

Critical care psychology service

Patient information factsheet

How you might feel during critical care

- Critical care can be a scary place for patients and their loved ones.
- The treatments you are given that are needed to support your body can sometimes affect your mind as well.
- It is normal to experience gaps in memory, have vivid dreams, nightmares or hallucinations.
- You can feel confused, and experience a mixture of emotions such as fear, anxiety, loneliness, depression or uncertainty.

How you might feel recovering after critical care

- Recovering from critical illness can take time.
- Many people experience a range of feelings and reactions in the weeks or months that follow, including:
 - Feeling upset, tearful, or overwhelmed
 - Vivid dreams, nightmares, or flashbacks
 - Tiredness or low energy
 - Difficulty remembering what happened in hospital
 - Feeling like you've changed as a person
 - Worrying about becoming ill again
 - Confusing or strange memories
 - Loss of confidence.
- These are common and understandable responses to what you've been through.

How can a Psychologist help?

- Psychologists are trained to support people with the emotional and psychological impact of physical illness and medical treatment.
- We are not doctors and do not prescribe medicines, but we work with your healthcare team to help you feel better and handle what you're going through.
- We offer a space to talk about your thoughts and feelings, explore any worries or challenges you have, and support you in making sense of your experience.
- Together, we'll build on your strengths and explore ways to manage distress, so you can feel more in control during a difficult time.

Ways we can help

- Understand and manage distressing thoughts, feelings and memories.
- Make sense of your experience in critical care.
- Try out new ways of coping.
- Manage the uncertainty around your health and treatment.
- Reflect on how illness has affected you and those close to you.

Support for family members

- Having a loved one in critical care can be overwhelming.
- The Psychologist can support you to make sense of what is happening and provide a space to express your thoughts and feelings.
- We can also connect you with local and national services that provide practical and emotional support.

What next?

- If you or a loved one are interested in meeting with the Psychologist, please talk to your ward Doctor or Nurse and they can refer you.
- You can also contact us with any questions you have.

Contact our service

Critical Care Psychology email: Whh-tr.ccuchp@nhs.net.

Clinical Health Psychology administrator: **020 7527 1538**.

Useful support

ICU Steps is a charity with lots of useful information on their website for people and their families who have experienced critical illness – www.icusteps.org

Carers UK is a charity that offers advice and support for people looking after a loved one – www.carersuk.org

Contact our Trust

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern, please contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on **020 7288 5551** or whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net.

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet, please email whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net. We will try our best to meet your needs.

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