

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH AND CARE EXCELLENCE

Medical technologies evaluation programme

Equality impact assessment: Topic selection and scoping

GID-MT589 Digitally enabled therapies for adults with anxiety disorders

The impact on equality has been assessed during this evaluation according to the principles of the [NICE Equality scheme](#).

1. Have any potential equality issues been identified during the development of the topic briefing note or during selection, and, if so, what are they?

Several potential equality issues have been identified in line with equality considerations for this class of technologies. Key issues include:

- Digitally enabled therapies are delivered through a mobile phone, tablet or computer. People need regular access to a device with internet access to use the technologies. Additional support and resources may therefore be needed for people who are unfamiliar with digital technologies or do not have access to smart devices or the internet.
- People with cognitive impairment, problems with manual dexterity, learning disabilities or who have difficulty reading or understanding health-related information may need additional support to use digitally enabled therapies. This should be considered when selecting and delivering these interventions. Further considerations can be found in [NICE's guideline on mental health problems in people with learning disabilities](#).
- Digitally enabled therapies should be accessible to people with visual impairments using screen readers, and people with hearing impairments.
- People with English as a second language may have difficulties navigating digitally enabled therapies provided in English. Digitally enabled therapies and mental health services should consider how to translate these interventions or provide additional support as needed.
- People's views of mental health problems or intervention may be influenced by their ethnic, religion and cultural background. People have the right to

make informed decisions about their care, including the use of digitally enabled therapies.

People facing social inequality and disadvantage, discrimination and social exclusion are at higher risk of mental health problems. The rates of anxiety disorders are higher in women and show an increasing trend in comparison with the rates in men. The prevalence of anxiety is higher during pregnancy. Among people with a common mental health disorder, women, people from a White British background or in midlife are more likely than others to receive treatment. Access to mental health care will not increase for those who are unable to engage with a digital service due to a lack of equipment, unavailability of internet connection, lack of experience with computers or lack the privacy needed to complete the intervention.

Age, disability, race and religion or belief are protected characteristics under the Equality Act (2010).

2. What is the preliminary view as to what extent these potential equality issues need addressing by the committee?

The committee should consider all the equality issues when making recommendations. Access to mental health care may not be improved for those who are unable to engage with a digital service due to a lack of accessibility, lack of equipment, unavailability of internet connection, lack of experience with computers or lack the privacy needed to complete the intervention.

3. Has any change to the draft scope been agreed to highlight potential equality issues?

Subgroups were added to the draft scope to consider how the use and effectiveness of digitally enabled therapies may differ by level of digital literacy and access, protected characteristics and comorbidities.

4. Have any additional stakeholders related to potential equality issues been identified during the scoping process, and, if so, have changes to the stakeholder list been made?

No additional stakeholders related to potential equality issues were identified during the scoping process.

Approved by Associate Director: Anastasia Chalkidou

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