



Psychological health services for families under the care of the rheumatology team



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What is a clinical psychologist?

Psychology is the scientific study of people, the mind and behaviour. After their psychology degree, some graduates do further training to specialise in using their understanding of how people think, feel and behave in order to help people. Clinical psychologists have a minimum of six years of specialist training in a variety of psychological approaches that can help when people are having difficult thoughts or feelings that are affecting their well-being and making it harder to do the things they need or want to do.

Clinical psychologists have trained in theories of human behaviour and development, and are not medically trained. They do not prescribe medication or diagnose mental illnesses. The clinical psychologists who work in our Trust have gone on to specialise in reducing psychological distress and enhancing psychological well-being for children and adolescents coming to hospital. They are all registered as qualified clinical psychologists with the Health Professions Council.

Why is there a clinical psychologist in the rheumatology team?

We recognise that when a child or young person is diagnosed with a rheumatological condition or musculoskeletal problems, the whole family may need to adjust their expectations, hopes and daily lives. It takes time to make sense of what has happened and get used to new, and therefore sometimes worrying, experiences. This process of change is almost always stressful.

The rheumatology service aims to support children and adolescents under their care to achieve their full potential socially, educationally and psychologically as well as physically. A clinical psychologist works as part of the team and attends

regular meetings in which the emotional, social and medical concerns for children and young people are discussed. The aims of the meetings are to ensure that families receive the best all-round care. It is perfectly normal to experience stress, worry and frustration in coping with a child's illness, and not everyone will need or want to see a psychologist. Sometimes, however, families may find it helpful to meet with the clinical psychologist directly for some extra support or advice. Children and young people often worry about their parents and want to protect them from their most difficult feelings. However, this can leave them having to manage their difficult feelings on their own. Having someone to talk to who is not a family member can help.

How can the clinical psychologist help me or my child?

If you decide that you would like to meet with the clinical psychologist, they will introduce themselves to you by telephone or at the hospital and plan an initial meeting. The clinical psychologist can see parents, children, adults and other family members together or individually, depending on what you prefer. They are likely to meet with you in an outpatient clinic room, in the psychological health services department, or in cubicles on the ward during a hospital admission.

The psychologist can help with issues such as:

- adjusting to living with a rheumatological condition or musculoskeletal problems
- making difficult decisions and coming to terms with change
- preparing for medical procedures (for example blood tests, injections, scans)
- making sense of how you and/or your child feels
- finding ways to deal with feeling worried, sad, afraid or angry
- finding ways to solve problems, using your child's strengths and skills
- helping you and/or your child to find ways to feel more confident and in control
- learning techniques, such as relaxation, that make it easier to cope with pain and treatments
- dealing with difficulties with your child's peer relationships or difficult family dynamics as a result of your child's health condition or treatment (for example, behavioural changes in a sibling since diagnosis).

Every situation is different and is assessed individually. The first meeting is an opportunity for you to discuss with the clinical psychologist what might be helpful for your family in managing any emotional or personal difficulties you may be experiencing as a result of your child's rheumatological condition or musculoskeletal problems.

Sometimes, it may be enough to meet with the psychologist once or twice for you to feel you can resolve the difficulty or find new ways of dealing with it. However, you and/or your child may feel it would be beneficial to meet regularly, say once a week, with a clinical psychologist over a longer period of time. This will be negotiated with you when you meet with them, and reviewed regularly as you go along.

How can I arrange to see a clinical psychologist?

You can arrange to see the psychologist by asking any member of the rheumatology team (consultant, doctor, nurse, occupational therapist, or physiotherapist) to make a referral on your behalf. The psychologist will then contact you by telephone or arrange to meet you in the hospital if you are currently there.

The psychologist is available Tuesdays, Thursdays and alternate Fridays, so your appointment will be within these times, although we try to be flexible around your other commitments where possible.

You do not need to bring anything with you to your appointments with the psychologist, and there are no costs involved.

I have been given this guide but I'm not sure why

If a member of the rheumatology team has given you this leaflet, it does not mean that they think your family is not coping or that you 'need help'. It may be that they recognise that your situation is difficult, that you or your child appeared distressed, or that they simply wanted you to be aware that these services existed for future reference.

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 guide that you do not want them to make a referral on your behalf. The decision to use psychological health services is entirely up to you and, if you decide not to, this will not affect your healthcare in any way.

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

The clinical psychologist works as a member of the multidisciplinary team and communicates regularly with them to provide the best care to your family. 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 about this first whenever possible. If there is something you tell the psychologist that you do not want them to share with anyone other than their supervisor, please let them know. They will always try to make sure that that information is then kept private, or 'confidential'.

The psychologist will keep their own notes about any conversations they have with you or your child, which are kept securely and confidentially within psychological health services. These notes are to help the psychologist remember

the details of the concerns you have discussed with them and the plans they have agreed with you. They may also write in your child's medical notes or write letters to members of your child's healthcare team (for example, their GP, rheumatologist, physiotherapist, nurse) about the work they have done with you, which are filed in both their notes and your child's medical file. If you have any concerns, or want to know more, about the information that is likely to be shared about your child's care, please talk to the psychologist about this.

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 them first with the psychologist or another member of the rheumatology team. If this does not address your concerns or you do not feel able to do so, please contact:

The head of psychological health services

Psychological health services,
Level 6,
Bristol Royal Hospital for Children,
Paul O'Gorman Building,
Upper Maudlin Street, Bristol BS2 8BJ

Telephone: **0117 342 8168**

Hours: 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

or

The patient support and complaints team.

You can contact them by telephone on **0117 342 1050**.

**Psychological
Health Services**

Psychological Health Services

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 under our care, you may be invited to take 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 email patientleaflets@uhbristol.nhs.uk.

