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Press release

Provision of Psychological Therapies to be expanded across east and west Suffolk

Services supporting people in east and west Suffolk with common mental health presentations such as low mood and anxiety disorders are to be expanded.

The NHS Ipswich & East Suffolk and NHS West Suffolk clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) approved the £1.6 million expansion of Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust's *Wellbeing Suffolk* service at their respective Governing Body meetings earlier this month.

Wellbeing Suffolk's Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) service provides free access to evidence-based psychological support for people who are 16 or older and experience depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, specific phobias and problems with sleeping.

Evidence demonstrates those with long-term physical health conditions (LTCs) are more likely to develop mental ill-health. It is estimated that people with two or more LTCs are seven times more likely to experience depression than those without.

Building on previous work to develop IAPT-LTC services, the recruitment and training of clinical and support staff will make IAPT services accessible to at least 18,645 adults by 2024, an increase of nearly 2,500 people.

People in Suffolk with LTCs can already access online cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) support called 'Living Life to the Full' (<http://www.lltf4suffolk.com>).

The service also provides a specific six-week course - 'Living Well with Physical Health Problems' - as well as telephone-based CBT sessions adapted to those with LTCs.

Wellbeing Suffolk has also developed and implemented disease-specific support and intervention pathways for people with heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), diabetes, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), musculoskeletal conditions and cancer. Patients with those LTCs under the care of the acute hospitals in east and west Suffolk can be directly referred to Wellbeing Suffolk for support.

Patients can also refer themselves for free support by completing the self-referral form on the Wellbeing Suffolk website ([wellbeingnands.co.uk](https://www.wellbeingnands.co.uk)) or by calling 0300 123 1503 (8am – 8pm), where details can be given in confidence.

Once a patient has been referred to the Wellbeing Service they will be contacted within three working days to arrange a one-to-one telephone appointment where a clinician will assess their needs and decide the best way they can be supported to make positive changes.

The service also provides one-off taster sessions that can be accessed by anyone aged 16 or over who is registered with a Suffolk-based GP. Full details of these can be found on <https://www.wellbeingnands.co.uk/suffolk/get-support/courses/>

Wellbeing Suffolk is a key partner in the transformation of community mental health services, which are working towards fully integrated IAPT services within primary care. The service already has link workers integrated in GP surgeries and has introduced more wellbeing practitioners to primary care settings to enable seamless referral routes to wellbeing interventions.

Richard Watson, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Strategy and Transformation for the Suffolk and North East Essex (SNEE) Integrated Care System, said: “We know that around 9.5% of all people in Suffolk registered with a GP have depression, and following the pandemic this figure is likely to have risen sharply.

“IAPT therapies are extremely beneficial, not only for those with depression, but also for people suffering from a number of other mental health conditions. I am delighted with the expansion of these therapies, which will help to meet the increasing need identified in the local population.”

Robyn Fiorio, Wellbeing Suffolk Service Manager, said: “This additional investment will allow us to expand our services to support even more people every year.

“This will be especially important in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has resulted in a significant increase in demand for our services.

“We would encourage anyone who is experiencing common mental health problems such as low mood, depression or anxiety to visit our website to find out more about the variety of ways in which we can help.”

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