

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.

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The Department of Clinical Psychology at the National Spinal Injuries Centre (NSIC)

Patient information leaflet

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

Safe & compassionate care,

every time

Coping with Spinal Cord Injury (SCI)

Few people can be prepared for the experience of SCI - it is a major trauma in anyone's life and presents individuals and their families with many challenges and concerns. There are no set responses to SCI. We are all individuals and our response is often influenced by our own life experiences and history of coping. Following a SCI, the sense of loss may trigger feelings of depression, fears about the future may cause anxiety, and a sense of injustice may cause anger. All these responses can be considered part of the normal emotional reaction and adjustment process.

Coping with SCI can involve making adjustments in all aspects of life. Areas such as work, housing and relationships can be affected, and new plans may need to be made.

Clinical Psychologists are experts in providing emotional support to help people manage the challenges they face as they learn to cope with, and adjust to, living with a spinal cord injury. Psychologists talk to people about how they are coping and support them to identify different strategies and approaches.

Sometimes other factors can make people more vulnerable to difficulties with coping with SCI. For example, if someone has sustained a head injury as well as SCI, they may need extra help. People who had mental health problems before their injury or a learning disability may need extra support too.

Complaints / Compliments

If you have any concerns or compliments about the treatment and rehabilitation you receive, or about your experience at the NSIC, please raise them with a member of staff.

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

What to expect when seeing a Clinical Psychologist

Meeting with a Clinical Psychologist is a joint agreement between the Psychologist and the patient, and progress towards the desired goals will be assessed and discussed during the meetings.

Issues discussed with the Clinical Psychologist are confidential and will only be discussed with other members of the team if relevant.

Each person referred has a file in which a record of the meetings is kept and this does not form part of the general medical notes. The Clinical Psychologist will record that a meeting has taken place in the NSIC electronic notes. An individual can discontinue contact with their Psychologist at any time without affecting their overall treatment.

Part of our work with you may include joint referrals with other services at the NSIC.

We work closely with the Psychosexual Counsellor who provides patients and their partners with specific support about their sexual life.

Also for patients who have severe and on going mental health issues we can arrange Psychiatric support.

Psychologists are also involved in supporting families and couples, and provide a private and confidential space to discuss particularly sensitive issues of a SCI such as changes in relationships and sexual issues. A Family Counsellor works as part of the Department. Please ask if your family member would like a referral.

Unfortunately, pain is common following SCI. Psychologists are part of the multidisciplinary team who help people to manage their pain.

In addition to providing patients and their families with emotional support, the Department of Clinical Psychology also coordinates the Needs Assessment and Goal Planning Programme. This award-winning programme aims to ensure that patients get the most from the rehabilitation process, and the Needs Assessment Checklist provides a basis against which we can measure each person's progress and outcome of rehabilitation.

The Department is active in conducting and implementing patient focussed research and leads the field in researching factors which help people cope and adjust to spinal cord injuries. We also contribute to staff training, building clinical knowledge and awareness of psychological issues and skills of how to work with patients.

The Department has written the following leaflets, plus a specially designed auto hypnotic relaxation CD for people with SCI.

Those include:

- Coping with Spinal Cord Injury
- Coping with Anxiety
- Coping with Depression
- Coping with Chronic Pain
- Memory Difficulties and SCI
- Supporting Children when their Parent has a SCI
- Rehabilitation and Goal Planning at the NSIC
- Family Counselling
- Managing Stress and Anxiety within the family
- Information booklet for Relatives and Friends

These are available from each ward area or direct from the Clinical Psychology Department.

How do I get to see a Clinical Psychologist?

Any member of the clinical team working with a patient can refer someone to the Clinical Psychology Service, or an individual patient or family member can request to be seen.

During the initial appointment, the Clinical Psychologist will talk with you about how you are feeling and coping and assess the nature and extent of any difficulties you may have. As mentioned previously, sustaining a SCI is a traumatic event and may trigger many emotions and concerns. Research and experience have shown that discussing these in a confidential environment, focussed on your individual needs, helps people to cope and adjust in the long term to their injury.