

**Patient
Information**

Renal Psychology Service for kidney patients

Introduction

This leaflet explains what psychological support is available for kidney patients. If you have any questions, please speak to a member of the renal team or contact the psychology team on the phone number at the end of this leaflet.

What is the Renal Psychology Service?

Kidney conditions and their treatment can affect various aspects of your life. The Renal Psychology Service has psychologists who specialise in how to cope with the stresses and strains of kidney illnesses such as kidney disease.

You would be seen by a psychologist who is registered to work in the NHS by the Health and Care Professionals Council. They may use titles of Clinical, Counselling or Health Psychologist.

Psychologists are trained to understand thoughts, emotions, behaviours, and relationships and can offer support in the form of psychological therapy, offering a space to discuss concerns related to your renal condition. Psychologists are not the same as medical doctors and do not prescribe medicine, diagnose conditions or admit people into hospital.

Who can access this service?

Anyone under the care of a renal consultant at Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust can access the service.

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GHPI1572_12_23

Department

Psychology

Review due

December 2026

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Why have this service?

Having a serious illness can be difficult to cope with for anyone. You can deal with some of these difficulties yourself, maybe with help from family and friends, or with the support of your health care team (your nurses and doctors). Some problems benefit from the help of a psychologist.

For example, some people might say:

- “I just can’t get my head around what’s happened to me”
- “I’m finding it hard to cope with feeling so sad”
- “I get so scared about going for appointments and treatment”
- “I feel like the rug’s been pulled from under my feet”
- “Everything’s about the illness – I’m losing touch with who I am”
- “I can’t bear the uncertainty and waiting”
- “I know what I need to do for my health but I’m struggling to do it”

Psychologists are trained to help with these and other issues.

How might a psychologist help me?

This service is to help with problems relating to your kidney condition and/or the treatment for this. Psychologists can help you to:

- make more sense of the situation.
- consider the impact of the illness on yourself and those around you.
- look at how to develop your existing strengths in coping with things.
- develop new ways of coping and see how they work out in practice.
- work together to look at things from a different point of view.
- work on the best ways for you to communicate with the people around you.
- find ways of feeling more in control.
- deal better with distressing thoughts and feelings.

You will be working together with your psychologist on solving your problems. It is not a matter of simply telling you what to do, you will need to be actively involved in your therapy.

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Deciding to see the psychologist

Any staff member in the renal department can complete a referral form on your behalf. They will discuss this with you if they think a referral might be helpful. A referral will only be made with your agreement.

If you are not sure whether this service is right for you, you can discuss it with a member of your healthcare team, or ask to speak to a psychologist.

If you would like to go ahead with the referral, the psychologist will either send you an appointment letter, or telephone you to arrange an appointment once you are at the top of the waiting list.

If you think our service may help and a referral has not already been discussed with you, please talk to a member of your healthcare team.

What will happen at the appointment?

Outpatient appointments can take place over a video call or in person at Beacon House, Gloucestershire Royal Hospital. If you are currently having haemodialysis, the psychologist may be able to see you during your dialysis session, if this is appropriate.

Appointments usually last about 50 minutes. You are welcome to bring a family member or friend with you to the appointment.

At the first meeting, you and the psychologist will identify and explore your concerns and needs, then decide what kind of help will be of most use to you. You may decide not to take up any further appointments after the initial meeting or there may be another service that is better suited to your needs which we may be able to signpost you towards.

You may be offered a number of follow up appointments; this will depend on your difficulties.

You are always welcome to be re-referred to the renal psychology service again in the future.

**Patient
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Sometimes talking can make people more aware of how distressed they are; this can be uncomfortable. A talking approach is not for everyone. Please keep this in mind and look after yourself first.

Alternative therapy or treatment

You may want to consult your GP who may recommend some other care or prescribe medication, if needed.

Will the discussions be confidential?

Yes. We do communicate our understanding of your problem to other professionals directly involved in helping you. However, you may be discussing very personal matters with us and we will respect a request not to pass on details, subject to the requirements of the law.

Psychologists will have to make a disclosure to the authorities if they hear about a serious criminal act or a serious issue involving the safety or wellbeing of a child or adult.

Your psychologist will take notes during or after your sessions; these are kept securely and confidentially. Psychology case notes are kept separately from general hospital medical records.

Letters which summarise the work you and the psychologist do together are sent to your GP, renal consultant and referrer. Copies of these letters will be filed in your general hospital medical records.

**Patient
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For urgent mental health issues, please contact your GP or:

The Crisis Team

Tel: 0800 169 0398

Renal Psychology Service

Gloucestershire Royal Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 8523

Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4:00pm

Please note that messages may not be picked up each working day.

Further information**Gloucestershire Kidney Patient Association**

Website: <https://gloskpa.org/>

Kidney Care UK

Website: <https://www.kidneycareuk.org/>

Find an NHS psychological therapies service

Website: <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-an-nhs-talking-therapies-service>

MIND

Website: <https://www.mind.org.uk/>

Cruse bereavement services

Website: <https://www.cruse.org.uk/>

Samaritans

Tel: 116 123

Website: <https://www.samaritans.org/>

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Making a choice

Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.



Ask 3 Questions

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you are asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation

* Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. These questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84:379-85



<https://aqua.nhs.uk/resources/shared-decision-making-case-studies/>