

Psychological Services within Occupational Health Service

Information for staff

This leaflet aims to introduce you to the Psychological Services available within Occupational Health Service (OHS) and provide guidelines on what services are offered and how referrals are made.

Who we are

The OHS is available to all staff of the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and Psychological Services are a Clinical Psychology led team of staff working within OHS. The team is made up of staff who are trained to use psychological models and theories in order to work collaboratively with individuals and with teams. The team works alongside the other OHS staff to provide advice to employees, managers and the Trust on issues relating to health at work and fitness for work, and to promote a model of personal and team resilience and staff care within the Trust.

How we can help you?

The Occupational Health Service (OHS) is available to all staff of the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. Its main purpose is to provide advice to employees, managers and the Trust on issues relating to health at work and fitness for work and the Psychological Service is part of this OH multi-disciplinary team.

We can help with a range of psychological and emotional difficulties that have resulted directly from work (e.g., post-trauma symptoms following a work-related incident; work-related stress; anxiety related to sharps injuries, etc) and psychological difficulties which are impacting upon work above and beyond absenteeism.

Because we are a limited service, we do not see individuals with non-work related psychological difficulties but can help with signposting them to appropriate community services (e.g., Staff Care or local community services). Sometimes it can be unclear whether a difficulty is work-related or not and in this case we can offer an assessment appointment to determine with the staff member whether the most appropriate psychological service is within OHS or their own community.

How can I access the Psychological Services?

Referral to OH Psychological Services must be made by your Occupational Health advisor (e.g. nurse advisor, doctor, physiotherapist, OT). You must already be attending an OH professional before you can be referred for psychological input. We do not accept referrals directly from individual staff members or from managers.

What will happen once I am referred to the Psychological Services?

When you are referred to Psychological Services by your Occupational Health advisor, you will be offered an assessment appointment by post as soon as one becomes available. Your appointment letter will also include some short questionnaires. You will be asked to complete them and bring them along to your assessment appointment. Assessment appointments typically last for 1 – 1 ½ hrs. Sometimes, you may be invited to attend a second assessment appointment.

During the assessment, you will be asked about your current difficulties. In order to understand you as a whole person, you will also likely be asked about your job as well as your life outside of work and there will be an interest in hearing your own understanding of your current difficulties and how you think these might be helped. You will also have the opportunity to raise and ask questions about the Psychological Service.

At the end of the assessment, a joint decision will be made with you about what the next step is and whether further sessions are likely to help you. If it is felt that further sessions would be helpful, an action plan will then be agreed and future sessions will be arranged and will usually last for 50-60 minutes and over an agreed number of weeks.

If it is felt that further attendance with Psychological Services would not be helpful, together we would then try to explore alternative and more suitable options.

Will the information I share remain confidential?

We recognise that confidentiality is key in building a therapeutic relationship and as a result we do not report back to managers unless a staff member asks us to do so. We write a brief letter to the OH referrer to let him/her know that the staff member has attended and to provide a brief action plan of what was agreed. We can update a GP or other involved health professionals, with the staff member's consent. We keep psychology notes separate from the staff member's OH file, in a locked filing cabinet, also for reasons of confidentiality. Similarly, electronic notes are not accessible to the wider Occupational Health team. We discuss the limits of confidentiality with staff members at their first appointment. Rarely, confidentiality must be broken if information is given which indicates a risk to the individual or others or on legal mandate. If this happens, we will always try to discuss it with you first.

What should I expect from further 1-1 sessions?

We offer a broad range of interventions from a variety of therapeutic orientations (systemic therapy; CBT; Acceptance and Commitment Therapy; Cognitive Analytic Therapy; Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy; Brief Solution-focussed Therapy;

Narrative Therapy; EMDR). Interventions are tailored to the individual's needs following the assessment. A summary of our most commonly offered therapies is available on request.

Most psychological therapies are not 'done' to you, instead we will work 'with you' on your difficulties. Your personal opinion as to whether you feel the therapy is helping will be sought.

Because psychological therapies are collaborative, it is important that you make a meaningful commitment to your sessions in order to make any changes and discuss any concerns that you have about your sessions with your psychologist or therapist. Generally, we will ask you to:

- Actively participate in your sessions and, as these may only involve one hour every one to two weeks, you may need to practise new skills between sessions.
- Try to attend all your appointments and let us know as soon as you can if you need to cancel or no longer wish to attend. This helps us to keep our waiting list as short as possible, by ensuring that all available appointments are used. Where time off from work is an issue, your Occupational Health advisor may be able to provide support in agreeing this with your manager.

What else do we do?

We recognise that our service is limited and that meeting individual staff need must also be balanced with having a wider impact. For this reason we also offer a more consultative role either to teams or on steering groups. We also deliver teaching and training to staff within the BHSCT on a variety of topics (e.g., mindfulness; resilience; stress management; motivational interviewing; cognitive therapy skills; self-care). Occasionally we provide input to teams and wards in crisis or difficulty.

We run an eight-week Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy course one to two times per year. This course is open to any staff member of the BHSCT, regardless of whether they are attending OH Psychological Services. The course is limited to approximately 20 places.

Contact details

Please see the Occupational Health service webpage for contact details of the Occupational Health Service.