

Exploring how physical activity can be better utilised within NHS Talking Therapies services to improve mental health outcomes

Case Study – Camden and Islington NHS Talking Therapies

What is the service?

As part of a pilot funded by Sport England, Camden and Islington ICope, together with Healthy Minds Buckinghamshire have introduced several interventions to support service users to become more active to help their mental health.

Interventions include:

- **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) groups for depression** with a specific element set aside for service users to do some form of physical activity i.e. walking or online activity
- **A series of long term condition workshops** supporting service users who are living with physical long term health conditions (LTCs). The workshops are focused on helping people with LTCs to become more active using behaviour change techniques such as goal setting, discussing barriers and supporting each other with solutions
- Access to a wellbeing **app** (Foundations by Koa Health) which includes specific modules focused on increasing physical activity
- **Walk and talk** therapy sessions with individuals who are receiving treatment for depression. This involves training up a number of High Intensity staff to deliver 121 therapy whilst walking



How do you identify and engage service users in physical activity?

This has been offered through our existing service offer.

- CBT Group and ‘walk and talk’ sessions are offered to people with depression
- The long-term condition workshop is aimed at service users who have a long-term physical health condition
- The app is offered to anybody starting step two treatment, CBT for depression or anxiety disorders

Have you measured the impact and if so, what have you found?

As part of the Sport England pilot, we are evaluating all interventions (led by UCL). The evaluation includes monitoring clinical outcomes, physical activity levels and qualitative feedback from service users and staff. The evaluation will be available in early 2024.

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What has worked well?

Informal feedback from service users within the CBT for depression groups and the LTC workshops suggests those who engage with the offers, find them helpful. It has been challenging to get feedback from people using the app. The 'walk and talk' therapy offer is new, a number of staff have been trained and are starting to use this.



What challenges have you faced and how did you overcome them?

The main challenges have been the recruitment of service users to the new interventions and in particular staff remembering to consider this in their sessions and make appropriate referrals.

Getting people to use an app has been a challenge. We think this is partly due to busy clinicians remembering to tell people about the app and encouraging the use of it. Another early challenge was 'on-boarding' new users to the app. Overtime, we have found rather than solely relying on clinical staff to tell people about the app, routine mailouts to people starting treatment has increased the usage.

Some service users are reluctant to attend groups. This is a general issue within NHS Talking Therapies, not unique physical activity interventions. Exploring incorporating physical activity more directly into individual 121 therapy sessions is underway via 121 walk and talk sessions.

How could a similar approach be rolled out at other NHS Talking Therapies services?

Our learning from the pilots will be captured within a report and we will also be creating a toolkit to support other services design physical activity opportunities into their services.