

The Clinical Psychology Service for children and young people with diabetes

Information and advice for children and young people with diabetes, and their parents/carers

Paediatric diabetes

What is the clinical psychology service?

The clinical psychology service is a service to help children, young people and families cope with some of the difficulties that can occur from having diabetes.

What does the clinical psychology service do?

Our psychologists work with children, young people and their families in hospital, outpatient clinics, homes and schools. We use talking and drawing to help understand how children and young people think, feel and behave. We will listen to your concerns and try to find a helpful way forward. Children, young people and their families can talk to us about what they think is important; nobody will think it is silly.

We also sometimes work with other people you might meet like doctors, nurses and play specialists.

Going to see a psychologist does not mean that you are 'mad'. Most of the problems we help with are things that everyone struggles with at some point in their life. Psychologists are different from doctors and psychiatrists as they do not prescribe medication.

Who is the clinical psychology service for?

Our service is available to all children and young people aged 0-18 who have diabetes and see the Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust Diabetes Team.

Why is there a psychologist in the diabetes team?

Physical and emotional well-being are closely linked. We know that young people living with diabetes and their families often feel worried, sad, angry or frightened about managing their condition.

Talking to a clinical psychologist can help you to understand what is going on, and help you find new ways of coping.

Having diabetes means having to pay attention to things that most young people don't need to think about:

- Remembering to give yourself insulin.
- Remembering to do blood tests to see what is happening in your body and recording them in a diary.
- Watching what you eat.
- Working out how much insulin to have.

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- Managing high and low blood sugars.
- Managing exercise and illness.

Trying to remember to do all of this can make children, young people and parents feel cross and fed up.

Sometimes you may decide not to bother with injections, using your pump, blood tests or healthy eating. This means that you end up with too many high or low blood sugars. Stress can also affect your blood sugars and make you feel more uptight and tense.

How can the psychologist help?

Sometimes having diabetes or having a child with diabetes can be stressful at times such as when moving school, growing up or during family changes. Parents and children can sometimes find it upsetting or difficult to talk to each other about these things and need some extra support. We would just like you to know that we are around to talk to you if you feel it might be helpful.

Some of the problems we can help children and young people with are:

- Strong emotions such as feeling shocked and scared which often happen when children and young people are first diagnosed with diabetes.
- Feeling sad and low in mood, not sleeping well and having no energy to manage diabetes.
- Worries about treatment, needles and blood sugar monitoring.
- Learning to be the boss of your diabetes so you can live with and manage diabetes.
- Support and ideas to help you make and maintain lifestyle changes.
- Feelings of disappointment when your diabetes self care isn't going to plan.
- Difficulties that occur when people in the family get frustrated.
- Feeling different.
- Support with managing your diabetes at school and discussing it with your friends.
- Difficulties with food, eating and body image.

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Who is the psychologist?

The psychologist in the diabetes team is Dr Ash Reynolds - he has been with the diabetes team since 2002. He is different from a psychiatrist as he does not prescribe medication.

How can the service be accessed?

A child/young person can be referred to us by any member of their diabetes team or you may wish to contact us directly yourself.

What happens during the appointment?

First appointments usually last 1 - 1½ hours and we will talk to you all about your concerns and how we may be able to help. You or your child can see the psychologist on your/their own, or you/they may like to bring someone to the appointment.

What a child or young person says to us is private (confidential) unless we are worried about their safety or the safety of others. It may be useful to share some of the things a child or young person tells us with their family, school or medical team so that they can help too, but we will plan with the child/young person what information we will share.

What happens after the appointment?

At the end of the session we will plan with you what to do next. This may involve:

- arranging another appointment to work with the family, just the child or just the child's carers;
- arranging for the child to see someone else who will be able to help;
- suggesting how the child and their family could manage the problem and deciding that they do not need to see us again – a one off session was all that was needed.

After the first appointment we will write to the child's GP and the person who referred them to our service to let them know we have seen them. We also like to contact school and other people who know the child but will discuss this with the parents/carers first.

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Contact details

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Children's Outpatients

Sandwell General Hospital

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