



University Hospitals Bristol **NHS**

NHS Foundation Trust

Patient information service
Psychological health services

Psychology services for paediatric cardiology



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What does the psychology service offer?

Having a baby or child with a heart condition, or being told during pregnancy that your baby has a heart condition, will feel different for each family or individual. We provide a psychology service for children who have a heart condition and their families, and for individuals and couples who have received a diagnosis of a heart condition during pregnancy.

The service has a number of roles, including:

- offering emotional support for children, families, individuals and couples throughout their time in paediatric cardiology services, from diagnosis to supporting adolescents as they transition to adult cardiac services
- helping children and families through the experience of cardiac surgery. This can involve:
 - supporting and preparing children if they are anxious about procedures such as blood tests, cannulas being inserted and surgery
 - helping parents find ways to talk to their children about surgery
 - supporting children after surgery
 - supporting parents and siblings with their own feelings about surgery
- supporting children and their families with the experience of being in hospital
- supporting parents to bond with a newborn baby in hospital
- helping children and families adjust to living with a heart condition, and managing the demands of the illness and its treatment more generally

- supporting siblings who have a brother or sister with a heart condition. Siblings can have a range of reactions and feelings, and it can take time for them to make sense of what is happening. We are available to support siblings directly, and to support them through talking with their parents
- supporting children and families who may have other difficulties such as existing worry and anxiety, low moods, behavioural problems, or learning disabilities. These issues can make living with a heart condition, coming to hospital, or having surgery more stressful and difficult to manage.

We know that a heart condition is a long-term condition and the psychology service is here for your child until they are 18 years old. There may be times when your family needs extra support and times when you do not feel you need support at all. If you feel unsure about whether psychology would be helpful at the moment, and would like to discuss this with us, please do not hesitate to get in contact (see contact details on page five).

What is a clinical psychologist?

Clinical psychologists use an understanding of how people think, feel and behave, and of the psychological impact of living with long-term medical conditions, to help children and families with the kind of difficulties described above. We have training in a variety of psychological approaches that can help when people are having difficult thoughts or feelings that are affecting their wellbeing, and making it harder to do the things they need or want to do. Clinical psychologists do not prescribe medication (such as anti-depressants).

I was given this guide but am not sure why

Everyone who has contact with the cardiology team is given this leaflet, so that you are aware of our service should you wish to use it – either now, or in the future. If it was suggested that you might want to meet with the psychologist, but you feel after reading this information that you do not want to have an appointment with them at this time, please tell the member of the team who gave you this leaflet. The decision to use the cardiac psychology service is entirely up to you, and if you decide not to, it will not affect your child's care in any way.

How do I arrange to see a clinical psychologist?

There are two clinical psychologists who work in paediatric cardiac services – Dr Vanessa Garratt and Dr Nell Ellison.



Dr Nell Ellison



Dr Vanessa Garratt

You can ask any of the paediatric cardiology or fetal medicine staff to refer you, or you can speak to one of the clinical psychologists directly. You may see us at a surgical or pre-admission clinic, or if you are in hospital, we are often on the ward, or you can contact us on the number on the next page.

We are based at:

Psychological health services
Level 6, Bristol Royal Hospital for Children
University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust
Upper Maudlin Street, Bristol, BS2 8BJ

Tel: **0117 342 8168**

What happens next?

We try to be flexible with our involvement to suit families. We can meet with family members individually or together, depending on what you prefer.

If you are currently in hospital, we can meet you next to your child's bed, in the quiet room, or at another private place in the hospital.

If you are not currently in hospital, we will telephone you to arrange an outpatient appointment, or we can arrange to have an appointment over the telephone.

Every family's situation is different and is assessed individually. We will work with you to reach an understanding of your difficulties, and advise you about the best way to resolve issues.

Sometimes it can be difficult to know what you might want from a psychology service, so the first meeting is an opportunity to discuss what you are finding difficult or challenging at the moment, and for us to explain the ways we might be able to support you.

What happens to the information I share with the clinical psychologist?

The clinical psychologists are part of your child's care team. This means that some information may be shared with other staff who are closely involved with your child's care, if it is appropriate and helpful to do so. If there is something that you tell the psychologist that you do not want them to share with anyone in the team, please let them know. They will always try to ensure that information is kept private when necessary. However, if there is reason to think that there is a risk of harm to you or others, this information may need to be passed on to other people. The psychologist will talk to you before passing on information, whenever possible.

The psychologist will keep their own notes about any conversations they have with you, which are kept securely and confidentially within psychological health services. These notes are to help the psychologist remember the details of the concerns you discussed with them, and the plans they have agreed with you. If you have any concerns, or want to know more about the information that is likely to be shared about your family, please talk to the psychologist.

What if I am not satisfied with the service I receive?

If you have concerns about the service you receive from the psychologist, please discuss it first with them or another member of the cardiology team.

If this does not address your concerns, please contact the head of psychological health services, Sue Dolby. You can contact her by phone on **0117 342 8168**.

Or, you can contact the LIAISE team on **0117 342 8065**. This is

a service that aims to improve the experience of patients and families at the Bristol Royal Hospital for Children. They aim to help the hospital understand and resolve any problems you experience promptly.

Or, you can contact the patient support and complaints team on **0117 342 1050**.

Please note that if for any reason you would value a second opinion concerning your diagnosis or treatment, you are entirely within your rights to request this.

The first step would usually be to discuss this with the doctor or other lead clinician who is responsible for your care.

Smoking is the primary cause of preventable illness and premature death. For support in stopping smoking contact **Smokefree Bristol** on **0117 922 2255**.

As well as providing clinical care, our Trust has an important role in research. This allows us to discover new and improved ways of treating patients.

While your child is under our care, you may be approached about them taking part in research. To find out more please visit: **www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/research-innovation** or call the research and innovation team on **0117 342 0233**.

For access to other patient leaflets and information please go to the following address:

www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/information-for-patients/

Hospital switchboard: 0117 923 0000



Minicom: 0117 934 9869



www.uhbristol.nhs.uk



For an interpreter or signer please contact the telephone number on your appointment letter.



For this leaflet in large print, audio or PDF format, please call the patient information service:



0117 342 3728 / 3725

