

PATHS to prevention: A co-designed Physical Activity pathway to support the Transition from inpatient to community mental Health Settings

Plain English Summary

Background

About 1 in 4 people in the UK experience mental health problems every year. Many manage their health at home, but around 80,000 people in England each year need to stay in mental health hospitals for support.

Physical activity helps mental and physical health. People often enjoy staying or becoming active when they're in hospital, but once they go home, it can be harder to stay active. This time can be difficult, with a high risk of becoming poorly again and needing to go back to hospital.

People have told us that getting access to physical activity support depends on where you live. There is more help if you live in a city, but not as much if you live somewhere else. It's also hard to know what services are available, and sometimes even healthcare workers don't know. People who have experienced inpatient care have shared that physical activity isn't always talked about or encouraged during and after this.

We believe helping people stay active when they go home can improve their physical and mental health and reduce the chance of them going back to hospital. We've looked at other research and spoken to people with lived experience, and we've found gaps in current support.

Aims

We want to make it easier for people to be active after leaving inpatient mental health care. To do this, we will work with people who know what this transition is like to design how best to help.

Design and Methods

Our 12-month project has three parts:

1. **What's already there?** – We'll find out what physical activity support is already available in the NHS, recovery colleges, exercise referral schemes, and charities. We'll look at inpatient and outpatient support, how people access this, what the gaps are, and how they are funded.
2. **Designing a new physical activity scheme** – We'll work with people with lived experience and health and social care staff to design a physical activity support pathway that is easy to use, connects people to community resources, and meets their needs.
3. **Making it available to more people** – We'll apply for more funding to test the scheme and work with people in healthcare to improve long-term support.

Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE)

We will work with a people with lived experience of inpatient mental healthcare to help us design the project, give feedback and share their thoughts on the results. They will also help us share results with the public in ways that are easy to understand.

Dissemination

We will share our findings at academic conferences, in journal articles, at meetings with healthcare staff, in a public-facing blog post with our public members, and in a short video or image.