



Psychological therapies on Koala Ward: information for children, young people and families

This information sheet from Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) provides information about the psychology support available to children and young people who are staying on Koala Ward. You can ask a member of the team to refer you to psychological services if you feel that you would like support.

Meet the team

The Psychology team at GOSH offers assessment and intervention to children and young people with a variety of neurological (brain and nervous system) conditions. We work closely with the medical and nursing teams, social work and also link with local services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in various parts of the country.

We aim to link with a range of services, depending on the individual needs of the child or young person, so we can explore all options to decide the best way forward for each family. This will vary from child to child but in all cases, we look at every aspect of a child's experience, including family life and support as well as their medical needs. We involve siblings and other relatives if needed, as we recognise how a child's illness can impact on the entire family.

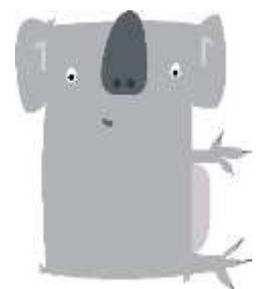
How can we help on Koala Ward?

While your child is staying on Koala Ward, your medical or social work team may offer you the option of meeting with a member of the team. Other families have told us how helpful it is to have support for dealing with some of the issues of having a child in hospital from the psychology

team. This is something we aim to offer everyone if it is needed as we recognise that it can be an anxious time for all the family.

This might include:

- Adjustment to a medical condition, diagnosis and prognosis, including answering difficult questions about a child's condition
- Supporting feelings of low mood, anxiety or self-esteem in relation to the medical condition
- Adjusting to changes in environment – however homely we make a ward, it is still a hospital with different routines, which can affect people in different ways
- Managing worry about procedures and treatments, such as physiotherapy, blood tests and major surgery
- Finding ways to deal with your own feelings and emotions as well as those of your child in hospital and the wider family.



What does psychology support involve?

After an initial conversation, we decide with you how much support you might need and what format this will take, for example:

- Ongoing support while your child is staying on Koala Ward or as an outpatient after discharge.
- One-off meetings to establish what your family needs and identify support and information closer to home.
- Psychological therapy as an outpatient on an individual basis or as a group, as needed to address a particular issue or develop wider coping strategies.

Any decisions about what psychological support will involve are made jointly with you and your family. Any input will only be arranged if you are happy and comfortable with the plan. The only circumstance when we would become involved without your input would be if a person is at immediate and serious risk.

How do we access the psychology service?

Referrals to the Psychology Team can be made by any member of the team looking after your child. You can also ask to be referred to the team if you think it might be helpful. We aim to see families as quickly as possible whilst you are on the ward. Alternatively psychologists are able to provide online or written resources if you feel that this would be suitable.

Equally, you do not have to have psychology input if you do not want it or feel it would not be helpful. You can change your mind at any point and ask for a referral if things change.

Can we continue to access support after we have been discharged?

We would discuss with you whether you feel that you may need support after your child has been

discharged from Koala Ward. This may involve informing you of therapy services near your home. We can continue to see you or your child as an outpatient, if your child remains under the medical care of GOSH. This may be useful to consider ongoing adjustment to a medical diagnosis, or to support young people as they transition into adult medical services.

The timeframe to access psychological services as an outpatient may depend on the urgency of the current circumstances, which is assessed on a case by case basis.

Confidentiality

We take your privacy seriously. However, if your safety or that of another person is at risk, we have a legal duty to share information with those who need to know it. We also share information across the medical teams to ensure that they have a comprehensive understanding of your child's needs. If there is any information that you do not wish us to share with the medical team, please do let us know.

Our commitment to you

Working with you and your child, we will always try to create a plan that is helpful and relevant to their wellbeing, individual and cultural differences. We will arrange an interpreter if you or your child would find this helpful.

Monitoring our service

We are always trying to improve the experience for those who use our services. It helps us to understand what you experience when you come to GOSH – seeing what we do through your eyes can show us things that we might miss as staff.