

Psychological support for people affected by cancer

Information for patients

This leaflet provides information about our oncology psychological support service. It explains who we are, the services we provide and how you can access them.

Who we are

Our team is made up of a clinical psychologist and counsellors who specialise in providing psychological support – such as talking therapies and consultations – to people affected by cancer and those close to them. We are based at the Royal Free Hospital and also run clinics in Barnet Hospital.

How we can support you

A diagnosis of cancer, its treatment and aftermath can be distressing for the person affected and those around them. It is common for patients, their families and carers to experience shock, worry and sadness. People cope with these difficult times by drawing on their resilience and the support of those around them. Sometimes distress can become overwhelming and may start affecting quality of life, relationships and medical care.

Our team can provide a safe space to talk through difficult feelings and experiences associated with cancer and help you find ways to cope. Concerns we can help with include:

- coping with change and uncertainty about treatment and the future
- low mood, depression and anxiety
- loss of confidence and self-esteem
- support in making decisions about treatments
- managing pain and side effects of treatments
- difficulties with relationships and intimacy
- managing treatments alongside daily life
- talking to children about cancer
- changes in your appearance following treatment
- coping with caring for someone who has cancer

How you can access the service

If you think you might benefit from our support, you can ask a healthcare professional involved in your care – such as your doctor or nurse – to refer you. You can also refer yourself by calling us on 020 7472 6739 or emailing: rf.onc-psych-support@nhs.net.

If you require an interpreter or help with mobility, hearing or sight, please let us know and we will make appropriate arrangements.

What happens when you are referred

We will contact you to arrange an appointment or send you an appointment letter. If you are an in-patient at the Royal Free Hospital or Barnet Hospital, we will arrange to see you on the ward. These appointments typically last about 50 minutes.

At your first appointment you will get to know your therapist, discuss your difficulties and think through what support would best suit your needs. You and your therapist will agree on whether additional appointments will be helpful for you.

We will provide you with a safe space to express your feelings and make sense of your experiences. We may offer specialist talking therapies or provide information about practical support and other services that may be available to you.

Do I have to see you?

No, it is entirely your choice. If you choose not to, it will not affect your medical care. If you change your mind and would like to see us at a later stage, you can ask to be re-referred.

Can I bring anyone else to the appointment?

Yes, if you wish, a family member or carer can be with you for your appointment.

Confidentiality and records

All personal information collected by our service is kept confidential and our records are secured separately from your general medical notes.

At the beginning and end of any support we provide you with, a summary letter will be sent to the professional that referred you and your GP to update them. You will receive a copy of this letter and it will be kept with your general medical notes. If there is information that you do not wish to share with other professionals, please let your counsellor or psychologist know.

The only time that information cannot be kept confidential is if your counsellor or psychologist is concerned about your safety or the safety of others.

If you need urgent support

We are not an emergency service and cannot provide a rapid response in a mental health crisis. If you require urgent mental health support, please contact your GP or go to your nearest emergency department.

You can also call:

- **Macmillan Support Line:** 0808 808 00 00
Monday-Friday, 9am-8pm
- **Samaritans:** 116 123
Available all day, every day of the year

Contact us

Please get in touch if you would like to find out if our service is right for you and how we might support you:

- **Royal Free Hospital** (Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm): 020 7472 6739
- **Barnet Hospital** (Tuesdays and first two Thursdays of the month, 9am-5pm):
020 8216 4065
- **Email:** rf-onc-psych-support@nhs.net

Other useful contacts and services

Royal Free Hospital Macmillan cancer information and support centre

Drop-in: Monday to Thursday, 10am-4pm and Friday, 10am-1pm.

Tel: 020 7794 0500 ext 31337

Email: rf.cancerinfo@nhs.net

Royal Free Hospital Citizens Advice Camden Macmillan welfare advice service

Confidential, impartial advice on money, work, housing, transport and other issues for patients with cancer and their carers.

Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm, by appointment only.

Tel: 020 7794 0500 ext 37698

Email: rf.camdencab@nhs.net

Barnet Hospital benefits cancer advice service

Drop-in: Monday to Thursday, 10am-4pm and Friday, 10am-1pm.

Tel: 020 8440 4227

Chase Farm Hospital benefits cancer advice service

Tel: 020 8440 4227

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

At the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust, we are fully committed to providing a high quality patient experience. We

hope that you will be satisfied with our service. If you have any comments, compliments or complaints you can contact the PALS.

- Barnet Hospital PALS: 020 8216 4924
- Chase Farm Hospital PALS: 020 8216 4924
- Royal Free Hospital PALS: 020 7472 6446 or 020 7472 6447

More information

For more information about cancer services at the Royal Free London, please visit our website:

www.royalfree.nhs.uk/services/services-a-z/cancer-services/

Your feedback

If you have any feedback on this leaflet or for a list of references for it, please email: rf.communications@nhs.net

Alternative formats

This leaflet is also available in large print. If you need this leaflet in another format – for example Braille, a language other than English or audio – please speak to a member of staff.

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