

# Frequently asked questions for adults who are already receiving support from mental health services.

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Specialist mental health services, including Community Mental Health Teams, Home Treatment Teams and inpatient services, have continued to provide support during the COVID-19 pandemic. You will normally need a referral from a healthcare professional to access these services.

The way some of these services are delivered may have changed during the pandemic in order to reduce transmission of the virus and keep you, your loved ones and our staff safe.

## **1. Contact**

If you are already receiving care from your Health Board's mental health services, you can expect contact with your care co-ordinator or another professional in the team looking after you to be maintained.

Where safe to do so, you will be given the choice of the type of contact including face-to-face, telephone or video consultations, where available. Your Care and Treatment Plans should be up-to-date, with all the relevant support details along with your personalised crisis plans.

### **1.1 How often can I be expect to be contacted?**

You can expect contact between you and your health professional to be maintained at the level it was before the COVID-19 pandemic. This will be determined on an individual basis, according to your needs.

### **1.2 How and where will my reviews take place?**

Where safe to do so, you will be given a choice of the type of contact you would prefer, including face-to-face, telephone or video reviews where available. You will be asked if you have a quiet, private space in which you can discuss your mental health in an open and honest way.

Your health professional will always try to meet your contact preference, whilst managing the risks associated with the COVID-19 virus and the need to keep you, your loved ones and our staff safe.

### **1.3 Have waiting times for services increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?**

Demand for mental health services is expected to increase significantly, as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's mental health

begins to make itself felt. As a result, you may face a longer than usual wait for support from specialist mental health services.

However every effort is being made to reduce the waiting times as it is important to access support at the earliest point.

There are a number of things you can do to look after your mental health and wellbeing while you wait for more specialist support to become available. Please visit our Frequently Asked Questions for adults seeking mental health support for the first time for further information.

## **1.4 Where can I go if I'm in crisis?**

A mental health crisis (sometimes also called a mental health emergency) is when a person's mental or emotional state worsens quickly. It often means that you no longer feel able to cope or be in control of your situation.

A mental health crisis or emergency can be a frightening experience, you may feel scared, overwhelmed or alone, but the important thing to remember is that you are not alone and there is support available to help you feel better.

Whether you experience a sudden deterioration of an existing mental health problem or are experiencing problems for the first time, the most important thing is to reach out for help.

We are here to provide help and support. Please get in touch if you need urgent help.

If you are known to mental health services, your Care and Treatment Plan should include the details of what to do in crisis.

If you're not known to mental health services please refer to the list below of local access points for crisis care in your area.

- Via your GP
- Shropdoc – this is the out of hours GP service in Powys, telephone 111 free from any landline or mobile phone
- Access to the crisis resolution home treatment team is by referral only. Referrals can be made by Mental Health Hospital Teams, Psychiatric Liaison Teams, Community Mental Health Teams, out of hours GP services, Police and Ambulance staff.

- Minor injury/A&E departments. **Please only attend if it is an emergency.**
- The CALL Mental Health Helpline for Wales, which is available every day, all year round.

Call freephone 0800 132737; text Help to 81066 or visit [www.callhelpline.org.uk](http://www.callhelpline.org.uk)

## 2. Inpatient services

Our acute inpatient wards are operating as usual. However some restrictions and changes to normal operations have been introduced and these may vary depending on locality.

### 2.1 Can I have visitors?

This has been a very difficult time for those families and carers with loved ones in hospital. We understand that it has been especially difficult not being able to visit to support their recovery and wellbeing.

Because of changes to guidance, some visiting is now allowed outside, weather permitting. However, visiting can only happen if we follow certain guidelines, so we will still need your help and understanding. COVID-19 has not gone away, and we all need to follow infection control advice for the safety of everyone.

### 2.2 Can my family support me during ward round?

We fully recognise the importance of the support network of friends and family, especially during COVID-19 pandemic. Every effort will be made to encourage the continuation of that support during ward rounds; via the use of technology your family member or support network will be able to attend the meetings virtually.

### 2.3 Will I still be able to have leave?

Leave should be allowed as long as you have no COVID-19 symptoms and have had no contact with any confirmed cases.

## **2.4 How can I access advocates? Should they still be coming on the ward?**

Independent advocates are classed as key workers and, as such, advocacy services are still operating in all of the usual settings where people receive support from health and care services. Advocates will offer a range of support in creative ways to maintain social distancing rules, including online support alongside scheduled drop in support.

It is as important during this difficult time that you are informed of your rights and supported to ask questions about your treatment and that you have access to advocates to support this.

## **2.5 Access to therapeutic interventions**

Delivery of therapies that were paused during the initial phase of the pandemic have re-commenced, through video technology, and face-to-face where clinically appropriate.

## **2.6 Can I still access group activities and therapies?**

Access to face-to-face group activities and therapies is likely to be restricted because of local COVID-19 restrictions. However, it is possible that some activities and therapies may be delivered online.

## **2.7 Can I still have home visits?**

Your health professional will always try to meet your contact preferences, whilst managing the risks associated with the COVID-19 virus and the need to keep you, your loved ones and our staff safe.

## **3. Families and carers**

The support family and friends provide to someone with a mental health condition is so important and even more so during the COVID pandemic. Supporting someone who has a mental health condition can be difficult for family and friends, but it is important to remember that help and support is available for you. Taking care of your own wellbeing will mean you are better prepared to support someone else with their recovery. It is important you have access to the most up-to-date information and support that may help you to continue your caring/support role at this time.

Carers' organisations can provide relevant information, advice and support. They can:

- Provide you with someone to talk to
- Inform you of your rights (including advice on welfare benefits)
- Help to access a carers assessment
- Help you develop a plan that supports your needs
- Put you in touch with local carers groups so that you can connect with other carers

It is important that you remember that you are doing your best at this very difficult time, so be kind to yourself.

### **3.1 The person I normally provide care for has been admitted to hospital. Will I still be involved in their care?**

Yes, the support you provide is so important to that person's wellbeing and recovery. This is especially important during the COVID pandemic

### **3.2 Can I contact the team direct about the person I care for?**

Yes – it is still possible to contact healthcare teams directly and it is important that you do so if you have any concerns. However, healthcare professionals cannot usually share confidential information about your relative with you, unless your relative agrees. You can read more about this on '**Confidentiality and information sharing: For carers, friends and family**' by clicking here: [www.rethink.org/advice-and-information/carers-hub/confidentiality-and-information-sharing-for-carers-friends-and-family/](http://www.rethink.org/advice-and-information/carers-hub/confidentiality-and-information-sharing-for-carers-friends-and-family/)

You and your relative can take steps so professionals can share information with you. Please see the section called 'What arrangements can I make for the future?' in the above link.

You will see your relative can sign a consent form to allow you to get information from professionals.

### **3.3 Will I still be able to access carer support?**

Carers' organisations can provide relevant information, advice and support. They can:

- Provide you with someone to talk to
- Inform you of your rights (including advice on welfare benefits)
- Help to access a carers assessment
- Help you develop a plan that supports your needs
- Put you in touch with local carers groups so that you can connect with other carers

It is important that you remember that you are doing your best at this very difficult time, so be kind to yourself.

### **3.4 Will I be able to attend reviews?**

Yes, if this is agreed with the service user/patient and it is considered safe to do so, taking into account COVID-19 infection prevention measures.

You may be offered the use of digital technology to enable you to attend reviews. This includes video consultations via the Attend Anywhere platform, which has recently been rolled out to all Health Boards in Wales.

### **3.5 Should the care co-ordinator keep in touch with me?**

Your care and treatment plans should detail the contact arrangements agreed with your care co-ordinator. This involves a two-way approach where you know how and when to contact them, and you agree how often they should contact you.