

## Written evidence submitted by Money and Mental Health Policy Institute (MHS0002)

### Introduction

The Money and Mental Health Policy Institute is a research charity established in 2016 by Martin Lewis to break the link between money and mental health problems. The Institute's research and policy work is informed by our Research Community, a group of thousands of people with lived experience of mental health problems or of caring for someone who does.

Our response focuses on one area of the panel's evaluation of the Government's commitment to mental health services: the intention to commission IAPT long-term conditions services across England and the provision within this to integrate employment advice and debt counselling.

In addition to this response, we recommend the panel review our report, [The missing link](#), which explores how tackling financial difficulty can boost recovery rates in IAPT.<sup>1</sup>

### Background

- Difficulties earning and managing money can cause stress and anxiety, leading to or exacerbating mental health problems.<sup>2</sup>
- Almost one in five (18%) people with mental health problems are in problem debt, three and a half times the rate among people without mental health problems.<sup>3</sup>
- Unresolved problem debt can be a drag on recovery, prolonging mental health problems and raising the risk of suicide.<sup>4</sup>
- People with depression who are also experiencing financial difficulty are 4.2 times more likely to still have depression 18 months later compared to people with the same mental health problems who are financially stable.<sup>5</sup>
- Money advice is very effective in resolving financial difficulties, boosting take-up of welfare benefits and supporting employment.<sup>6</sup> However, people experiencing mental health problems often struggle to access this advice - due to difficulties reaching out or navigating debt advice processes.<sup>7</sup>

### Is the Government's commitment for all areas to commission IAPT long-term conditions services wide enough in scope?

The Government, via the NHS Long Term Plan, committed to a complete roll-out of IAPT services by 2019. Within this, they pledged to increase the number of people with anxiety disorders or depression accessing talking therapies, aiming to reach a total of 1.9 million people by 2023/24.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Acton R. The Missing Link. Money and Mental Health Policy Institute. 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Holkar M. Debt and mental health: a statistical update. Money and Mental health Policy Institute. 2019

<sup>3</sup> Holkar M. Mental health problems and financial difficulty. Money and Mental Health Policy Institute. 2019. Derived from Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey 2014: covers England only.

<sup>4</sup> Bond and Holkar. Silent Killer. Money and Mental Health Policy Institute. 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Evans. Treating financial difficulty – the missing link in mental health care?. 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Acton R. The Missing Link. Money and Mental Health Policy Institute. 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Bond and Holkar. Help Along the Way. Money and Mental Health Policy Institute. 2020.

<sup>8</sup> NHS Long Term Plan 2019.

### **Integration of debt advice within IAPT long-term conditions services**

The Government's commitment included a range of targets, such as shorter waiting times, and prioritising IAPT services for long-term physical conditions (like IBS, diabetes, chronic pain and medically unexplained symptoms). Within this commitment to prioritising IAPT services for long-term physical conditions, the Government agreed to include "employment advice, debt counselling and other social assistance" to be made available within this service.<sup>9</sup> Given our expertise in money and mental health, our response considers this specific target.

We welcome the commitment to include financial support and social assistance in IAPT long-term conditions services to target the cyclical nature of financial difficulties and mental health problems. Guidance supporting the implementation of the Government's commitment stipulates that debt counselling services should be offered as part of an integrated care plan, with close liaison between clinicians and advisers from the point of assessment, through treatment and to discharge.<sup>10</sup>

As evidenced above, mental health and money problems are intricately linked - with one problem feeding into the other and creating a vicious cycle of increasing financial difficulties and worsening mental health. Introducing debt advice for those experiencing financial difficulties in IAPT could improve recovery rates. Our previous modelling suggests that for depression, we could see recovery rates increase to 51% and anxiety recovery rates could increase to 53% from 47% and 49% respectively.<sup>11</sup>

Integration of debt counselling could be implemented in various ways, for example, through co-location of services or a single referral point. Money and Mental Health, with researchers at King's College London and Citizens Advice, is currently piloting how money advice could be embedded into NHS-provided talking therapy.<sup>12</sup> We, alongside Citizens Advice, have also recently submitted a proposal to the Comprehensive Spending Review for the government to invest in a small-scale pilot to integrate money advice into standard IAPT services pathways.<sup>13</sup>

### **Broadening access to debt advice in standard IAPT services**

Currently, targets to deliver debt advice in IAPT are limited to services for people with long-term conditions, however, the link between financial difficulties and mental health problems is not exclusive to people with comorbid physical conditions. Given this, an additional target should be added in the 2023/24 review of the NHS Long Term Plan to include provision of debt counselling in all IAPT services.

Despite the guidance and target to integrate debt advice into IAPT for long-term conditions by 2019, the extent to which this has been achieved is unclear. As part of this review, the panel should evaluate the extent to which this has been successfully integrated across the country.

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<sup>9</sup> IAPT Manual. NHS. 2021.

<sup>10</sup> IAPT Manual. NHS. 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Acton. The Missing Link. Money and Mental Health Policy Institute. 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Annual Impact Report 2020/21. Money and Mental Health Policy Institute. July 2021

<sup>13</sup> Darcy C. Comprehensive Spending Review: proposal for integrating money advice into IAPT pilot. Money and Mental Health Policy Institute and Citizens Advice. October 2021.

We welcome the widened scope for IAPT to include financial advice for those with long-term conditions. It takes necessary steps to tackle the cyclical nature of financial difficulties and mental health problems. However, the scope of the current commitment is too specific to ensure an equitable outcome between those accessing IAPT services through standard pathways and long-term condition pathways.

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