



The Paddle Journey

How it all started

The Paddle journey began several years ago in response to conversations held within the Anxiety and Depression Patient Forum of the Oxford Academic Health Science Network ('Oxford AHSN'). This group, comprised of **patients** from 'talking therapy' services, **therapists** and **researchers** across the Thames Valley (Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire), met bi-monthly with the overarching aim of improving the outcome and experience of patients using IAPT services (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies), now known as '**NHS Talking Therapies for Anxiety and Depression**'. For further information about the nature and role of the Patient Forum please visit:

<http://www.oxfordahsn.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/AD-Network-Patient-and-Public-ForumTORs-draft-vs-2.pdf>

What have patients said?

Conversations within the Patient Forum drew attention to the difficulties and challenges that patients commonly face when coming to the end of their therapy; in particular that sometimes, they feel anxious and ill prepared to 'go it alone' after discharge (without the regular support of a therapist) and ill-equipped to maintain the gains that they may have made during therapy. These themes were explored more systematically within a series of research projects carried by the Oxford AHSN to investigate how long patients stay well for *after* therapy ('durability of clinical gains') and what patients find most helpful (both **during** and **after** therapy) in terms of staying well in the longer term ('maintaining clinical gains').

This research indicated that whilst patients who do well during therapy typically stay well for the first 6 months post discharge, a significant number (around a third) will seek additional help for their anxiety and/or depression. Related research has indicated that patients who leave therapy with some residual symptoms are almost twice as likely to relapse within the first year of treatment as compared to patients leaving therapy without residual symptoms (see Ali et al, 2017 for further information¹).

One of the challenges that patients report around staying well after discharge is knowing **how best** to do this. Knowledge gained within therapy may be recorded across a range of written sources, which are often not readily accessible in the longer term. The maintaining clinical gains research indicated that patients find it helpful to review therapy-related information, however, information relating to therapy may be lost once patients are discharged. Patients said they would find it helpful to have a way of storing treatment notes and related information **electronically** and in **one secure place** (rather than having to keep lots of different pieces of paper together).

¹ Ali, S., Rhodes, L., Moreea, O., McMillan, D., Gilbody, S., Leach, C., Lucock, M., Lutz, W., Delgado, J. (2017). How durable is the effect of low intensity CBT for depression and anxiety? Remission and relapse in a longitudinal cohort study. *Behaviour Research and Therapy* 94, 1–8.

As one respondent said:

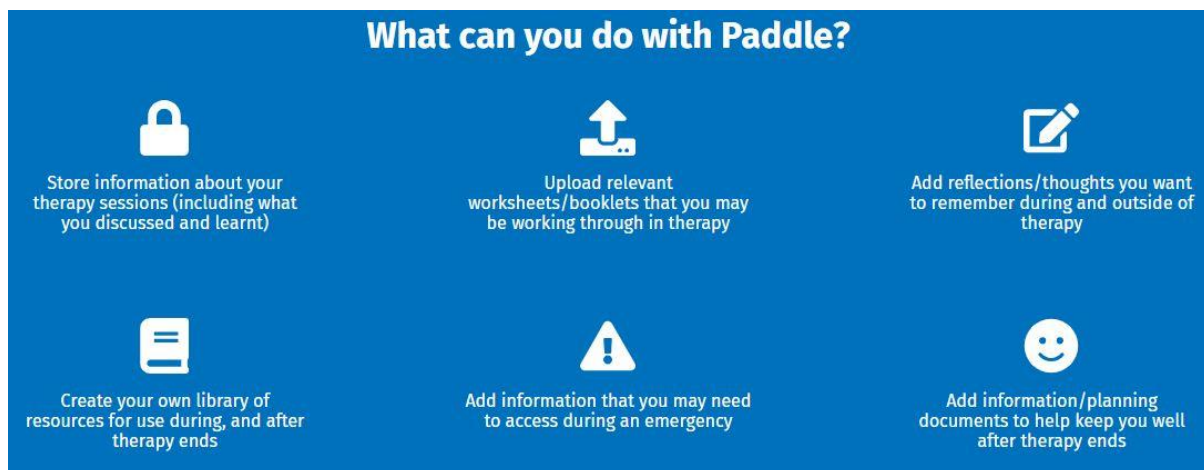
'It would be nice if there was something else that supports you in your progress, not just falling back into old habits once daily life takes over again. Maybe an app or an online thing that sends reminders to keep well or do certain exercises that you can engage with on the go. I always have my phone with me – but not my stack of papers.'

So the idea of Paddle was born – as a means of keeping information and key learning from therapy sessions, work booklets and other related resources altogether in an organised fashion and ensuring that this important information is more readily accessible once therapy ends. The overarching vision is that the app will be downloaded and used by patients both **during** and **after** treatment to help them to

- get the most out of their treatment by storing and organising treatment-related information in a secure location
- continue to use the skills learnt during therapy and other related resources once discharged, in order to stay well for longer.

How was Paddle developed? Phase 1

Paddle was developed **by** patients (and clinicians) **for** patients, using a shared understanding of what the therapeutic journey for anxiety and/or depression entails and importantly, what patients need to help them stay well after finishing treatment. After much consultation, six key functions of the app were identified and agreed upon (these are outlined below), the most important of which include **recording key learning from therapy sessions**, and **storing specific resources designed to help keep patients well after leaving therapy**. We are extremely thankful to everyone who gave their time and expertise to this project.



Phase 1 was piloted in the Thames Valley NHS Talking Therapy Services and evaluation was positive with the majority of patients who participated in the pilot stating that ‘Paddle had helped them make the most of therapy’.

Phase 1 pilot and evaluation was followed by **Phase 2** (following a break from development due to COVID) which tested post-discharge submission of clinical scores via Paddle, with patients able to view their clinical scores on Paddle for 6 months following discharge. Data analysis from Phase 2 has not yet been finalised but early results indicate that patients found this functionality helpful in staying well after discharge and maintaining their therapeutic gains. Patients have reported that it was useful to be able to view their clinical scores over a period of time and be offered suggestions and comments as appropriate by Paddle to maintain wellbeing or, indeed, get back on track.

What now?

Paddle is currently in its' final phase of development (August 2023) which will combine phase 1 and 2 as a fully automated process (and medical device registration). Eligible patients will be invited to participate in the roll-out of Paddle at the start of treatment to maximise their therapeutic journey, with the option of continuing with submission of clinical scores up to 12 months following discharge to support staying well. Following this 'testing phase' in Thames Valley services (Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire), it is anticipated that Paddle will be made available to all other NHS Talking Therapies Services in England, hopefully by June 2024. If you are a NHS TT service provider or patient and would like any further information about Paddle, please visit the Paddle website <https://www.paddleapp.org> or contact the project team on inekewolsey@gmail.com.