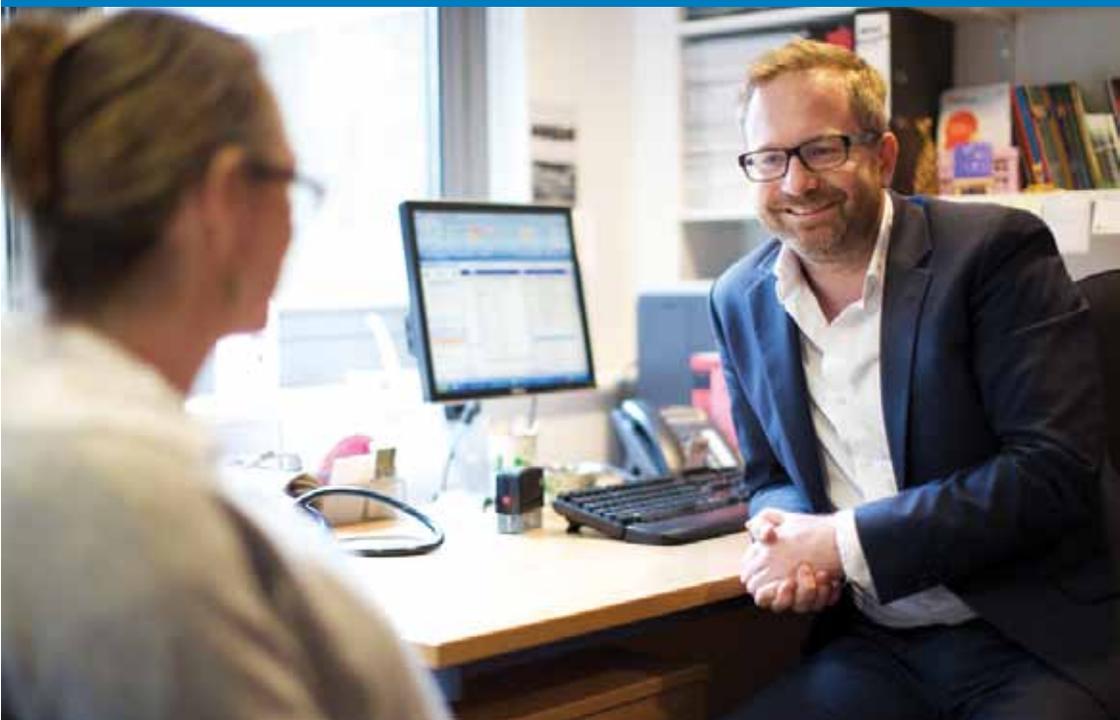


# How can clinical psychologists help with chronic pain?



Irving Building  
Pain Centre  
**0161 206 4002**

**Saving lives,  
Improving lives**



## Why have you been referred to see a clinical psychologist?

Following your recent appointment at the Centre, you have been invited to meet with one of the clinical psychologists. At the Pain Centre we know that your pain is real and understand that it can be distressing to live with. Living with chronic pain can affect many areas of your life. The effects of pain are different for each person, and assessment with a psychologist is to understand how your pain affects you and how we may be able to help.

Clinical psychology input often addresses the following issues:

- ***Sleep problems***

Chronic pain can make it difficult to get a good night's sleep. You may find that pain makes it difficult to fall asleep or that it wakes you during the night. This can cause you to feel tired the next day and make it harder to carry out day-to-day activities. Psychologists can help with techniques that can improve sleep patterns.

- ***Memory and concentration difficulties***

Chronic pain can affect your ability to concentrate and to remember information. This means that you may have less mental energy to concentrate on and remember the things you want to do, which can affect how well you function. Psychologists can help people with chronic pain to develop strategies to help with concentration and memory problems.

- ***Difficulties within social life***

Chronic pain can create problems developing and maintaining friendships and participating in social activities. You may find that if you have not been involved in social or leisure activities for a long time you have lost confidence in your ability to do this. We can help people to gradually feel more confident and develop skills to manage their pain more effectively so that they can improve their social and leisure activities.

- ***Difficulties with relationships***

Chronic pain and the changes it causes can affect your relationships with friends, family, and your partner. Family and friends can find it difficult to understand persistent pain and may not know how best to help. Pain can cause people to be irritable with those close to them and can create

difficulty with sexual relationships. Psychologists at the pain centre are experienced in helping people to address the impact of pain on relationships with other people, and to gain effective support from those around them. They can also help people to overcome difficulties with intimacy and sexual relationships.

- ***Problems with work***

Pain can affect your working life. You may experience problems at work or be frustrated because you are struggling to work in the same way that you did before you had pain. Some people have found that they have to give up work due to their pain and may wish they could return to some form of employment. We can help people to develop strategies to cope at work and to develop the confidence to gradually return to or look for paid or voluntary employment.

## ● *Self-confidence*

Chronic pain can cause loss of confidence and self-esteem, which can lead to anxiety. Pain can also affect your sense of identity – changing your sense of who you are, or just not feeling like your old self. Clinical psychologists at the Pain Centre are experienced in helping people to improve their confidence and self-esteem, and helping them to develop a positive self-identity.

## ● *Mood*

Chronic pain can affect your mood and you may find that you can feel more depressed, sad, stressed, anxious, self-conscious, irritable, frustrated and / or angry. This is understandable given the effects of pain on day to day life. Mood problems can be disruptive, and can worsen the problems that pain causes. Clinical psychologists at the pain centre can help

people to improve their mood by (1) looking at how their thoughts, feelings, and behaviour can contribute to feelings of distress; and (2) addressing some of the distressing life changes that can be caused by pain.



## What will happen at my first psychology appointment?

Your appointment will last up to an hour and a half and is an opportunity for you to tell us about how your pain is affecting your life. You and the psychologist will then discuss how the Pain Centre might be able to help you. The appointment is also a chance for you to ask any questions. A plan will be agreed with you, and if the psychologist writes a letter you will receive a copy.



## Common worries about seeing a clinical psychologist

People can think that they have been referred to a clinical psychologist because the doctor thinks that their pain is imaginary or 'all in their head'. This is not why you have been referred to see a clinical psychologist. The pain you have is real and psychological input may help to reduce the impact of that pain on the areas of your life which are described in this leaflet.

People can also worry that clinical psychologists might ask them about personal subjects or topics that they do not wish to talk about. When you meet with the psychologist you don't have to tell the psychologist anything that you don't want to. However, we would also encourage you to be as open as you feel able. This is because the more information we have, the easier it is to decide the best way forward to meet your needs.



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If you need this information leaflet translated, please telephone:

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Jeżeli potrzebne jest Państwu to tłumaczenie, proszę zadzwonić pod numer.

Urdu

اگر آپ کو اس ترجمانی کی ضرورت ہے تو مہربانی کر کے فون کریں۔

Arabic

إذا كنتم بحاجة الى تفسير او ترجمة هذا الرجاء الاتصال

Chinese

如果需要翻译，请拨打电话

Farsi

اگر به ترجمه این نیاز دارید ، لطفاً تلفن کنید

**0161 206 0224**

or Email:

**InterpretationandTrans@srft.nhs.uk**

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