

### Useful resources

If you would like to find out more about chronic pain and pain management, these websites have very good resources based on the latest research evidence:

- <https://www.tamethebeast.org/>
- <https://www.paintoolkit.org/>
- <https://www.awaywithpain.co.uk/>
- <https://painsupport.co.uk/>
- <https://painconcern.org.uk/>
- <http://www.action-on-pain.co.uk/>

THIS LEAFLET IS BASED ON GUIDANCE BY THE BRITISH PAIN SOCIETY'S 'Participant Information for Pain Management' Programmes' (2013).

### Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or [whh-tr.whithealthPALS@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.whithealthPALS@nhs.net)

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please email [whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net). We will try our best to meet your needs.

Twitter.com/WhitHealth  
Facebook.com/WhittingtonHealth

Whittington Health NHS Trust  
Magdala Avenue  
London  
N19 5NF  
Phone: 020 7272 3070  
[www.whittington.nhs.uk](http://www.whittington.nhs.uk)

Date published: 08/04/2022  
Review date: 08/04/2024  
Ref: ACS/ClinHealPsych/CHPPMS/01

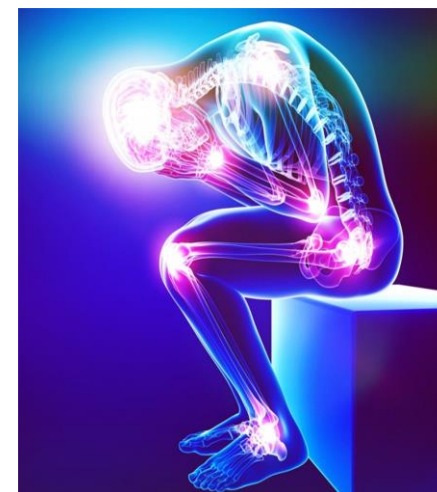
© Whittington Health  
Please recycle



## Clinical Health Psychology

## Pain Management Service

### Information for Patients



## Introduction

This leaflet is for anyone who is considering seeing a psychologist in the Pain Management Service or attending a Pain Management Programme. It describes the self-management approach to chronic pain, what you can expect from accessing pain management psychology, including a Pain Management Programme, and how the service is structured.

## Chronic Pain and its Effects

Chronic pain is pain which has lasted more than three months. It can affect you physically and it can also affect other aspects of your life, such as how you feel and what you are able to do.

Common problems associated with chronic pain include:

- Stopping enjoyable activities
- Finding your usual routine more difficult to cope with
- Feeling unhappy about how pain has affected your life and worrying about the future
- Losing your self-confidence
- Feeling that your friends and family do not understand your pain and how it affects you
- Feeling more anxious, irritable or low in mood than you used to
- Increased use of pain medication, which can lead to problems with side effects

## The Self-Management Approach

The self-management approach involves learning new skills to help reduce the impact that the pain has on your life. You probably already use various skills to help you manage your chronic pain. The goal of pain management is to build on these existing skills and to learn some new ways of doing things.

If you are not able to attend either the first or the second session of the Pain Management Programme, you will have to start on another programme later, as you will have missed too much information to make good use of the rest of the programme.

## Do I need to bring anything?

If you need anything to enhance your vision or hearing (e.g. glasses/ hearing aid), please bring that along. A willingness to learn and consider new ideas is also essential.

## Will my pain go away if I attend sessions with the chronic pain psychology service?

The aim of the service is to increase understanding about the causes of pain and how to deal with it. It also aims to help people make slow and steady improvements in doing things they need and want to do, and to reduce the emotional stress that can be associated with persistent pain. The hope is that by the time of discharge, people have more confidence, feel happier and more in control, and are on their way to being more flexible with increased stamina. To have long-term benefit you will need to attend regularly, practice and continue to use all the strategies you learn on the programme after it ends.

## Will I be cured?

Reduction in pain is highly variable (some people report reductions, others do not) but generally, people report increases in quality of life, despite having chronic pain. Although may still remain, people are more confident in managing their pain and feel more in control of their lives.

## What support is available after the programme?

Often people make friends in the group programme and create their own support network. We will provide you with a list of resources about support groups, activities in the community as well as literature and web-based resources.

### Why should I come to a Pain Management group or 1:1 sessions?

While attending these sessions, you will develop skills and knowledge that help you deal with and manage your pain, such as:

- learning the 'mechanics' of chronic pain and how it affects your nervous system
- understanding what it means to 'work with' your nervous system rather than 'fighting' your pain
- learning a new and different approach to managing pain that incorporates body, mind and environment
- understanding the psychological effects of pain and what to do about it
- learning new, evidence-based strategies that will allow you to manage daily life and increase your quality of life
- understanding flare-ups / increased periods of pain, what to do and how to reduce the frequency or intensity of flare-ups
- reducing isolation by attending a group with others who are also living with chronic pain

### What if my pain is so bad that I feel unable attend or I cannot attend for some other reason?

We understand that pain can be unpredictable and can get in the way of many things, including attending appointments. To manage pain successfully we need to be willing to try new things and consider new perspectives, and if you are not able to attend, you will not be able to benefit.

If you cannot attend any of your appointments, for whatever reason, please let us know as soon as possible. If you miss appointments, we may need to close your referral, but we will aim to discuss this with you first.

Although a self-management approach is not meant to get rid of the pain, many people find that self-management can help them to feel more confident about managing their pain and can manage it more effectively. They may be able to carry out activities more easily without an increase in pain and can return to some activities that they have stopped because of the pain. This means a more enjoyable and fulfilling life despite chronic pain.

### How can psychologists help with managing my physical pain?

Psychologists specialise in understanding behaviour, thoughts, and feelings. Persistent pain can influence our behaviour (we feel less able to do things), our thinking (we tend to have more negative thoughts) and feelings (we may feel low, anxious, or angry). All those reactions are perfectly normal and common responses to experiencing pain but can unfortunately also have a negative impact.

Psychologists are trained to work with complex issues like chronic pain by helping people to identify potential changes that can improve their ability to live well and reduce factors that contribute to pain.

### What is on offer?

- 1 **Pain Information Workshop:** 1.5hr one-off session.
- 2 **Pain Management Group:** 3-hour sessions, weekly for 12 weeks.
- 3 **1:1 (one-to-one) psychology sessions:** variable, weekly or fortnightly sessions. Please note that we have a very limited provision for one-to-one appointments.

### **1. Pain Information Workshop**

All new referrals are invited to a one-off workshop where members of our physiotherapy and psychology teams, who specialise in pain management, give information about what is available from the service and talk through what might be the best option for you. After attending this session, we will make a date for a 1:1 assessment to understand if our programme is the right thing for you, and if now is the right time.

### **2. Pain Management Programme**

The most common intervention is our Pain Management Programme. The pain management group is run by two members of the Pain Management Team, usually from physiotherapy and psychology.

The group programme is partly an educational course on pain management, and partly an opportunity to have positive discussions with other people who are living with persistent pain.

Although the idea of a group setting can perhaps be off-putting, most people who attend say that getting advice and support from others in a similar situation is really helpful and many build friendships while on the programme.

Sessions include confidential and positive discussions about how pain occurs, how pain affects your mind and body, how to manage stress, how to improve sleep, how to improve relationships and how to continue with things that matter to you (work or play).

There will also be some relaxation and mindfulness as well as gentle movement. We will look at practical strategies to help you increase your activities and stamina. You should wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothes when you come to the group so that you can do gentle movements.

### **3. 1:1 Psychology sessions**

During the face-to-face sessions with a member of our psychology team, you will be able to talk about your worries and concerns about pain and develop ways of thinking about and responding to your pain that enable you to live a more fulfilling and meaningful life.

You will set realistic and relevant goals to work towards, and there will be an expectation to do tasks in between sessions to help you to achieve these goals. Due to limited service resources, 1:1 sessions would only be offered in exceptional circumstances.

#### **Who is the chronic pain psychology service for?**

We can only see people experiencing persistent pain who have been assessed and referred by the Pain Consultant or pain physiotherapists at the Whittington Pain Clinic based in Whittington Hospital.

The service is generally recommended for people who have completed all their investigations into the medical cause of their pain.

#### **Where are the sessions?**

Whittington Hospital (various sites: Whittington Education Centre (WEC), main hospital building or Physiotherapy block)