



University Hospitals Bristol **NHS**

NHS Foundation Trust

Patient information service
Psychological health services

Psychological health services for families under the care of the diabetes team



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Why is there a clinical psychologist in the diabetes team?

We know that diabetes challenges many aspects of life for children and their families, in different ways and at differing points, throughout childhood and adolescence. This can lead to emotional distress and place strain on the young person and family members. It is important that children and their families have access to appropriate support in managing this. The clinical psychologist is available to support you with a variety of issues, and help minimise distress, from diagnosis onwards.

How can a clinical psychologist help me or my child?

If you decide that you would like to meet with the psychologist, they will contact you to introduce themselves and plan an initial meeting. Children, parents and siblings can be seen together or individually, depending on what you prefer. You are likely to be seen in a room close to the outpatients area at the hospital where your child attends the diabetes clinic.

The first meeting is an opportunity for you and your child to discuss what might be helpful in managing any emotional or personal difficulties your family may be experiencing as result of your child's diabetes. Sometimes, more than one appointment is necessary for the psychologist to get a full picture of your situation, and to agree a way forward to help you to manage or resolve the problem.

It may be that meeting with a psychologist provides a space for you to reflect on your feelings about difficult experiences, and accept that these feelings are understandable. It may also help in developing some practical strategies for making difficult feelings and situations easier to cope with.

Sessions could also help you to consider ways of managing difficult decisions or changes to your child's diabetes management. We may also support you by liaising with other medical professionals involved in your child's care, although this would always be discussed with you first.

Sometimes, it may be enough to meet with the psychologist once or twice for you to feel you can take things forward, and you may not need ongoing support. It may be that a prearranged number of sessions would be more helpful, in order to address particular difficulties in a more structured way. This will be discussed with you during the first session, and reviewed regularly.

What other roles does the clinical psychologist have within the diabetes team?

The clinical psychologist also:

- provides advice to other healthcare staff on the psychological impact of receiving a diagnosis and treatment for diabetes
- teaches other staff about using psychological approaches to support families (for example, how to help with worries about needles)
- does research, audit and service development to improve psychological care for children and staff.

What are the common concerns for young people with diabetes?

- adjustment to living with diabetes
- managing their blood tests, injections and carbohydrate counting
- telling friends about diabetes and managing injections in public
- needle fears
- managing social, educational and physical pressures in addition to diabetes routine in their teenage years
- mood difficulties
- managing the transition to adult services
- hypo/hyper fears
- managing difficult feelings.

What are common experiences for parents of young people with diabetes?

Each parent will react differently to their child's diagnosis of diabetes. Parents often report feelings of sadness, loss, anger, guilt and worry. Sometimes, these feelings can feel overwhelming, and it can be helpful to talk to somebody who knows about diabetes who is not part of the family.

The ongoing management of diabetes and worry about the future can place great strain on families. Sometimes, this results in arguments, and behaviour from children and adolescents that can be challenging to manage. Parents might try to cope

by avoiding thinking or talking about diabetes, or by making it a very important part of life for themselves and their families. Different ways of coping within families can be helpful, or unhelpful, depending on unique situations. What can be helpful for one person can equally be unhelpful for another.

It can be difficult to know how much information to share with your child and with their siblings. Supporting your child when they need to have a medical procedure that they find distressing can also be very tough. The psychologist can offer you time away from the children to consider challenging situations such as these.

How can I arrange to see the clinical psychologist?

You can arrange to see the psychologist by asking any member of the paediatric diabetes team (for example, a doctor or nurse) to make a referral on your behalf.

I have been given this guide but I'm not sure why

If a member of the diabetes team has given you this leaflet, it does not mean that they think you or your child is not coping, or that your family 'needs help'. It may be that they recognise that your situation is difficult, that you or your child appeared distressed, or that they simply wanted you to be aware that this service existed for future reference.

If it was suggested that you or your child might want to meet with the psychologist, but you feel after reading this information that you do not want to have an appointment at this time, please tell the member of the team who gave you this leaflet. The decision to use psychological health services is entirely up to you and your child. If you decide not to, this will not affect your child's healthcare in any way.

What happens to the information we share with the clinical psychologist?

The clinical psychologist is part of your child's care team. This means that some information may be shared with other staff closely involved with your child's care if it is appropriate and helpful to do so. If you tell the psychologist something that you do not want them to share with anyone in the team, please let them know. They will always try to make sure that information is then kept private, or 'confidential'.

However, if there is reason to think there is a risk of harm to you, your child or others, this information may need to be passed on to other people. The psychologist will talk to you about this first whenever possible.

The psychologist will keep their own notes about any conversations they have with you or your child, which are kept securely and confidentially within psychological health services. These notes are to help the psychologist remember the details of any concerns you or your child have discussed with them, and the plans they have agreed with you. They will write a brief letter to the people involved in your child's care following the initial assessment and when treatment finishes. These letters are filed in both the psychology notes and your child's medical notes. If you have any concerns, or want to know more about the information that is likely to be shared about your child's care, please talk to the psychologist about this.

What if I am not satisfied with the service I receive?

If you have concerns about the service you receive from the psychologist, please discuss these first with them or another member of the diabetes team. If this does not address your concerns, or you do not feel able to do so, please contact:

- the head of psychological health services, Sue Dolby. You can contact her by telephone on **0117 342 8168**

or

- the patient support and complaints team. You can contact them by telephone on **0117 342 3604**.

Please note that if for any reason you would value a second opinion concerning your diagnosis or treatment, you are entirely within your rights to request this.

The first step would usually be to discuss this with the doctor or other lead clinician who is responsible for your care.

Smoking is the primary cause of preventable illness and premature death. For support in stopping smoking contact **Smokefree Bristol** on **0117 922 2255**.

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
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/.

Hospital switchboard: 0117 923 0000



Minicom: 0117 934 9869



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 call the patient information service:



0117 342 3728 / 3725

