



Royal Berkshire
NHS Foundation Trust

Clinical Psychology Service: Hospital Palliative Care Team

Information for patients and
relatives

You or your family may have asked for some help, or the doctor or nurse providing your care may have suggested that you see a Clinical Psychologist. This leaflet aims to help you understand what to expect.

What is a Clinical Psychologist?

A Clinical Psychologist is someone who has been trained to help people cope with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Some Psychologists - called Clinical Health Psychologists - specialise in helping people with physical health problems.

Why see a Clinical Psychologist?

When people have a serious illness it is normal to feel upset and worried. Hospital staff are there to support you and will try to ensure that you have the information you need about your condition and any treatments that you are offered. They want to know if you are feeling upset or anxious about any aspect of your illness or treatment.

Sometimes people need more support and you may be referred to the Clinical Psychologist. The Psychologist works closely with other professionals in the Palliative Care Team, as well as with the staff on the ward.

A Psychologist may help if you experience difficulties such as anxiety, depression, panic attacks, loss of confidence or problems in relationships. They can help with psychological techniques for managing symptoms, such as pain, nausea, and breathlessness. They can support communication and it may be an opportunity for you and/or your family to talk through concerns; to gain an understanding of your emotional reactions; and to develop strategies to cope with any problems you are facing.

Who can see the Psychologist?

Patients can be referred to the Clinical Psychologist if they are an inpatient at the Royal Berkshire Hospital and have been diagnosed with cancer or other life-threatening illness. The medical team may suggest a referral or you can request that a referral is made. It may also be possible to see the partner or close relative of the patient.

The referral would usually be made by a member of the Palliative Care Team with your permission. You can also refer yourself directly to the service by asking a member of staff to make a referral to the Palliative Care Team for support.

When will I see the Psychologist?

The Psychologist will usually see you on the ward or in a private room near the ward if one is available. How often you meet will depend on the difficulties that need to be addressed. The meetings will not continue after discharge, but the Psychologist will help to ensure that you continue to get the support you need after you leave hospital.

Is it confidential?

Clinical Psychologists follow the same rules of confidentiality as all hospital staff and respect everyone's right to confidentiality and privacy. We are part of the clinical team and routinely communicate with the doctors and other health professionals involved in your care. You can ask to see letters and your medical records if you wish. If there is particular information you do not want shared with the medical team, this is not a problem, except in rare circumstances if there is a risk of harm to yourself or another. When you see a Psychologist your details will be placed on the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust records and the Berkshire Healthcare NHS Trust records. If you would

like more information about any aspect of confidentiality please ask the Psychologist at your first meeting.

If you have any further questions about seeing the Clinical Psychologist, you can speak to your nurse or doctor.

Clinical Psychologists are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) and chartered by the British Psychological Society (BPS).

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This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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