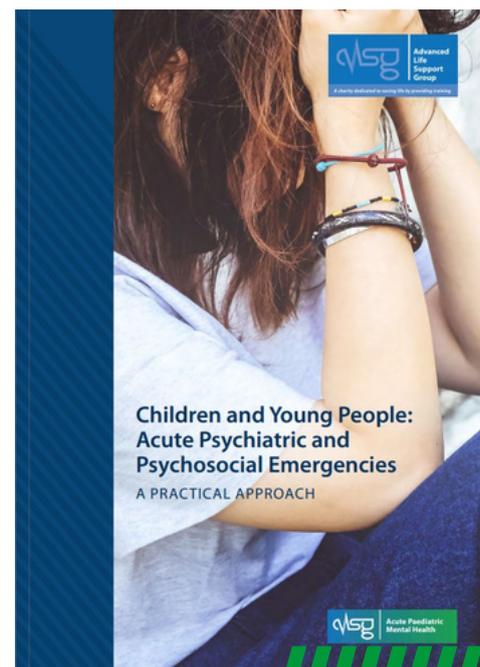


The CYP APEx programme consists of a manual; a series of online bridging e-modules for learners to apply some of the knowledge they acquire from the manual; and a two-day face-to-face component with lectures, small group workshops, and scenarios with simulated patients.

Learning together

Candidates will:

- Take a compassionate 'All Behaviour is Communication' (ABC) approach
- Practise developmentally appropriate communication
- Keep self and the CYP safe
- Practise de-escalating an acutely dysregulated CYP
- Carry out a mental state examination and a HEEADSSS psychosocial interview
- Identify different reasons for acute food/fluid refusal and appropriate responses
- Show an awareness of risk factors and approaches to reducing restrictive practice
- Explain the CYP legal position regarding capacity, consent and capability
- Describe environmental modifications
- Use a trauma informed approach
- Recognise when to call for help

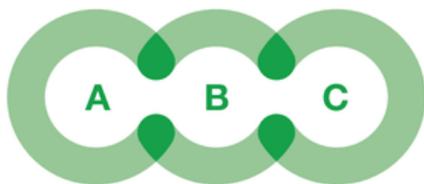


What are the benefits?



The secondary aim of the course is to strengthen **competence** and **confidence**, helping to reduce the stress professionals may experience when managing highly challenging situations. The content centres on the immediate response to crises, using structured frameworks designed to deliver **safe, effective, and high-quality care** until an appropriate onward plan is in place.

The third key principle of the course is that all means of **safe de-escalation** strategies should be attempted first, with restrictive practices used only as a last resort.



All **B**ehaviour is **C**ommunication

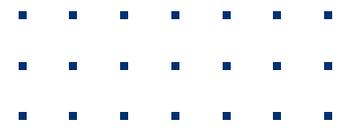
All Behaviour is Communication:

- Competent, confident and compassionate
- Safe effective, high-quality care
- Least restrictive de-escalation

This framework equips teams to manage acute distress with confidence and consistency until an onward care plan is established, making a tangible difference to patient safety and wellbeing.



Next steps



Set up options

There are two models to choose from for setting up the CYP APEx course:

1 Off base model

ALSG will support you with the course set up and you will be joined on the course and supported by the Working Group and outside faculty at your centre until you have an established team who can deliver the courses independently.

This approach selects candidates with the expectation that they will progress to instructor recommendation. After completing the initial CYP APEx course, the same group attends a Facilitation course, advancing them to instructor candidate (IC) status. You can then run an additional CYP APEx course, allowing the new ICs to complete their first IC assessment. This streamlined pathway helps you build a faculty base more quickly, enabling provider courses to be delivered locally.

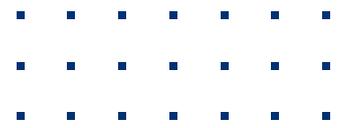
2 Location package

A CYP APEx location package has been put together to support teams who are interested in setting up the course in their region.

The package is offered at a discounted cost of £2100. It includes three course places on a CYP APEx course at ALSG in Manchester, one observer place and three Facilitation training course places (subject to conditions). Payment can be made from one trust, or split into three different payments of £700 per person.

If you would like more information or wish to apply for either option, please email cypapex@alsg.org.

Testimonials



“The simulations, although stressful and nerve wracking were absolutely incredible. The learning from each one I will take back and use in my day to day practice. The actors were brilliant, the use of timeouts was so helpful.”



“The support and feedback from my fellow candidates was excellent, when I used the time outs their suggestions really helped me focus my time to get the most out of the simulations.”



“This is an incredible course I would recommend to my colleagues and resident doctors. Having a multidisciplinary faculty and group made the learning even richer.”

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