

## **ACT/ Contextual Behaviour Science Conference**

### **Adapting ACT for people with Personality Disorder**

#### **Abstract:**

It might be expected that ACT, with its focus on avoidance and valued living, would be an effective therapeutic approach for personality disorders. To date, however, there has been little research testing ACT as an intervention for people with personality disorder diagnoses. Furthermore, the few published studies focus almost exclusively on Borderline Personality Disorder, despite the high prevalence rates of other personality disorder presentations. Helen will begin this 1-day workshop by briefly outlining the empirical evidence available, including data from her own pilot study testing a group-based ACT intervention for DBT graduates with complex personality disorder presentations.

The remainder of the workshop will use experiential exercises, demonstration, and didactic teaching to explore the ways in which ACT might need to be adapted to be a safe and beneficial therapeutic option for people with personality disorder diagnoses. Topics covered will include the use in ACT of experiential exercises, the use of metaphors, therapeutic style, and how to develop a safe and effective approach to addressing avoidance and acceptance of private experiences. There will also be discussion of some possible limitations of ACT for this client group.

The workshop is aimed at clinicians with some knowledge and experience of ACT.

#### **About Dr Helen Bolderston**

Dr Helen Bolderston is a clinical psychologist with over 25 years of experience working predominantly in mental health settings in the UK National Health Service. She specialises in acceptance-based psychotherapies, especially ACT, MBSR/MBCT, and DBT. Her NHS clinical work and research over the last few years has predominantly been with people with complex, chronic psychological difficulties; people who are often given personality disorder diagnoses. Her PhD focused on ACT and personality functioning.

Helen currently works as a lecturer and researcher in the Department of Psychology, University of Bournemouth. She is currently conducting research examining aspects of social cognition in people with borderline personality disorder diagnoses, as well as several ACT and mindfulness focused studies.