

# What do patients see as helping and hindering them from getting to therapy via primary care for depression and anxiety?

## Journey to the first consultation What happens before going to primary care?

Patients perceptions and understanding of mental health issues impacted their help-seeking decision-making

Stigma towards mental health issues, accessing support, and receiving a diagnosis meant experiencing a mental health issue was seen as unacceptable, which impacted service engagement

Patients used other coping techniques and waited until their mental health was at crisis point before going to primary care

**Public health implications:**  
Public health initiatives which target stigma and education around depression and anxiety are needed. These need to be implemented in the wider population, not just those engaging with primary care services.

## The healthcare professional and patient relationship is important

**Service implications:**  
Primary Care services must prioritise mental ill health by offering additional training to it's staff and implementing systemic changes such as lengthening GP appointment times

Patients valued when healthcare professionals were warm and empathetic when discussing their symptoms; they also preferred having a shared identity. The absence of this made them feel voiceless.

## Interacting with primary care

Patients don't see primary care as where anxiety and depression are supported and believe primary care prioritises physical over mental health

Patients believe that healthcare professionals within primary care don't have enough knowledge about anxiety and depression

Patients believed it wasn't easy to access therapy; due to long wait times, and primary care offering medication in place of therapy

A systematic review conducted by  
Alice Tunks, Clio Berry, Patrick Nyikavaranda,  
Clara Strauss, Liz Ford  
Contact: a.tunks2@bsms.ac.uk