

## Patient information

### Liverpool Cancer Psychology Service

#### Cancer Psychology Service

#### **What do psychologists do?**

Psychologists are trained to work with people experiencing a wide variety of problems. A psychologist can work together with you to help you to understand the troubles you are having and find ways of overcoming them or coping with them more effectively.

Psychological therapy can help you make changes in the way you think, feel, and respond to the challenges you are facing.

#### **What will happen at my first appointment?**

Your first appointment will be an assessment. The purpose of this is to get an understanding of what is going on for you and how this is affecting your life. The session will last approximately one hour.

The psychologist will decide together with you if you would benefit from therapy sessions. Sometimes there may be other services that can better meet your needs. If this is the case, the psychologist can help you to think through what services will be most appropriate for your current needs.

At the end of the assessment, the psychologist will usually be able to give you some ideas to start making positive changes in your life.

For some people, only one appointment is needed. Sometimes, a second appointment is needed to complete the assessment. This is to ensure that the psychologist has all the information needed to understand your situation and advise you on the best way forward.

#### **What happens next?**

If this is the most appropriate service for you, you will be added to our waiting list for therapy. We will then contact you as soon as a space becomes available. If needed, we can offer a phone call to review how you are doing during this waiting time.

Individual therapy sessions last for about 50 minutes and may be offered weekly, fortnightly, or monthly. You can access the session as per your preference, face to face, telephone or online (video). You can discuss this with the psychologist.

The goals for therapy will be discussed and agreed between you and your psychologist. If you would like to find out more about our psychologists, you can find this information in our Liverpool Cancer Psychology service webpage accessible at

<https://www.uhliverpool.nhs.uk/services/service-finder/cancer/liverpool-cancer-psychology/meet-team>.

Once your therapy has come to an end you will have the opportunity to review with your psychologist what the next steps might be.

Psychological therapies are individually tailored to your situation and needs. Every patient is unique, and your psychologist will work with you to see what therapies might be most useful according to your situation. There are cognitive behavioural therapies which identify helpful ways of coping, or therapies which use mindfulness, images and other ways to help with challenging emotions.

Some patients may need a specific therapy to address particularly upsetting memories, especially if these memories affect daily life and cause severe distress.

We understand that a diagnosis of cancer and following its treatment can be a time of intense distress and difficulty, and the cancer psychology service specifically provides help with psychological needs that come up.

We sometimes work with family members, as well as patients.

### **What is the difference between a psychologist and a psychiatrist?**

Psychologists and psychiatrists have different training and work in different ways. Psychologists train by studying psychology at university. They then complete further years postgraduate training in applying psychology to helping people experiencing different kinds of troubles. Psychologists do not prescribe medication.

Psychiatrists are medical doctors who can diagnose psychiatric problems and prescribe medication, although some are trained in psychological therapy as well.

### **Trainee and assistant psychologists**

We have trainee and assistant psychologists working with the team who might be involved in your psychological therapy. They will always be closely supervised by qualified psychologists. If a trainee or assistant psychologist has been allocated to you, you will be made aware before you start your first therapy session.

### **Is what I tell the psychologist confidential?**

The psychologist will make notes in a psychology file to help them keep track of what you talk about in your therapy sessions. No-one outside the psychology service will see these notes.

The psychologist will also make brief notes in the hospital electronic patient record to say when they met you and the general issues you are working on together.

The psychologist will write to the person who referred you to let them know what you are working on in therapy. You can also have a copy of these letters.

The letters would usually be copied to your family doctor (GP) and the person who referred you. However, you can tell your psychologist if there is information you would prefer not to be included in a letter. On occasion we may need to consult with others in your cancer

team other than your referrer; we will always check with you before contacting others in your cancer team.

**There are two situations in which the psychologist will have to break confidentiality:**

- If a court of law instructs them to.
- If you tell them something that makes them concerned that you or someone else is at risk of serious harm.

If you want to know more about confidentiality, it is a good idea to ask your psychologist early on so they can explain the system to you and answer any questions. They will always let you know if they will need to break confidentiality.

**What if I cannot attend the appointment?**

We will do our best to arrange your sessions at times that are convenient for you and to rearrange them if necessary. Please do let us know when you are arranging an appointment when would be best for you.

In our experience for therapy to be effective, regular sessions are needed. We appreciate that people might have to cancel an appointment from time to time, but if this happens regularly it could be a sign that it might not be the right time for you to be having therapy. Your psychologist will discuss this with you, and you may decide to end your psychology sessions for the moment. Should things change, you can always contact the service directly and ask to be seen again.

**Service user group**

There is an active service user group consultation within the service. You will be invited to join and informed about what it involves when your therapy ends.



Cheshire & Merseyside  
Cancer Voices  
CHESHIRE & MERSEYSIDE CANCER ALLIANCE

**Feedback**

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future. Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

**Further Information**

**If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact:**

**Dr Jane Hutton  
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All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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