



**Wirral University  
Teaching Hospital**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Pain Psychology Patient Information Leaflet



Psychologists work as part of the Wirral Chronic Pain Service (WCPS) multi-disciplinary team (MDT) to support people living with persistent pain in a variety of ways.

## **What does a pain psychologist do?**

Being diagnosed and living with chronic pain can affect people in lots of different ways. Psychologists are a key part of a chronic pain service. We do lots of different things, and you might see us for a one-off consultation, delivering sessions on the pain management programmes, or for individual and group therapy.

We can help you identify ways out of how you are thinking, feeling or responding to your pain, or help you can cope with the difficult emotions that can come up. Sometimes we might ask people difficult or emotional questions – this is with the aim to fully understand all the factors that could be contributing to your current problems.

## **Who are we?**



Dr Jo Jury, Principal Clinical  
Psychologist / lead psychologist  
for WCPS



Mark Ireland, Assistant  
Psychologist

We also offer placements to Trainee Clinical Psychologists undertaking their doctorate.

*Please note WUTH is a teaching hospital trust and as such sometimes we are joined by colleagues or trainees. Except for some circumstances (e.g. for reasons of safety, or where a supervisor is observing a trainee for assessment purposes) this can be declined, and you will be asked for your consent prior to beginning the appointment.*

## **What will my initial appointment with a psychologist be like?**

This first appointment is a chance to talk about what aspects of your pain experience you are finding difficult. We will ask you to fill in some questionnaires and bring these to your appointment. The initial appointment will usually last approximately 45 minutes and aims to come to a psychological understanding (formulation) of you and your pain. We will sometimes ask you about traumatic or adverse experiences in your life because we know this can be a factor in how people experience pain. We ask people to be prepared for this first appointment by thinking about what they would like to achieve within therapy or what difficulties they feel are impacting upon their pain, and by filling in the questionnaires we send you.

**Please note:** we are not a mental health service and as such if we feel your needs could be better met elsewhere we will signpost you there. Sometimes it can take a few sessions to realise this.

# What is therapy?

We offer evidence-based therapy such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) or acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), which works on making changes towards agreed goals. This means we will ask you to complete some between-session tasks such as practising skills, filling in worksheets or trying something new. Appointments usually take place weekly or fortnightly, as any less frequent than this means that we risk losing momentum. We are not a counselling service and while there are some important similarities, psychological therapy is different to counselling.

We always consider whether a person is ready, willing and able to engage in therapy as it can be a significant commitment, and we aim to avoid setting someone up to be in a situation where they believe "therapy didn't work". We therefore do not offer therapy to everyone referred through to us.

**We offer in-person clinic appointments by default however can arrange these via the telephone or video where needed.**

If you would like to see a psychologist, please ask a member of the team to consider together whether your difficulties might fit with what we can work with. It is likely there will be a wait for this initial appointment. You can contact our team on **0151 482 7891**.

## **What about confidentiality?**

We work together with all the professionals supporting you within WCPS, to help them support you as best as possible. As we also work within a wider network with outside health professionals (GP, mental health teams, social care) we may share or request relevant information where needed to ensure optimum care and safety of yourself and others. We also discuss our work within supervision which at times is provided by people outside of the department (where this is the case, we anonymise information). This is to ensure we are working safely and within our professional boundaries.

There may be times when we can't maintain confidentiality, for example if it is essential to your care or safety (e.g. concerns about risk to yourself or others). Very occasionally we have a legal obligation to share information (e.g. child protection, information regarding criminal activity). Where appropriate this will be discussed with you before any action is taken. We can discuss this at your first appointment.

## **If you are having a mental health crisis**

If you are experiencing acute distress, we are probably not the right service for you. We do not offer urgent appointments. If your mental health is problematic you should speak to your GP, or in a crisis phone the local crisis service phone line on 0800 145 6485. **If you are unable to keep yourself safe and are in imminent danger, please call 999 or get yourself to A&E for a mental health assessment.**



This leaflet is available in large print, Braille and on tape.  
Please contact 0151 604 7289 if calling from outside the  
Hospital and x2761 if calling from inside the Hospital.



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