



Barriers to Accessing Services views from across Lothian

Over the years CAPS have asked people across Lothian what stops them getting the help or support they feel they need. Various CAPS reports, minutes, films and research were analysed to write this summary and highlight the main themes. In addition we have included some views from the 'Equally Connected—Edinburgh and Lothian's Report' to represent people from black and minority ethnic groups.

Going to see your GP

There is an assumption that people go to their GP when they feel they need support or help for their mental health. The Equally Connected Report showed that people from BME communities don't go to their GP for mental health issues. However this is not just specific to BME communities. The relationship people have with their GP will determine whether or not people will use this service as the gateway to getting help or support.



"If you don't immediately sense that the GP cares and wants to listen to you, you won't talk about your mental health problems"

"GP's don't have time,
There is pressure from
the NHS"

"You are treated with drugs instead of
looking at the cause of the problem"

"It's hard to go back to the
GP if you had a bad first
experience"

"I think GP's should be more
informed on the different groups
and support available"

"Why would I go to the GP? When you go to the GP they do not even
look at you. Why should I then go with my most personal problem to
them"

If you don't know, you can't go

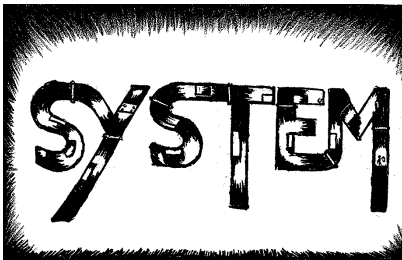
Not knowing what you can access and what is out there is something that continues to come up in the work CAPS

does. People said they feel reliant on professionals such as GPs and support workers passing on information. Being discharged from hospital and not being told about community resources is something that CAPS continues to hear. People from BME communities said they did not know about (mild to moderate) community resources available.

"We don't know what's out there because there's not enough publicity of available services"

"It's not easy being classified as mild to moderate because you rely on sympathetic/empathic GP's and your own initiative to find help that helps"

"What is stopping me? The people who neglect to tell me what is available"



You want to go, but they say no, no, no!

People who are actively trying to get help but don't fit into the eligibility criteria are frustrated by the mental health system. CAPS continues to hear stories about people who turn up to the Royal Edinburgh Hospital in distress and are turned away with no information about community resources or where else to go.

People have said that they find it hard to access secondary mental health services. Even if people feel the support is right for them it is ultimately up to someone else to decide what is best for them. Many services are referral only which takes the control away from people deciding what they need and if it is right for them. People from across Lothian have said they want easier access into mental health services.

"There is a 'we know best' attitude from staff"

You can go, but the wait is slow

Long waiting lists stop people getting the help or support they need, when they need it. In the meantime some people feel isolated and don't necessarily know about other community groups or resources that they could access in between appointments.



Stigma in the Community—Stigma in the services

The stigma associated with mental health is a reason some people don't want to access mental health services. In addition people have told CAPS that their diagnosis has got in the way of receiving the help or support they need. People from the LGBT community have also said that coming out to professionals has changed the type of treatment they received. People from BME backgrounds also experience prejudice or the fear of encountering racism or other types of discrimination on top of the stigma around mental health issues.



"I don't want to use local mental health services because people from my area know me and I don't want them making judgements"

"I have met many professionals who are quite patronising when they learn I have Borderline. Believing I'm only playing up for attention when I'm really needing help"

"A psychiatrist said that now that we have this information (being gay) we have to start looking at your mental health problems differently"

It's not you, it's me

The people CAPS have been in touch with who don't go to any community groups or activities said that it was because of their lack of confidence and poor mental health. However people said they would get out if they had someone to go with them to groups and activities

"My voices are troubling. I could do these things (get out to groups) if I had a support worker or buddy"

"I feel odd and don't fit in with people"