

## **The Staff Advice and Consultation Service**

NHS employees are known to be affected by significantly higher levels of stress than employees in general in the UK.

The field of mental health is one of the most stressful areas of work in the health service. It has long been recognised that the close contact all staff in mental health services have with the types of painful personal difficulties brought by our clients brings a particular enduring psychological stress. The problem is very significant and the associated costs, both human and financial are high.

In recognition of the increasing levels of stress and concerns for staff health and welfare, the Trust's Staff Advice and Consultation Service allows all staff access to counselling services.

This new service gives all Trust staff access to high quality counselling or psychotherapy. This accessible, confidential and professionally accountable service aims to a 'first port of call' for staff who may seek help with a wide range of issues that may affect their working and personal lives.

The consultations can address specific problems, offer help in making decisions, or give support in coping with crises such as bereavement, relationship breakdown or experience of trauma. In addition to dealing with psychological difficulties, the service can also provide support with a wider range of issues that can affect staff in their working lives, for example, financial, career or retirement advice. The consultation may also offer help in diffusing difficult situations at work or in dealing with workplace conflicts.

### The Consultation

The consultation is for up to three sessions only. In the initial meeting an assessment is made of the nature of the difficulty and the need for more specialist or longer-term help. Each consultation varies according to the needs of the individual. In some situations staff may need help in accessing a more appropriate specialist service, for example for financial help or for longer term counselling or psychotherapy, where as in some cases up to three advice sessions would be sufficient to address specific issues.

### Consultation Staff

The service is run by members of the professional staff within the Trust. This mainly includes clinical staff all of whom are qualified psychotherapists, psychiatrists, psychologists or social workers with extensive experience in counselling and psychotherapy. In addition staff from Human Resources and consultants from the Black Workers Group would also be available for appropriate advice as required.

There will be a sufficient pool of staff available, to ensure that any staff member wishing to use the service would be able to see someone that they do not know or would not normally work with. Confidentiality is assured and case notes will not be kept, any correspondence written on behalf of the staff member would also be available to the staff member.

## Accessing the Service

Most staff will be able to self refer, but some staff members may use the service after a recommendation by others with the Trust. Such recommendations need to be made thoughtfully as it is essential that the consultation is entered into voluntarily.

Staff members can access the service through Heads of Discipline, Departmental Managers, the Staff Involvement Group, and Human Resources. This is to ensure that staff can access the service through a range of pathways. Consideration will also be given to the location of the consultation so that staff members are comfortable.

As the service will be audited, there will an opportunity for anonymous feedback from users in the form of a questionnaire at the end of the consultation.

## Accountability

Overall responsibility for the service and day-to-day service delivery will lie with Susan Thomas, Director of Human Resources. All responsibility for issues of professional practice will remain with the professional line manager of the individual consultant.

## Consultation Staff

An up to date list of consultation staff can be obtained from Human Resources. This includes professional staff within the Trust, as well as, staff from Human Resources and consultants from the Black Workers Group.

For further information, please phone, email or send a written request to either:

Heads of Discipline

Chairs of Departments

Departmental Managers

The Staff Involvement Group

Human Resources

The Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust  
The Tavistock Centre  
120 Belsize Lane  
London  
NW3 5BA  
Tel: 020 7435 7111  
[www.tavi-port.org](http://www.tavi-port.org)