



**Wirral University
Teaching Hospital**
NHS Foundation Trust

Pain Service

Patient Information Leaflet

wuth.nhs.uk



Hi, welcome to the Pain Service

Please take some time to read this leaflet, it has been written to help you get the most from what's on offer in our service.

Wirral Chronic Pain Service – Elm House- Clatterbridge Hospital CH63 4JY

Tel : 0151 482 7891

Please call if you cannot find us !

(Please give your name in at the reception, located opposite the entrance. If this is unmanned then turn left and present to the office along the corridor)

How we approach pain

We often think of pain as something caused when we injure ourselves or if something is wrong in our body. While this may be true, there are plenty of circumstances where pain happens when injuries have healed completely or even if there isn't anything wrong. Bizarre as it sounds, pain is more about how our nervous system decodes messages sent to the brain than what's going on in the tissues. It's a bit like when a computer programme doesn't work properly because of bugs in the code.

Because of this new understanding of pain, we now know that pain isn't simple. Everything matters when pain is concerned. Our general wellness, how we move and exercise, how we think, what we know and don't know, our mood, our memories and expectations, how we feel and look after ourselves our relationships with family friends and work are all important.

Believe it or not science tells us any of these factors can strongly influence the intensity and experience of pain.

We understand that pain can have a significant input on your quality of life. We call this a biopsychosocial approach to pain and it shows just how complex pain is.

For all these reasons, we have an experienced team of professionals from different clinical backgrounds so we can take a “whole person” approach to help you manage your pain. There may be no single thing that improves your pain, however when a number of similar things are optimised we get the best chance of a good result. We will work with you to understand these things so please don’t be surprised if we explore wider things in our discussions – it’s all about understanding your pain as part of you and not just as a joint or nerve or muscle!

Our hope is to get a really good understanding of the factors involved in causing pain, but also your priorities and what makes you function well. We will then work with you to create a management plan that genuinely helps you function better, and gives the best chance of improving your pain.

What to expect in the pain service

We start by looking at the information from your GP. We use this to decode who’s the best person to meet with you first. Don’t be surprised if you get a short telephone appointment at first – this isn’t to give you less time, its to fill in any information gaps and fine tune who best to meet with you in a longer appointment. We may also ask you to fill in some questionnaires – some of these might not seem relevant but they help us to get a picture of what difficulties you are experiencing.

When we meet with you for pain assessment it is always helpful to know what your hopes are for the appointment. This might sound a bit strange (It's a pain clinic and our hope is to reduce pain) but sometimes it's also about things like being clear about diagnosis, managing pain or symptoms from this biopsychosocial approach rather than purely medical.

Treatments we can offer include -
Individualised and tailored support
Pain Management Programmes
Mindfulness group
Exercise group

Your appointment

There are certain things that help get the best from this first meeting; when we both have a clear view of hopes, an open mind to new things or opinions, and a clear shared responsibility over your pain. Also, not shying away from honest questions like whether the well meaning strategies used so far by your other clinicians are indeed helpful or not. Also, whether there is room for other general improvements that can often help pain too.

Things that help get the best from the first meeting:

- Everyone has a clear view of what we would like to get out of this meeting
- Everyone is open minded to new things and opinions
- We share responsibility for trying to improve your pain
- No one is afraid of honest questions
- We discuss openly what has and has not worked so far
- We consider if there's room for other health improvements to improve pain

We will talk about your pain and maybe examine you too (with your consent) – it's often a good idea to wear clothes that you might exercise in or are loose fitting. We will discuss what we've found, what we think is going on and some of the evidence to back this up. At this point we'll also go through some of the treatment options (again using the best evidence for each) and agree with you what you think sounds the best option. This will be based on the evidence we've discussed and also what you know about you -this is where shared expertise between us really helps!

The type of things we might talk about includes:

Functional rehabilitation (getting your body as fit and strong as it can be)

Brain retraining

Mindful/meditation strategies

Medicines

Using psychological techniques

Pilates or yoga

Injections

Group based rehabilitation (Pain Management Programmes)

Further tests or opinions

Peer support or signposting

Anything that may help you move forwards

What we will always do:

Keep your best interests at the centre of what we do

Be curious about what can help you as an individual (it's your pain)

Use the best evidence

Share decisions

Talk honestly

Work with you as partner

Respect your choices as a grown up

What we don't do:

Something that we don't think will work just because it's easier for either of us

Try and blind you with science

Talk down to you

Keep going with something for the sake of it when it doesn't work

Will my pain go away?

Truthfully we don't know (we would rather get that out there at the start). Pain is complex. It is rare that persistent pain (pain that stays) is about a serious medical problem. As we've said it is not always about injury or something wrong with the body. There is an x-factor involved in the nervous system that means normal things can become painful. Similarly things that might previously have been slightly painful can become very painful. It's our job between us to understand your pain and as fully as we can, as the treatments can vary. This is one of the reasons why we have a skilled team of experienced clinicians from different disciplines. We approach your pain with an open mind; some of the resources we can share will help with this too.

Things to look at between now and your appointment

Studies show that when people understand how pain works, the pain can start to improve. Even if you aren't one of these lucky ones, it makes good sense to know how our bodies work especially when we are up against something as complicated as our pain system. This can help us become more informed and in control of our pain. There are some good websites to learn more about this. see below for list of web reference recommendations, some focusing on the brain science of pain, others with some good strategies to get started on. We have also mixed in some clinical guidelines in there which may be a bit dry, but give a good idea of where we get our evidence from in the type of treatments we advise or work with. If nothing else it gives a good foundation for our conversation when we meet.

Lastly we look at ways to improve quality of life. Between now and when we meet up, please have a think about your hopes for our first appointment (and tell us if we don't ask first) and what kind of things add quality to your day.

We look forward to meeting you!

Web Refs

www.flippingpain.co.uk

Painconcern.org.uk

Livewellwithpain.co.uk

Pain UK -a charity supporting charities who help with pain

People living with Pain/ British Pain Society

Nice.org.uk/guidance/conditions-and-diseases/musculoskeletal-conditions

Nice.org.uk/guidance/conditions-and-diseases/chronic-and-neuropathic-pain

Who's who in the team?

Our team is made up of clinicians, administrators and managers. The clinical team is made up of physiotherapists, psychologists, therapy and psychology assistants, pharmacist, occupational therapist and medical doctors. All the team are highly trained and have a different skill set to each other and therefore have a different angle on helping with pain.

Administrators

Our admin and managers make sure the service runs smoothly and look after non-clinical matters. You might meet one of our admin team when you arrive for your appointment. They will also book you in for appointments and be the first point of contact for you when phoning the service.

Physiotherapists

There are specialist pain physiotherapists in the clinic who specialise in the assessment, diagnosis and management of different chronic pain conditions. We take your health conditions into consideration therefore we will ask you about your general health and look at your previous investigations, such as blood tests and x-rays. We will help you to understand your pain and what you can do to influence it. With an individual pain management plan we will help you to develop strategies to better manage pain and improve your ability to do day to day activities that you may be struggling with. This may well include a variety of management tools for example pacing or increasing your ability to exercise taking into consideration what triggers your pain and what you feel you are able to do.

Psychologists

We have an Assistant Psychologist and a Clinical Psychologist in the team, we also offer placements to Trainee clinical psychologists undertaking their doctorate. A psychologist can help you better understand the psychological and social factors involved in your experience of pain. They will work alongside you to find ways to positive changes to your thoughts, feelings and behaviours with a view to improving your quality of life. If another member of the team suggests you see one of our psychologists it does not mean that your pain is not real or that you have a mental health problem. The psychologists see people both one to one and in groups. There is a separate leaflet to explain more on the role of a psychologist in a pain team.

Therapy Assistant

Our therapy assistants work alongside all members of the chronic pain team, to assist in all aspects of the care we provide our patients. They assist in our pain management programmes, various classes and pain management programmes, in addition to running their own exercise and support classes. They are also there to help you if you need it on the day of your appointment.

Occupational Therapist

Our specialist OT works to improve your ability to complete tasks you may struggle with in your home and work life due to chronic pain. They will help you identify what activities hold the most value and meaning to you and how to develop strategies to make these easier and more fulfilling and therefore to improve your quality of life and function. These can include adapting your environment and suggestions on how to problem solve different activities. The OT will also be key link to other community groups you might find useful. 1:1 mindfulness sessions can also be provided by our OT.

Pharmacist

Our specialist pain pharmacist will guide you through the options for medications for your type of chronic pain. We can discuss the potential benefits of medicines as well as their possible side effects. Together we will balance the benefits and risks of medicines and find the medication (including none!) which is right for you.

Medical Doctors

Our pain specialist medical doctors come from the anaesthetic branch of medicine. They focus on complex medical diagnoses, often mixed together with pain conditions and sometimes interventional pain medicine (injections). They also are expert at using combinations of medicines that can help pain. They have a good knowledge of all aspects of pain and the science behind it.

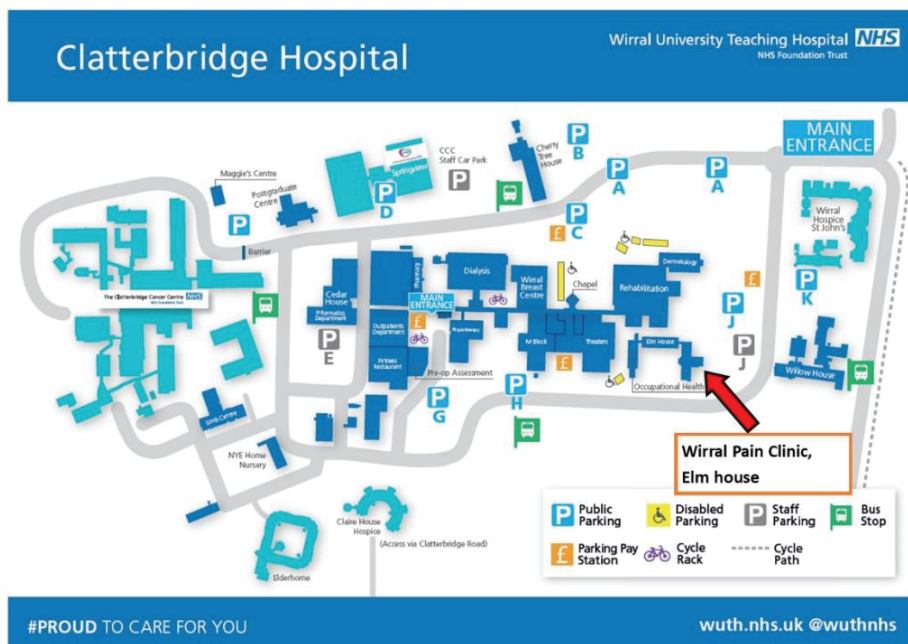
We also like to ask people who are experts in living with pain to help us shape the service in various ways.

Appointments

If you are unable to attend your appointment, it is important you contact us to reschedule as soon as possible, to enable your appointment to be offered to other patients.

Please be aware if you miss an appointment without notifying us our policy is to discharge you from our service back to the care of your GP. Please note this would also mean cancelling all future appointments with other clinicians within our team.

We therefore strongly encourage you to keep a note of when your appointments are and to ensure that either yourself or someone on your behalf contacts us as soon as you are able. If there are any concerns or problems with this we always welcome conversations about how we can support you to attend appointments.





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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