

## Family Counselling Leaflet For Relatives and Friends

### How can I help reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. We ask that you, and anyone visiting you, use the hand sanitiser available at the entrance to every ward before coming in to or after leaving the ward. In some situations hands may need to be washed at the sink using soap and water rather than using the hand sanitiser. Staff will let you know if this is the case.

[www.buckshealthcare.nhs.uk](http://www.buckshealthcare.nhs.uk)

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### Patient information leaflet

If you require a translation or an alternative format of this leaflet please call PALS on 01296 316042

Safe & compassionate care,

every time

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## Concerns and Complaints

All NHS Trusts have a commitment to monitoring and improving the quality of their services and therefore comments from users of those services are especially helpful.

If you wish to talk about any aspect of the service provided and do not feel you can speak to the counsellor at the time of your appointment or to the Department of Clinical Psychology, then you may speak to either the Patient Support Officer on 01296 316601 or Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01296 316042.

Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust PALS/complaint leaflets are available in the foyer of the NSIC or on the wards.

## Compliments

If you are particularly happy about the service you have received, you are welcome to let the counsellor and the NSIC know, preferably in writing.

## What happens when I go for my appointment?

On the day and time of the appointment, the counsellor will arrange a convenient meeting place within the NSIC. You will be contacted by the counsellor at the appointed time and you can go together to the counselling room. If you would prefer to stay on the ward where your relative is, there are a few places that can be used for a private conversation. There is no set structure for the sessions, you are free to discuss the things that are a priority for you. The counsellor may ask for some background information in your initial session. If it is difficult for you to visit the hospital during the hours the counsellor is available, the counsellor can arrange for regular telephone support.

## Frequency of counselling and length of each session

The length of each counselling session is normally between 50 minutes to 1 hour. However, this is flexible and may depend on your time and availability. Child relatives will usually be seen for a shorter period, depending upon their age. Sessions are tailored around your needs and whilst some family members request weekly appointments, others may schedule appointments as and when required.

## Translation Services

If you would like to request a written translation of this leaflet, please contact the Department of Clinical Psychology on 01296 315822/3/5. A translator can be arranged for your counselling session, but will require advance notice. Please let the Family Counsellor know of this request.

## On hearing difficult news

If you are reading this leaflet, it may be that a member of your family or a close friend has sustained a spinal cord injury (SCI). This is usually an unexpected event caused by a traumatic accident or illness. It is normal for family members and friends to experience some intense and confusing emotions, which at times may feel overwhelming. This is perfectly normal and understandable. There is no right or wrong way to feel because we all react to a traumatic event in different ways. Some people find that during a stressful situation, previous ways of coping fail and they feel less resilient or able to cope with challenges and difficulties that come their way.

Although you may wish to remain strong for your injured relative, it is important that you and your family look after yourselves and think of your own needs in terms of the resources and support available both within and outside this hospital.

## What is Family Counselling?

When families and relationships are put under strain, it can sometimes leave a person feeling isolated and alone, especially if they are unable to share those feelings with another family member or friend. It is natural to want to protect your loved one with a SCI from your emotions, however it is important that you find an outlet. Talking to a professional counsellor may give you an opportunity to look at your emotions and consider constructive ways of coping and readjusting. It may lead you to experience a greater sense of control and purpose, especially at a time when everything may seem quite overwhelming.

If you feel it might be helpful to speak to the Family Counsellor, details on how to make an appointment are explained within this leaflet. Please be assured that anything you wish to discuss with the counsellor will be treated in strict confidence.

## Emotions after a traumatic event

Waiting to hear the outcome of your relative's injury from the doctor, travelling long distances and familiarising yourself with the hospital and staff can all cause a person to feel stressed. It may be that you are also experiencing other emotions such as exhaustion, anxiety, feelings of loss and sadness, anger at your family's situation, anger towards a specific individual, frustration about what has happened or feelings of guilt. Many family members continue to juggle the demands of work, childcare or caring for elderly relatives. This can add to feelings of stress, fatigue and generally being overwhelmed and overloaded.

The Family Counsellor can provide a non-judgmental and unbiased approach to your difficulties. It may be helpful to have someone who will listen to your concerns and enable you to consider ways to help you manage this tremendously difficult time in your life.

## What can I talk to the counsellor about?

- Stress and anxiety
- Sadness and loss
- Anger
- Guilt
- Coping and readjusting
- Communication
- Relationship and intimacy (we also have a psychosexual therapist)

- Financial difficulties
- Employment
- Change of roles within the family
- Any other issues related to a family member having an SCI

Please see the leaflet "Managing Stress and Anxiety within the Family after Spinal Cord Injury" for further information .

## How do I make an appointment to talk to the Family Counsellor?

You can contact the Family Counsellor directly by telephone, email or in person. Alternatively you can leave a message with the Department of Clinical Psychology here at the National Spinal Injuries Centre on 01296 315823 and they will ensure that the counsellor receives the message.

The Family Counsellor will see individuals, couples and/or families and is trained to work with relatives of all ages, including children. All enquiries will be treated in confidence.

## Details on the counsellor

**Name :** Sarah Standish

**Location:** St Joseph's Ward, Ground Floor, near the RVS café

**Telephone:** 01296 315858 (Please leave a message and the counsellor will contact you as soon as possible)

**Email:** sarah.standish@buckshealthcare.nhs.uk

Counselling is available Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays between 9 am and 5 pm