



## INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

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# Cognitive assessments for patients with HIV

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This leaflet gives some information about cognitive assessments available in our sexual health clinic for patients with HIV.

### **What is a cognitive assessment?**

A cognitive assessment involves a series of tests and puzzles which look at different thinking abilities. The tests involve the use of different skills. Some people might find them difficult and others might find them easier. The tests are standardised which means we can compare how we would expect someone of your age and educational experience to do on the tests, with how you actually do.

### **Why do I need an assessment?**

As part of your ongoing HIV care, the British HIV Association recommends that all HIV patients complete a cognitive assessment within three months of diagnosis, and then annually. This is so that we can measure the current status of your thinking abilities, and to keep a monitor of any changes further into your HIV journey.

### **How does a cognitive assessment help?**

Cognitive abilities can be affected by many different factors including low mood, stress and physical injury. We also know that HIV not only affects your immune system, but can enter your brain and affect how it works.

For example, people with HIV may experience the following difficulties:

- Memory loss
- Difficulty concentrating
- Noticeable changes in movement (e.g. slower)
- Difficulty understanding information
- Longer time needed to process information.

The assessment can help us to identify your strengths and areas where you may need further support in relation to your thinking abilities. We would also be able to keep track of your cognitive skills over time by inviting you back to repeat the assessments in future years.

### **Are there any disadvantages?**

Most people do not experience any disadvantages and can find it useful to know about their cognitive abilities.

### **What will be involved?**

You will be asked to complete two types of assessments. This should last between 1-1½ hours and may be split between two appointments. There will be plenty of time before and after the assessment for you to ask any questions or share your concerns.

We would see you on your own since having others in the room may affect how you perform during the assessments.

However, you are welcome to bring a family member/friend to sit in the waiting room with you.

**If you wear glasses or hearing aids then please bring them with you.**

**Will I be told the results?**

Upon completion of the assessment, we will arrange an appointment to discuss the results with you in person. You can invite a family member or friend to attend if you wish. We can also discuss any concerns or questions that you may have.

**Do I have to have an assessment?**

No. This is optional. You can also discontinue the assessments at any point without reason. This will not affect your care in any way.

**What happens after I have done the assessments?**

After your feedback session we are required to write a brief summary of the results and share this with your HIV consultant. This can help them to plan your care. We can provide you with a copy of this summary if you wish. All records are stored in accordance with Trust guidelines.

Depending on your particular results we may:

- Continue to meet with you to help you understand the difficulties you may be experiencing (in relation to living with HIV), and to think about how to cope with them.
- Give you some advice and not need to see you again until we invite you back for a re-assessment.
- Invite you to complete further specialist cognitive assessment or, where this is not possible, refer you to neuropsychology.

These options will be discussed with you.

**If you have any further questions about the cognitive assessment you can ask a member of the clinic team to arrange a time for you to meet with one of our clinical psychologists.**

This information can also be accessed via our website: <http://www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk/index.php/my-sexual-health>



**Further sources of information**

NHS Choices: [www.nhs.uk/conditions](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions)  
Our website: [www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk)

**Patient Experience Team (PET)**

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

**King's Mill Hospital:** 01623 672222  
**Newark Hospital:** 01636 685692  
**Email:** [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net)

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net).

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