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Adult Mental Health Teams

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*Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust – Caring, Safe and Excellent*

What is Psychological Therapies?

Psychological Therapies

**Introduction to Psychological Therapies**

Psychological Therapies

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This leaflet provides a brief introduction to psychological therapies, which are increasingly viewed as an important part of both mental and physical healthcare. The aim of this leaflet is to help you know what to expect if you haveservi been referred to Psychological Therapies, which is a team within the adult mental health teams (AMHT).

**What is Psychological Therapy?**

The term “therapy” does not describe a single method. It is an umbrella term for a range of approaches drawing from a variety of models and theoretical backgrounds, delivered by different practitioners or therapists. Talking therapies are becoming increasingly popular, and whilst individual types of therapy differ, they are likely to have the following features in common:

* You will talk with a therapist who has some specialised academic and practical training.
* Therapists will be required to abide by a code of conduct and have their practice supervised.
* The focus will often be on a particular issue that causes distress or difficulty in daily living. The aim of treatment is to help with the symptoms of the problem, increase your understanding of your issues and enhance your overall wellbeing.

Unlike many medical interventions, where a particular form of treatment (e.g.: medication or surgery) is given, most psychological therapies will require collaboration and active involvement if they are to work effectively.

Effective psychological therapy should:

* Provide you with a clear plan for your treatment
* Focus on current, relevant problems
* Be delivered by a therapist who can establish a good relationship or rapport with you.

This last factor in particular, a good relationship between the client and therapist, is critical in achieving a positive outcome – more so than any given model or approach.

**Who will I be working with?**

There are a range of therapeutic clinicians within the AMHT such as clinical Psychologists, Psychodynamic Psychotherapists, CBT therapists, Systemic therapists, CAT therapists, Psychiatrists, Mental Health Nurses and Occupational Therapists. Anything you discuss will be confidential within the team. Your GP will also be kept informed about the treatment you are offered, so that they can co-ordinate this with any other services they arrange for you.

**What is a clinical psychologist?**

A psychologist has a degree in psychology, followed by three years of training in understanding and treating people with different kinds of emotional and mental health problems. Clinical psychologists see people with a variety of difficulties, including low mood, anxiety, trauma, relational difficulties, OCD and more. They try to help people find solutions to their problems by looking at how they deal with life and understanding how they could change their behaviour by developing more helpful pattern of reacting. They do not prescribe drugs, but see behaviour, thoughts, and feelings a being closely connected and by changing one, you can change the others.

You may have also been referred to a psychologist because of problems with your memory, speech, perception, or other brain functions; In this case you may be offered careful testing to assess what you are finding difficult and what strengths you have. The psychologist will explain all the test results to you and what they mean.

**What is a psychotherapist?**

Psychotherapists come from a range of professional backgrounds including clinical psychology, nursing, social work, occupational therapy, and medicine. Psychotherapists have studied one or more types of talking therapy and their postgraduate training varies from 18 months for CBT therapists to four years for psychodynamic psychotherapists, CAT therapists and group analytic therapists. They see people with a range of problems and will listen to your experiences and help you understand more abo yourself, the nature of your difficulties and your relationships.

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The work involves exploring these issues on a deeper level, in order to change patterns of behaving and relating. There are a number of different approaches and the therapist will discuss with you which may be the most suitable.

**What can I expect from Group therapy?**

We offer a range of group therapeutic treatments, such as Mentalisation, Cognitive Analytic Therapy, Group Analytic Therapy, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, Understanding and Coping with Trauma and Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy. These are psychoeducational groups that can help you understand and use self-help techniques. They may be offered in person or digitally depending on the group, and typically group sizes are 12-15 participants. At first people may feel nervous joining a group, however many people often find it is helpful to know others are experiencing similar things to you and you aren’t alone. Anything discussed in groups is confidential, and you will not share personal experiences.

**What can I expect from individual therapy?**

Depending on the type of therapeutic pathway you are on this may vary. It can be helpful to think about your goals and what you would like to focus on in therapy. During therapy you can expect to develop an understanding of your problems, how they started and what keeps them going. Whilst there is often space to think about the past you may also want to address the present, and how to make changes in your current daily life. You are the one who knows yourself and your difficulties best and you will be involved in deciding what is going to help. Your therapist has expertise in the kinds of treatment that has helped other people with similar problems. Therapy can be challenging and often people can start to feel a little worse before they feel better. It can be helpful to bear this in mind when thinking about how supported you are and how ready you feel for therapy. However, your therapist will be there to support and encourage you throughout the process.

**What are the different therapies?**

There are many different psychological therapies to address common mental health problems. Some of these are described below.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

CBT views problems as arising from beliefs and patterns of behaviour which are learnt across the course of your life. This type of therapy looks at unhelpful thoughts, emotions and behaviours and aims to overcome problems arising from them.

CBT focuses on the ‘here and now’ by exploring the cycles and patterns of behaviour that keep a problem going.

This collaborative type of therapy regards both you and your therapist as equals and the main focus of the work will be negotiated between the two of you. You may be asked to record information and then try out changes or perform tasks that confront particular fears or difficulties. This might happen during or after the therapy session. The work tends to be time limited and therapists will generally work through an agenda that is set at the start of a therapy session.

CBT is one of the best researched therapies. It has a strong evidence base in the treatment of depression and anxiety disorders such as obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), panic and phobias as well as more complex disorders such as psychosis and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Systemic Therapy

This approach looks at how people interact with each other. Unlike other forms of therapy that work only with an individual, systemic therapy works with couples or entire families.

Systemic therapy looks at the various perspectives of the people involved with a problem or situation. These views can help build a shared understanding of complicated relationships, which in turn can be used to find solutions.

Research suggests that systemic therapies are effective in dealing with family based problems, such as:

* arguments between couples and families
* marital distress or impending divorce
* parenting difficulties experienced by those with small children
* disruptive behaviours such as conduct disorder
* drug abuse

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Systemic therapists are skilled at helping people gain an understanding of their problems and find their own solutions by encouraging open discussion and learning to manage difficult emotions.

Psychodynamic Therapy

Psychodynamic psychotherapies refer to a set of approaches that see problems as a result of the link between the present and past. It looks to help people understand intense, unmanageable feelings that they may not even be aware of. Treatment is generally conducted over a longer period (over a year) and is less likely to be structured or led by an agenda.

This model works towards understanding the underlying cause of a particular problem. Early childhood experiences are explored to see how these have influenced your development.

Psychodynamic therapy can involve:

* Helping you to understand more about your behaviours and improve your awareness of what is happening – both consciously and unconsciously.
* Investigating patterns of conflict, blocks to personal growth or unresolved difficulties that may cause you distress.
* A focus on the feelings and what is happening within the therapy room (i.e.: the process).

Therapists in this model may say less than in other types of therapy, but will offer interpretations or critical insights that you may have overlooked.

This type of therapy has not been as widely researched as some others, and has not been as extensively investigated in formal clinical trials compared to approaches like CBT. However, there is evidence for it being effective in a range of disorders including depression, sexual abuse, substance abuse and personality disorders, especially when other structured therapies have not worked in the past.

Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT)

CAT integrates aspects of CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy) and psychodynamic therapies to provide a time limited, problem focused approach that also takes into consideration early experiences and social style.

Problems that arise due to conflicting relationships are often addressed and worked through during this type of therapy. CAT therapists work collaboratively with you to work towards an understanding of patterns of unhelpful behaviours and how sequences of events or thoughts can lead to the development of problems. Once these have been recognised, you will be encouraged to learn new, more helpful methods of coping.

The evidence base for CAT is not as wide as other therapies, but there is emerging support for its effectiveness in treating eating disorders, mood swings, interpersonal difficulties, and other conditions where relationships may play a role. There is some research that has shown CAT to be as effective as CBT and IPT (interpersonal therapy) for treatment of certain anxiety disorders.

Making a comment, or raising a concern or complaint

If at any time during your treatment, you feel that it is not helping or you are unhappy with your treatment, please discuss this with your therapist. Get support from an advocate or friend if that helps you to say what you need to. If you feel unable to talk to your therapist directly, please call Psychological Therapies on 01865 902005 or email us at Oxon.psychologicaltherapies@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk to discuss your concerns or find out about our full complaints procedure.

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When making a complaint, please be as specific as possible. Be clear about what you are unhappy with and what you want to achieve. You can also get advice and support from the **Patient Advice and Liaison Service** (PALS) on the free phone number 0800 328 7971 (24-hour answerphone) or by email pals@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk. PALS will also be able to advice you about getting an advocate or someone to help you with this process.