

**Pathway for patients presenting with Adult Mental Health Needs in General Practice**

**April 2020**

**Purpose of this care pathway**

This care pathway illustrates the processes within each stage of care provision for patients presenting with adult mental health needs in General Practice. It recognises the principles set out within the Regional Mental Health Care pathway ‘You in Mind’ and the Stepped Care model detailed within, i.e. Steps 1 & 2 managed within General Practice and Steps 3 -5 provided by Trust MH Services.

This care pathway will also provide assurance to the Southern HSC Trust in relation to the governance provisions for the Band 7 Senior Mental Health Practitioners (SMHPs) practising within the Primary Care multi-disciplinary team (MDTs)s. The role of the SMHPs and governance arrangements are further detailed within the Newry & District GP Federation Governance Framework document and job description.

This care pathway has been written during the period of the Covid19 pandemic and therefore has not been developed in collaboration with a wide group of staff or service users. There has been input from GP leads and matters identified by Trust mental health managers have been considered and reflected within.

**Scope of this care pathway**

This care pathway is for use by GPs and Senior Mental Health practitioners within the Newry & District GP Federation.

Referral to Trust MH services is for scheduled care services only. The pathway for unscheduled care mental health services will be considered in the future and therefore the current referral pathway to Home Treatment Crisis Response remains direct GP referral only.

**Role of the Practice Administration team**

Administration staff are the first point of contact in general practice. Patients will ring the practice to arrange an appointment with a health care professional.

Administration staff have attended ‘care navigator’ training and will ask patients some detail about their healthcare need in order to direct them to the most appropriate healthcare professional to meet their needs. In relation to mental health they have been provided with some guidance as detailed in appendix 1.

Patients will have the choice to attend a GP or they may book an appointment directly with the senior mental health practitioner.

**Pathway**

This pathway is underpinned by the principles within the Collective Leadership Strategy. Our staff will be supported, engaged, enabled and empowered to deliver high quality, compassionate care and support that improves the health & wellbeing of our population.

**Collaborative working**

There are a range of communication processes in place, formal and informal, that will support the multi-disciplinary team model and ensure a collaborative approach to patient care within and across teams, as detailed in the table below. These processes will also support the learning and development of the SMHPs within this new model, promote autonomous practice and develop their clinical leadership role.

The introduction of MDTs in the Newry & District GP Federation is at an early stage of implementation with the recruitment of Senior Mental Health Practitioners across the Federation area continuing into 2020/21.

The continued implementation of MDTs will require collaborative working within and across GP practice teams and with other partners, including Trusts, Community & Voluntary sector and people with lived experience. There will be much to learn as we move forward with the transformation agenda. As such, this pathway will be reviewed in collaboration with key stakeholders and within a culture of continuous quality improvement.

Collective leadership will be key to transforming services as outlined in Health & Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together.

**Appendix 1**

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**General Practice Mental Health Practitioners**

**Guidance for Reception Staff**

Patients registered with the Practice can now book an appointment with a practice based Mental Health Practitioner (MHP). The main role of the MHP is to provide a first contact and brief intervention mental health service to patients, of any age, within the practice. Patients may book an appointment if they are concerned about their mental health and wellbeing.

Examples of when an appointment with the mental health practitioner may be offered includes when a person describes any of the following:

* Feeling stressed, depressed or anxious
* Experiencing panic attacks
* Thoughts or acts of Self-harm – cutting, poisoning, burning or hitting
* Thoughts of life not worth living or suicide
* Addiction Issues – Alcohol, Drugs or Gambling

Patients may request to book an appointment directly with the mental health practitioner or may be advised to make an appointment by another healthcare professional within the Practice multi-disciplinary team.

Urgent appointment slots are available for booking on the day and may be offered to patients with suicidal thoughts or presenting in psychological distress.

**If you are concerned a patient is in danger of suicide or serious harm please seek advice immediately from a GP or Mental Health Practitioner. This includes patients who state that they have;**

* **self-harmed by poisoning – E.g. overdose of medication or swallowed harmful liquid**
* **taken a harmful material – E.g. swallowed button batteries**
* **a plan or intent to complete suicide.**