

The Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust

The Portman Clinic

You have received an appointment to be seen at our clinic and may have some questions you want answering before coming for that appointment. This leaflet aims to answer some of these questions.

What is the Portman Clinic?

The Portman Clinic is an outpatient National Health Service psychotherapy clinic located in a large residential house, 5 minutes walk from either Swiss Cottage or Finchley Road tube stations. The Clinic is for people who suffer with problems from criminal or violent behaviour or from disturbing sexual behaviour or experiences.

Our services are available to everyone regardless of race, culture, sexual orientation, class, gender, age, religion or ability. We recognise that in our society certain groups and individuals have experienced and continue to experience discrimination and racism, and we are committed to think about these aspects of people's lives in a sensitive way. We are committed to achieving equal opportunities in all aspects of the Clinic's work, and in particular to provide services to people who may find themselves discriminated against or otherwise excluded from access to services.

Why do people come to the Portman Clinic?

You may have been referred to the Clinic as a result of seeing your GP or following contact with a psychiatrist, probation officer, social worker, psychologist or other professional person. Or, you may have contacted the Clinic directly yourself. Attending the Clinic gives you the opportunity to discuss your problems and be given an expert opinion about how you may best be helped.

What should I expect from my first appointment?

The first few appointments are for the purpose of getting a fuller picture of you and your difficulties and then coming to some conclusion, together with you, about what to do next. This might be a recommendation for treatment at the Clinic or a suggestion that we contact the person who wrote to us about you and outline what we think might help you best.

If psychotherapy treatment is recommended what should I expect?

Psychotherapy is a "talking" treatment and takes place either one-to-one with a therapist or in a group with others and a therapist. Sessions are on a regular usually weekly basis and because problems are often complicated the psychotherapy treatment extends over quite a long period of time. The families of children being seen will also be offered appointments though not necessarily on a weekly basis.

The therapist will listen carefully to whatever you wish to discuss and many people find that being able to talk about disturbing thoughts and painful emotions, in the present and from the past, may eventually bring a sense of relief and understanding. The therapist is committed to thinking about you and talking with you in a thorough and respectful way. Taken together, this may then help to free you from the more self-destructive ways of feeling, thinking and behaving and enable you to live and function more easily.

Psychotherapy can often be a powerful process and will at times be upsetting. However, knowing that you can see the therapist on a regular basis may make this more bearable. Because psychotherapy is at times distressing and frustrating, our experience is that it may not be suitable for people who often and heavily use alcohol or drugs to try to gain relief from their distress.

If you have further questions about what you might expect during the treatment please ask the therapist you are coming to see.

What information will I be asked to provide?

We will ask you for your address, details of your ethnic origin and your GP's name and address before you come for your first appointment. If you change your address or telephone number whilst you are having treatment please let us know so that we are able to contact you if necessary. We also need this information to ensure that your treatment is funded appropriately, in line with the contract arrangements that apply to NHS Trusts. If we do not have this information there may be a delay in sending you your first appointment.

Any information we hold on you is protected by the Data Protection Act and is held in confidence. We will use it only to manage your care and our own services.

Confidentiality

Everyone working in the NHS has a legal duty to keep information about you confidential and in this Clinic we attach particular importance to this responsibility. You will normally be told if information about you is shared with others for professional reasons, and anyone receiving that information must also respect its confidential nature. If you do not want information to be shared, your wish will be respected unless there is an overriding reason not to do so. It is our practice to periodically send a letter to your GP and/or referrer confirming your continued attendance at the Clinic. If you are concerned about this or any aspect of confidentiality please discuss this in your first appointment.