

## **Briefing: Safeguarding Adults with Mental Health Concerns**

The Safeguarding Adults Executive Board (SAEB) is keen to promote a strong wellbeing approach to safeguarding with early interventions being key to our prevention agenda. This briefing aims to promote timely and effective responses to adults with mental health concerns which can improve wellbeing and reduce risks of many forms of harm. This briefing is aimed at all practitioners who encounters adults with mental health concerns through their work.



Anxiety has been the [Mental Health Foundation's](#) chosen theme for this year's Mental Health Awareness Week, which ran from 15 to 21 May. Anxiety is a normal emotion in us all, but sometimes it can get out of control and become a mental health problem. For some people it is debilitating.

Lots of things can lead to feelings of anxiety, including relationships, starting a new job (or losing one) or other big life events. People can also get anxious when it comes to things to do with money and not being able to meet basic needs, like heating our homes or buying food.

It is important that people have an awareness and understanding of anxiety so that they know how to access support and can help prevent it from becoming a problem. Anxiety can become a mental health problem if:

- feelings of anxiety are very strong or last for a long time
- fears or worries are out of proportion to the situation
- someone avoids situations that might cause them to feel anxious
- worries feel very distressing or are hard to control
- regularly experiencing [symptoms of anxiety](#), which could include panic attacks
- someone finds it hard to go about everyday life or do things they enjoy.

If symptoms fit a particular set of medical criteria then a person might be diagnosed with a particular [anxiety disorder](#).

### **Help is available**

There are various [evidence-based treatments and strategies](#) that have been found to help with anxiety. Self-help strategies and resources, talking therapies and medication can help and are all available from the NHS. See the next page on responding to mental health concerns when you are worried about someone.

## Responding to Mental Health Concerns and Suicidal Feelings

Prompt professional responses to mental health concerns are important to promote wellbeing and, sometimes, to prevent harm. Practitioners across the local network need to know how to access specialist mental health services.

### Things which indicate an adult needs an urgent mental health assessment:

- Expressing suicidal thoughts and feelings
- Worries about self-harm
- New or increased symptoms such as hearing voices and/or believing things which are not real
- Expressing paranoid beliefs
- Talking in a very confused way, which is unusual for the person
- A marked change in behaviour including, but not limited to, social withdrawal, aggression, irritability or onset of self-neglect.

These things can indicate serious mental health concerns. Anyone can experience a mental health crisis and people need timely interventions from clinical services.



For urgent matters there is 24/7  
mental health crisis support



**0800 023 4650**

CNWL's Single Point of Access (SPA) is a 24-hour telephone service which offers support, advice and signposting adults who may be experiencing a mental health crisis. Individuals, family, carers and professionals can contact SPA for urgent mental health advice. SPA clinicians can support with risk assessments, referring to secondary services, referring an adult for urgent intensive community support or can explore whether hospital admission might be needed. *NB: if someone already has a mental health clinician in place try to speak to them first if possible.*

**TIP:** If you believe that an adult needs to be in hospital for mental health care because the risks are very high, they may require an assessment under the Mental Health Act. See the information on the next page about what this means and how to refer for a Mental Health Act assessment.

### Getting help before crisis point

Encourage the person to speak to their GP or to give you permission to you to speak to their GP. If they are already actively involved with secondary mental health services (such as Community Mental Health Teams – known as CMHTs), call the relevant team if you know their number. GPs and primary care mental health teams can do non-urgent assessments of someone's mental health and decide on next steps. The CMHTs in Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster are all run by CNWL.

Adults can also speak to their [local Talking Therapies service](#) to access a range of tailored support, which includes counselling and individual or group mentoring to improve self-esteem, communication and well-being. This service is suitable when the person is not in crisis.

## PARTNERSHIP WORKING IS KEY!

To improve outcomes for adults with mental health needs, a multi-agency approach across health, mental health and social care practitioners is crucial. Effective interventions and management of risk involve:

- Joint risk assessments and management plans
- Sharing knowledge and expertise
- Assessments including input from both social care and clinical services
- Planning care and support together

Make sure you know how to contact teams and professionals in other organisations and be curious about how other services operate, including their criteria and expertise. Build relationships across services and make use of partnership forums.

### **‘Think Family’ when Supporting a Parent with Mental Health Needs**

“Published case reviews tell us that professionals sometimes lack awareness of the extent a mental health problem may impact on parenting capacity. This may result in a failure to identify potential safeguarding issues. The learning from these reviews highlights that professionals must recognise the relationship between adult mental health and child protection”.

When supporting a parent with mental health problems, it is important to ‘Think Family’:

- Explicitly consider the potential impact on the children and on parenting capacity.
- Take responsibility for making child safeguarding referrals – follow your organisation’s safeguarding procedures.
- Referrals to children’s social care which indicate parental mental health concerns, including suicidal ideation, ought to be recognised as a child safeguarding concern.
- Adult mental health clinicians and child safeguarding practitioners should proactively and promptly communicate directly to develop a shared understanding of a family’s situation.

Assessing parental mental health or child wellbeing in isolation from other professionals working with a family will result in less effective interventions.



## Mental Health Assessment vs Mental Health Act Assessment

### Know the Difference

When responding to mental health concerns involving adults, particularly where there is a perceived crisis or high risk, it is helpful when practitioners have clarity about how to access the right kind of help at the right time. There is sometimes confusion about what type of assessment is needed and how to mobilise the right service. Sometimes lack of clarity about mental health assessments and mental health act assessments can delay access to urgently needed help.

<b>Mental Health Assessment</b>	<b>Mental Health Act Assessment</b>
<p><b>What is it for?</b> To assess symptoms and severity of mental disorder and make decisions about treatment.</p> <p><b>Who does it?</b> Healthcare professionals do mental health assessments. It could be a GP, a psychiatric nurse, a psychiatrist, a psychologist or an occupational therapist with specialist experience.</p> <p><b>When is it needed?</b> When there are concerns that a person's mental health is deteriorating or changing, and they may need additional support. This may include a review of medication, or assessment of risks associated with their mental health, such as suicidality, self-harm, aggression or self-neglect. Consideration should be given to issues around mental capacity if someone is refusing an assessment or support. Efforts should be made to assertively engage them. However, people with mental capacity to decide do have a right to refuse a mental health assessment.</p> <p><b>What are the possible outcomes?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A change, or increase/decrease in treatment for a mental health condition.</li><li>• A referral to a more specialist service either in hospital or in the community.</li><li>• Urgent care and treatment by a health service in the community.</li><li>• A referral for a Mental Health Act assessment may follow.</li></ul>	<p><b>What is it for?</b> To decide whether the legal criteria for compulsory detention and treatment for mental disorder are met.</p> <p><b>Who does it?</b> Only an Approved Mental Health Professional (AMPH) along with two doctors with special training can do a Mental Health Act assessment. AMPHs are employed by the Local Authority. They are usually social workers with special training.</p> <p><b>When is it needed?</b> If it appears to an AMPH that a person may need to be held in hospital against their will because their mental illness poses a risk to their health or safety or poses a risk to other people, and there is no way to manage the risks without compulsory detention / treatment. People do NOT have a right to refuse a Mental Health Act assessment.</p> <p><b>What are the possible outcomes?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The person could be detained in hospital, also known as 'sectioned', under the Mental Health Act.</li><li>• If the person is not detained in hospital, the AMPH may then take steps to arrange support with local health and social care services</li></ul>

## Referral Pathways for Mental Health Support

**To refer for a mental health assessment, or access support advice and signposting contact:**

**CNWL's Single Point of Access (SPA):**

Ph: 0800 023 4650

Email: [cnw-tr.SPA@nhs.net](mailto:cnw-tr.SPA@nhs.net)



**Central and  
North West London**  
NHS Foundation Trust

**To refer for a Mental Health Act assessment:**

Anyone can refer by telephoning the AMPH service Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm or the Emergency Duty Team out of hours on evenings and weekends:

Kensington and Chelsea AMPH Duty	Westminster AMPH Duty
Ph: 0207 361 2780 EDT: 0207 373 2227	Ph: 0207 854 3999 EDT: 0207 641 6000

## Safeguarding Adults with Mental Health Issues

Abuse, neglect and self-neglect come in many forms, all of which can affect adults with mental health issues. If you have concerns about safeguarding adults, you should contact Adult Social Care on the details below.

Adult Social Care Kensington and Chelsea	Adult Social Care Westminster
Ph: 0207 361 3013 Em: <a href="mailto:socialservices@rbkc.gov.uk">socialservices@rbkc.gov.uk</a>	Ph: 0207 641 2176 Em: <a href="mailto:adultsocialcare@westminster.gov.uk">adultsocialcare@westminster.gov.uk</a>

**When raising safeguarding concerns consider:**

- If there is an immediate risk to safety call 999
- Do you suspect a crime has been committed? Call 101 to report crimes.
- Think family – are any children or other vulnerable adults potentially impacted within the family?
- Is the person alleged to be causing harm also vulnerable in some way?

## Protecting the Mental Health of Professionals

Working in helping professions or emergency services can place a strain on your emotional wellbeing. You may have to hear or respond to people who are in distressing situations, or reply to emails that make you feel shock, anger, sympathy, disbelief or sadness. You may be experiencing an increase in workload.

***If you are struggling, you are not alone.  
Your mental health matters and you deserve support.***



Having a mentally healthy workforce can bring so many benefits to your organisation. MIND produces extensive resources for staff, managers and organisations on how to take care of staff and look after their mental health at work. Useful resources from Mind are listed further within this briefing.

[Access to work](#), funded by the Department of Work and Pensions, is here for you if you are struggling at work. The support is easy to access and there is no cost.



## Training and Development Opportunities

### Suicide Prevention Training with Every Life Matters

Every Life Matters are pleased to be working with Public Health in Kensington and Chelsea, and Westminster to offer a free series of [online suicide prevention courses](#). This training is open to residents and community groups as well as professionals from voluntary and statutory services working with adults in these two Local Authority areas.



### Useful resources and further reading

[CNWL Mental Health Services](#)

[Rethink Mental Illness Advice and Information](#)

[Mind – How to manage stress](#)

[Mind – How to support staff who are experiencing a mental health problem](#)

***With thanks to Hillingdon Safeguarding Partnership  
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