



The National Cleft Surgical Service for Scotland
Cleft lip and palate
Clinical Psychology service

Here to help with any challenges a cleft may bring-
because it shouldn't get in the way of your life.

What is a 'Clinical Psychologist'?

Clinical Psychologists are trained to have an expert understanding of how people think, feel and behave. We use this to help people cope with difficult situations, feelings and/or experiences.

Although Clinical Psychologists often work with people who have been given a mental health diagnosis (i.e. depression), we are not here to diagnose or decide that there is anything 'wrong' with a person or a family. Instead, we aim to support them with any issues they may find difficult.

Why are there Clinical Psychologists in the Cleft Team?

Importantly, we are *not* here because we expect that people born with a cleft lip and/or palate will have major psychological problems. In fact, research has repeatedly shown this is not the case.

However, we understand that although a cleft is only one small part of a person (or family), it can bring along challenges that most people do not have to deal with. We also know that trying to cope with problems alone does not always work.

Our role in the Cleft Team is to provide support for individuals and/or families for any cleft-related difficulties they may face.

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Who do the Cleft Clinical Psychologists see?

We aim to meet as many people in the Cleft Service as we can. This lets us introduce ourselves, and/or see if you have any concerns related to cleft at that particular time. We do this by:

- Coming to team clinic appointments
- One to one conversations at key times (i.e. age 5, 10, 15; before surgery)

We also contact anyone who has asked (or agreed to be referred) for our support. We work with people affected by cleft at *any* age.

What kind of issues can you help with?

No two people's experiences of cleft are the same, however, previous issues we have worked with include:

- Adjusting to the diagnosis of a cleft
- Talking to people about cleft
- Talking to children about their own cleft
- Coping with reactions and questions
- Preparing for treatment or surgery
- Deciding about treatment or surgery
- The experience of treatments and procedures
- Starting/moving school, work
- Difficulties in social situations (i.e. shyness)
- Feeling 'different'
- Feelings about appearance, speech, hearing
- Confidence and self-esteem
- Teasing or bullying
- Anxiety, worries, low mood



Sometimes people come to us with problems that aren't directly related to their cleft. In this case, we may be able to suggest services that are better able to meet these needs.

What kind of support do you offer?

If you do have any cleft-related issues you would like help with, we can offer tailored support. This can include:

- One off discussions/suggestions
- Individual/family Psychology appointments (by phone or face to face)
- Joint working with other professionals (i.e. Surgeons, GPs, Teachers)
- Themed 'groups' to talk about common issues
- Signposting to other services

How do I access the Cleft Clinical Psychology service?

If you would like our support, you can let us know by speaking to us (i.e. in a clinic), phoning our Secretary (see 'Contact Us') or telling another member of the Cleft Team (i.e. nurse).

Once you have done this, we will write to you to confirm and add you to our list. How long you wait on the list depends on the number and urgency of other referrals.

What happens in the first appointment?

The first appointment usually lasts around 50 minutes. Where possible these are held face to face, but we can also offer phone or NHS video call appointments. We know that talking about difficult things isn't easy, so don't worry if you feel nervous.

The aim of the first appointment is to get a clearer understanding of your problems. We will talk things over with you and ask you some questions. We may also give you questionnaires to fill in. We might start trying to understand why the issues have arisen, and thinking about how to tackle them.

How many appointments will I need to attend?

Whether further appointments (or other forms of support) may be helpful will depend on the problem. We will discuss this in your first appointment. If you do have further appointments, we can try to tie these in with other hospital visits.

Will you tell anybody else what we talk about?

Everything we discuss will be confidential unless there are concerns that someone's safety is at risk. However, some relevant information may be shared with the Cleft Team. We will tell you if there is anything it would be helpful to share. We will also send your GP copies of letters, to inform them of your care. Finally, it can sometimes be helpful for us to talk to other agencies you are involved with (i.e. schools). If this is the case, we will discuss this with you.

Contact Us

To request or ask about support from Cleft Clinical Psychology, please contact our secretary on **0141 451 6730** or ggc.cleftpsychologyscotland@nhs.scot