

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Counselling and sexual health

How might seeing a counsellor help me?

You may be wondering how seeing a counsellor can help someone with a sexual health or sexual relationship difficulty. This leaflet aims to answer some of the questions you may have.

What is a counsellor?

A counsellor is trained to help people understand their concerns and find ways of coping with them, without prescribing medication.

A counsellor offers people an opportunity to explore their thoughts and feelings with them and identify what changes they can make. This may involve learning new skills and approaches to solving problems.

Who might be helped by seeing a counsellor?

Many people have concerns about sex or experience difficulties in their sexual relationships at some time in their lives. There can sometimes be physical reasons for these difficulties. However, other kinds of issues that can also affect our sexual pleasure and enjoyment include:

- Feelings of pressure to live up to expectations of ourselves or our sexual partners.

- Negative thoughts or feelings about ourselves, our partners or sex itself.
- The impact of unwanted, distressing or abusive experiences.

For some people, their concerns may be more about their health. For example, they may have been diagnosed with an infection or physical health condition such as HIV and may need treatment. They may be worried about the impact of their health condition or treatment on their lives.

For others, they may feel unhappy about what they have been doing. They may also be putting themselves at risk of sexually transmitted infections or worry about passing on infections to others.

What concerns might people talk about with a counsellor?

Specific concerns that people might find helpful to talk about include:

- A lack of sexual desire or sensation.
- Difficulties with intercourse, or dissatisfaction with sex.
- Worries about porn usage.
- Abusive or distressing sexual experiences.
- Problematic or risky sexual interests, desires or behaviours.

- Worries about health conditions and their impact.
- Being diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection.
- Adjusting to the challenges of living with a physical health condition such as HIV and managing its treatment.
- Sharing personal, intimate information with others.

There may be other sexual and physical health concerns not listed above that could also be helpful to talk about.

Is it a confidential service?

We treat all information as confidential and keep care notes separately from other hospital records. We will not share anything you tell us unless there is a genuine need and we have your permission, or we are legally required to do so. You can discuss any questions or concerns you may have about confidentiality with us.

How can I see a counsellor?

If you would like to know more about our service or you feel that you might benefit from seeing a counsellor, please speak to your doctor or nurse. They will provide you with a form to fill in and leave for us to get in contact with you.

Contact details

My Sexual Health
King's Mill Hospital
Telephone: 01623 672260

Useful websites

- The College of Sexual and Relationship Therapists:
www.cosrt.org.uk

- Terrence Higgins Trust:
www.tht.org.uk
- Self-help leaflets (NHS Trust in Northumberland): www.ntw.nhs.uk

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions

Our website: 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

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.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them.

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet, please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

To be completed by the Communications office

Leaflet code: PIL202409-05-CSH

Created: December 2017 / Revised: September 2024 /

Review Date: September 2026