



## *Pelvic Pain Service and Clinical Psychology*

This leaflet answers some commonly asked questions about the role of a Clinical Psychologist within the Pelvic Pain Team and how they might be able to help you.

### **What is a Clinical Psychologist?**

Clinical Psychologists aim to work with people to reduce their distress and enhance their wellbeing.

They work with people with a wide range of physical health problems to cope with the emotional consequences of these difficulties, and to improve their quality of life.

### **Why might you see a Clinical Psychologist?**

Being referred to a psychologist does not mean that your pain is not real or that it is “in your head”. Pain is complex and can affect people in lots of different ways, not just physically.

Clinical Psychologists work with you, and the other members of the Pelvic Pain Team, to help you manage your pain.

Most pain management services include a Clinical Psychologist. They have a very broad remit helping with different aspects of pain management, including helping those who:

- are feeling low in mood or lower in self-confidence
- are feeling anxious or panicky about pain
- have relationship difficulties

### **How can a Clinical Psychologist help?**

A Clinical Psychologist cannot cure your pain. However you may already be using a number of “self-management” skills and a psychologist can help you build on these skills and develop new ones.

Clinical Psychologists are different to Psychiatrists. They do not prescribe medication. They use a range of talking therapies to help the people they work with.

## **What will happen at your first appointment?**

A psychologist will:

- Listen carefully and encourage you to talk about how your pain is affecting your life
- Talk about your goals and what might be helpful to you in finding a way forward with your difficulties
- Discuss whether psychology might help you to make sense of your difficulties and develop coping strategies
- Discuss and agree with you how many sessions may be appropriate and review this at an agreed point

Sessions usually last about 50 minutes.

## **Books that others have found helpful**

Cole, F., MacDonald H., Carus, C. & Howden-Leach, H. (2005). *Overcoming Chronic Pain*. London: Robinson

Greenberger, D. & Padesky, C. (1995). *Mind Over Mood*. New York: Guilford Press.

Harris, R. (2008). *The Happiness Trap*. London: Constable & Robinson Ltd.

Hayes, S. (2005). *Get out of your mind and into your life*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications Inc.

## **Websites based on psychological therapies that others have found helpful:**

[www.paintoolkit.org](http://www.paintoolkit.org) – Patient self-help and support

<http://www.edspace.org.uk> – Information website with mental health resources. Includes self-help booklets on topics such as Stress and Anxiety, Low Mood, Managing Worry and Overcoming Sleep Problems.