

# Access to Primary Care Mental Health Services for people from ethnic communities



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**healthwatch**  
Walsall

Legend for report

Q = Question

A = Answer

ESOL = English for Speakers of Other Languages

## Introduction

Healthwatch Walsall is the independent voice of the public in health and social care in Walsall. We gather feedback from the public through engagement and projects and use that feedback to work with health and social care providers and commissioners to improve service delivery.

Healthwatch Walsall wanted to know what the experiences of people from ethnic minority communities in Walsall are who have, tried to or considering accessing Mental Health support/services via Primary Care services.

## Methodology

This project used a mixed methodology with a survey that was completed with men and women from a variety of cultures and communities with people aged eighteen upwards.

In addition, we held 2 discussion groups to gain more personal stories and views.

## Who took part?

There was a total of **172** survey responses. However, not all the people who took part answered all the questions. The participants were men and women from various ethnic cultures and communities in Walsall. With a wide range of ages.

### Ethnic Background

	No. & %
Asian/British Asian: Indian	57 (33)
Asian/British Asian: Pakistani	23 (14%)
Asian/British Asian: Bangladeshi	20 (12%)
Asian/British Asian: Other Asian background	12 (7%)
Black/Black British: Caribbean	11 (6%)
Asian/British Asian: Chinese	10 (6%)
Black/Black British: African (9)	9 (5%)
Black/Black British: Other Black background	7 (4%)
Other White non-British background	7 (4%)
Mixed/Multiple ethnic background: White & Asian/British Asian background	4 (2%)
Mixed/Multiple ethnic background: White and Black/Black British background	3 (2%)
Mixed/Multiple ethnic background: Other Mixed background	3 (2%)

## Key points

- People felt there is still a stigma and fear of judgement around poor mental health from own community, family or health professionals.
- Service users confirmed (109/73%) that they did seek mental health support via a GP/GP service.
- They said that getting a GP appointment and the waiting time for an appointment was a barrier.
- Also, that long waiting times may prevent them seeking support in the future.
- They mentioned there is a sense of distrust in services (due to past experiences or system related issues).
- Service users (65/43%) felt that there is a lack of cultural identity and understanding from some professionals.
- They felt that they were not listened to and that professionals were working from a script.
- Service users (70/43%) mentioned that they had communication/language difficulties.
- A small minority (24/16%) mentioned that financial/travel costs were a barrier to accessing mental health support.
- A small minority further mentioned that they had a fear of or did not want to use technology to access services.

## Findings from survey

People responding to the survey were asked a range of questions, some were single choice answers, others were multiple choice answers. Not all participants answered all the questions.

Q. If you, or someone you know, needed mental health support where would you try to get help as a first contact? (Tick all that apply).

A.

	No. & %
Your GP service (Doctor)	124 (74%)
A mental health practitioner based at your GP practice (e.g. Counsellor, Mental Health Nurse)	85 (51%)
Self-referring to NHS Talking Therapies	50 (30%)
NHS 111	39 (23%)
Crisis Team	28 (17%)
A community support group	36 (21%)
A national charity such as MIND	20 (12%)
Other	5 (3%)

When people answered 'Other', we asked them to explain further. Here are their answers:

- Rethink
- Samaritans
- Private psychology/psychiatrist
- Parent
- Friend

Q. Have you or someone close to you ever needed support for mental health concerns?

A.

Yes 141 (89%)                      NO 17 (11%)

When people answered Yes, we asked which services did you or they access? (Multiple choice answers)

	No. & %
GP service (Doctor)	109 (73%)
Mental Health Practitioner at your GP practice (e.g. Counsellor)	79 (53%)
Self-referral to NHS Talking Therapies	46 (31%)
NHS 111 non-clinical services such as community groups, charities, etc.	33 (22%)
Crisis Team	28 (22%)
Other	4 (22%)

When people answered 'Other', we asked them to explain further. Here are their answers:

- Samaritans
- CAMHS
- Private therapy
- Friends
- Social care

Q. What barriers, if any, did you or they face when trying to access mental health support?

A.

	No. & %
Long waiting times	99 (65%)
Difficulty getting an appointment	95 (63%)
Lack of information about available services	91 (60%)
Language or communication difficulties	70 (46%)
Cultural misunderstandings or lack of culturally sensitive care	65 (43%)
Stigma or fear of judgement (e.g. from community, family or professionals)	58 (38%)
Distrust in services (such as due to past experiences or system related issues)	32 (21%)
Financial barriers (such as transport costs)	24 (16%)
No barriers	23 (15%)
Racial discrimination by service providers	16 (11%)
Other	2 (1%)

When people answered 'Other', we asked them to explain further. Here are their answers:

*"I have epilepsy. They ask me to call 111 and they didn't respond."*

*"Quick judgment and bias assessment".*

*"Fear accessing process i.e. telephone".*

Q. If you have experienced barriers in accessing mental health support, please tell us more about your experience:

A.

*"I have been told that culture doesn't change the way that I have been treated but it has. I have been waiting for mental health services for the last 3 years. To the point that I nearly took my own life".*

*"It was difficult to get the right support; GP's are busy and usually just prescribe tablets. Services are very limited".*

*"We had an assessment and never heard the outcome from GP".*

*"My son is 21, waiting for an assessment for Autism over 2 years. Waiting list 3 and half. There is little support for people without a diagnose".*

Q. If you have not sought mental health support, what might prevent you from doing so in the future? (Multichoice answer).

A.

	No. & %
Lack of information about available services	10 (67%)
Long waiting times	8 (53%)
Difficulty getting an appointment	8 (53%)
Stigma or fear of judgement (e.g. from community, family or professionals)	8 (53%)
Cultural misunderstandings or lack of culturally sensitive care	7 (47%)
Language or communication difficulties	6 (47%)
Financial barriers (such as transport costs)	3 (20%)
Racial discrimination by services	2 (13%)
Distrust in services (e.g. due to experience or system related issues)	1 (7%)
Other	1 (7%)
I don't think I would face any barriers	0

Q. If you accessed mental health support, was the information provided about the services and treatment options available clear and understandable?

A.

YES 105 (74%)

NO 36 (26%)

When people answered No. They explained further:

*"I had done some research, and I knew that I didn't want CBT. I was told there was no other options and if I stayed on the waiting list there was a chance I could be seen by an EMDR therapist but that was 2 years ago, I just gave up".*

*"It was very limited and it was hard to understand; it felt as though the service was just following a script".*

*"We didn't go further, still waiting for an assessment outcome".*

*It was difficult to find out how far my child is on waiting list for assessment, we only know he still needs to wait for more than year".*

*"I have been told by GP that my case is not an emergency, it's not life threatening yet, because I didn't think about suicide".*

*"I don't want medicine and want help that is above basic counselling i.e. psychotherapy, then the support doesn't seem to be as forthcoming".*

*"Sometimes yes, sometimes they don't arrange interpreters".*

Q. If you saw your GP about your mental health, what was the outcome?

A.

	No. & %
Medication	46 (32%)
Referral to Mental Health Practitioner	39 (28%)
Referral to NHS Talking Therapies	35 (25%)
No action	11 (8%)
Referral to Social Prescriber	6 (4%)
Other	5 (4%)

When someone answered other, they said:

*"Not heard anything yet".*

*"I referred myself to talking therapies reluctantly since no other referral was made or offered".*

Q. How would you rate the overall quality of help with your mental health that you received from the following services? (GP - Doctor)

A.

	No. & %
Good	77 (54%)
Neither good nor poor	20 (14%)
Poor	18 (13%)
Very good	17 (12%)
Very poor	9 (6%)
Did not use	3 (2%)

Q. How would you rate the overall quality of help with your mental health that you received from the following services? (Mental Health Practitioner at GP Practice).

A.

	No. & %
Good	64 (48%)
Neither good nor poor	23 (17%)
Poor	19 (14%)
Did not use	14 (11%)
Very good	9 (7%)
Very poor	4 (3%)

Q. How would you rate the overall quality of help with your mental health that you received from the following services? (Social Prescriber at GP services).

A.

	No. & %
Good	44 (36%)
Did not use	28 (23%)
Neither good nor poor	26 (21%)
Poor	16 (13%)
Very poor	6 (5%)
Very good	3 (2%)

Q. How would you rate the overall quality of help with your mental health that you received from the following services? (NHS Talking Therapies).

A.

	No. & %
Good	42 (33%)
Did not use	27 (21%)
Neither good nor poor	25 (20%)
Poor	21 (16%)
Very good	8 (6%)
Very poor	5 (4%)

Q. How would you rate the overall quality of help with your mental health that you received from the following services? (NHS 111).

A.

	No. & %
Did not use	38 (31%)
Good	31 (25%)
Neither good nor poor	20 (16%)
Poor	16 (13%)
Very poor	10 (8%)
Very good	7 (6%)

Q. How would you rate the overall quality of help with your mental health that you received from the following services? (Non-clinical services such as community groups or charities).

A.

	No. & %
Did not use	44 (35%)
Good	33 (26%)
Neither good nor poor	22 (18%)
Poor	12 (10%)
Very good	8 (6%)
Very poor	6 (5%)

Q. What was the best thing about your experience of getting help for your mental health?

A.

- *"Restoration Therapy and 'MindKind' projects, really supported me at a time when I needed it most. Their flexibility has helped me become a new person and it is shown that I'm not broken I just needed to correct format for me".*
- *"Pick up phone day or night and talk".*
- *"Feeling heard and supported".*
- *"Community services provide a more understanding and sensitive service".*
- *"My mental health nurse was absolutely brilliant".*
- *"GP listened to my concerns".*
- *"Express myself without judging".*
- *"Talking to someone".*
- *"To feel or know I wasn't alone in the way I was feeling or emotions I had. That I was not crazy or going mad. I understand the chemical imbalances I had at the time".*
- *"They provided support but booking appointments was very difficult".*
- *"Mind charity through the practitioners said...you don't have a mental health issue, you obviously keep your mental health well looked after".*
- *"Meeting others in same situation".*

Q. If you could change one thing about your experience of getting help for your mental health, what would it be?

A.

- *"I would have never gone to the NHS and wasted so much time".*
- *"Get help sooner".*
- *"I would refuse taking medication, as I really wanted psychology therapy".*
- *"Each case should be taken seriously; each person should have access to therapy even if the case is not "emergency" for GP. This could lead to poor outcomes for asking for help in the future".*
- *"Referral for psychotherapy and reduced wait times".*
- *"Getting therapist".*
- *"More awareness".*
- *"Waiting time is too long They don't help you straight away".*
- *"Just for people to know where to go differences between services. More posters in GP e.g. explain what talking therapies mean".*
- *"Not sure, I think maybe more around other people being educated on mental health including workplaces".*

## Additional Comments/ Focus group

Comments within the survey and from the focus groups speak of cultural barriers within services. It was felt by some people that services lacked awareness of cultural differences and norms, and this could impact on how they were treated when they sought help.

*"I have been told that culture doesn't change the way that I have been treated but it has. I have been waiting for mental health services for the last 3 years, to the point where I nearly took my own life."*

Another said that they felt that there was a need for more professionals from different cultures as...

*"There is a lack of 'cultural identity professionals', then you don't have to keep explaining your lived experience."*

Others spoke about the social stigma associated with mental health problems within their own culture that prevented them from seeking help in the first place.

*"Due to culture, poor mental health is not always discussed, so very awkward and difficult to talk about."*

*"My close friend was brought up in a religious strict household. It was seen as a sin to struggle with mental health, which set her back from finding the support that she needed."*

One person told how they felt that racism played a part in their misdiagnosis when an assumption was made that they had a mental health condition because of their race and gender.

*"The doctor was quick to judge without a proper assessment of the issues and referred me to the wrong mental health service. The actual issue being ignored. This is a common response to Black and Asian women... we're automatically diagnosed as depressed even if it could be low mood or fatigue from a non-mental health issue."*

Beyond cultural or race related barriers to accessing services, the key reasons for not being able to access services were a lack of access to GP appointments which is common for the whole population.

*"Can't get an appointment at the GP.'  
'Very difficult to get an appointment in the first place.'  
'No face-to face appointments with GP."*

People also commented on a lack of knowledge on what services were available or if their symptoms were mental health related in the first place, meaning that they did not always know where to go to get help.

*"If I knew what help is out there and how to access it."  
"I wish there was more mental health awareness for Asian middle-aged women... it took me a while to realise my symptoms are related with mental health illness."*

## **Conclusion**

People feel that there is still a stigma and fear to express their mental state in their own communities and family settings.

In most cases, service users access mental health support via their GP/GP service. Many expressed the difficulties around initially getting an appointment and then the waiting times for an appointment. Further, mentioned that the waiting time for assessment/diagnosis and treatment was also an issue.

Some service users may need immediate support whilst others may need initial diagnosis and a treatment pathway. But excessive waiting could mean that people's conditions may/will deteriorate or that earlier intervention could have been an option.

Service users commented on the quality of the outcome for them was generally good when accessing GP services. Whether it be a GP or a dedicated Mental Health Practitioner. But some commented that there seems to be lack of cultural understanding in services.

There was also a view that past experiences of this may prevent them accessing any services in the future.

People feel that there is a lack of knowledge of non-clinical led support, which if awareness were greater may mean that people could gain access to support more quickly, and in an environment more familiar to them. The need for clinical intervention could be lessened.

It is worth noting that people were not always aware of alternative help and support in their own communities and locally. It may be that people need more information about alternative pathways and that the GP service can provide such information.

Communication and language is important and every tool to effectively communicate should be used as well as promoting ESOL opportunities.

In addition, some people have a fear, lack of knowledge when using technology or may not have access to technology to even begin accessing services.

There is need for access to a range of clinical and non-clinical treatment and support from a variety of sources. So, that people with a range of mental health needs could be supported.

We visited both men's and women's groups, and it was apparent that there was an element of self-help or peer to peer support that worked for people. It does not mean that this replaces access or support, but it highlights the value of shared experiences and shared support.

The initial contact with each individual is important and an understanding of the appropriate pathway to meet that individual need is critical. The thinking that a Doctor/GP service can be the gatekeeper for this may hold up the access, treatment and support the individual needs.

Some of the comments that people have shared could be actioned relatively quickly.

- *"Waiting time is too long They don't help you straight away".*
- *"Just for people to know where to go differences between services. More posters in GP e.g. explain what talking therapies mean".*
- *"Not sure, I think maybe more around other people being educated on mental health including workplaces".*

## Recommendations

1. Check/look at the current Mental Health triaging process to ensure fit for purpose.
2. Each GP website could have a Mental Health self-assessment so that patients can be specific about their mental health state of mind/or Mental health condition. This could be used by the GP service to deploy quick and suitable support to the patient. i.e. if someone is worrying about debt and becoming anxious, debt support could be deployed to work with the patient. This may address the need for medical intervention.
3. Assess and if necessary, address any excessive wait times for: contact, assessment, diagnosis, treatment etc.
4. Ensure interpreters are available when possible.
5. When language interpretation is not available, use of digital translators already available on smartphones and tablets such as 'Google Translate' could be used. A.I. is making strides in many communication areas.
6. Promote ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) opportunities to cohorts of non-English speaking individuals. For communication and future nonclinical opportunities such as those that can be offered by social prescribers.
7. A directory of local mental health support could be added to each GP service, online and each GP venue. As well as local community centres, libraries etc. So, that if someone has a mental health need or mental health concern, they can access a directory to seek additional organisations or local community support such as Rethink and men's walk and talk groups.
8. Consider Mental Health 'drop-in centres' for people to access either advice around access or local support available. There are a number of warm places or community associations that maybe able support some space for this or a local library setting etc.
9. Possibly identify Mental Health champions or mental health 1st Aiders in communities who may be an initial or supportive contact for people seeking to access MH services or support organisations.
10. Ensure patient awareness of 'Walsall Connected' to access online services which may include mental health related support.
11. Communities could consider having 'mental health 1st aiders' who are aware of cultural considerations and be a link to services to signpost people to.
12. Services could ensure that they have cultural aware staff or utilise staff from those communities to meet communication or treatment needs if not already done so.

- 13.** Communities could consider having mental awareness days to reduce the stigma and encourage people for that culture/community to open up about mental health.

## Other Demographics

### Gender/sex

	No. & %
Male	82 (52%)
Female	74 (47%)
Prefer not to say	2 (1%)
Non-Binary	2 (1%)

### Age

	No. & %
25 - 49	82 (52%)
18 - 24	34 (21%)
50 - 64	24 (15%)
65 - 79	11 (7%)
80 years and over	7(4%)
Prefer to not to say	2(1%)

## Mental Health Support Links

Listed below is a short list of the useful support information and organisations and how to access them. It is not exhaustive and will change over time due to the development of new and closure of some of the support due to funding or other issues.

### **Walsall Council 'Wellbeing Directory'**

A varied range of local support information and advice. It includes specific health and wellbeing information.

Link: <https://tinyurl.com/4neeeazp>

### **Social Prescribing through your GP service.**

Social prescribing is designed to support people with a wide range of social, emotional or practical needs. It enables GPs, nurses and other primary care professionals to refer people to a range of local, non-clinical services to support their health and wellbeing.

Link: <https://tinyurl.com/yc2uurpr>

### **Walsall Mental Health Liaison Service**

This service is for adults from the age of 17 -65 years old experiencing emotional distress that is impacting upon their mental health and may not be able to keep themselves safe.

There is a separate service for individuals aged 66 years and above provided by Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust, however working in close partnership with this team to ensure that assessment, treatment and pathways to mental health services are supported, the service is 24 hours.

Dorothy Pattison Hospital, Walsall, WS2 9XH  
Telephone: 01922 607960.

### **Walsall Community Directory**

Contact details and outline of events of 15 community venues in Walsall. Ideal to get involved, meet people and seek support and advice.

Link: <https://tinyurl.com/5eh4xdep>

### **Walsall Talking Therapies**

Walsall Talking Therapies Service supports people with depression and anxiety symptoms. We can help people aged 16 and over who are registered with a Walsall GP.

Link: <https://walsalltalkingtherapies.nhs.uk/>

Telephone: **0800 953 0995** (Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm).

### **Walsall Council Mental Health page**

This is aimed at younger people. Offering tips and guidance.

Link: <https://tinyurl.com/37d4fwcf>

### **One Love**

A Community Interest Company whose aims are to tackle, social isolation loneliness, anxiety, depression and issues that lead to poor mental health.

Address: 202 Bloxwich, High St, Walsall, WS3 3LA

Telephone: 01922 900486

### **Forward Carers**

Carers support service, here to make a difference to the lives of people caring for an elderly frail, sick or disabled family member.

Telephone: 01922 616798

Link: <https://forwardcarers.org.uk/>

### **Mindkind**

MindKind. And we really do mind. About mental health in the workplace. About mental health in the community. About mental health in conversations. MindKind Projects stand up for mental health in the workplace. To bridge the gap in support services. And to encourage people to be kind to themselves.

Telephone: 01922 632170.

**The Sanctuary Hub**

A safe place where you can access support outside of usual mental health service hours. Experienced and trained mental health recovery workers who provide person-centred support.

Telephone: 0800 008 6516

**Andys Man Club**

Free support groups nationwide, running every Monday from 7PM except bank holidays. In these groups, men can open up about the issues affecting their lives in a safe, judgement-free and non-clinical environment. Our clubs are designed to be free of pressure, there is no obligation for men to speak, they can simply listen if they wish.

With thousands of men using our sessions every week, and an army of volunteers on board, the movement is continuing to grow week-by-week. We firmly believe in the power of talking and that #ItsOkayToTalk. Link to website: <https://andysmanclub.co.uk/>

**Facebook**

If you have access to Facebook, you can search for local support which may be run by like minded/position to offer each other support and guidance. Or it might be self-help, peer to peer support such as men's mental health walking groups. There may be other support routes/ organisations. If you can suggest and supply any contact details Healthwatch Walsall will add to our Advice and information section.

# healthwatch

## Walsall

Share your Walsall Health and Social Care services experiences by getting in touch by using our services review platform "Have Your Say" on our website. Link: <https://tinyurl.com/3778j3ps>

Find us and our reports on our Social Media platforms



Facebook: @HealthwatchWSL

X (Twitter): @HWWalsall

Instagram: healthwatchwsl

YouTube: Healthwatch Walsall 2020

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We are committed to the quality of our information. Every three years we perform an in depth audit so that we can be certain of this.

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