



University Hospitals Bristol
NHS Foundation Trust

Patient information service
Psychological health services

Adult congenital heart disease (ACHD) psychology service



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Psychological health services – adult congenital heart disease

The experience of having congenital heart disease (CHD) will feel different for each person. There may be times when you have questions, worries or concerns. As part of the team, we have medical doctors, cardiac nurse specialists, ward nurses, and a clinical psychologist who can all help with different areas of your care.

You can find out more about the psychological support we offer in this leaflet.

Some of the things you may experience when you have a heart condition might include:

- Worries about your heart condition and the impact it is having on your day to day activities.
- Coping with changes in your health and having medical treatments or interventions (e.g. MRI, CT scan, ICD implantation, catheter implantation, cardiac surgery) and/or needle phobia.
- Feeling worried or anxious about having an ICD or pacemaker.
- Worries that you may have trauma symptoms associated with past, current and future medical treatments and interventions.
- Having difficulty coping with a high risk pregnancy related to your CHD.
- Having a learning difficulty and needing additional support.
- Coping with being in hospital for a long time.

How do I arrange to see a clinical psychologist?

As part of our team of psychologists, Michelle O’Keeffe offers specific support to people with congenital cardiac conditions. You can ask any clinical specialist nurse, cardiologist or medical registrar to refer you to Michelle in the Psychological Health Service (PHS).

You can contact the PHS at:

Bristol Heart Institute
Bristol Royal Infirmary
Bristol
BS2 8HW

Tel: 0117 342 6609

What will happen when I meet a psychologist?

If you are currently in hospital, you can be met next to your bed, in the quiet room, or at another private place in the hospital.

If you are not currently in hospital, you will be sent a letter with details of how to contact the bookings team to arrange an appointment with the psychologist.

If you live a significant distance from Bristol or if it is difficult for you to come to the Bristol Heart Institute (BHI) for appointments you can be offered telephone appointments.

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 individuals with the kind of difficulties described (on page 2). 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, making it harder to manage their medical condition and do the things they want to do in life. Clinical psychologists do not prescribe medication (such as anti-depressants).

We use a range of approaches, one of which is cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). CBT has been shown to be beneficial in helping people manage their long term health conditions. Therapy is a collaborative process which means that you will be asked to think about what is important for you to gain from the sessions.

Therapy can help you find ways to manage difficult thoughts and feelings, develop better relationships, learn how to manage personal problems, and develop ways to live a meaningful and valued life. You may find that at times, you talk about feelings which you find more uncomfortable. Your therapist is there to help and support you with this.

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

Everyone who has contact with the staff working in congenital heart disease is given this leaflet so that they are aware of our service should they wish to use it, 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 service is entirely up to you, and if you decide not to, it will not affect your care in any way.

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

The clinical psychologist is part of your care team. This means that some information will be shared with other staff who are closely involved with your 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 make sure that information is then kept private, or confidential. 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 clinical psychologist will talk to you about this first whenever possible.

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

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

If this does not address your concerns or you do not feel able to do so, please contact:

Head of Psychological Health Services, Cardiac, Critical Care, Pain and Neuro (PHSCCPN)
Level 6, Bristol Royal Hospital for Children
Paul O’Gorman Building
Upper Maudlin Street
Bristol
BS2 8JB

Telephone: **0117 342 8168**

Hours: 9.00am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

or

The Patient Support and Complaints Team (PSCT).

Telephone: **0117 342 1050**

Notes and queries

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 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.

