

Information for patients, families and carers

Clinical Health Psychology for physical health problems

Who can see a Clinical Health Psychologist?

- If you have a cardiac health problem, for example a heart attack, heart failure and/or angina and you are under the care of a cardiologist at the Royal Bolton Hospital
- If you have or are diagnosed with Irritable Bowel Disorder (functional bowel disorder) or an Inflammatory Bowel Disease, and are under the care of a gastroenterologist at the Royal Bolton Hospital
- If you have a skin condition and are under the care of a Consultant Dermatologist at the Royal Bolton Hospital
- If you have Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and are under the care of the Bolton Respiratory team, you can be referred to a Chronic Disease Management Clinic at Bolton One.

What is a Clinical Health Psychologist?

Clinical psychologists are specially trained professionals. They have a minimum of six years' accredited training and are regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council.

Unlike psychiatrists, clinical psychologists are not medically trained doctors. They do not give medical advice or prescribe medication; they use Talking Therapy instead.

What problems could be helped by a Clinical Health Psychologist?

It is natural for medical conditions and treatment to create changes that can be difficult to deal with. You may be feeling anxious about what may happen, sad about things you can no longer do, or annoyed at what seems unfair. Sharing these feelings with family and friends may be all that is required. However, some people have thoughts and feelings that are difficult to share with people they know, or they feel they are going over and over problems but not finding they feel any better. It is when this happens that a clinical psychology appointment may be useful.

The range of problems that can affect people includes:

- Coping with uncertainty
- Coping with treatment
- Distress about diagnosis
- Relationship strain and difficulties caused by a physical condition
- Coping with changes in how you look
- Coping with changes in role

- Loss of confidence
- Loss of pleasure in activities previously enjoyed
- Fear of death
- Anxiety
- Panic attacks
- Low mood
- Depression

What happens in the assessment appointment?

The first appointment is an opportunity to discuss your health concerns and the impact of your health problem on your life and your emotions. Usually an appointment lasts 50 minutes, and you will be asked to complete a questionnaire about how you feel. You will be asked what you would like help with and towards the end of the session, a plan of what will happen next will be discussed. For example, you may agree to a further assessment or a plan for therapy. Each time you will see the same psychologist.

What type of therapy does a Clinical Health Psychologist offer?

Psychological therapy aims to strengthen the person's ability to cope with their problems and help them to learn skills to live with them. The person may find it useful to learn different ways of thinking about their situation but are uncertain how to do this. A variety of psychological approaches may be offered by the psychologist and include problem solving, solution focused therapy, cognitive behavioural therapy, narrative approach and hypnosis or relaxation. The most appropriate approach will be discussed with you based on an understanding of the problem you are dealing with.

What will happen to the information you share with the Clinical Health Psychologist?

Anything you say in the meeting with the Clinical Health Psychologist will be treated confidentially. However, we all work as part of a multi-disciplinary team and at times it may be necessary to share some information with other colleagues. This will only happen if:

- Sharing information will improve the care you receive
- It is necessary to refer to another specialist
- There are circumstances involving risk of harm to you

We will always discuss with you before sharing any information. We will send a letter to the person who referred you to the clinical health psychology service, and you can have a copy of that letter.

We cannot accept self-referrals.

If you require a copy of this leaflet in any other language or format, such as large print or audio, please contact **01204 390193**.

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