

Department of Clinical Psychology

01744 646864

**Accessing
psychological support
for people with cancer**

Patient information leaflet

**This leaflet is available in alternative languages/formats
on request.**

**Whiston Hospital
Warrington Road
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Why might someone with cancer need psychological support?

Being diagnosed with cancer can be an extremely difficult and stressful time. **Almost everyone** will feel shocked and upset at first. For many people these feelings improve over time, with support from their healthcare team, family and friends.

Everybody copes with cancer in a slightly different way and there is **no right or wrong way** to feel about having cancer. People can find different stages of the treatment process difficult. For some people, the hardest part starts when their medical treatment has ended. If you find that the way you are feeling is **beginning to interfere** with your everyday life, it could be helpful to ask for some extra support with the emotional side of cancer, as well as the physical support you already receive from your medical team.

Some examples of problems that you could ask for help with:

- Coming to terms and coping with cancer
- Feeling low or worried
- Changes to how you feel about yourself or other people
- Coping with medical treatment



What should I do if I think I would like extra support?

If you live in **St Helens, Knowsley** or **Halton** your local psychological services for people with cancer are based at **St Helens Hospital**.

- If you have a **cancer nurse specialist**, you can ask them to help you to access this service
- If you do not have a cancer nurse specialist you can talk to your GP or the consultant that you see at the hospital. They will be able to make a referral for you.

If you do not live in St Helens, Knowsley or Halton, please ask your GP how to access psychological services where you live.

What will happen next?

Your cancer nurse specialist can **provide information and support** about both the physical and emotional aspects of living with cancer. They will talk to you about how you are feeling and help you to decide what the best course of action might be. This could involve:

- Further contact with your cancer nurse specialist
- A referral to counselling or psychology services



What can I expect from counselling or psychology services?

The counselling and psychology services are experienced at dealing with the emotional impact of health difficulties such as cancer. They will talk to you about how you have been feeling, and help you to think about what has happened to you. There are a range of therapies that could be offered to help you cope with cancer.



You are likely to be offered an assessment session in which you will be asked about your experience of cancer, your current difficulties, and the impact that this has had on your life. A plan of action would then be agreed between you and your therapist.

Other sources of support

If you would like to speak to somebody you could also call the confidential helpline run by:

Macmillan Cancer Support
0808 808 0000

As well as counselling, there are a wide range of complementary therapies available at the Lilac Centre at St Helens Hospital. To find out more call: **01744 646173**

After your treatment has ended, you may wish to ask your cancer nurse specialist about the self-management course run by Macmillan: **H.O.P.E.** (Helping Overcome Problems Effectively), where cancer survivors meet to discuss ways to manage stress and build confidence.

For more general support, you could join the online community of people living with, and beyond cancer, at:

<http://www.cancerbuddiesnetwork.org>