

Dear Colleague,

A phobia, or an extreme fear of a specific situation or object that results in severe distress or highly avoidant behaviour around those objects or situations, can interfere with day-to-day functioning.

Individuals with dental phobia typically avoid dental treatment with the result that they experience more dental pain and have poorer dental health. Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) provides a mechanism for reducing repeated use of sedation among individuals with dental phobia and seeks to enable the patients to enjoy the use of dental services.

Unfortunately, the availability of CBT for dental phobic patients has been a significant barrier to its use and uptake. Nevertheless, within Hull and East Riding we have been fortunate to have developed a close working relationship with our local CBT team, NHS Hull Talking Therapies (formerly Let’s Talk).

CBT is a short-term therapy that typically lasts between 6 and 12 sessions. Furthermore, cognitive and behavioural interventions have been shown to be successful in reducing dental anxiety and increasing dental attendance and research has shown this benefit can be maintained in the long term.

In an effort to improve outcomes for adults with dental phobia in the Hull and East Riding locality, in a holistic manner, we are now working in partnership with the NHS Hull Talking Therapies service.

All adult phobic patients will now be asked to self-refer themselves to either NHS Hull Talking Therapies if their GP has a Hull postcode, or NHS East Riding Talking Therapies if their GP has an East Riding postcode, prior to being referred to the Adult Special Care Service for dental assessment. Once the patient has successfully completed the CBT therapy they will either be discharged and treated in general practice, or referred into the adult special care dentistry service. The aim is to reduce the patients’ dental phobia and allow dental treatment without recourse to sedation techniques, ideally in the general practice setting.

We hope that you will discuss with patients the changes in the patient pathway with regards to managing their dental anxiety and explain the need to engage with NHS Hull Talking Therapies or NHS East Riding Talking Therapies prior to accessing dental treatment with the Adult SCD service.

Referral details for the cognitive behavioural therapy are:

**NHS Hull Talking Therapies (if GP has a Hull Postcode)**

Website: <https://www.letstalkhull.co.uk/pages/make-a-referral>

Telephone: 01482 247 111

**NHS East Riding Talking Therapies (if GP has a East Riding Postcode)**

Email: HNF-TR.SelfReferral@nhs.net

Website: <https://iaptportal.co.uk/erew.html>

Telephone: 01482 335 451

For future referrals for patients with dental phobias we will request the following:

* Adult Special Care Dentistry referral form
* Anxious/ Phobic Adult Dental Patient Supplementary Form

Please find a copy of these forms enclosed.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Navneet Lad

Specialist in Adult Special Care Dentistry