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Research identifies ways to improve access to mental health services

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A study by researchers from the Universities of Liverpool and Manchester has identified ways to improve how older people and ethnic minority populations access mental health care services.

As part of the 'Improving Access to Mental Health in Primary Care' programme, researchers sought to identify why two underserved groups, in four areas of Liverpool and Manchester, had not been using mental health services and what measures could be taken to address this.

They interviewed people who had been shown to receive inadequate care to find out what their specific needs were and to understand why they had not accessed the services they needed.

In response to this, the researchers introduced and tested a new model of care, with initiatives aimed at making access to relevant mental health services easier.

The initiatives included working with local community groups, the introduction of a new well-being service and improved training for primary care teams, in particular GP receptionists who are often the first point of contact for patients who have mental health needs.

Professor Chris Dowrick, from the Institute of Psychology, Health and Society, who led the research, said: "Many people with mental health problems don't get the help and support they need. We wanted to understand why this was and explore different ways to address this.

"Crucially, we found that there is a wealth of mental health expertise and knowledge in communities but it needs to be better nurtured and better coordinated.

"Although GP surgeries are often the main point of access to mental [health care services](#) they are not the only point. They need to be augmented by specialist well-being therapists and community and voluntary groups.

"We also found that psychological interventions need to be tailored to meet the specific needs of these specific groups.

"Overall, our study found that a range of interventions across different providers resulted in greater awareness and use of [mental health](#) services by underserved groups. Further research is needed to test these results."

Provided by University of Liverpool

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