

of thinking will help you to make better choices and access more positive life experiences.

Without exception, important personal changes take time, effort, commitment and sacrifice. What's more, personal change is less an event than a life long process.

#### What about confidentiality?

The information that you provide is confidential, and the psychologist would take action only if there was a serious risk of harm either to yourself or to other people. If this was the case, you would, if at all possible, be notified that confidentiality was to be broken. If you have queries about confidentiality do ask the psychologist at any time.

#### What if I need more help or other kinds of help?

The psychologist would be glad to liaise with other care providers regarding appropriate psychological help for you, e.g. if you want to access services that are more local to you or you want to try a different approach but value the specialist opinion here. Alternatively, if your situation feels too overwhelming and you require some medication or care from a mental health team, the psychologist here would be pleased to liaise with another practitioner over your care.

Do feel free to ask for any other information or advice.

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**Clinical Psychology**  
Patient Advice and Information



london medical

# Clinical Psychology at London Medical

This leaflet answers some of the most commonly asked questions about clinical psychology relating to health and illness.

## Who are clinical psychologists?

Clinical psychologists most commonly do their work in clinics and hospitals. They are not medical doctors and do not prescribe drugs. Rather, they apply their expertise to assist people who are experiencing personal and interpersonal difficulties. Psychologists at this clinic typically focus on the kind of difficulties that could compromise health.

## How might a clinical psychologist assist?

A clinical psychologist may simply, but importantly, provide an opportunity to talk and think about things that are unclear or worrying to you. They would also discuss with you different ways of understanding or managing your difficulties.

In medical services such as London Medical, such difficulties might include problems in adjusting socially and emotionally to a diagnosis, or managing the necessary lifestyle changes in order to stay as healthy as possible, or making complex decisions about certain investigations and treatments. Our psychology group is made up of independent practitioners who have extensive experience working with medical populations.

## What happens at the first meeting?

The initial meeting is usually focused upon assessing your needs; finding out what is troubling you and how, and to discuss what your psychological needs are and whether they can be met here. The meeting (and all subsequent ones) can be for you alone or include others who are helpful to your situation.

The initial meeting for newly referred patients will take the form of a 'double appointment'. You will meet with the psychologist for up to 50 minutes, have a short break, then meet for up to another 50 minutes. You will have the opportunity to talk about your situation and ask questions. The psychologist may also ask about your health and treatment problems and how your life is generally. Following your meeting, a summary will be sent to you or can be collected in person. Some people choose not to receive a summary, knowing that they can access it at the clinic any time.

Psychologists are obliged to inform referrers of the outcome of their referrals. If you do not wish for a copy of your summary to be made available to your referrer, the psychologist will write a brief letter separately; you can also ask for a copy of this. Psychological perspectives can have important implications for your health and health care; it can be useful to share your psychological summary with your doctors or other professionals involved in your care. Do ask for your psychologist's advice or recommendation on this matter.

## What happens next?

All subsequent meetings will last for up to 50 minutes. Early on you will discuss with the psychologist the likely number of meetings, at what interval and for what purpose. Each person has his or her own unique circumstances to navigate, so it is not always possible to predict how much exact input a particular person needs for the improvements that he or she seeks. These decisions are also influenced by practical considerations. Psychologists at London Medical tend to offer short-term input which can range from one to thirty meetings. You are of course free to end the meetings at any time. Typically a small number of exploratory meetings are

set up to see how you feel about working with the psychologist. You may be asked to do some work between meetings. These tasks are always agreed beforehand so you will be in control of the timing and the nature of them.

## How will I know if it is helping?

Don't expect to feel dramatically better right away. Some people do, because being listened to and being understood can bring relief. If that does not continue, it may simply mean that you are beginning to get into the nuts and bolts of meeting the challenges of change. You should however expect to:

- feel comfortable in your consultation soon, if not right away;
- have confidence in your psychologist;
- feel that, in time, you are developing new ideas for responding to people and events, taking a step at a time;
- notice that in time, these new ways of approaching situations are leading to new experiences and ideas about yourself and others;
- eventually feel more in control of your difficulties and life in general.

If you don't feel as if you are getting much out of your meetings, do talk it over with your psychologist. If things don't improve, perhaps the timing is not appropriate or perhaps someone else is better equipped to assist you.

## What's the down side?

There are no quick fixes and this can be disappointing. Furthermore, some things in life cannot be changed, and sometimes it is other people or society that needs to change. However, it is possible to learn to live more comfortably with a situation, or to make the most of what can be changed.

New ideas may bring discomfort. Learning to think about yourself or your situation differently may mean giving up some old ways. Alternative ideas may have to be developed and tried out. In time, the new ways