



# Bristol Autism Spectrum Service

Guide to Mental Health in Bristol

Problems of anxiety and depression (low mood) are very common and affect millions of people in the UK. People with Autism are vulnerable to developing mental health problems. If you are experiencing a mental health problem such as low mood or high anxiety, it is best to seek help. You do not need to suffer in silence. This guide outlines some of the services available to help you.

## Quick Guide:

- If you are in **immediate crisis or feel suicidal** NHS Mental Health line 0300 555 0334 or 999
- If you want to discuss having **talking therapy free on NHS** call Vitahealthgroup.co.uk 0333 200 1893 (this could be face to face individual, group therapy or online). Or email them [refer.BNSSG@nhs.net](mailto:refer.BNSSG@nhs.net) Website is [www.vitahealthgroup.co.uk](http://www.vitahealthgroup.co.uk) if you'd prefer to ask for help by completing an online form.
- If you wish to search for **private counselling or talking therapy** and can pay, try a local therapist see [www.itsgoodtotalk.org.uk/therapists](http://www.itsgoodtotalk.org.uk/therapists) or read this Guide for links to loads of local counselling and therapy services.
- If you want to do some **self-help** reading or apps use [www.nhs.uk/apps-library/category/mental-health](http://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/category/mental-health) and [www.reading-well.org.uk](http://www.reading-well.org.uk) are good places to start. There are loads of free resources at the end of this Guide.
- If you are a bit confused and want to **discuss your options**, contact Bristol Autism Spectrum Service and make an appointment 01275 796 204 or email [awp.bass@nhs.net](mailto:awp.bass@nhs.net)

## *If you are anxious or depressed...*

### *Bristol Autism Spectrum Service (BASS)*

<http://www.awp.nhs.uk/services/specialist/autism-spectrum>

Tel: 01275 796 204

BASS is not able to offer long term therapy but we can offer long term support around mild symptoms of anxiety and low mood. We offer support via the Friday Advice Service located at the Create Centre, Smeaton Road BS1 6XN. If you have not visited the Advice Service before then all you need to do is call 01275 796 204 or email [Awp.bass@nhs.net](mailto:Awp.bass@nhs.net) and book in for an initial appointment to meet one of the team. (Do not just turn up without an appointment.)

You will need to email us your diagnostic report or bring with you to this appointment (unless it was BASS who diagnosed you).

Aswell as giving you tips to help if you are feeling anxious or depressed through groups and one to one appointments, we can also talk about how and where to get more specialised therapy or counselling help.

BASS can also offer 1:1 appointments to talk about a specific issue such as: housing, benefits, looking for voluntary or paid work, organising your life or social and emotional support. These are bookable appointments.

BASS also offers workshops on relationships, mindfulness and stress management. If you would like to attend these then ask someone at the advice service or call the number above and we can book you onto one or more of these courses.

### *Vita Health Group*

[www.Vitahealthgroup.co.uk](http://www.Vitahealthgroup.co.uk)

Tel: 0300 200 1893

Vita Minds is the name for Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire's NHS primary care mental well being service. Vita Minds provide a range of talking therapies for adults of all ages. They offer self-bookable courses providing information on mental health difficulties such as stress, worry, panic and low mood. There are also courses and limited one to one therapy options that are available following an assessment.

To access Vita Minds you need to complete an assessment. Assessments can be booked by calling the number above.

If you get one to one therapy from Vita Minds this is sometimes six weeks of cognitive behavior therapy, but they may assess that you need 12 weeks (high intensity) or even 18 weeks. You will probably only be able to access this once a year but you may be able to apply for a further 6,12, or 18 weeks each year.

Vita Health Group (who run Vita Minds) work alongside a variety of organisations to provide this service so when you have your assessment with them, you may find that your therapy or course is offered by another local organisation.

## *Other services in Bristol who are not under NHS primary care mental health*

### *Off the Record*

<http://www.otrbristol.org.uk/>

Tel: 0808 8082273

Off the Record (OTR) work with young people aged 11 – 25 offering individual and group based support.

The current 1:1 counselling talking therapy waiting list stands at 6+months. OTR have many different groups and drop in sessions – see their website. However, if you can't attend a drop in, you can sign up online.

OTR offer in house counselling based at their offices on Old Market, Bristol.

There are also ORT Well Being Practitioners available in schools across Bristol and South Glos.

### *Relate Avon*

<http://www.relate-avon.org.uk/index.html>

Tel: 0117 942 8444

Relate Avon offer relationship counselling, family counselling and psychosexual therapy. They are based on Cheltenham Road. They charge over £50/hour.

### *Second step*

<http://www.second-step.co.uk/aqp>

Tel: 0117 909 6630 – ask to be put through to “Wellbeing Therapies”

Second step is a leading mental health charity based in the west of England. They offer a variety of interventions over the phone and in their city centre location Bristol, including workshops in their Wellbeing College. Their office is in Brunswick Square.

### *Avon Counselling and Psychotherapy Service*

<http://www.acps-bristol.org.uk/>

Tel: 0117 930 4447 (Office hours Mon-Fri 10am - 3pm)

Treatment offered includes: counselling & psychotherapy, short- term and longer-term work, Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR), mindfulness, couples therapy and anxiety management. Fees: Individuals - £44 per session (£11 for those on income-related benefits). Couples - £58 per session (£21 for those on income-related benefits).

### *Network Counselling*

<http://network.org.uk/>

Tel: 0117 9507271 (Office hours Mon-Fri 9:30am-4pm)

Treatment offered: One hour of counselling/week for individuals and couples (16+) and young people (11+). Appointments Mon-Thurs 9:30am-8:30pm and Friday 9:30am-3:45pm. Fees: No fixed charge, suggested donation of £29.50 per session. If unable to make a financial contribution this will not prevent you from receiving counselling.

### ***Bridge Foundation***

<http://www.bridgefoundation.org.uk/>

Tel: 0117 9424510

The Bridge Foundation is based in Cotham and offers one to one psychotherapy and counselling to adults and young people from 16 years of age.

Treatment offered: Brief counselling (up to 6 sessions), longer term therapy, child/family therapy and free counselling for parents, carers and couples who are pregnant with first child, or with children 0 to 11 years living in St Pauls, St Agnes, St Judes, Barton Hill, St Philips, Old Market and the Dings, Easton.  
Fees: £45-£75 per session based on income.

### ***Wellspring Low Cost Counselling***

<http://www.wellspringhlc.org.uk/low-cost-counselling/>

Tel: 0117 304 1400

They offer counselling sessions at an affordable rate for those that are less well-off or vulnerable. £15 per hour for unemployed and recipients of welfare benefits, and the full rate is £35 per hour. The type of counselling is psychodynamic (you can look this up to see if you think it might be beneficial to you).

### ***Low Cost Counselling***

<http://www.lowcostcounselling.co.uk/>

Tel: 07927 355028

Minimum charge is £2.50 per session, but it is hoped that most people will offer between £12.50 and £40 per session. Sessions in clients home where possible. They cover the Greater Bristol area - Yate, Thornbury, Whitchurch, South Bristol and Portishead as well as central Bristol.

### ***Meeting Minds Counselling Service***

<http://bristolmind.org.uk/counselling/meeting-minds/>

Tel: 0117 980 0385

Offer up to 4 months of counselling to over 18 year olds, with the option to extend this if you and your counsellor feel it to be appropriate. Rates are between £15 to £30 per session. The initial appointment costs £10. Each session lasts 50 minutes.

### ***Heart to heart***

<http://www.hearttoheartbristol.co.uk/>

Tel: 07926314739

Heart to heart offer a sliding scale of price's for counselling depending on your financial circumstances.

£15 - for individuals in receipt of benefits (with documented proof needing to be shown on first session with your counsellor).

£20 - for students/individuals on a low income (documented proof required on first session).

£25 - for individual counselling (for clients in full time employment) and

£40 for couples counselling. Each session lasts 50 minutes

### *St Mungo's*

<https://www.mungos.org/>

Tel: 020 3856 6000

St Mungo's is a charity and housing association working directly every day with people who are sleeping rough, in hostels and at risk of homelessness. They enable clients to access mental health services as well as promoting a model of psychotherapy that is effective for people experiencing homelessness. They also operate services such as Building Bridges to Wellbeing, a peer support group which encourages clients to use their skills to help others with their resilience, confidence and mental health.

### *GAN-West*

<http://www.group-analysis-bristol.co.uk/>

Tel: 0117 944 1005

GAN (Group Analytic Network West) are based in Cotham. They offer individual and group psychotherapy.

### *Missing Link*

<http://www.missinglinkhousing.co.uk/>

Tel: 0117 9251811

Missing Link is a mental health and housing service for women in Bristol. They are based in Queens Square in Bristol City Centre and also offer home visits.

### *Nilaari*

<http://www.nilaari.co.uk/>

Tel: 0117 952 5742

Nilaari is a community based organisation working with adults with complex needs. This means they work with those at risk of re-offending, those with problematic substance use as well as those experiencing mental health issues. They are specialists in working cross-culturally especially with those from Black and Asian backgrounds and those individuals often described as 'hard to reach' however their services are available to all communities across Bristol.

### *Penny Brohn UK*

<http://www.pennybrohn.org.uk>

Tel: 0303 3000118

Penny Brohn UK is the leading charity in the UK supporting people affected by cancer. Their Bristol Whole Life Approach provides a powerful combination of physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual support that is designed to help anyone affected by cancer, at any stage of the disease.

### *The Harbour*

<http://www.the-harbour.co.uk/>

Tel: 0117 925 9348

The Harbour are based in Frogmore Street and work with clients who are affected by a life threatening illness (including adults experiencing life threatening illness, carers and those in a close relationship with someone with a life threatening illness and those recently bereaved).

### *The Green House*

<http://www.the-green-house.org.uk/>

Tel: 0117 935 1707

The Green House offer individual therapy to men, women, children and young people who have experienced sexual abuse at any time in their lives. They are based in St Werburghs.

### *Womankind*

<http://www.womankindbristol.org.uk/>

Tel: 0117 916 6460

Womankind is a women only provider, based in the city centre (Brunswick Square) but also providing services in Knowle. They offer psychotherapy and counselling.

### *The Swan Project*

<http://www.theswanproject.co.uk/>

Tel: 0117 989 2521

Based in Montpellier and specialising in alcohol addiction recovery, The Swan Project offers a range of low-cost counselling and therapeutic services which aim to empower the personal recovery and growth of anyone committed to reducing their drinking.

The actual cost can be negotiated according to how much the individual can afford to pay.

### *Sevenside Institute*

<https://www.sipsychotherapy.org/>

Tel: 01179 273 898

Sevenside Institute for Psychotherapy offers an opportunity for people who have emotional and relationship problems to have therapy at a reduced fee with a psychotherapist in training.

They offer two different options: Intensive psychoanalytic psychotherapy which is for individuals who are looking for thrice weekly sessions for a minimum of two years or psychodynamic therapy which is for individuals who are looking for therapy at once or twice weekly for a minimum of one year.

### *Knowle West Health Association*

<https://kwha1.wordpress.com/>

Tel or text: 07969 737076

Free counselling from counsellors on student placement, trained and professionally assessed to the standard required to offer counselling to a client. Counsellors will be working under BACP ethical framework. Sessions are available Mon-Fri for individuals aged 18 or over.

## *Private counsellors and therapists*

Some people with autism pay to meet with a private counsellor or therapist.

*What's the difference between therapy and counselling? There is no single, defined difference.*

*Sometimes people who are therapists may have done a longer or more advanced training course eg psychologists.*

If you are considering seeing a counsellor, therapist or other professional privately, find out how much they charge before committing to appointments. You can find a private counsellor through:

- <https://www.nationalcounsellingsociety.org/find-counsellor/> (search Bristol)
- The [British Psychological Society](#) (BPS) is a membership organisation for registered psychologists. The BPS has a 'find a psychologist' directory of registered psychologists on the home page.
- The [British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy](#) (BACP) is a membership organisation and a registered charity that sets standards for therapeutic practice. The BACP has a '[find a therapist' directory](#) of registered and non-registered therapists. The BACP also has guidance about finding the right therapist for you.
- The [British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapists](#) (BABCP) has a [register of accredited CBT therapists](#). Therapists on the register have specialist skills and knowledge and have undergone relevant training and supervision.

It is good practice for a therapist to be a member of a professional body, such as the BPS, BACP, BABCP. If you use a private therapist or counsellor ask them about their professional qualifications and training. You can also check these with their professional body. Talk to Bristol Autism Spectrum Service about getting the right therapist for you.

## *Peer support*

### *Changes Bristol*

This is a free weekly mental health support group for people. It operates across Bristol. Daytimes and evenings.

[www.changesbristol.org.uk](http://www.changesbristol.org.uk)

0117 941 1123

[info@changesbristol.org.uk](mailto:info@changesbristol.org.uk)

You can just turn up. There is a friendly atmosphere and you will be welcomed with a cup of tea. Everyone has opportunity to speak in a structured meeting. Be supported and learn from each other.

### *Campaign against living miserably (CALM)*

This organization has a helpline for men struggling with suicidal thoughts 0808 802 5858. 5pm-midnight.

[www.thecalmzone.net](http://www.thecalmzone.net)

## *Support in the workplace*

If your mental health difficulty is related to stress in your workplace, you can ask your employer what occupational health services are available to you. Check out the [Time to Change](#) website, which has a section dedicated to employers.

### *Bristol Autism Spectrum Service (BASS)*

<http://www.awp.nhs.uk/services/specialist/autism-spectrum>

Tel: 01275 796 204

BASS is able to offer to give information and support about any employment difficulties you are facing via their Friday Advice Service located at the Create Centre, Smeaton Road BS1 6XN. If you have not visited the Advice Service before then all you need to do is call 01275 796 204 and book in for an initial appointment to meet one of the team. Or email [awp.bass@nhs.net](mailto:awp.bass@nhs.net)

## *What to do in a crisis.*

If you want to talk to someone right away, the [mental health helpline](#) page has a list of organisations you can call for immediate assistance. These are helplines with specially trained volunteers who'll listen to you, understand what you're going through, and help you through the immediate crisis.

Helplines include:

### ***[AWP NHS Trust Bristol Mental Health Line \(the Crisis line\)](#)***

This is available 24/7 and calls are answered by mental health professionals.

Tel: 0300 555 0334

### ***[Bristol Mindline](#)***

<https://bristolmind.org.uk/>

Tel: 0808 808 0330

Bristol Mindline is available Wednesday to Sunday from 8pm to midnight if you need someone to talk to.

### ***[Samaritans Bristol](#)***

<https://www.samaritans.org/branches/bristol-samaritans>

They have 24 hour local and national helplines. 0300 304 7000.

Bristol: 0117 983 1000

UK: 116 123 – free to call

Text: 07725 909090

Drop-in: 7:30 am to 9:00 pm

The Samaritans of Bristol

37 St Nicholas Street

Bristol BS1 1TP

### ***[Bristol Sanctuary](#)***

This is a place to come when you are in serious emotional distress. They aim to provide a safe, comfortable and welcoming environment where you can take stock and find some balance.

Call before you go - you can leave messages on 0117 954 2952, text us on 07709 295 661 or email us on [awp.bmhsanctuary@nhs.net](mailto:awp.bmhsanctuary@nhs.net) and we will respond after 5pm

The Sanctuary is at 1 New Street, St Jude's, Bristol, BS2 9DX. It is open weekends and Monday and Friday.

<http://www.bristolmentalhealth.org/services/bristol-sanctuary/>

## *Sane*

Emotional support, information and guidance for people affected by mental illness, their families and carers.

SANEline: 0300 304 7000 (daily, 4.30-10.30pm)

[www.sane.org.uk/support](http://www.sane.org.uk/support)

## *Campaign against living miserably (CALM)*

This organization is for anyone struggling with suicidal thoughts. It has a helpline for men 0808 802 5858. 5pm-midnight.

[www.thecalmzone.net](http://www.thecalmzone.net)

If you believe you are an immediate risk or danger to yourself or others dial 999.

## *Self help section*

This section includes details of some good books (you may well be able to get from local library) and other online resources or apps

Have a look at this website for more information and advice:

[www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk) lots of good resources and podcasts/videos

[www.bristolmentalhealth.org](http://www.bristolmentalhealth.org)

[www.lltff.com](http://www.lltff.com) has a range of useful materials, courses and short books (£2.50 each

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

[www.anxietyuk.org.uk](http://www.anxietyuk.org.uk)

[www.getselfhelp.co.uk](http://www.getselfhelp.co.uk)

[www.anxietybc.com](http://www.anxietybc.com)

[www.ocdaction.org.uk](http://www.ocdaction.org.uk)

[www.ocduk.org.uk](http://www.ocduk.org.uk)

[www.cedar.exeter.ac/iapt/iaptworkbooksandresources](http://www.cedar.exeter.ac/iapt/iaptworkbooksandresources)

[www.web.ntw.nhs.uk/selfhelp](http://www.web.ntw.nhs.uk/selfhelp)

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk) (for younger people but has lots of great info on it including headsmed about effects of different medications)

[www.studentminds.org.uk](http://www.studentminds.org.uk)

[www.ntw.nhs.uk/pic/selfhelp](http://www.ntw.nhs.uk/pic/selfhelp)

[www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/resources](http://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/resources)

### **Podcasts**

Listen to a podcast by searching 'anxiety' or 'stress management'. The quality of podcasts is variable but there may be some good tips you might like to use. The following is just one example:

[www.letstalkaboutcbt.libsyn.com](http://www.letstalkaboutcbt.libsyn.com)

[www.anxietylayer.com](http://www.anxietylayer.com)

## Private therapists

You may like to make use of a private therapist or counsellor for the months whilst you are having to live indoors. Some therapists will use online communication such as Skype or Zoom to conduct therapy sessions.

Use these websites to search for trained therapists locally.

[www.babcp.com](http://www.babcp.com)

[www.bps.org.uk](http://www.bps.org.uk)

[www.bacp.co.uk](http://www.bacp.co.uk)

## Bristol Autism Spectrum Service

If you have a question about something related to your general wellbeing or your autism, you can email BASS – [awp.bass@nhs.net](mailto:awp.bass@nhs.net)

There is more autism information on our webpages: [www.awp.nhs.uk/bass](http://www.awp.nhs.uk/bass)

## Diverse UK

Locally there is Diverse UK for Bristol, Bath, North Somerset and South Glos areas. This is an autistic organisation where you can get online and find social groups.

[www.diverseuk.org](http://www.diverseuk.org)

[www.facebook.com/groups/diverseuk](https://www.facebook.com/groups/diverseuk)

[hello@diverseuk.org](mailto:hello@diverseuk.org) to sign up and find out more

## Good books

[www.reading-well.org.uk](http://www.reading-well.org.uk) has a whole list of good books you can get from your local library

*Mindfulness* by Professor Mark Williams and Danny Penman. Look up Mark Williams online.

## Apps for anxiety and mood

[www.nhs.uk/apps-library/category/mental-health](http://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/category/mental-health)

is an excellent resource of online apps and communities for mental well being

Here are some others:

- Headspace (free then some fees)
- ChillPanda (free - cartoony, yoga and breathing exercises etc)
- Molehill Mountain (free - for anxious autistic people)
- Calm (free with in app purchases)

## Support for older people.

Age UK

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/>

Silverline [www.thesilverline.org.uk](http://www.thesilverline.org.uk)