

We Need to Talk

campaign for psychological therapy

This is a toolkit that gives you everything you need to campaign on We Need to Talk ahead of the general election.

Psychological therapies – such as counselling and psychotherapy – can be very effective for treating mental health conditions. However, they are not always easily available on the NHS and some people can wait years for treatment.

Although the Government's Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme has improved the situation, far too many people are still not getting the treatment that they need. Because of this Mind, the Royal College for General Practitioners, the Royal College of Psychiatrists, Rethink, Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, Young Minds, Mental Health Foundation, the New Savoy Partnership and the British Psychological Society have launched a major new phase of the We Need to Talk campaign that calls for better access to psychological therapies.

What do we want?

We want the NHS to offer a full range of evidence-based psychological therapies to all that need them within 28 days of requesting referral.

What needs to happen?

Psychological therapies must become a top priority for all of the main political parties. To achieve this, we need to start putting the issue on the agenda of party political candidates ahead of the general election.

What can you do?

You can play a vital role in this campaign by making your local party political candidates aware of the need for better access to psychological therapies. This campaign toolkit aims to give you ideas on how you can go about doing this.

In the toolkit, you will find:

- Campaign briefing
- Campaign Q&A
- What you can do
- Template letter to your party political candidates
- Template letter to your local editor
- Feedback form

Go to www.mind.org.uk/talk to find out more. If you have any questions, please contact Vicki Ensor at Mind on 020 82152223 or v.ensor@mind.org.uk.

Thank you very much for supporting the campaign!

Campaign Q&A

Who is part of the We Need to Talk campaign?

The campaign is supported by a large number of charities and organisations. These include: Mind, Rethink, Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, Mental Health Foundation, Young Minds, Royal College of Psychiatrists, Royal College of General Practitioners, the New Savoy Partnership and the British Psychological Society.

What is the history behind the We Need to Talk campaign?

The We Need to Talk campaign has been running since 2006. The campaign has called for better access to psychological therapies and highlighted the long waiting times that many service users experienced across the country.

As part of its work, the campaign published two documents: 'We Need to Talk: the case for psychological therapy on the NHS' and 'While We Are Waiting: experiences of waiting for and receiving psychological therapies on the NHS'. Both documents can be downloaded at www.mind.org.uk/talk.

What has the campaign achieved so far?

In 2007, the Government committed £173 million to its Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme (IAPT). The programme aims to train 3,600 therapists and enable 900,000 more people to access psychological therapies by 2010/11.

So, what's the problem?

Although the IAPT programme has improved the situation across the country, far too many people are still not able to access the right psychological therapy at the right time. IAPT only provides a limited range of psychological therapies, its provision is patchy and a large number of people are excluded from accessing the programme (such as people with severe mental health conditions or those with borderline personality disorder).

What is the campaign doing now?

The next major phase of the We Need to Talk campaign has just been launched and is calling for all the NHS to offer a full range of evidence-based psychological therapies to all who need them within 28 days of requesting referral.

Why is offering a range of psychological therapies important?

There is no 'one size fits all' psychological therapy. What works for one person may not work for another. It is therefore important that a full range of psychological therapies are available in order to ensure that people are able to access the right therapy for them. At the moment, the range of psychological therapies provided around the country varies considerably and this needs to change.

Why do we want the waiting time cut to 28 days?

When people are experiencing mental distress, they can be in a very vulnerable situation. They need to access the right help for them as soon as possible. However, we still hear from far too many service users who tell us that they have been put on waiting lists for months and sometimes years.

Having to wait for over a month to access treatment can put a huge strain on people at a very difficult time. As one service user put it, 'while I was waiting (for about three months), my anxiety increased as I felt I was being ignored and sidelined'.

Why do we say 'from requesting referral'?

It is important that the campaign includes those who want to self-refer to psychological therapies. Service users should not be entirely dependent on being referred to treatment through mental health professionals. If a person feels that psychological therapy will help them, nothing should stop them from getting a thorough assessment.

What do we want from party political candidates?

We want to make psychological therapies a priority issue for all of the main political parties. In order to achieve this, we need to get as many party political candidates as possible to commit to improving access to a wide range of psychological therapies if they are elected.

Where can I find more information about the campaign?

Read our campaign reports and Lord Layard's case for psychological therapies at www.mind.org.uk/talk.

What you can do

Lobby your party political candidates

Ahead of general elections, party political candidates obviously become focused on the needs of their potential constituents. What you say to your candidates is extremely powerful. You are therefore best placed to spread the We Need to Talk message to the future government by lobbying your party political candidates.

- **Write to them**

We know that party political candidates take notice of letters that have been written by constituents. We have drafted a template letter that aims to give you an idea of what you might want to write but remember that the most personal letters are the most effective. The main purpose of the letter should be to ask them to make a commitment to improving access to psychological therapies if they come into power. You can find your candidates' email and postal addresses by accessing the websites of the political parties.

- **Organise a meeting**

Ask your candidates to meet with you to discuss the campaign. In the meeting, try to make sure that you explain why you want them to commit to improving access to psychological therapies. Remember, your personal experiences will make the greatest impression on your local candidates.

- **Doorstep questions**

Most candidates will be knocking on doors in their constituencies to find out what matters most to local people. This is a great opportunity to raise We Need to Talk as an issue that you care about. Be prepared to explain to candidates why you think psychological therapies are important, why you think the NHS should offer a full range of psychological therapies within 28 days of requesting referral and remember to ask whether they would commit to improving access to psychological therapies if elected.

- **Organise a hustings**

Hustings are public meetings at which each candidate sets out what he or she will do if elected. Members of the public are able to ask questions and cross-examine the candidates, as well as getting 'on record' commitments. Check your local paper and community notice boards to see if any hustings have been arranged in your area.

You might like to organise your own hustings. If you do, it's important to be impartial – you must invite all of the candidates for your constituency and give them equal opportunity to speak. Avoid endorsing a particular candidate's view, and allow people to come to their own conclusions. Although candidates will want to talk about a range of issues, be sure to

ask them questions on psychological therapies and try to get them to commit to improving access to psychological therapies if elected.

Use your local media

Most local newspapers will run stories on the local parliamentary candidates and the election. You could respond to any such articles with a letter to the editor that calls on candidates to commit to improving access to psychological therapies. We have drafted a template letter for you to use but, again, remember that the most effective letters are the most personal.

Listen out for local radio talk shows on the election. They sometimes ask for residents to phone in with questions for candidates – put in a call and ask about psychological therapies.

Template letter to your local party political candidates

This template letter aims to give you an idea of how you might want to write about the We Need to Talk campaign when you contact your party political candidates. However, the best letters are the most personal, so please make your letter as individual as possible – explain why this issue matters to you, why you think psychological therapies are important and share any experiences you have of waiting for psychological therapy or not being able to access the therapy you wanted.

Remember to ask your party political candidate for a response and, if possible, please forward copies of any response you receive to Mind (feedback details can be found at the end of this toolkit).

[Your address and postcode]

[Date]

Dear [candidate's name]

I am writing to you as my party political candidate. I'm a therapist/service user/carer/constituent in your local area and am asking you to commit to improving access to a wide range of psychological therapies if you are elected.

I support the We Need to Talk campaign that is being run by Mind and a large number of other charities and organisations. The campaign is calling for the NHS to offer a full range of evidence-based psychological therapies to all those that need them within 28 days of requesting referral.

Better access to psychological therapies is extremely important. Depression and anxiety place a huge burden on our society - in fact, these conditions cost the economy £12 billion every single year.

Although psychological therapies have been proven to be very effective for many mental health conditions, they can often be exceptionally difficult to access. Waiting times are often far too long - in some cases people are left waiting for 2 years! The recent Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme has improved the situation to some degree but its provision is patchy, the therapies it offers are limited and it excludes many people who do not fit the programme criteria.

I believe that it is vital to improve access to psychological therapies because [explain why this campaign is important to you]. It is simply not right that when people are experiencing mental distress, and are in a vulnerable position, they can be made to wait for months on end to get the help that they need. We would never accept this for physical health problems and it should be no different for mental health.

Will you commit to improving access to a wide range of psychological therapies for all who need them if elected?

I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely,

[Your signature and name]

Template letter to your local editor

As with the template letter to party political candidates, the below aims to give you an idea of what you might want to write to your local editor but we encourage you to make your letter as personal as possible. Although your letter may have a greater chance of getting published if you are writing in response to a recent news story on the election or local candidates, you can send a letter to your local editor at any time.

[Your address and postcode]

[Date]

Sir/Madam,

We Need to Talk – will our political candidates let us?

One in four people will experience mental distress in their lives. That's a lot of people. In fact, common mental health problems like depression and anxiety cost our economy £12 billion every single year.

You would think that these numbers alone would give the government an undisputable mandate to ensure that the right treatment is available at the right time to anyone experiencing mental health problems. But this is sadly not the case.

Although it has been proven time and again that psychological therapies can be extremely effective for treating a wide range of mental health problems, far too many people cannot access the therapy that they want when they need it. [Include any experiences you have of waiting for psychological therapy or trying to access a therapy that wasn't available in your local area].

I therefore support the We Need to Talk campaign that is being run by Mind and a large number of other charities and organisations. The campaign demands that the NHS offer a wide range of evidence-based psychological therapy to all those that need them within 28 days of requesting referral.

I am calling on our local party parliamentary candidates to commit to providing better access to psychological therapies in our area if they are elected. We Need to Talk – will they let us?

Yours sincerely,

[Your signature and name]

Feedback form

Members of the We Need to Talk coalition will be continuing to campaign on this issue past the general election. Our work will be more effective if we know which party political candidates were contacted ahead of the election and what their responses were. It would therefore be very helpful if you could update Mind on any campaign activities you undertake as part of the We Need to Talk campaign. Please do this by completing the following form once the election is over and sending it by freepost to: Vicki Ensor, FREEPOST (WD 2336), 15-19 Broadway, Stratford, London, E15 4BQ. Thank you.

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone:

Email address:

What were the names of your party political candidates?

How did you lobby the candidates?

What responses did you get from them?

If you contacted your local media, was your letter published and, if so, in which paper?