



Older Adult Primary Care Psychological Therapies

Autumn 2020 Newsletter



Greater Manchester
Mental Health
NHS Foundation Trust

Salford Older Adult Primary Care Psychological Therapies is a team of Clinical Psychologists, Counsellors, an Occupational Therapist and a Mental Health Practitioner. Our team works with older adults that are experiencing moderate levels of age related mental health difficulties in primary care. Such as depression, anxiety, carer stress, bereavement, loss adjustment and adapting to changes in physical health and mild changes in cognitive functioning.

Our contact

Older Adult Primary Care Psychological Therapies
The Bridgewater Suite
St James' House
Pendleton Way
Salford
M6 5FW
Phone: 0161 358 1477

The Team

Dr Ruth Fox - Team Leader / Principal Clinical Psychologist
Dr Shaneela Malik - Clinical Psychologist
Heather Kirby - Senior Occupational Therapist
Dorinda Farrington - Registered Mental Health Nurse Therapist
Sharron Mitchell - Senior Counsellor
Jonathan Kilcourse - Counsellor
Rachael Smith - Counsellor
Zahra Younas - Assistant Psychologist

Referrals & Waiting List

Please note our fax machines are no longer in use. We accept referrals via post and email:

gmmh-ft.oaprimcarepsychology@nhs.net

We are continuing to accept referrals during the Covid-19 Pandemic, however, waiting times may vary. We thank you for continuing to support us in delivering a much needed service to this client group.

If you require any advice or more information about our service and appropriate referrals, please contact us on **0161 358 1477**.

Coping Carers Group

This is an 8-week programme aimed at carers of people with dementia, who would like to learn more about coping with the emotional difficulties associated with the caring role such as stress, anxiety, and depression. Based on a Cognitive Behavioural Therapy approach, it aims to provide coping strategies to improve carers' quality of life and it is also a great chance to meet other carers and to share experiences.

Currently we are not running the group due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but we are accepting referrals for a future group. To make a referral, please refer using our usual referral form.

Psychological Impact of COVID-19 on Older People

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on people's lives across the age span, it has particularly affected older people given their increased risk. Whilst staying at home and self-isolation may protect older people from the virus, it nevertheless may lead to other serious problems. A study by Age UK (2020) has looked at how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on older people and found that it has had a significant impact on both their physical and mental health, including:

- **Lack of social support:** Many older people have been left feeling lonely and socially isolated due to being in the high risk or shielding group. Although digital technology is able to provide a virtual social support network and a perceived sense of belonging, most of the older adult population have a limited access to internet services and smart phones.
- **Increase in mental health problems:** Older people have reported they are no longer taking pleasure in things they used to enjoy and are worried about what the future holds, leading to mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. For some older people, the anxiety about the virus has been debilitating, leading to panic attacks. Many face a double-edged sword where they are afraid of leaving the house due to fear of catching the virus, but at the same time find it difficult to cope with the loneliness and isolation at home.
- **Untreated physical health problems:** Older people with long-term health conditions have had reduced access to their usual healthcare. As a result, many have been struggling to manage their conditions, with worsening symptoms as well as increased pain from untreated medical conditions. A decline in physical activity such as loss of function and reduced mobility has also exacerbated existing health problems and can have a knock on effect on their mood and mental health.
- **Impact on memory and cognitive functioning:** Older people have had many aspects of their daily functioning disrupted due to the lockdown restrictions. They have limited face-to-face contacts and constricted activities such as being unable to go on regular walks to the park and attending social groups. Some older people reported that this lack of mental stimulation and socialising throughout the pandemic has impacted their cognitive function, reporting increased forgetfulness and difficulties in concentration. Furthermore, some carers of people with dementia have reported a rapid deterioration in the cognitive functioning of their loved one, due to the sudden changes in routine, access to services and lack of contact with family and friends.
- **Bereavement and loss during Covid-19 pandemic:** Older people who have lost a loved one during the pandemic have not only had traumatic and distressing experience but many have been unable to attend funerals of their loved ones or have had limited access to bereavement support.

Given the impact of Covid-19 on the mental health of many older people, access to psychological therapies is as important as ever. We know both from our experience of working therapeutically with older people and from the research literature, that older people significantly benefit from talking therapy approaches despite referrals for older people being much lower than those for working age adults ([Tardos, 2013](#)). Evidence shows that psychological interventions are a successful treatment for anxiety and depression in older age ([Krishna et al., 2011](#)) and furthermore, it is found that psychological therapies in the treatment of depression in primary care, have longer lasting effects than medication and preferred by the majority of patients ([Cuijper et al, 2019](#)).

Our Service

To meet the need in Salford, the **Older Adult Primary Care Psychological Therapies Service** provides talking therapies including psychology, counselling and occupational therapy for older adults experiencing mental health difficulties.

Whilst our service has had to adjust to different ways of working due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we are still providing home visits and clinic appointments to those who need them, as we find that many of our clients are unable to benefit from or access telephone or video therapy. If you are a healthcare professional and feel someone may benefit from talking therapies, please use the referral form attached with this newsletter.