

Psychological support for people affected by cancer

Information for patients

This leaflet provides information about our Oncology Psychological Support Service (OPSS). It explains who we are, the services we provide and how you can access them.

Who we are

Our team is made up of oncology professionals who specialise in providing psychological support, such as talking therapies, to people affected by cancer.

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. Talking therapies, as offered by our service, can also help.

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 to 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 or emailing us using the contact details at the end of this leaflet..

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 or self-refer?

We will contact you to arrange an appointment or send you an appointment letter. If you are an in-patient, we may 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 use this service?

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?

A family member or carer cannot usually accompany you to your appointment because an individual psychological support session

is confidential. This means that you will need to be seen alone for talking therapy. If you do bring someone with you, they will need to wait elsewhere.

Confidentiality and how we treat your records

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

There are exceptions to confidentiality such as: when the person providing talking therapy is concerned about your safety, or the safety of others; in cases of child protection issues; or, when breaking confidentiality is requested by a court of law.

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 contact:

- **Macmillan Cancer Support Line:** 0808 808 00 00
7 days a week, 8am-8pm
- **Samaritans:** 116 123
24 hours a day, seven days a week

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: 020 7472 6739
- Barnet Hospital: 020 8216 4065
- Email: rf-tr.onc-psych-support@nhs.net

Useful contacts and services

Macmillan cancer information and support centres

Royal Free Hospital Macmillan Information Centre
Tel: 020 7794 0500 extension 31337
Email: rf.cancerinfo@nhs.net

Barnet Hospital Macmillan Information Centre
Tel: 020 8216 4142
Email: rf-tr.BarnetCancerInfo@nhs.net

Chase Farm Hospital Macmillan Information Centre
Tel: 020 8375 2247
Email: rf-tr.BarnetCancerInfo@nhs.net

Royal Free Hospital Citizens Advice Camden Macmillan welfare advice service

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

Tel: 020 7794 0500 ext 37698
Email: rf.camdencab@nhs.net

Barnet and Chase Farm Hospitals Macmillan citizens advice service

Tel: 020 8440 4227
Email: infomacmillan@barnetcab.org.uk

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

At the Royal Free London, we are fully committed to providing a high quality patient experience. If you have any comments, compliments or complaints you can contact our PALS teams:

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

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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