

Reprocurement of IAPT services in Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire

Frequently Asked Questions – version 1.0

We will be updating this FAQ document throughout the mobilisation of the new IAPT service, providing responses to questions raised by service users, partners and other stakeholders. Please check back at <https://bnssgccg.nhs.uk/health-advice-and-support/improving-access-to-psychological-therapies-iapt/> for updates and additions.

1. What is happening to IAPT services in our area?

IAPT is the national programme to Improve Access to Psychological Therapies, such as CBT and counselling, for people who would benefit from them.

IAPT services can be very effective at treating anxiety and depression and we want to make sure they're as widely available as possible to people in Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire.

Lots of people already use IAPT services in our area and since 2017 we've been working with service users to understand how the services can be developed and enhanced to meet people's needs.

We've listened carefully to what people have told us, and have commissioned a new IAPT service for our area which will begin on 1 September 2019. The service will offer the same NHS-funded therapies and treatments as before, but will also seek to help people with personal issues commonly linked to depression and anxiety, such as debt, poverty and social isolation, by referring them to practical advice and support in the community.

We think this more joined-up approach will help to deliver a more effective IAPT service, with better outcomes for local people.

2. Who will provide the new service?

We ran a reprocurement exercise in 2019 to identify a provider and all tenders received were assessed against nationally-determined criteria including value for money and service quality and sustainability. After careful deliberation, the contract was awarded to Vita Health.

3. What is Vita Health?

Vita is an accredited provider of mental health and physical/musculoskeletal health services, based in the South-East of England.

Vita is a specialist provider of psychological therapies, delivering interventions in accordance with NICE (National Institute for Clinical Excellence) guidance. It is accredited by the Royal College of Psychiatrists and the British Psychological Society (BPS) and was the first independent provider to achieve the BPS Accreditation Program for Psychological Therapies Services.

4. Where does Vita currently provide NHS services?

Vita is the sole provider of the NHS IAPT contract for Basildon and Brentwood CCG providing Step 2 and Step 3 and Long Term Conditions and has also worked with Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (Wirral and Thurrock) to provide IAPT at Step 2 and Step 3.

Vita has also provided Step 3 treatment for moderate, severe and complex mental health within a psychology service in the UK. This service cannot be named for contractual reasons.

Vita is the sole provider of the NHS Musculoskeletal services contract for Bromley CCG.

5. Why was the contract awarded to Vita Health?

Like all NHS organisations our commissioning decisions are guided by national legislation that determines how we tender for services and assess bids. Our priority is to ensure the best possible NHS services for local people and we consider bids from NHS, not-for-profit and private sector providers. We carried out a robust procurement process to identify a single provider for the service, and Vita Health was the best bidder, demonstrating how they will work within our region to create effective partnerships and deliver high-quality mental health services for local people.

6. Will Vita's bid be available for public viewing at any point (to understand what they intend to do, how they intend to operate their service model, etc)

The CCG's service specification is publicly available, and it is this that Vita will be delivering against. The bids themselves are commercially sensitive and for this reason cannot be shared.

7. How will this be a different model of service?

A summary and overview of the new IAPT service specification is available online at <https://bnssgccg.nhs.uk/library/iapt-service-specification-brief-summary-and-overview/>

There are two key differences in our approach. First, as well as treating the symptoms of mental ill-health via clinical interventions such as CBT and counselling, the service will also seek to work with people to understand the social causes of their mental health problems and help them to access practical advice and support in the community. As an example, someone who has financial worries might also be referred to an organisation that can help with debt counselling or benefits advice.

A second important difference is that we are commissioning the service from a single provider serving the whole of Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. We believe that working with a single provider will support the rapid roll-out of the new IAPT model across our area, while also ensuring consistent services for people regardless of where they live.

8. How will Vita co-produce services – how will service user involvement be properly embedded?

We are committed to ensuring that robust patient involvement is embedded in our IAPT service model and are working with Vita to agree how this will be done. We will publish further details of this in the coming weeks and months.

9. Will the service still be free and is it still an NHS service?

Yes, it is an NHS service and the services we commission will continue to be free for users.

10. What will be offered by the new services?

A summary and overview of the new IAPT service specification is available online at <https://bnssgccg.nhs.uk/library/iapt-service-specification-brief-summary-and-overview/>

The service will offer a range of NICE-recommended therapies for depression and anxiety disorders, delivered in line with a stepped-care model that identifies the most appropriate intervention based on a detailed assessment of an individual's needs.

In practice, services provided may include a wide variety of interventions ranging from self-help and support groups, to more intense group or individual cognitive behaviour therapy, couple therapy, counselling or psychotherapy. Referral to external services such as job retention or employment support, or other health or social care pathways, also forms part of the service specification.

11. How much emphasis will there be on preventing mental illness rather than treating it – how will the prevention element of the service work?

Prevention and self-help is a key element of our new service model and as detailed in the specification, our expectation is that the provider will work with external organisations to ensure that service users are supported to access practical advice and support for social issues commonly associated with anxiety and depression.

12. How long will people have to wait for treatment – will this be any different?

Of the referrals that have a course of treatment, 75% should have their first treatment session within six weeks, and 95% within 18 weeks (100% of pregnant women should have their first treatment session within six weeks of referral).

13. How will the new service work with Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust (AWP) as a provider of secondary mental health care?

We are working with AWP to define the relationship between the Trust and the new provider of IAPT services.

14. Where will the new service be based?

The service will be delivered within the Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire area. This will involve central hubs in the area of Bristol, in the area of North Somerset and in the area of South Gloucestershire. We will share details of locations once these are confirmed.

15. Can you be referred into the service by your GP?

Yes, your GP can refer you to this service.

16. A 10-year contract is a long time; how will teething problems be handled? Will there be break clauses in the contract?

The CCG will monitor the service through monthly contract management meetings with Vita Health. Any teething problems will be identified and solved through this channel. There is a three-year break clause in the contract.

17. What is the ‘mobilisation period?’ What happens until that ends? What changes might a service user see?

The mobilisation period is currently underway and continues until the service goes live on 1 September 2019.

18. Will there be a cut-off point where the current services stop taking referrals?

The current service will stop taking new referrals from 1 September 2019.

19. Will staff currently providing services be transferred to the new provider?

Discussions are taking place between the current providers of services and Vita Health. The providers will reach a decision in consultation with staff as to who the

Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE) provisions apply to and establish if the staff affected would like to transfer from their existing organisation to Vita Health.

20. Positive Step is an established brand. Will this be discontinued?

A new service name will be developed by Vita Health. This will be shared ahead of the new service go-live date on 1 September 2019.

21. Can you self-refer into the service?

Yes, you can self-refer into the service.