

Information for patients, families and carers

Clinical Health Psychology in the Pain Management Service

Why have I received this leaflet?

You have received this leaflet because a member of the Pain Management Service felt it might be helpful for you to meet with a clinical psychologist. They can talk with you about the impact persistent pain is having on your life and explore whether psychological support could help you manage some of the challenges that living with ongoing pain can bring. It does not mean that we think the pain is 'in your head' or not real.

Living with persistent pain can be challenging and can affect many areas of a person's life. For example, people experiencing persistent pain often report difficulties in carrying out daily activities, including work, hobbies, and exercise. People may become fearful of aggravating the pain and start to avoid their usual activities.

Other people share that they might try to carry on as normal and 'push through' the pain, resulting in increased pain. Over time this can lead to reduced activity and loss of fitness, loss of work and independence, financial pressures, and changes in mood. For some people, this can result in frustration, anger, anxiety, or, at times, depression. Some people may also experience sleep disturbance, which may also add to fatigue and stress. For some, life can become dominated by the pain.

What is the role of a clinical health psychologist in the Pain Management Service?

Clinical Health Psychologists are specialists in assessing and treating psychological distress. They are not medical doctors, do not prescribe medication, and cannot make your pain go away.

However, they can help you manage the emotional and practical challenges that can arise as a result of living with persistent pain. They have a specialist understanding of the impact that long-term pain conditions can have on many aspects of life, including wellbeing, relationships, daily activities, work, and quality of life.

Their role is to offer practical tools and coping strategies to help you manage the impact of pain and adjust to living alongside it. They aim to support you in finding ways to reduce the effect pain may be having on your life and to help you move towards the things that are important to you. Meeting with a clinical psychologist can help you feel more hopeful about the future, despite the challenges of living with pain.

Interventions offered by Clinical Psychology include the Pain Management Programme and, in some circumstances, individual pain management sessions.

What will happen in the assessment appointment?

The assessment appointment is an opportunity for you and the psychologist to discuss the impact that pain is having on your life and to consider whether Clinical Psychology is the most appropriate form of support for you.

The psychologist will ask questions about your pain and how it affects your daily life. This may include discussing the impact pain has on your thoughts, feelings, behaviours, relationships, and activities.

The aim is to gain a fuller understanding of your situation and the ways in which pain is affecting you.

The appointment will last up to one hour.

Towards the end of the assessment, you and the psychologist will discuss your hopes and goals, along with any difficulties you have identified together. Then you will consider whether the Pain Management Programme is the most suitable option for you.

The programme is delivered jointly by Clinical Psychology and Specialist Pain Physiotherapy. It is designed to support people to live as well as possible alongside persistent pain. However, there may be occasions when the programme is not the most appropriate intervention. In these circumstances, other options may be considered, such as individual pain management sessions or referral to another service that is better placed to meet your needs.

Any recommendations will be discussed fully with you, and you will have the opportunity to ask questions. It is also completely your choice whether you wish to proceed with any support offered.

Attending an assessment appointment does not commit you to receiving any further input from Clinical Psychology.

What happens next?

After reading this leaflet, if you would like to meet with a clinical psychologist, please telephone the service on 01204 390045 by the date indicated in your letter, to let us know. You will then be sent an appointment as soon as one becomes available. There is usually a waiting time for an appointment.

However, if you do not want to see a clinical psychologist, you do not need to respond to this letter and your referral to clinical psychology will be closed. This will not affect any appointments you already have arranged with other members of the Pain Management Service.

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

Information correct at the time of publication

IPG:3365

Review: June 2026