

# Psychological Therapies Service

## Telephone and video appointments

### Information for patients



**In response to the COVID-19 guidance, we are now providing appointments via telephone or video conferencing until further notice. Please read this information along with any other information you may have been given about the Psychological Therapies Service. We hope this will allow you to make an informed decision about engaging in psychological therapy with our team during the COVID-19 response.**

As with face-to-face psychological therapy, the team will provide compassionate, professional and respectful psychological therapy sessions adapted to you.

Appointments will be made at an agreed time and we will continue to offer flexibility with appointment times where possible. Please contact us if you are running late, need to cancel a session or can no longer be in a suitable and confidential place at the time of the session.

We understand that it may not be easy to attend sessions by phone or video, particularly when speaking about more personal difficulties and you may become upset or anxious during the session. It may help if you think about the following before and after a session.

#### **You may wish to consider the following:**

**Confidentiality:** We will offer appointments in a quiet, confidential space and may use a headset to keep conversations private. You are likely to discuss sensitive topics in your session. Please ensure that you are on your own (unless otherwise arranged) in a private space. You may wish to use headphones to reduce the chance of others overhearing.

**Distractions:** Getting the best from therapy requires focus. Please try to ensure that you are not going to be interrupted during the session, for example by children or pets. If this is not possible, it might make it difficult for you to engage in therapy and you should discuss this with your clinician. Find a comfortable chair so that you can sit throughout the session. Please have all you need to hand, including a drink if needed. We discourage eating or smoking during sessions.

**Distress:** Conversations in therapy can be difficult. Think about what you might do to prepare before a session. Make sure you have what you need with you and allow yourself a few minutes to set up, then sit quietly or use a relaxation exercise. After the session, it might be helpful to spend a few moments in reflection before re-connecting with your home or work life.

**Boundaries:** Therapist-patient is a professional relationship. To help maintain professional boundaries we ask that you are awake and appropriately dressed before your session begins, and that you do not have your session while lying in or on your bed.

**Ill Health:** If you are unwell and not able to fully participate in your session, we ask that you cancel it just as you would a face-to-face appointment. You can call the office and they will help you to rearrange.

## **Recording sessions**

It may sometimes be helpful to record a session or part of a session for you to refer back to. We also sometimes ask to record sessions for training purposes. We would ask that you please do not record your sessions without agreeing this with your therapist first.

## **Connecting for your session**

We will be providing our appointments using your preferred telephone number or via NHS NearMe. Please make sure before your session starts that your phone or device is working, fully charged and has an adequate signal.

### **Phone appointments:**

Your therapist will call you on your preferred number at the time of your appointment. If you do not answer they will try again 10 minutes later. They may not try again. This will be treated as a non-attendance.

If your call is cut off mid-session, your therapist will try to call you again immediately. Please don't try to call them, as our lines often do not accept incoming calls and you will block your own line. If they cannot get through they will try again after 5 minutes. If you are still unable to reconnect, please contact the relevant office (contact numbers on page 3). They will help you to make an alternative arrangement.

### **NearMe (video) appointments:**

For NearMe appointments, you will be given details on how to set this up. You will be given a link to go to in order to access the correct 'virtual waiting room'. There is no app to download and you do not need a user account.

To improve the quality of the sessions offered through NearMe, please make sure you make use of the fastest and most reliable internet connection you have available (mobile or broadband). Please also consider the possible devices you have to access the NearMe platform and use the device with highest quality camera and screen.

Please check your access to NearMe a few minutes before the session is due to start. If you are not able to log-in at the appointment start time, we will wait for 10 minutes before closing the video link. If you are more than 10 minutes late for the session, please contact us by telephone and we will re-join the video session using the same NearMe meeting details.

As with face-to-face appointments, if you are over 20 minutes late, we will need to reschedule that appointment.

If your video call is cut off mid-session, please try to enter the waiting room again immediately. Your therapist will do the same. If you are unable to reconnect after 5 minutes, your therapist will contact you by phone. You can decide together whether to continue the session by phone or to make an alternative arrangement.

## What are the potential risks of engaging with psychological therapy over the telephone or through the internet?

Although we believe that each appointment will be provided using a tested and reliable communication platform (e.g. telephone or NearMe) it is important to be aware of the following potential issues with appointments not offered face-to-face.

Potential risks include:

- All online services send data across the internet in an encrypted format. This is a reasonably secure means of sending data but it is not 100% secure.
- If your internet connection is poor, or when lots of people are trying to use one internet connection, the quality of the voice and video call can be reduced.
- Although the voice and video software aim to be secure and confidential, we cannot guarantee the security level of your smart phone, laptop or tablet.
- Any psychological therapy which is delivered online can be disrupted by technical issues. We are not IT experts, so can only do our best to support you with resolving any difficulties.

## What if I can't or don't attend an appointment?

Missed appointments increase waiting times. Please give us as much notice as possible if you are unable to keep your appointment so we can offer your appointment to someone else.

- If you cancel your appointment on more than 2 occasions, it is unlikely we will be able to offer you another appointment and you will be discharged back to the care of your GP.
- If you do not attend an appointment and have not informed us, we reserve the right to discharge you back to your referrer. If you contact us within 4 weeks of the missed appointment you may be offered another appointment depending on your therapist's judgement. If more than 4 weeks have passed since the missed appointment you will need to get a new referral from your GP.

## Contacting us

Our main means of contact will still be through our administration department. You can call and leave a message for any clinician on the relevant number below and they will endeavour to contact you by phone as soon as they are able. This is for messages and appointments only. Please do not use this number in an emergency.

- Edinburgh Psychological Therapies Office: **0131 537 6904**
- West Lothian Psychological Therapies Office: **01506 523 615**

