Cleft.NET.East

Cleft Psychology Team

This leaflet sets out the psychological support provided by clinical psychologists within the cleft team which is available to children and young people with cleft lips and/or palates and their families.

What is a clinical psychologist?

A clinical psychologist is someone who has been trained to understand how people, think, feel and behave, and how this can change over time. We use this knowledge to try to help children, young people and their families to adjust to and cope with challenging situations.

Why are there psychologists in the cleft team?

Although we do not expect that people who have been born with a cleft lip and/or palate will have psychological problems, we understand that cleft and its associated treatment can be challenging for any individual and their family. Since both psychological and physical wellbeing are essential to care, our aim is to provide specialist support to address any cleft-related difficulties which may be encountered.

Along with other professionals in the team, we are available to see children at routine cleft clinics and at key time points, and five-year review.

What do the cleft psychologists do?

Our role is to try to help minimise the impact that a cleft lip and/or palate and any associated treatment can have on patients and their families’ lives.

We are able to offer you or your child a confidential space to talk about how you and/or your child are feeling. We can offer support and may suggest strategies for you to try. We will work closely with you to find ways of enhancing your psychological wellbeing. We are able to work together with individuals, families and professionals - for example education and health care staff.
What can we help with?

Commonly, we support individuals at any age and/or their families with concerns around:

- Adjusting to the diagnosis of a cleft lip and/or palate.
- Talking to other people and coping with their reactions and questions.
- Talking to your child about their cleft and what to say to siblings, family and friends.
- Making decisions about treatment and surgery.
- Preparing for surgery, dental treatment, orthodontics or other treatments and procedures.
- The experience of medical assessments, treatments and procedures, including support after surgery.
- Starting school, moving to secondary school, leaving school and applying for jobs.
- Difficulties in social situations.
- Thoughts and feelings about appearance, speech or hearing.
- Confidence and self-esteem.
- Teasing or bullying.
- Anxiety, worries, low mood.

Sometimes people come to us with non-cleft related concerns – we may be able to signpost you to services that are better able to meet these needs.

When can I be seen?

We will offer an initial appointment which may be a one-off session or the first of a series of appointments, depending on what best suits you. We also offer telephone appointments and visit the wards. Sometimes we are able to suggest other services that may be able to provide better or more local support.

Your first appointment will usually last for around 60 to 90 minutes. During this first meeting, we will talk about any current difficulties as you and/or your child see them, and a bit about your life in general – this will help us build up a picture of any issues you face. Together, we will then consider some ways forward, for example, arranging further sessions or directing you to other services. Any further appointments with us usually last for 60 minutes. Wherever possible, we try to see people on the same day that they are coming for other hospital appointments.

Sometimes it can be helpful for us to talk (with your consent) with other agencies you are involved with, for example school, social services, your GP, or other medical teams.

What about confidentiality and consent?

Confidentiality and consent will be discussed with you at your first meeting and you will have the opportunity to ask any questions.
All information that you share with us is treated confidentially unless there are concerns that someone’s safety is at risk.

Letters are exchanged between members of the team so that we can provide you with the best quality care. Copies of letters are also sent to your GP. However, if there is information that you do not want to be shared with the rest of the team you can talk to the psychologist about this.

You will be given the opportunity to receive copies of any letters.

**How do I contact the psychology service?**

If you have any questions or concerns, no matter how small, please feel free to contact us on the telephone number below. You can, of course, talk to any member of the team who can put you in contact with us.

**Telephone:** 01223 596272  
**Address:** Cleft.NET.East, Box 46, Addenbrooke’s Hospital, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 2QQ

Please note, if your concern is urgent, you should contact your GP as we are not available 24 hours.

**Further information**

For more information about the service and the team, please visit the Cleft.NET.East website:


There are a number of websites to help parents and children. A number of these are listed below:

- CLAPA: [www.clapa.com](http://www.clapa.com)
- Kidscape: [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)
- Childline: [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)
- Changing Faces: [www.changingfaces.co.uk](http://www.changingfaces.co.uk)
We are now a smoke-free site: smoking will not be allowed anywhere on the hospital site. For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169.

Other formats:

If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio, please ask the department where you are being treated, to contact the patient information team: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk.

Please note: We do not currently hold many leaflets in other languages; written translation requests are funded and agreed by the department who has authored the leaflet.

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Contact number
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Publish/Review date
May 2017/May 2020
File name
Cleft_psychology_team_v1
Version number/Ref
1/100327