

Patient information

Paediatric Clinical Psychology Service

What is a clinical psychologist?

A clinical psychologist is trained to understand how people think, feel and behave. They work alongside medical and nursing staff and look at the link between physical health and emotional well-being.

The role of the psychologist is to listen to everyone's concerns and help children and their families cope with difficulties that can come from having a medical condition or medical investigations and receiving treatment. They will try to understand each family's individual situation and support them to make positive changes. The focus is on building resilience and developing coping skills.

Who is the clinical psychology service for?

The service is available to the families of all children and young people aged 0-16 who are seen by the paediatric team at the West Suffolk Hospital. The clinical psychologist may meet you if you are admitted to the Ward or if you are seen in an outpatient clinic. Appointments can be for the whole family, just parents or carers, the young person on their own, or for siblings.

Why is there a clinical psychologist in the team?

Having an ill child can cause a lot of worry and upset. Young people living with a chronic health condition and their families can often feel worried, sad, angry or frightened about managing their condition. It can also be upsetting if there is no medical explanation of your symptoms. Talking to a clinical psychologist can help you to understand what is going on and find new ways of coping with your symptoms, situation or coping with a diagnosis or treatment plan.

Why might your child be referred?

Most of the problems that clinical psychologists help with are things that everyone struggles with at some point in their lives. If a member of your treatment team suggests

you have an appointment with the clinical psychologist it does not mean that your child is “going mad” or that your difficulties are “not real”. In fact it just means that they think you may benefit from talking the difficulties through with someone who is experienced at dealing with difficult feelings, behaviour and strong emotions and can offer a range of different kinds of therapy.

What can the psychologist help with?

A clinical psychologist can help with lots of different kinds of problems such as:

- Dealing with upsetting news, grief and bereavement
- Managing strong emotions such as fear, sadness or anger
- Support for living with and managing your medical condition
- Coping with treatments that you feel worried about
- Dealing with feelings related to having a medical condition such as feeling different
- Problems getting on with others or worries about school
- How your condition affects family life and support for parents and siblings
- Difficulties taking medication or sticking to your treatment plan or special diet
- Physical problems that get worse when you worry
- Managing pain
- Problems with eating, sleeping or using the toilet
- Coping with changes in weight, eating and body image
- Managing difficult behaviour
- Explaining your condition to other people and getting back into school
- Finding new ways of coping with and managing stress

What happens during the appointment?

First appointments with a psychologist typically last 1-1.5 hours with subsequent appointments lasting 45 minutes to an hour. Usually the family would be seen all together to start with but the young person can be seen alone if they prefer. The psychologist will want to ask about you, your child and other family members, school etc, about the impact that the medical condition is having on your life. They will need to know how you are all feeling and ask about things that are going well and not so well for your child and family.

This information will be used to decide if further appointments will be helpful and who needs to be involved. The psychologist will only help if you and your child want them to and we will discuss this at our first appointment.

You might be seen for just one session or you could be offered a series of weekly or fortnightly appointments depending on what you need.

How do we make an appointment?

If you would like to talk to the clinical psychologist you can ask any member of your treatment team at your regular clinic appointments or by phone. Details of your first appointment will usually be sent to you by post or you may be contacted by the psychology secretary by telephone.

What happens next?

At the end of your first appointment the psychologist will write a letter to the person who you usually see, as well as your GP, and you will also receive a copy. This will also be shared with other members of the paediatric team as necessary. We may also ask to share the information with school or other people who might be able to support you and your family, but would always get your permission to do this first.

Who to contact?

For more information contact:

PA to the Consultant Clinical Psychologist: 01284 712627

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the hospital website www.wsh.nhs.uk and click on the link, or visit the disabledgo website:

<http://www.disabledgo.com/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust/main>