What is IAPT?
The Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme is the NHS’ first-line response to common mental health issues like depression. It aims to improve access to talking therapies, like counselling or psychotherapy. IAPT is popular and has a good rate of success.

Older people are as likely to experience depression as any age group. However, they seek help less than younger people, and when they do, they don’t always get the best response from health or care professionals.

Who is at risk?

Older people over 65 are more likely to feel uncomfortable about friends and family knowing than if they had a physical health issue.

Most people over 65 would not discuss depression with their GP.

Nearly half of people think older adults are less likely to recover from a mental health condition.

Withholding help from older people and the mental health system:

- 44% of people think older adults are less likely to recover from a mental health condition.
- 12% of older mental health specialists are vacant.
- 42% of older people's mental health specialists have reported a reduction in funding for older adult services.
- 28% of older people living in care homes are affected.
- 22% of men and 28% of women are affected.
- 40% of people aged 85+ are more likely to be prescribed medication for depression than offered IAPT.
- Older people aged 65+ are five times less likely to be referred to IAPT than those aged 55–59, despite people aged 65+ having the best IAPT recovery rates.

Surveyed reported a reduction in funding for older adult services.

Stigma:

5 in 6

People over 65 are more likely to feel uncomfortable about friends and family knowing than if they had a physical health issue.

Attitudes:

44% of people think older adults are less likely to recover from a mental health condition.

Younger people are five times more likely to recover from a mental health condition than older people.

Funding:

By 2026 ageing will likely be the sole driver for increasing the demand for mental health services.

Increasing need:

Independent Age believes that every older person’s mental health should be taken seriously; they shouldn’t just be given medication and shown the door.
Independent Age believes that we all have a part to play in reducing stigma around mental health and supporting older people to seek help. We want to see:

1. The NHS commits to making the mental health of older people a priority in the implementation of the long term plan, and local plans, especially in relation to IAPT referrals.

2. Older people feature in the national conversation on mental health, especially around reducing stigma and improving access to support.

3. Health and care professionals receive training to recognise and support mental health issues in older people e.g. through social prescribing.

Older people can recover from a mental health issue, if they are given the chance. Independent Age believes that every older person should have the best chance for good mental health and wellbeing. We must all work together to make this a reality.

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