

Anxiety and Depression

Getting help from IAPT services

Produced by Nick Hanlon for Social Anxiety West, 2nd June 2010

Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) is an initiative that aims to make psychological therapies more accessible to people facing challenges with their mental health. In 2010 IAPT services became available across the UK meaning that people have a better chance of accessing the help they need. Clinical research indicates that although medications can sometimes provide faster initial symptom relief, psychological therapies tend to offer greater progress in the long-term. This initiative therefore appears to be a step in the right direction for people experiencing anxiety and depression.

What is provided by IAPT services?

The IAPT services are particularly focused on providing psychological assistance for people experiencing anxiety and depression and the therapies provided are evidence based. What this means is that only therapies that have been proven through clinical research are offered. An independent organisation called the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) oversees the task of reviewing relevant clinical research and producing guidelines indicating which therapies will be most helpful. The NICE guidelines for anxiety and depression recommend several therapies including cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), counselling, couples therapy and interpersonal therapy (IPT). These are the therapies that will likely be offered by your IAPT service with CBT being the most common.

In addition to this, IAPT services may also be able to offer debt, housing, relationship and employment help to people facing mental health challenges. This may be done directly or through connections with other organisations. By accessing your local IAPT website you may also be able to access self-help resources or book yourself onto free courses. The availability and nature of these extra forms of help will vary from service to service. Website details are provided at the end of this guide.

How much help will I get?

IAPT services are based on a stepped care model. What this means is that there are different levels of care with the higher levels offering more intensive therapy and lower levels offering less intensive therapy. The level of care you will be offered should reflect the nature and severity of the difficulties you are experiencing while burdening you as little as possible. If the level of care you have been offered proves insufficient or your situation worsens then it is likely that you will be offered a higher level of care. The person delivering your care should explain to you what choices are available and why they are considered suitable for you.

Note that although IAPT focuses on psychological therapies, medications may also be offered through other health care professionals such as your GP or a psychiatrist. The stepped care levels along with treatment recommendations from NICE are shown in the tables below.

Stepped Care Levels

Level: Provider	Focus	NICE Recommendation
Step 1: Primary care / IAPT Service	Recognition and monitoring	Assessment / Watchful waiting
Step 2: Low Intensity Service	Depression mild – moderate	cCBT, Guided self-help, Behavioural activation, Exercise.
	Panic disorder mild – moderate	cCBT, Guided self-help, Pure Self-help
	Generalised anxiety disorder (GAD) mild – moderate	cCBT, Guided self-help, Pure self-help, Psychoeducation groups
	Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) mild - moderate	Guided self-help
Step 3: High Intensity Service	Depression mild, moderate and severe	CBT, IPT, Behavioural activation
	Depression mild - moderate	Counselling, Couples therapy
	Panic disorder	CBT
	Generalised anxiety disorder (GAD) mild - moderate	CBT
	Social phobia	CBT
	Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	CBT, EMDR
	Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)	CBT
Step 4: Mental health specialists including crisis teams	Previous treatment ineffective, Severe, Significant risk	Medications, Complex psychological interventions, Combined treatments
Step 5: Inpatient care, Crisis teams	Risk to life, Severe self-neglect	Medications, Combined treatments (including psychological interventions), ECT

Shaded levels are separate from IAPT services. cCBT = Computerised Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, EMDR = Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing, ECT = Electroconvulsive Therapy

How much does it cost?

The service is government funded and is therefore free in much the same way as visits to your local GP are free. Certain treatments such as prescription medications, self-help books (sometimes prescription) or services through third party organisations may incur a charge. Prescriptions may be free if you are in receipt of certain benefits, have limited earnings or are in full-time education and aged 16 to 18.

How do I access IAPT services?

IAPT services will accept referrals through your GP. Many IAPT services also offer self-referral or if not, plan to offer self-referral in the near future. Self-referral means you can access the IAPT service directly without needing to see your GP. If you are not an 'ordinary resident' in the UK then it may be possible that you cannot access the service. Your local GP or IAPT service will tell you whether or not this is the case.

What happens next?

After visiting your GP or contacting your local IAPT service you will be given an opportunity to discuss your difficulties and needs. This can often be done over the phone or face-to-face if necessary. The information you give will be considered by the team and you will be offered some initial help thought appropriate for the challenges you are faced with. Face-to-face help can often (but not always) be offered within your local GP surgery or at other local locations to minimise the distance you have to travel. You may also be given information about other organisations that could benefit you. If after fully engaging in the help you have been provided with you find it is insufficient then let your IAPT service know this. They will then likely be able to offer you additional assistance.

Who is my local IAPT service?

Please select the service that operates within the area which your registered doctor's postcode falls. For example if your registered doctor's address is South Gloucestershire then you should use the South Gloucestershire service. When seeing your GP it can be helpful to specifically ask to be referred to the relevant psychological therapies service.

Need help right now? If you are distressed, suicidal or experiencing feelings of despair, you can contact The Samaritans, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling **08457 90 90 90**.

Bristol (City of): RightSteps Service

Provider: Turning Point

Contact: Please make an appointment to see your GP and ask to be referred to the Psychological Therapies/RightSteps service.

Website: http://www.bristol.nhs.uk/Patients/All_Services/MentalHealth/Rightsteps

South Gloucestershire: Lets Talk Service

Provider: 2Gether NHS Foundation Trust

Telephone: 0800 073 2200 for self-referral or make an appointment to see your GP.

Email: talk.2gether@glos.nhs.uk

Website: www.talk2gether.nhs.uk

Bath and North-East Somerset: Psychological Therapies Service

Provider: BANES NHS

Contact: Please make an appointment to see your GP and ask to be referred to the Psychological Therapies service.

Website: www.banes.nhs.uk/yourservices/adults/Pages/PsychologicalTherapies.aspx

North Somerset: PositiveStep Service

Provider: NHS/Second-Step partnership

Telephone: 0800 688 8010 for self-referral or make an appointment to see your GP.

Email: enquiries@positivestep.net

Website: www.positivestep.net and also www.awp.nhs.uk/positivestep

Gloucestershire: Lets Talk Service

Provider: 2Gether NHS Foundation Trust

Telephone: 0800 073 2200 for self-referral or make an appointment to see your GP.

Email: talk.2gether@glos.nhs.uk

Website: www.talk2gether.nhs.uk

Swindon & Wiltshire: Swindon and Wiltshire Psychology Service

Provider: AWP NHS

Telephone: Please ring your local GP and ask to be referred to the counsellor or IAPT service. Self-referral is done through your local surgery and some may require you to see a GP first.

Website: www.awp.nhs.uk/swindonpsychology (you can book onto courses online)

Somerset: Somerset Community RightSteps Service

Provider: Turning Point/NHS partnership

Telephone: 01278 727447 for self-referral or make an appointment to see your GP.

Email: rightsteps@somcomhealth.nhs.uk

Website: www.somerset.nhs.uk/rightsteps

Your region not listed? Speak to your doctor about referral to your local IAPT or Psychological Therapies service.

If you have spotted any inaccuracies in this document then please let us know by emailing us at email@sawest.org.