

Stakeholder Briefing: New Mental Health Services during Covid-19 Outbreak

Gloucestershire County Council is working in partnership with Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group to introduce a range of new mental health services in response to the Covid-19 outbreak. It is acknowledged that this is a challenging time for everyone. Social isolation, distancing, and changes in routine and relationships may contribute to mental health difficulties; as well as anxiety caused by concerns about our own health and the health of our loved ones, job security, and finances. It is important that we have the necessary capacity in the system to respond; and, given social distancing requirements, that we look at new ways to deliver mental health support.

A press release has been published outlining the new services:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gloucestershire-county-council-news/news-april-2020/seal-of-approval-for-plans-to-launch-new-mental-health-services/>

We wanted to write to you as partners to provide more information about the new services that are in place including go live dates and referral routes. There are 6 new offers in total. This briefing covers the support available to adults only, a separate briefing will be circulated covering support available to children and young people. These new/ extended services will work alongside existing mental health services in the county to help ensure a joined up pathway for patients, whilst enabling universal access to some form of support.

The majority of services will initially run for a 9 month period to ensure that support is in place to deal with the short and medium term impacts of the outbreak on mental health and emotional wellbeing.

For GPs: information will be added to the G-care website.

Adults

Tier 1

Qwell - Access to trained online counsellors for adults

Xenzone have been commissioned to provide 'Qwell' – a digital mental wellbeing platform for adults (aged 18 plus). This online platform will include self-care resources, peer support and access to trained online counsellors, and will be open to anyone experiencing issues with their emotional wellbeing, such as stress or anxiety.

Qwell may be suitable for individuals who are awaiting a referral and/or treatment from the Let's Talk Service (IAPT) or as 'step down' support for individuals exiting this service.

When the service will be accessible

Qwell is available now.

Referral criteria

These offers are described as 'tier 1' services offering universal level support for any adult living in Gloucestershire experiencing issues with their emotional wellbeing. No referral necessary.

How to access

Qwell can be accessed by following this link: <https://www.qwell.io/>. Service users must register under 'Gloucestershire Adults'.

Tier 2

Funded counselling sessions for adults

Gloucestershire Counselling Service has been commissioned to deliver funded counselling sessions for adults whose mental health has been more severely affected by Covid-19, for example, by worsening existing mental health issues or because of a bereavement, and who wouldn't normally be able to access counselling and pay for it themselves. Up to 12 sessions will be offered initially including initial assessment.

When the service will be available

Individuals will be able to access funded sessions from June 2020.

Referral criteria

This service is described as 'tier 2' providing targeted support to those individuals whose mental health has been more severely affected by Covid-19. The service is not open access. The following professionals/organisations can refer:

- GPs
- Community Wellbeing Service
- Community Advice Liaison and Mental Health Service (CALMHS)
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Occupational Health Teams

It is important that the referrer has a relationship with the individual being considered for referral so that they are able to determine whether counselling would be suitable for the individual and whether they would not normally be able to pay for it themselves.

Individuals must meet the following criteria to be referred:

- Over the age of 18.
- Resident in Gloucestershire and registered with a Gloucestershire GP.
- Experiencing ongoing adverse impacts on their mental health and/or emotional/psychological wellbeing linked to the Covid-19 outbreak (through for example exacerbation of existing mental health issues, change in family or financial circumstances, or bereavement); which is having an adverse impact on their ability to manage; and their ability to function in everyday life and/or relationships.
- Personal circumstances or vulnerabilities which mean they would not usually be able to access counselling and self-fund it.
- Able to benefit from and commit to a programme of counselling.

The following guidelines are provided to help determine if counselling would be suitable for an individual:

Indications towards counselling being suitable:

- client wants counselling and has some idea what they want from it
- client has a personal support network
- client is functional in daily life
- client is amenable to counselling via video link/phone (during Covid-19 lockdown)

Contra-indications for individual adults:

- indications of psychosis
- serious substance-abuse impacting daily functioning
- client is currently suicidal or seriously self-harming and would benefit instead, from a referral to the crisis team.

How to access

Following a referral, individuals can access the service by visiting:

<https://gloscounselling.org.uk/product/preapproved/> . Individuals who don't have internet access can call Gloucestershire Counselling Service on 01453 766310 and request a hard copy registration pack. Specific referral instructions have been issued to those organisations who are able to refer.

Frontline professionals and volunteers supporting people in emotional distress

Online mental health awareness and Psychological First Aid training for first responders and community volunteers

A suite of resources has been developed to help first responders and community volunteers support people in the community who may be struggling with their mental health. It is acknowledged that a huge amount of community resource has been mobilised to respond to need within the community, and that some individuals will be part of this response having had no previous experience of working with people experiencing heightened emotional distress. The following training resources have been developed to address this:

30 minute Mental Health Awareness Training

This is intended as a basic introduction to Mental Health for those with no prior experience. It will enable the trainee to understand some of the signs and symptoms of poor mental health and equip them with basic skills to respond to this. It is aimed at volunteers, however, it can be accessed by anyone. This can be found here: <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/resources-for-professionals-and-volunteers>

45 minute Psychological First Aid Training

This is a more in depth training package equipping the trainee in how to deliver Psychological First Aid (PFA). PFA is the WHO recommended intervention used during crisis situations such as a global pandemic. PFA can be delivered remotely and provides a useful tool to support somebody experiencing

emotional distress. This training is aimed at professionals contacting/responding to individuals who may be vulnerable, however it can be accessed by anyone. This can be found here:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/resources-for-professionals-and-volunteers>

Script/Guide for supporting people through emotional distress

A script/conversational guide has been developed to support responders who may be contacting vulnerable people/people in states of emotional distress. It is intended to help professionals through that process which can be difficult. It includes guidance on wording, appropriate questions to ask, how to phrase your questions, things to be aware of when speaking with someone, what support can be put in place/where to signpost to. There is also a supplementary document outlining common mental health diagnoses and personality disorders, to use with those individuals where this is relevant. This can be found here: <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/resources-for-professionals-and-volunteers>

Signposting information sheet

A simple signposting sheet has been developed for front line responders who may be supporting individuals in need of further support. It outlines all available mental health support offers in Gloucestershire and identifies which service should be referred to when/for whom. This can be accessed here: <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/resources-for-professionals-and-volunteers>

Volunteer Emotional Support Sessions

In addition to the above, Gloucestershire County Council has also commissioned a number of emotional support sessions for volunteers responding within the community, who may have no access to emotional support for the role they are carrying out. In order to access these volunteers should get in touch with the organisation coordinating community response in their area.

Update on existing mental health support in the county

Specialist Mental Health Services run by Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Trust, including the Let's Talk Service (IAPT), the Children and Young People's Service (CYPS) and the Crisis and Recovery Team are still operating, for more information about these services, please visit the GHC website: www.ghc.nhs.uk

The Community Advice, Liaison and Mental Health Service delivered by the Independence Trust is still operating as normal. This service can support people with moderate to severe mental illness with: Personal support plans, access to information & advice, signposting/reference to other services, 1:1 support with a Bridge Builder, peer support, befriending, exploring opportunities to develop and learn new skills. More information can be found here: www.independencetrust.co.uk/CALMHS/about

For additional queries relating to this briefing please contact: suzie.lane@gloucestershire.gov.uk