



Mental Health Navigation

Reducing pressure on primary and secondary care by supporting people to address their unmet non-clinical needs

There are currently multiple challenges facing community, primary and secondary health care services, including:

- Insufficient workforce capacity that is unable to meet increasingly complex patient needs
- High pressure on mental health professionals and GPs, meaning competing demands on their time
- Staff may struggle to maintain up-to-date awareness of the multitude of local community assets available



Our Mental Health Navigation service has dedicated capacity to assist and empower people to access the right support.

People living with mental illness report difficulties in navigating and engaging with social care systems and community support.

Our Mental Health Navigation service empowers people by providing the right support for them, helping them manage a range of needs and social stressors that could otherwise affect their mental health. This also helps alleviate the wider pressures on health care systems.

By using the support of our dedicated Community Mental Health Unit, we can help transform community mental health care, helping the NHS to move towards integrated core community mental health services, primary care, and secondary care. This also means services are brought closer together, enhancing the workforce and achieving longer lasting and better health outcomes.

How Rethink Mental Illness can support primary care with Mental Health Navigation

Rethink Mental Illness has learned that primary care networks need extra capacity to close the gap in services for people who do not meet the clinical threshold for secondary mental health treatment.

As a service provider, Rethink Mental Illness can support primary care networks with robust operational support such as recruitment, training, management and performance monitoring, and tested quality frameworks.

This can significantly reduce workforce pressures and ensure that mental health patients with complex needs receive person-centred support from a multi-disciplinary team.

In addition to our Mental Health Navigation role, we are also able to deliver all personalised care roles which feature on the Additional Role Reimbursement Fund Scheme (ARRS), including Carers Coordinators and Health and Wellbeing Coaches. As an alternative to service delivery we can also offer consultancy and training support to other organisations that would benefit from our experience of delivering Mental Health Navigation.

In primary care, a Mental Health Navigator:

- Is fully integrated into the multi-disciplinary team
- Empowers clients to manage and prevent mental health crises
- Uses a person-centred approach to assess and address needs (including debt, housing, benefits, employment, training, volunteering)
- Acts as a link between community, health and social services whilst providing emotional support to build self-efficacy and resilience
- Encourages meaningful engagement with local communities
- Works with patients for up to six months with no appointment limit, with a gradual step-down of support



Mental Health Navigation and Communities that Care model

The Mental Health Navigation model is the golden thread that links people, communities and health care systems together. The lack of wider community support available for people who are severely affected by mental illness – such as supported housing, employment help, debt advice and access to independent advocacy – can exacerbate mental health problems and leave people not knowing where to turn. Our new research has found that people want more support in these areas and want to be able to access this support via their GP surgery.

Improving alliance development and service delivery



i Our report [Building communities that care: a blueprint for supporting people severely affected by mental illness in their local communities by 2024](#) argues that when we support people as a ‘whole’, we give them the opportunity to thrive, not just survive.

Patient benefits

- Further evidence is being collected but, since the pilot started in 2020, we have seen an increase in patient outcomes scores
- Patients reported experiencing decreased anxiety around social issues because non-clinical needs are being met and social isolation is reduced
- Better adherence to clinical and non-clinical treatment
- Better engagement with and maintenance of positive health behaviours which are sustained over a longer period of time
- Patients receive support for up to six months with no abrupt discharge and no appointment limit

“What our clients say:”

“I kept visiting my GP with issues that couldn't be solved. Within a couple of sessions I sorted out my benefits and now have more appropriate housing which has helped with my anxiety”

“I missed my rent so the Mental Health Navigator sorted it out. It's in instalments rather than chunks and that's helped me with my stress as well”

“I feel a lot stronger, more independent and more capable. I'm controlling my mental health and getting my life back to how I want it”

“What our clinical partners say:”

“The Mental Health Navigator has spent time with patients with complex needs that typically bounce between GPs and whose social needs are never met. As well as improving patient outcomes, this role has reduced how often patients attend unnecessary clinical appointments”

Practice Manager

“It's about supporting the GPs and helping reduce appointments. I try to get back to patients within 24 to 48 hours so they quickly feel reassured they'll get the support they need”

Mental Health Navigator

Workforce benefits

- Health care professionals spend less time on non-clinical needs
- Significant reduction to the operational management from PCNs, relieving workforce pressures
- All Mental Health Navigators are linked in with national reflective practise forums, ensuring skills are up-to-date and shared
- Health care professionals have reported a reduction in the frequency of patients attending unnecessary GP appointments
- Health care professionals report higher levels of job satisfaction
- Patients and health care professionals spend less time researching alternative support



Impact and evaluation

THE
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In 2019 we commissioned the Tavistock Institute to undertake an external evaluation of our Mental Health Navigation pilot. This will be completed in 2023 and will evaluate the process, outcomes and impact of the service.

The interim evaluation is showing promising progress towards its outcomes so far, and local partners are choosing to invest in additional Mental Health Navigators because of the difference they are seeing at a local level.

Our pilot site is in Grimsby, within the Meridian Primary Care Network. Here, we have partnered with Navigo, a social enterprise providing adult mental health services across North East Lincolnshire.

Due to the success of this pilot we have now been commissioned by Navigo to employ additional Mental Health Navigators who are working with other primary care networks across this region.

Improving the lives of people affected by mental illness

We reached
40,000
people in
2021/22

Over
90
mental health
services in
England

Over
140
local peer support
groups

50
years delivering
high quality local
services

Rethink Mental Illness has 50 years' experience in delivering high quality local services, reaching 40,000 individuals in 2021/22.

Today we run over 90 mental health services across England that support people to live and thrive in their own communities. With the help of volunteers, we also run a further 140 local peer support groups and an award-winning advice and information line which receives more than 4,000 requests for help every year.

But there is still so much work to do. For too many people, access to well-funded mental health care and support that meets their full needs seems further away than ever.

For support in implementing a Mental Health Navigation service within your primary care environment, please contact:
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