**NHS urges people with mental health worries to seek help**

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported that almost one in five adults were likely to be experiencing some form of depression during the pandemic and almost one in eight developed moderate to severe depressive symptoms.

Ongoing research has shown that there are still many barriers to accessing mental health support, including highlighted feelings of mistrust with mental health services as a result of negative experiences, as well as the fear or shame of disclosing mental health concerns with loved ones.

***Dr Leke Oyedotun, GP based in Lincolnshire said***: *“COVID-19, loneliness, bereavement, concerns around job security and so many other factors have had a huge impact on the mental health of the nation over the last year. A small act such as talking to someone can make such a difference to acknowledging and dealing with your mental health and wellbeing. It’s important to know you are not alone and support is available – whether that is through NHS services or through family and friends.”*

Not everyone will need professional support to get through anxiety, but for those that do the NHS provides services across England, which are easily accessible. Support can also be found through many independent Black charity organisations such as Inside Out UK.

NHS Talking Therapies are a confidential service ran by fully trained experts, and the service can also be delivered in your chosen language through multi-lingual therapists or through confidential translators. People can access the service by visiting their GP or refer themselves online.

The latest referral figures for NHS mental health services from August 2020 show that referrals were recovering but were still down by 11% compared to the previous year. Of those referrals 89.1% would start treatment within 6 weeks, with an average of 7.6 sessions of treatment.

**Dr Ayodele Ajayi, Medical Doctor who specialises in Psychiatry said**: “*It is very encouraging to see the first national campaign on mental health services run by the NHS, as it’s vital to encourage people to come forward for mental health support.*

*“The talking therapies service has been available through the NHS since 2008, and it is recognised worldwide for it’s scale and effectiveness. It can be highly effective in helping people who are experiencing anxiety and depression, and I encourage anyone who is struggling to come forward to get the support they need, irrespective of race, age and background. Trained therapists can help you by working through feelings of anxiety or depression – so please speak to your GP or self-refer online to access the free support that is available.”*

The service has been fully running throughout the pandemic with almost 95% of talking therapies delivered remotely from July 2020 through a digital platform or over the phone, allowing people to stay in contact and get support more flexibly and comfortably. Face to face appointments are also still available, and services have implemented new measures to limit infection risks.

The NHS is here to help. To find out more about talking therapies, you can visit the [NHS website: nhs.uk/talk](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/free-therapy-or-counselling/)