Only 57 out of 211 clinical commissioning groups (CCG) met or exceeded the government’s 50% target rate for recovery from a mental health issue after completing a course under the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme, new statistics have found.

In addition, the percentage of people who are recorded as having recovered from a mental health issue after completing a course varies widely across England, from 18.8% to 69.4% according to findings in ‘Psychological Therapies: Annual Report on the use of Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) services, England, 2014/15’, published by the Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC).

The report looks at referrals received and outcomes from therapies such as psychotherapy, cognitive behavioural therapy, counselling, couples therapy and other treatments. The report showed there was 1,267,193 referrals received in 2014-15.

Overall, the mean average recovery rate in England was 44.8% (189,152 of 421,744 referrals). The CCGs with the highest recovery rates were NHS Cannock Chase CCG at 69.4%, NHS Stafford and Surrounds CCG at 67.3% and NHS Chiltern CCG at 61.6%.

In contrast, the CCGs with the lowest recovery rates were NHS Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale CCG at 18.8%, NHS East Staffordshire CCG at 20.9% and NHS Blackburn with Darwen CCG at 29.9%.

Likewise, referral times also varied markedly. The mean average waiting time was 32 days from referral to first treatment appointment. NHS Dudley CCG had the shortest average waiting time of just 6.7 days, while NHS Blackpool CCG had the longest at 124.1 days.

Meanwhile, patients experiencing a range of anxiety and stress-related disorders were found to have a slightly higher recovery rate at 47.8% than patients suffering from depression at 44.6%.

The HSCIC report also includes new analysis on the number of IAPT referrals and recovery rates for ex-British armed forces personnel. In 2014-15, 18,579 ex-British armed forces personnel were referred to IAPT services. Of those, 8,111 referrals finished a course of treatment in the year and started treatment, with almost half – 47.1% - moving to recovery. For this group, the recovery rate was 2.3% higher than the England average.

The therapy with the highest recovery rate was computerised cognitive behavioural therapy, at 58.4%, followed by interpersonal psychotherapy (53.9%). In contrast, cognitive behavioural therapy had a success rate of only 44.1%.

Dominic Gair, responsible statistician at the HSCIC, said: “Today’s report highlights regional differences in recovery rates and waiting times… [this] will enable commissioners and care providers to review access to psychological therapies in their areas, which should be useful when planning services for patients in the future.”

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