NHS
Norfolk and Suffolk
NHS Foundation Trust

Primary Care based mental health practitioners

Information for patients, carers and professionals



Improving together
Safer • Kinder • Better

Who we are

The Primary Care based mental health practitioners are a jointly-funded, non-urgent service, delivering mental health support in GP surgeries.

Practitioners are Mental Health Nurses, Occupational Therapists and Social Workers who collaborate with a range of professionals, teams and community organisations.

We also work closely with:

- Your GP, working alongside doctors to co-ordinate care and ensure continuity of support.
- Social prescribers.
- Enhanced recovery workers.
- Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE).

By working together, we ensure that individuals receive the most effective and holistic mental health support available.

How to access the right support for your mental health at the right time in general practice

Enhanced Recovery Workers

These are employees of Norfolk and Waveney MIND mental health charity. They work within GP surgeries across the county, empowering individuals aged 14+ to take control of their mental health and wellbeing. You can self-refer through your local GP practice.

Click for website or scan the QR code

Social Prescribers

Can be employees of your GP practices, local authority or Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises (VCSE). Connecting individuals with their local community based services to improve their overall wellbeing.

Click for video or scan the QR code

Primary Care Based Mental Health Practitioners (MHP)

Offer practical support tailored to individuals aged 16+, including signposting to helpful resources, techniques to manage challenges and brief interventions designed to support your mental health. They can also communicate your needs to others in your support network such as your GP ensuring you receive integrated care and access to the right services.

Click for video or scan the QR code

What happens if I am referred to the Primary Care Based MHP?

Prior to your appointment we will send a simple questionnaire which asks about aspects of your life that are known to have an impact on your mental wellbeing and recovery.

During your initial contact with the MHP we will discuss your mental health and your current needs and what you would like to explore in terms of support, helping you explore your mental health and gain insight into what might be affecting your wellbeing. These initial appointments can take place over the phone to enable a quicker access to support.

Further sessions can take place in person at your surgery or over the phone, providing flexibility to suit your needs.

These appointments can last up to 40 minutes and can be an in-depth discussion.

During this assessment the MHP will highlight any current needs, discuss your current risk presentation (thoughts of suicide / self-harm) and discuss your treatment plan. MHPs can explore short-term psychological interventions, safety planning, signposting you to a service that may meet your needs more appropriately following a longer discussion and discussing the possibility of medication needs with your GP.

In some cases, the MHP may offer further appointments, providing brief interventions that can include:

- Strategies for managing mental health difficulties.
- Techniques for managing anxiety and low mood.
- Safety planning.
- Learning problem solving skills.
- Understanding and managing emotion.



What Primary Care Based Mental Health Practitioners cannot offer

While the MHP provides valuable support, there are certain services they do not offer:

- Case management and care co-ordination.
- Counselling and long-term interventions.
- Support to those already under the care of a service (e.g. Community Mental Health Team or NHS Talking Therapies).
- Emergency or diagnostic services.

Planning ahead of your mental health appointment

Being prepared can help you get the most out of your appointment. Ask a friend, family or carer if you want someone with you during your appointment.

Prepare a list of the concerns you want to discuss. Think about your symptoms, how long you've felt this way and how it affects your life.

We would encourage you to write down any questions you want to ask. For example, you may want to know if medication or talking therapy could help, what you can do to help yourself or how long treatment will take.

During your appointment, there are things you can do to make the most of your time:

- Be open and honest. MHP's hear personal things all the time and are trained to deal with them in a professional and supportive way.
- Tell the MHP if there are things you think might help you.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions or get your MHP to repeat things.
- Ask them to write down anything you don't understand and make notes during the appointment if you need to.
- Make sure you fully understand what the next steps are before your appointment ends.

During your appointment the MHP is likely to ask you questions about:

- Your physical and emotional symptoms.
- Any recent events that might be affecting how you feel.
- Your drug and alcohol use and any thoughts of hurting yourself.
- Your medical history and family history, especially regarding any mental health conditions.

Based on what you say, the MHP might:

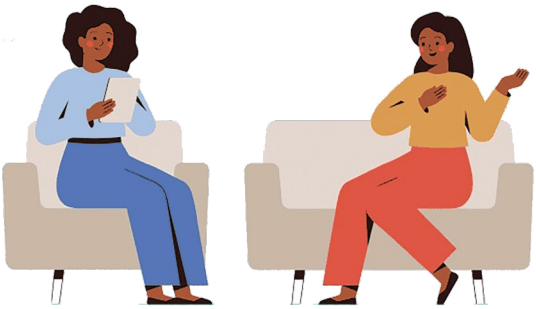
- Provide advice on self-help measures such as how to reduce stress, get better sleep or eat well.
- Give you the details of a service you can contact yourself, such as charitable or voluntary services.
- Refer you to another service such as NHS talking therapies or a community mental health team.

Common concerns about talking about your mental health

Will everything I say be confidential?

Everything you discuss within your appointment will be kept confidential between the service and your GP and will only breach that confidentiality if we think there is a serious risk of harm to you or someone else. We will seek your permission before doing so, if possible.

The practitioner will keep you informed about what will happen next. They might arrange a follow-up appointment, signpost you to other services or speak to another health or social care professional to assess if you need to access other services.



Notes page ahead of your appointment

What did you want to discuss?



How long has this been impacting you?



Have you tried anything to help?



What do you think will be helpful?



LOOK AFTER YOUR WELLBEING

Every Mind Matters has tips for keeping mentally healthy at: www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters

Recovery College offers free courses to those on a mental health or wellbeing recovery journey at: **www.nsft.nhs.uk/recovery-college/**



Mental health self-help guides on more than 20 topics can be found at: **www.nsft.nhs.uk**

CALM (5pm-midnight every day) **0800 58 58 58**. Online live chat and WhatsApp.

Mind support line (Monday to Friday 9am - 6pm) **0300 102 1234**

SANEline (4-10pm every day) **0300 304 7000**. Text SHOUT to **85258** (crisis text line).

TALKING THERAPY

NHS Norfolk and Waveney Talking Therapies

Talking Therapies
If you live in Norfolk and Waveney, self-refer at: **www.nandwtalkingtherapies.org.uk**

wellbeing Helping you live your life

Wellbeing
If you live in Suffolk you can self-refer at: **www.wellbeingnands.co.uk**

CRISIS SUPPORT

If you already receive specialist mental health support, make an appointment to see your regular clinician.

Samaritans 24/7 free on **116 123** or use Samaritans Self-Help app to track mood, create a safety plan and try techniques and helpful activities.

NHS 111 Choose the 'mental health' option, available 24/7.

If you or someone you are with is at immediate risk of harm, call 999 or visit A&E.

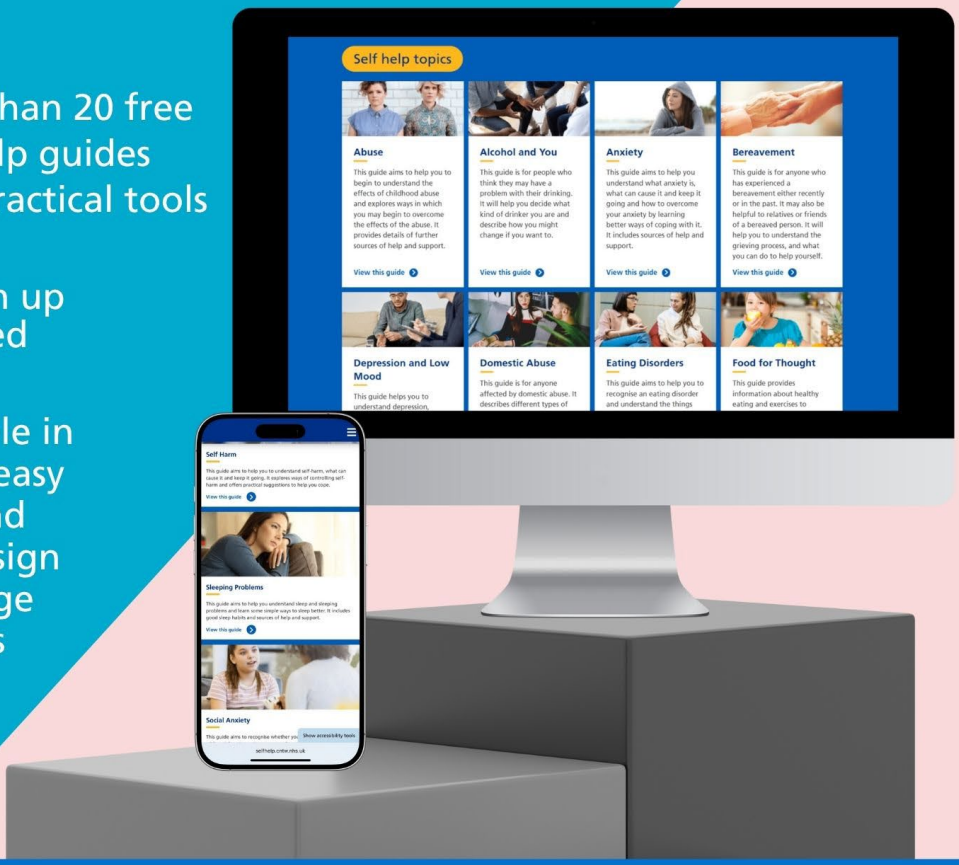
NHS
Norfolk and Suffolk
NHS Foundation Trust

FREE mental health self-help guides

More than 20 free self-help guides with practical tools

No sign up required

Available in audio, easy read and British sign language formats



Improving together
Safer • Kinder • Better

View the self-help guides on our website at **www.nsft.nhs.uk**

Improving together
Safer • Kinder • Better

NHS
Norfolk and Suffolk
NHS Foundation Trust

Feeling low? Feeling overwhelmed?
Anxious? Difficulty sleeping?



Recovery College

Unlock better mental health and learn how to live a meaningful and valued life, with or without symptoms

Find out more . . .

Email: recovery.college@nsft.nhs.uk
Visit: nsft.nhs.uk/recovery-college
Call: 0300 303 4419

Scan the QR code

Discovery • Meaning • Purpose

Relaxation techniques

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

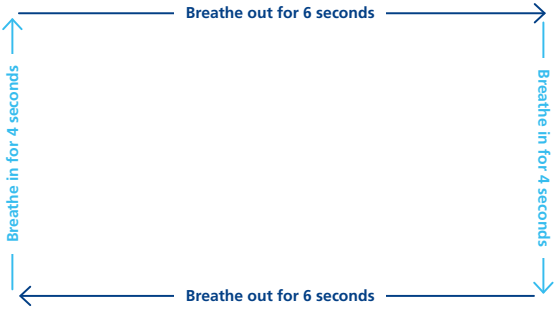
Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) is one way of reducing muscle tension that many people find helpful. PMR involves intentionally tensing each muscle group and then relaxing them. Tense each muscle group for 5 seconds and then relax the muscles for 10 seconds.

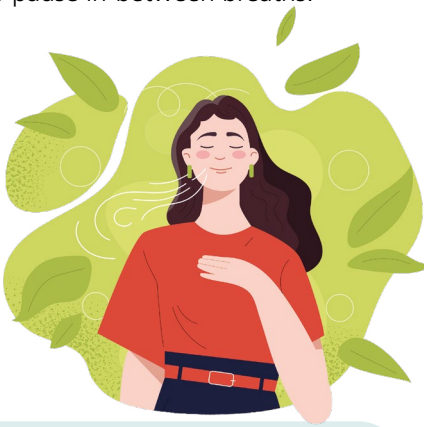
If you have any physical injuries that cause or could cause any muscle pain, then you may want to avoid tensing these muscle groups or you may want to try another relaxation exercise.

1	Expand your lungs, holding your breath for a few seconds. Release the breath slowly as the tension leaves your chest.
2	Now move your attention to your head. Tighten the muscles in your forehead by raising your eyebrows as high as you can. Hold for about five seconds. Then abruptly release feeling that tension fall away.
3	Now smile widely, feeling your mouth and cheeks tense. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release, appreciating the softness in your face.
4	Gently pull your head back as if to look at the ceiling. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release, feeling the tension melting away.
5	Now, tightly, but without straining, clench your fists and hold this position for about 5 seconds, and release.
6	Tighten the muscles your upper arm, flexing your biceps. Feel that build-up of tension, visualise it tightening. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release, enjoying that feeling of limpness. Let your arms hang loose beside you.
7	Tense your upper back by pulling your shoulders back trying to make your shoulder blades touch. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release.
8	Now tighten the muscles in your stomach by sucking in. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release.
9	Tighten your buttocks and thighs together. Hold for about 5 seconds… release, imagine your hips falling loose.
10	Now flex your feet, pulling your toes towards you and feeling the tension in your calves. Hold for about 5 seconds, and relax, feel the weight of your legs sinking down.

Rectangle Breathing

Imagine a rectangle. Breathe in slowly through your nose, across the side of the rectangle for 4 seconds. Then breathe out slowly through your mouth across the top of the rectangle for 6 seconds. Breathe in slowly through your nose, across the side of the rectangle for 4 seconds. Then breathe out slowly through your mouth across the bottom of the rectangle for 6 seconds. Repeat five times, or more if you wish. Try to take a brief second or two pause in-between breaths.





54321

When we are worrying or ruminating, or wake up suddenly in a panic, it can be hard to be aware of things around us in the here and now.

We can use our five senses to ground us back to the present moment. Focus on the present moment by using all your senses to notice where you are right at this minute.

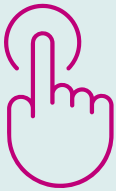
Say aloud: (Repeat as many times as you need to, spotting different things each time.)



5 things you can see



4 things you can hear



3 things you can touch



2 things you can smell



1 thing you can taste

Feedback

Friends and Family Test



Please use the QR code to provide any feedback.

For complaints, please contact your surgery or see the information below.

Need help and advice?

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) and Complaints Service offers confidential advice, support and information. It provides a point of contact for patients, their families and their carers.

Tel: 01603 421486

Email: palsandcomplaints@nsft.nhs.uk

IN TRAN® communication for all

If you would like this leaflet in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or a different language, please ask.

Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust values and celebrates the diversity of all the communities we serve. We are fully committed to ensuring that all people have equality of opportunity to access our service, irrespective of their age, gender, ethnicity, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership or social and economic status.

Trust Headquarters:

County Hall
Martineau Lane
Norwich
NR1 2DH

01603 421421

nsft.nhs.uk

nsft_mentalhealth

Norfolk and Suffolk NHS FT

© NSFT March 2026 GFX:7836