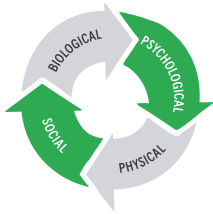


## Cognitive remediation



The main focus of this treatment is on psychological and social factors.



Remember one thumbs up sign means that enough people have done research to show that this approach does work.

### What is it?

Cognitive remediation therapy is not routinely available in the NHS. Cognitive remediation therapy (CRT) is a psychological therapy which uses talking and activities (e.g. puzzles) to try to improve your concentration, memory, planning and thinking skills so that you can do better in education, work and daily life.

In CRT, you would normally have an assessment first, to find out about the things that you're good at and the things that you're less good at. You would then have one-to-one meetings with a therapist, who would help you to use your strengths, and to practice things that you're not so good at, by doing puzzles, games and other activities and talking about how you're doing them.

It's often offered quite intensively, two-three times a week for three months or more. Sometimes CRT is offered on its own, but often it's offered alongside vocational support like individual placement and support (IPS), which gives practical, social and emotional support to help you get and then stay in education or work. This could be weekly support, or less often, depending on your needs.



### What does it aim to do?

CRT aims to help you to build on your strengths, to help you to improve your concentration, memory, planning and thinking skills, so that you are able to get on better in day-to-day life, school, college, university, work or living independently.

CRT involves lots of practice, talking and learning about how to improve your skills, so that you can meet the goals that are important to you. It helps you to better understand your strongest thinking skills and where you may have difficulty, so you can find the best strategies that work for you, to make improvements.

“ I suppose I walked away [from CRT sessions] feeling quite challenged and refreshed. It was intellectually stimulating and I felt in sort of... let me see... a contemplative mood, I think. ”

Jayden, 26

🗨️ It can be really frustrating if you are not able to concentrate for long enough to read a book or watch TV, or you struggle to remember things that are important to you. It can also make it hard to do well at college or in a job. CRT can help you to improve these sorts of thinking skills.

You and your therapist will try to work out what sorts of improvements in thinking skills help you to achieve the goals that are important to you. Then you will use games and puzzles, (sometimes on a computer), to practice things and to find the right approaches for you to help you to improve. 🗨️

Dr Clare Reeder,  
Clinical Psychologist and CRT Therapist

Vocational support helps you to put your skills into practice in real life, and provides advice and other support to deal with any problems as you get back into work, school or college.

### Does it work?

There have been a lot of trials conducted in America and some in Europe too, that have shown that CRT alongside standard care is better than standard care on its own.

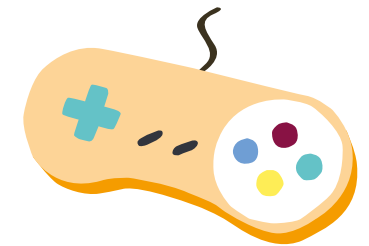
It has been shown to improve your skills in attention, memory, thinking and planning that are taught and practiced in the sessions. Some studies have also shown that it can lead to better social function, self-esteem and work outcomes.

There is evidence to suggest that CRT works best when combined with a vocational support element, and that vocational support works best when it involves actually doing a job and getting support at the same time, rather than doing a pre-work training programme.

Vocational support, on top of normal early intervention support, seems to lead to better work outcomes. So, having CRT and vocational support in school, college or work is likely to give you the best chance of success.

### The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)

NICE found that in adults, CRT seems to help you to be better at reasoning and problem solving. There isn't a lot of evidence that CRT alone helps with unusual upsetting experiences, hospital admissions, education or employment, but some studies do suggest that CRT with vocational support, is better than just having vocational support for your work and social life.



In young people, there's some evidence that CRT is better than an educational programme for reducing upsetting experiences and improving day-to-day function and work outcomes, but the quality of the research is low. There is a large study that is testing CRT in people who use early intervention services, but we don't know the results of this yet.

### **How can I get this treatment?**

There are very few people in the UK who are qualified to provide cognitive remediation therapy for unusual distressing experiences at the moment. You can ask your care coordinator for advice about whether anything is available locally.

There are UK-based researchers in CRT, so there may be a research project offering CRT that you may be able to get involved in. There is more opportunity to receive individual placement and vocational support with an employment specialist often as part of an early intervention service, and you can ask your care coordinator about this too.

### **✔ Main pro**

CRT and vocational support are the only therapies specifically designed to help you to get a job, get back to college and do well in education and work.

### **✘ Main con**

Although CRT helps with memory planning and thinking tasks, it's not entirely clear how well CRT helps you with real life things like doing well in a job or at college, and it doesn't reduce distressing unusual experiences. Also it's not readily available at the moment, and because it's quite intensive it's quite a commitment.

