

# Cancer Psychological Support (CaPS) - REFERRAL GUIDELINES

**1**  
I am concerned about my patient's psychological wellbeing.

What should I do first?

**2**  
What sort of issues might require more specialist input?

**3**  
How do I access specialist psychological support for my patient or advice?

Help the patient to identify their feelings/difficulties	<i>"How do you think you are managing with your illness?" "How long have you been feeling this way?"</i>
Consider how proportionate the distress is within the context	Might this distress resolve in a short time once the patient has had some time to process/adjust e.g. just after breaking bad news? What does the patient make of their distress? Do they perceive it as proportionate?
Identify the patient's existing coping resources and available support	<i>"What is helping to keep you going? What has helped in the past?" "Who provides you with support? Is there anyone you can call upon?"</i>
Provide information that might help	Can I educate about common emotional/psychological responses ('normalising')? Are there any additional leaflets or resources that might help?
Assist with basic problem-solving	Is there anything we can do to work through this problem now? Is there practical help that I can offer or signpost to?
<b>Discuss with key worker/CNS</b>	<b>Level 2-trained healthcare professionals (e.g. CNSs) can support with assessing psychological needs and/or conducting a Holistic Needs Assessment (HNA) and some basic intervention</b>

<b>Common reasons for referral may include:</b>	Psychiatric medication review e.g. antidepressants	Coping with end of life care issues
Coping and adjustment issues	Interaction with pre-existing mental health issues	Relationship issues
Depression/low mood	Treatment engagement issues or refusal	Carer burden
Suicidal ideation/risk (bleep liaison psychiatry if high risk)	Mental capacity issues	Psycho-sexual difficulties
Generalised anxiety/worry	Decision-making difficulties	Body image problems
Specific anxiety e.g. panic attacks/phobias	Issues preventing treatment /rehabilitation	Support with issues relating to children < 18
Fear of cancer progression/recurrence	Pre-surgical/pre-treatment psychological assessment	Side-effect management e.g. fatigue/nausea/pain/sleep
PTSD/Trauma (including ITU-related issues)	Communication issues/breakdown with HCPs	Adjustment to cognitive impairment

- Before referring, consider whether:**
- The patient's difficulties are **related to their cancer and/or treatment OR that specialist input would support their cancer care**
  - The patient has **consented** to the referral (contact us if capacity to consent cannot be established)
  - The patient **knows what to expect** after the referral has been made – giving them our **CaPS Patient Information Leaflet** may help (see our intranet page)
  - Is or has been under the care of (or a carer for someone at) **St George's** being treated for **cancer**
- It may also be useful to check if:**
- The patient has received or is currently receiving **psychological/psychiatric input elsewhere**

**The Cancer Psychological Support (CaPS) Team**

The Cancer Psychological Support (CaPS) Team offers counselling, clinical psychology and liaison psychiatry input and is made up of experienced specialist clinicians who are able to work with patients to address their psychological and emotional needs using a range of interventions. Our service is available to adult inpatients and outpatients who have received care for their cancer at St George's Hospital, as well as those involved in their care (e.g. carers, families, partners).

- How to refer to CaPS**
- To make a referral within the Trust, please complete the referral form (search for 'cancer psychological support' on intranet) and return to [cancer.psychologicalsupport@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:cancer.psychologicalsupport@stgeorges.nhs.uk). If you are unable to access the referral form, send us an email using this address and you will be sent a referral form.
  - If referring from outside the Trust, Please use [stgh-tr.cancer.psychologicalsupport@nhs.net](mailto:stgh-tr.cancer.psychologicalsupport@nhs.net). The referral form and further information about our service can be accessed externally at <https://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk/service/cancer-services/cancer-psychological-support/>.
  - We can also be contacted on **020 8725 0461** for advice/consultation, if you are unsure if a referral is appropriate or if a patient has not consented and you require management advice.

If you require **urgent inpatient psychiatric assessment**, please **BLEEP Liaison Psychiatry on 6501**. Urgent referral reasons may include:

- Risk of suicide/self-harm/harm to others
- Treatment refusal (assess capacity first)
- Active psychotic symptoms (hallucinations/delusions)