

# Clinical/ Counselling Psychology Service



*Exceptional healthcare, personally delivered*

## **What are Clinical/Counselling Psychologists?**

Clinical/Counselling Psychologists begin their training by studying normal behaviour and development and then take a specialist training in the various problems people may develop and the variety of assessments and therapies that can help. This takes a minimum of 6 years before qualifying. Clinical/Counselling Psychologists are not psychiatrists, who are medical doctors trained to treat mental illness, and should not be confused with CPNs (Community Psychiatric Nurses). Clinical/Counselling Psychologists working within general hospital settings have particular expertise in helping people with physical problems. They are not permitted to prescribe medication.

## **What kind of problems does a Clinical/Counselling Psychologist work with?**

A wide range of emotional problems, all the way from stress to severe depression. This includes helping people adjust to and cope with all aspects of physical illnesses, such as pain, and their treatment. Psychologists also specialise in the treatment of physical illnesses that are caused by stress such as palpitations. In addition, they may offer advice and treatment to those who are suffering from excessive anxiety, grief reactions that have gone on for too long, problems in relationships, sexual difficulties and worries.

## **What happens at my first appointment?**

The Psychologist will make a full assessment of your problems. This will involve a detailed discussion – (expect to spend a hour on this) – of your present difficulties, their effect on your daily life, how and when they arose and your early life. At the end of this – or at a later meeting – we aim to reach an understanding with you of your problem and its origins. Following this assessment, your Psychologist will be able to tell if this is the right service to help you. You will work with your Psychologist to identify particular goals for your treatment and discuss how these can be achieved. You and your Psychologist will be working together on solving

your problem; it is not a matter of simply telling you what to do. Whatever sort of therapy you are recommended, you will need to be actively involved.

### **I am not sure if I could discuss my problems with someone I do not know.**

Sometimes it is **easier** to talk to someone who does not know you socially; and who is trained to discuss personal and emotional matters and to treat such problems.

### **Is everyone referred for treatment?**

No. In some circumstances your Doctor will have asked you to see a Psychologist to help him/her understand your problems more clearly. If this is the case you will be seen on 1 or 2 occasions only in order to answer a number of questions. Following this, a report will be sent to your Doctor who will use this additional information when deciding upon the most appropriate help for you.

### **Will my treatment be confidential?**

Yes. Your psychologist will only communicate their understanding of your problem to other professionals directly involved in helping you, such as the Doctor who is responsible for your care within the Hospital and your GP so that they know what kind of therapy you are having. However, you may be discussing very personal matters with us and we will respect a request not to pass on details, subject to the requirements of the law. Your Psychologist will take notes during or after your sessions; these are kept securely and confidentially. Psychology case notes are kept separately from general Hospital medical records, but correspondence to your Doctors will be filed within the general case notes.

## **How long does it take?**

Some problems can be dealt with successfully in a few sessions, and it may be possible when you first attend to give you an estimate of how many sessions you will need. Other more deeply seated difficulties may need longer and more intensive treatment. Please ask if you are not clear about how long your treatment will last. We will review your progress with you from time to time and you can raise any doubts or concerns you have.

As for ending treatment, this will be negotiated as you progress and often involves spacing your appointments at longer intervals and/or arranging a follow-up after a few months to check that your progress is continuing.

## **Does it always work?**

We have a high success rate. As we use a number of different methods and approaches, if the first treatment method does not help you to meet your goals within a reasonable period of time, there are options for changing the approach. We work closely with other professionals in the Mental Health Services and, sometimes, additional help from a colleague may be recommended.

## **What happens if I need further help later?**

Sometimes people need “booster” treatment for the same difficulty. If this arises we will be happy to see you again and, hopefully, you will be able to see the same Psychologist who has already worked with you.

## **Trainee Clinical/Counselling Psychologists**

From time to time Trainee Clinical/Counselling Psychologists, who are on placement from postgraduate Clinical/Counselling psychology training courses, will be involved in your care. This might mean you work with a Trainee Clinical/Counselling Psychologist under the close supervision of a qualified Clinical/Counselling Psychologist. Trainee Clinical/Counselling

Psychologists also have to submit written information about their clinical work to their training course. This will be done anonymously and will ensure that a patient is not identifiable from such written work. If you do not wish to be seen by a Trainee Clinical/Counselling Psychologist at any time, please say so. This will not affect your care in any way.

NHS Constitution. Information on your rights and responsibilities. Available at [www.nhs.uk/aboutnhs/constitution](http://www.nhs.uk/aboutnhs/constitution)





**PATIENT  
APPROVED** 

**How to contact us:**

 **Health Psychology  
Medical Directorate  
Gate 10  
Brunel Building  
Southmead Hospital  
Westbury-on-Trym  
Bristol  
BS10 5NB**



**0117 414 6407**



**[www.nbt.nhs.uk](http://www.nbt.nhs.uk)**

If you or the individual you are caring for need support reading this leaflet please ask a member of staff for advice.

© North Bristol NHS Trust. This edition published November 2017. Review due November 2019. NBT002233

**take part...  
be involved...**  
in research



While in our care, you may be invited to take part in a research study.

To find out more visit:  
**[www.nbt.nhs.uk/research](http://www.nbt.nhs.uk/research)**



**[southmeadhospitalcharity.org.uk](http://southmeadhospitalcharity.org.uk)**

Southmead Hospital Charity raises funds for departments and wards throughout the Trust, meaning you can support an area close to your heart