

Persistent Physical Symptoms Service (PPSS)

Information about the service (for patients)



Working across Cumbria with patients and professionals to increase the understanding and confidence in management of long-term physical symptoms.

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The Persistent Physical Symptoms Service includes a team of experienced Psychologists, Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists, Cognitive Behavioural Therapists and Rehabilitation Assistants offering therapy, support and advice for patients with persistent physical symptoms that have lasted for longer than six months.

What are Persistent Physical Symptoms?

We use the term persistent physical symptoms to describe conditions defined by ongoing symptoms rather than by underlying medical diseases. Some common symptoms are pain, fatigue, dizziness and numbness, but there are many others. You will possibly have been given a diagnosis for your symptoms.

Some examples include:

- Fibromyalgia
- Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/ ME
- Non-epileptic attack disorder
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome

These terms can often be helpful in understanding, and explaining, a particular pattern of symptoms. However, there are other terms that are less useful because they do not help explain reasons for the pattern of symptoms. This can include descriptions such as 'medically unexplained symptoms' or a 'functional disorder' these terms are still used widely within the Health Service.

About the team

Our team work together to support people in understanding and managing their symptoms, with the aim of improving both their day to day activities of daily living and their mood.

We recognise that your symptoms are real and are likely to be interfering with your daily life. A biopsychosocial model is followed throughout the service, as it is recognised that there is complex relationship between physical, psychological and environmental factors, both in causing and maintaining symptoms.



What happens next?

After you have been referred to the service you will be asked to 'opt-in' to confirm that you want to attend an assessment with two of our clinicians.

Once you have agreed to 'opt-in' we will send you a number of questionnaires, together with an assessment appointment letter. The questionnaires help the team understand your symptoms better, and provide some understanding of how your symptoms are affecting your activities of daily living and mood.

At the assessment we will discuss a number of topics including the history of your difficulties (due to your symptoms) as well as exploring any short and long term goals you would value support with. At the end of the appointment we will discuss the options that are currently available for you - together with any recommendations for your specific needs and goals.

Our most common options available will be

- Attending a Living Well group
- Individual psychological therapy sessions
- Individual physiotherapy/ occupational therapy sessions
- A combination of the above

All of the interventions used within the Persistent Physical Symptoms Service are based on the most up-to-date research from working with patient groups. The main approaches used in this service are Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (ACT) and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). ACT is about learning to find ways to reduce the impact of your symptoms on your life, whilst accepting that it may not be possible to get rid of them completely. CBT is about examining how your thoughts, behaviour and symptoms relate to one another. Both therapeutic models aim to help you to identify new ways, suggestions and ideas on how to manage your symptoms and achieve your goals.

Further resources

There are a number of different websites which provide information and support about persistent symptoms. These are a few of our favourites.

- www.neurosymptoms.org - Written by a Neurologist about functional neurological symptoms, causes and treatments, also includes other symptoms e.g. pain and fatigue.
- www.paintoolkit.org - A 'handy guide' to self-management skills written by a pain patient, Peter Moore, and GP, Dr Frances Cole.
- www.ayme.org.uk - This website is aimed at young people with ME (Chronic Fatigue) and their carers, but contains lots of information that would be useful to people of all ages who are trying to understand CFS/ME.

Contact Information

If you have any questions we would be happy to answer them when you attend for your assessment.

If you have any questions that you would like to ask before attending the assessment, please contact one of the admin team.

Kath Tyson: 01768 245954

Janette Wilton: 01228 814781

Confidentiality

‘The Trust’s vision is to keep your information safe in our hands.’

We promise to use your information fairly and legally, and in-line with local and national policies. You have a right to understand how your information is used and you can request a copy of the information we hold about you at any time.

For further information contact the Information Governance Team on 01228 608998 or email: Information.Governance@cumbria.nhs.uk

Feedback

We appreciate and encourage feedback, which helps us to improve our services. If you have any comments, compliments or complaints to make about your care, please contact the Patient Experience Team.

Email: PET@cumbria.nhs.uk Tel: 01228 602128 Freephone: 0800 633 5547

If you would like this factsheet in another language or format, for example Braille, large print or audio, please call:

01228 603890 Email:

communications.helpdesk@cumbria.nhs.uk

Or write to Engagement and Communications
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