



# Your Voice Neurodiverse Meeting Minutes



Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2024

## Topic – Talking Therapies



### Attending

Self-advocates from Gloucestershire  
South-Advocates from Devon  
Self-Advocates from North Somerset

Organisations Represented Inclusion  
Gloucestershire, Dimensions For Autism



### Opening Question

#### **Favourite thing about Autumn**

People said Low Sunshine and crisp colder day, Fireworks, Pictures from Colorado(USA), Fresh air, Watching the changing of the seasons., Orange hot chocolates.



### Talking Therapies

NHS talking therapies services are also known as Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) services. They are services that you can self refer to for a range of issues, such as Anxiety and depression, PTSD, Panic attack, OCD, Phobias, Finding it hard to cope with work, life or relationships, Flashbacks and nightmares and Stress.

Caroline Longman is head of NHS Talking Therapies South-West will be joining us in November. It is important to keep feedback constructive.

We talked about barriers first then moved on to constructive ways of how to make NHS Talking Therapies better.



### Barriers to being able to access

We know that there are a lot of barriers to accessing talking therapies. We took some of the meeting to talk about them

- There is a reliance on CBT. The service is designed around what it is supposed to deliver.
- CBT can be a harmful intervention depending on how it is delivered, “it is like treating the symptom instead of the source.” CBT presumes disordered thinking, being neurodivergent contradicts this. This can make it traumatising. It seems like the go to for all things to do with mental health.
- Multiple rounds of CBT offered which doesn’t work.
- The offered therapies often leave autistic people “**Opening a can of worms that I don’t know how to close.**”

- 14/15 Month wait for NHS Talking Therapies and by the time you get to the end of the waiting list, mental health conditions can progress and worsen.
- Therapists can have little experience of autism. Practitioners often treat autism as a medical diagnosis rather than the personal lived experience of it.
- Being paired with a therapist who doesn't understand autism or autistic communication is tricky.
- There is a lack of understanding of gradual effects of ongoing trauma
- Not having a way to refer to another service outside Talking Therapies.
- Autistic people are having to have private talking therapy due to NHS therapies not working.



### **Things That could help improve the service**

We want the NHS to be able to improve the talking therapies service and we came up with some positive solutions that would help it work for Autistic people

- Contracting out to private services can be helpful, they can offer a new approach outside of the NHS and limit waiting times.
- It can be helpful for NHS staff to listen to your viewpoint on what is worrying you and have no-judgement
- 1-1 personal sessions are helpful.
- Bristol offered a few different options of support when the waiting list was so long.
- Therapists not discounting real life experience and neurodiverse identification. (This is already happening.)
- It would help if therapists were able to identify neurodivergent signs. It would be good if they had training on this.
- Knowing what therapies are proven to work for autistic people. Clinicians recognising the right type of therapy for you and allowing a flexible approach for autistic people.
- Therapist understanding autistic needs and that there is a need for specific training on autistic people's lived experiences could be helpful
- Training delivered by neurodiverse people could help, this doesn't feel like a priority at the moment.
- Direct link to autistic peer support groups.
- Autistic therapists and Neurodiverse specialised counsellors
- It would be good to be able to access Occupational Therapy for mental health.
- .The ability to refer to more suitable therapies outside of the service.
- Therapists capable of multiple ranges of therapy.



### **Closing moment for a bit of self care**

It was a hard and potentially triggering topic. As many of our topics can be quite intense we're going to have a moment of being able to think of something we're doing to look after ourselves and our wellbeing. Some of the things the group were doing were:

- Classical Music Concert.
- Theatre show
- Cat cuddling
- Cuddling of Primrose
- Booked to go out to dinner with friends.
- Painting your nails.
- Meeting with friends
- Torchwood Fan Fiction

## **Next Meeting**



Our next meet Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2024

We have been asked by the NHS to talk about Talking Therapies. We have the director for NHS Talking Therapies South-West Caroline Longman coming to the next meeting to hear this feedback.