

HWCoL Patient Panel on mental health, social isolation and the services you can access

On Thursday, 5 December, we held a Patient Panel on mental health, and how to stay well during the festive period, which can be an especially hard time for many in our community. We held the session via zoom and were joined by Katie Pomeroy and Khudaija Ismail from Talking Therapies City and Hackney and Talking Therapies Tower Hamlets.

We were also joined by Valentina Ines La Mela, from the Together Better Programme, who highlighted the work her team does in City and Hackney to engage with patients.

Talking Therapies

Katie and Khudaija started the session with talking about what wellbeing means to us, people attending highlighted that this meant having good physical health, some said feeling mentally well and other factors mentioned included, good sleep and having a routine in place.

Common mental health problems

- Low mood: 1 in 6 adults reported moderate to severe depressive symptoms in Autumn 2021 (ONS, 2021)
- Anxiety: Similar numbers reported moderate to severe depressive symptoms (ONS, 2021).

How to support wellbeing

Katie highlighted the 5 steps to support your mental wellbeing

1. Connect with other people
2. Be physically active
3. Learn new skills
4. Give to others
5. Pay attention to the present

How you can seek help

You can access, based on the borough you live in, Talking Therapies, if you are a City resident, you can access the City and Hackney Talking Therapies which is a free NHS service.

The support that is offered includes, one to one, group therapy, computerised CBT and be accessed by teams, on the phone or in person.

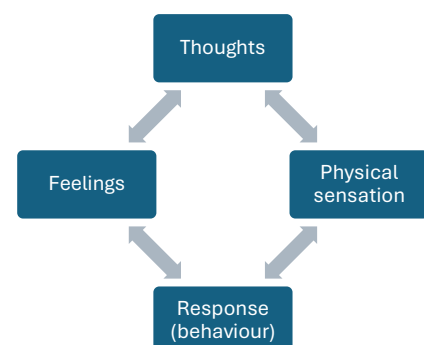
What is CBT?

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), is a form of psychotherapy that works to improve mental health conditions.

Low intensity

- 4-8 sessions, 30 minutes each.
- Low mood, anxiety and stress.
- Stress Less group
- First Year & You group

High intensity



- Around 10 sessions, 50 minutes.
- Low mood, anxiety, OCD, social anxiety, health anxiety, PTSD
- Groups for depression, low self-esteem, mindfulness

To make a referral to access City and Hackney Talking Therapies, visit www.cityandhackneytalkingtherapies.homerton.nhs.uk or call 020 7863 4278

The Together Better Program

The Together Better initiative seeks to engage and support patients in activities that promote health and wellbeing, while reducing pressure on GP practices and NHS services. The program empowers volunteers and community members to organise and participate in a wide range of activities designed to improve both physical and mental health.

The program focuses on engaging patients in health-related activities at GP surgeries across City and Hackney. This is achieved through the help of volunteers and Community Engagement Care Coordinators (CECCs) who guide patients through the process of accessing the program.

Valentina highlighted the **referral process**, which can either be through a self-referral or professional referral.

Self-Referral: Patients can register by meeting with a CECC who helps them complete a registration form.

Professional Referral: Healthcare professionals can refer patients by filling out a referral form, which is submitted to the CECC to initiate the process.

Activities Offered

The Together Better program offers a broad range of activities that include:

Physical Activities: Walking Group, Yoga, Tai Chi, Seated Exercise, Outdoor trips (museum visits, seaside).

Social & Community Engagement: Coffee Mornings, Mum & Baby Group, Gardening, Art & Craft, Photography, Cinema Club.

Health & Support Groups: Cancer Peer Support, Weight Loss Peer Support, Menopause Peer Support, Digital Support Workshops.

Special Interest Groups: Jewish Men's Exercise Group, Muslim Women's Group, Jewellery Making, Girls Talk.

There are many benefits to attending these sessions including improved physical and mental health, community connection and an increased confidence.

Patients have spoken on their experiences, with one attendee saying, "I'm more social, have new friends, and know different cultures" and another, "it has helped me restart interactions with others after the death of my husband."

For more details or to get involved you can contact, Valentina Ines La Mela via her email valentina@vchackney.org

For more information on our Patient Panels please visit our events page,
<https://www.healthwatchcityoflondon.org.uk/events>