

## What happens after the assessment?

At the end of the assessment, you and the clinical psychologist will decide whether you would benefit from further meetings. You may be referred to the pain management programme, which is perhaps the most successful way of helping people to live with chronic pain, or you may be referred elsewhere if it is appropriate. You may decide that there is no need for further help at all. This will be a matter for discussion and agreement between you and the clinical psychologist.

## Who is the team clinical psychologist?

The team clinical psychologist is Dr Marianne Nolan, who has several years' experience in the NHS and has specialist experience in pain management.

## What to do now?

If you are interested in coming to an assessment with the clinical psychologist, please call the pain clinic on **0117 342 7575** to arrange a convenient appointment. If we do not hear from you within four weeks, we will assume you do not want to come for an assessment and your name will be removed from the waiting list.

As well as providing clinical care, our Trust has an important role in research. This allows us to discover new and improved ways of treating patients.

While under our care, you may be invited to take part in research. To find out more please visit: [www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/research-innovation](http://www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/research-innovation) or call the research and innovation team on **0117 342 0233**.

For access to other patient leaflets and information please go to the following address:

[www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/information-for-patients/](http://www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/information-for-patients/)

Hospital switchboard: **0117 923 0000**



Minicom: **0117 934 9869**



[www.uhbristol.nhs.uk](http://www.uhbristol.nhs.uk)



For an interpreter or signer please contact the telephone number on your appointment letter.



For this leaflet in large print, audio or PDF format, please email



[patientleaflets@uhbristol.nhs.uk](mailto:patientleaflets@uhbristol.nhs.uk)



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Patient information service  
**Pain management clinic**

## Seeing a pain management clinical psychologist



Respecting everyone  
Embracing change  
Recognising success  
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**Our hospitals.**

  
**Above+Beyond**  
For Patients. For Health. For Bristol.

## Why see a clinical psychologist when you're in pain?

If you are reading this leaflet, the chances are your doctor has suggested you might benefit from an assessment with the pain team clinical psychologist. A first reaction to this idea may be that the doctor 'thinks it's all in my head'. Psychologists are often confused with psychiatrists (medically trained doctors with additional training in mental health).

A clinical psychologist is someone with a degree in psychology and specialist training in clinical psychology. A clinical psychologist offers therapy through talking and by using a variety of different approaches to help people resolve emotional distress. They do not prescribe medication.

The suggestion that you meet with a psychologist can sometimes cause some initial anxiety. The purpose of this leaflet is to inform you about the very different role of the psychologist within pain management.

## Chronic pain and psychology

It is likely that you have invested a lot of time in looking for an answer to your pain problems. Often it proves difficult to diagnose or effectively treat chronic pain medically, and there comes a point where further investigations and treatments stop being the most helpful way forward. By the time people reach this point, their pain has often impacted on their lifestyle quite significantly, and they may have started to feel frustrated, hopeless, helpless, anxious and sometimes depressed.

These feelings are often associated with the loss of enjoyable activities, maybe less contact with other people, and increased stress brought about by struggling to deal with the pain.

Often, the things we tell ourselves can bring us down. For example, thoughts like "I'm useless now I can't do..." will inevitably contribute to a low mood.

All of these reactions are entirely normal and natural, and they affect a significant number of the people we see in the clinic with long-term pain problems.

We know that low moods have an impact on our pain mechanisms. So, if we are low or stressed, it is likely that we will experience more pain.

Pain and your brain are undeniably connected. You cannot experience pain without a message reaching your brain and returning to the pain receptors.

Your state of mind impacts on your pain and your pain impacts on your state of mind. Hence the reason why a clinical psychologist is such a key member of the team.

## What happens at a psychology assessment?

You will be given an appointment to meet our clinical psychologist, who is experienced in working with people in chronic pain. She will sit with you and invite you to talk about the history of your pain, how it impacts on your life and how you are coping. The meeting will normally take about an hour. If you wish, you can bring a family member or friend with you, but the psychologist needs to understand your situation from your point of view.

You will be supported in developing coping strategies that can help with managing pain and regaining control of your life.

Most people find the assessment helpful, and find they benefit from the opportunity to talk things through.