

A PICTURE OF HEALTH

Improving Access to
Psychological Therapies

Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT)

What is IAPT?

Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) is a national NHS programme to increase the availability of mental health services across England by offering treatments for people with depression and anxiety disorders.

These therapies, often referred to as “talking therapies”, include counselling and psychology services.

Along with anxiety and depression, they can provide help for people with a range of related problems, such as:

- Trauma
- Anger
- Phobias – feeling scared of certain situations or things like spiders, confined spaces, needles etc.
- Obsessions and compulsions – being excessively bothered by recurring unwanted thoughts, or doing certain things like excessive washing of hands, checking of things.
- Feeling that you are not coping with life events such as childbirth, redundancy, illness or injury
- Relationship difficulties
- Unresolved issues from your past.

What is the current service like?

There are seven providers across east Kent, with five for the Ashford CCG area and four for the Canterbury CCG area. The current contracts end in September 2015, but all CCGs have agreed an extension until December 2015.

We are currently at the beginning of putting together a new specification to run the service beyond that.

Why does it need to change?

The original contracts were set up based on national guidelines but it would be better for patients if they were tailored to the needs of a specific area to meet the needs of the individuals using the service.

The current contracts are more focussed on the initial assessment, but it would be better for patients if they focused on the outcomes as 50 per cent of patients drop out after the initial assessment.

Patients have told us how they think the service can be improved. Comments include there being a lack of choice and that the service is only available Monday to Friday during working hours.

The new specification will make sure there is a variety of choice, including telephone, face to face and internet support, and will include early evenings and some weekend appointments.

What are the timescales?

The procurement process for a new service is due to start in July 2015. Ahead of this, a market engagement event will be held in May. A new service will be in place by January 2016.