



## Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs)

Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs) support people living in the community who have complex or serious mental health problems. Different mental health professionals work in a CMHT. This factsheet explains what a CMHT can do and how you might get referred to them. It also explains what to do if you have problems with your CMHT.



- Different mental health professionals work in a CMHT. These professionals are from health and social care backgrounds.
- These can include psychiatrists, psychologists, community psychiatric nurses, social workers, and occupational therapists.
- They work with you to help you improve your mental health.
- You might get help from the team as a whole, or from just one or two professionals.
- You usually get referred to the CMHT by your GP.
- If you have complex needs you might be placed under the Care Programme Approach (CPA).

## This factsheet covers:

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### 1. What are Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs)?

If you have mild or moderate mental health problems you can get treatment from primary care services. For example:

- help from your GP, or
- talking therapy from your local Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) service.

If you need more support, your GP may refer you to a Community Mental Health Team (CMHT). CMHTs are called secondary care services. You may also hear them called the Community Recovery Team or the Assessment and Brief Treatment team.

Health professionals from different backgrounds work in the CMHT. They work together to help you get better. A team may have one main clinic or office. Or they may work in different places, like GP surgeries or health centres. You may be offered home visits. This will depend on your NHS Mental Health Trust.

CMHTs are for people aged between 18 and 65. There are different mental health teams for other age groups. They are:

- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), for people under 18 years old, and
- Older Adult Mental Health Teams, for people who are over 65.

There are also specialist CMHTs. For example:

- crisis teams (for people experiencing a mental health crisis),
- Assertive Outreach Teams (for people with complex mental health needs), and
- Early Intervention Teams (for people experiencing their first episode of psychosis).

You can find more information on [www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org) about:

- Crisis teams
- Early Intervention Teams
- Assertive Outreach Teams

Or call our General Enquiries team on 0121 522 7007, and ask them to send you a copy of our factsheet.

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## **2. Who makes up a CMHT?**

Most staff in your CMHT will have mental health or social care backgrounds. Staff can include psychiatrists, social workers, nurses, and psychologists.<sup>1</sup>

### **Psychiatrists**

A psychiatrist is a medical doctor who has specialised in mental health. They can diagnose mental illness, prescribe medication, and recommend treatment.

### **Social workers**

A social worker is trained to give practical help with your social needs. This might be help with housing problems, financial issues, or through giving general support and advice.

### **Community psychiatric nurses (CPNs)**

A CPN is a mental health nurse who works in the community. They can support you with taking medication, manage your health, and offer you treatment in the community.

### **Psychologists**

A psychologist is someone who specialises in studying how your mind works, and understanding how your thoughts and feelings affect your behaviour. They offer psychological therapy. They don't normally prescribe medication.<sup>2</sup>

### **Occupational therapists**

An occupational therapist will help you to overcome difficulties that stop you doing things that are important to you. This supports your recovery, and helps you to be as independent as possible.

### **Other CMHT professionals**

Other people will also make up the team. For example, managers, psychotherapists, and administrators.

All staff work together and have meetings to discuss the progress of anyone they support. These meetings are called 'multi-disciplinary meetings'.

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### 3. How can I access the CMHT?

Normally, a health professional will need to refer you to a CMHT. Referral is when someone asks a specialist service for an appointment for you.

CMHTs accept referrals from:

- GPs,
- primary care services, such as Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT),
- Psychiatric Liaison Teams in A&E,
- other mental health teams, and
- social services.

Sometimes CMHTs will accept referrals from:

- the police,
- you, or
- your family.

It is more rare for CMHTs to accept referrals from you or your family. If you would like to know whether this is possible in your area, you can ask your local service.

The CMHT may not accept your referral. If you feel they should have accepted your referral, you can ask them to reconsider their decision. You can use an advocate to help you to get your point across. If they still do not accept your referral, you can make a complaint.

If there are no services for your needs in your area you can think about making an individual funding request (IFR). This is when you ask your NHS trust to pay for treatment outside your area.

You can find more information about:

- Advocacy
- Complaints
- NHS Treatment: your rights

at [www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org). Or call or General Enquiries Team on 0121 522 7007 and ask them to send you a copy of our factsheet.

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#### **4. What happens after I have been referred?**

If the team accept your referral, someone will call or write to you and give you an appointment. You shouldn't have to wait more than 18 weeks for an appointment.<sup>3</sup> You should talk your GP if you are worried about waiting times.

During your first appointment you will have an assessment. Sometimes the assessment might be done over a few appointments. It can be with more than one professional. This is so that the team can work with you to plan how they can best support you.

You will be asked about how you are feeling, and what support you already have in place. It is important to give the team any information that you think is important to help them to understand your needs.

Sometimes you might be asked about things that have happened in your past. Some people find this difficult. It's important to say if you don't feel comfortable talking about something.

Together with your team you will decide how to move forward with your treatment and care.

Your care might involve help from one team member. Or you might work with different members of the team.

The assessment and planning of your care should try to meet your needs. It should also try to respect your wishes. It should not just look at what the professionals and services can offer.

You should be encouraged to be involved in the planning of your care. And you should tell your care team if you don't feel that you have enough input in the planning of your care.

Your GP will still be responsible for the rest of your medical care and may, for example, prescribe regular medication.

If you have a severe and enduring mental illness your GP should offer you a regular physical health check.<sup>4,5</sup> They have a register that should remind them when this is due.<sup>6</sup>

People with severe and enduring mental illness are at higher risk of certain physical health conditions.<sup>7</sup> In your health check, a doctor or nurse may take your blood pressure, your pulse, do a urine or blood test, or weigh you.

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#### **5. What is the Care Programme Approach (CPA)?**

You may be put under the Care Programme Approach (CPA) if your team thinks that you have complex needs and you need ongoing support. The CPA is the framework that organises your mental health care.

If you are on a CPA you should get a care plan and regular reviews.<sup>8</sup> You should get a care coordinator who will be responsible for your care and support.<sup>9</sup> A care coordinator can be a social worker or community psychiatric nurse (CPN). You can still get support from a mental health team even if you are not under CPA.

You can find more information about ‘**Care Programme Approach (CPA)**’ at [www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org). Or call our General Enquiries team on 0121 522 7007, and ask them to send you a copy of our factsheet.

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## 6. When will I stop seeing the CMHT?

You should be with the CMHT for as long as you need it. If you make a good recovery, your CMHT can transfer you back to the care of your GP, or another primary care service that gives less intense support. This is called being ‘discharged’.

The team should involve you in the discharge process. You can also involve family or carers if you would like.

When you are discharged from the CMHT you might get support from:

- your GP,
- social services, or
- voluntary organisations like Rethink Mental Illness or Mind.

If you need the help of your CMHT after you have been discharged, you have to be referred back to them.

If you move to a different area while you’re with the CMHT, the team needs to make sure that your care is moved to that area. They should keep in touch with you until you are able to work with the new team.<sup>10</sup>

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## 7. What if I have problems with my CMHT?

You may feel you have some problems with your care or treatment when you are with the CMHT. Below are some ways you can try to fix these issues.

### **Your care coordinator**

If you have a care coordinator then this is the person who you will be in touch with the most. You should tell them during the assessment if you think it is important to have a male or female care coordinator. You should also tell them about any cultural or religious needs.

## **PALS**

If you are unhappy with your care you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). PALS can try to help you with any problems or questions you have. There is more information on finding your local PALS in the 'useful contacts' section at the end of this factsheet.

## **Advocacy**

You can use an advocate to help you to talk to your care coordinator. An advocate is someone who understands the mental health system and can explain it to you. They are not part of the NHS. They can help you to make your voice heard and deal with problems with services. They may be able to help with writing letters, or attending appointments or meetings.

## **Complain**

You can make a formal complaint if you are unhappy with the care you get from the CMHT. You can find details about how to make a complaint on the website of your local NHS Trust. You can get help with making a complaint from an NHS Complaints Advocate.

You can find more information about:

- Advocacy
- Complaints

at [www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org). Or call our General Enquiries team on 0121 522 7007, and ask them to send you a copy of our factsheet.

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## **8. What about confidentiality?**

The CMHT needs your permission to share information with other professionals, or your family or friends.<sup>11</sup> They can share information with your GP because your GP needs to be involved in your care.<sup>12</sup> They can share information with other professionals if they are worried about your safety, or the safety of other people.<sup>13</sup>

You can find more information about '**Confidentiality**' at [www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org). Or call our General Enquiries team on 0121 522 7007, and ask them to send you a copy of our factsheet.

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## **9. What can I expect as a carer, friend or relative?**

The CMHT may give you information about your relative's mental illness and how to support them. This is called 'psychoeducation'.<sup>14</sup>

If you need support to care for your relative, you can ask for a carer's assessment. Some CMHTs offer carer's assessments. This will depend on

your local NHS trust's policy. Otherwise, you can get a carer's assessment from your local authority.

There are rules about sharing information with family, friends, and carers.

The CMHT can only share information about your relative's care if your relative is happy for them to do so.<sup>15</sup>

You should talk to your relative about what information they are happy for you to know. This information should be written in their records.<sup>16</sup>

If your relative would like you to be involved in their care, the CMHT should involve you in their care planning.<sup>17</sup>

It is important to look after your own emotional wellbeing. And to ask for help if you need it.

In many areas there are local support groups for carers, friends and relatives. You can contact us to find out what services or groups are in your area.

You can find more information about:

- Confidentiality and information sharing – for carers, friends and relatives
- Supporting someone with a mental illness
- Carers Assessment

at [www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org). Or call our General Enquiries team on 0121 522 7007 and ask them to send you a copy of our factsheet.

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USEFUL  
CONTACTS

### **Patient Advice and Liaison Service**

You can find your local Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) by using the search facility on the NHS choices website.

**Website:** [http://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Patient-advice-and-liaison-services-\(PALS\)/LocationSearch/363](http://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Patient-advice-and-liaison-services-(PALS)/LocationSearch/363)



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<sup>2</sup> Reg 214, *Human Medicines Regulations 2012*. SI 2012/1916. Norwich: TSO; 2012.

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- <sup>9</sup> As note 8. Page 2.
- <sup>10</sup> NHS England. *Who Pays? Determining responsibility for payments to providers*. Leeds: NHS England; 2013. Para 15.
- <sup>11</sup> Department of Health. *Confidentiality: NHS Code of Practice*. London: Department of Health; 2003. Page 7.
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## Rethink Mental Illness Advice Service

**Phone 0300 5000 927**

**Monday to Friday, 9:30am to 4pm  
(excluding bank holidays)**

**Email [advice@rethink.org](mailto:advice@rethink.org)**

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### Did this help?

We'd love to know if this information helped you.

**Drop us a line at:** [feedback@rethink.org](mailto:feedback@rethink.org)

**or write to us at Rethink Mental Illness:**

RAIS  
PO Box 17106  
Birmingham B9 9LL

**or call us on 0300 5000 927.**

We're open 9:30am to 4pm  
Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays)



**Leading the way to a better  
quality of life for everyone  
affected by severe mental illness.**

For further information  
on Rethink Mental Illness  
Phone 0121 522 7007  
Email [info@rethink.org](mailto:info@rethink.org)



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**[www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org)**

### Need more help?

Go to **[www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org)** for information on symptoms, treatments, money and benefits and your rights.

### Don't have access to the web?

Call us on 0121 522 7007. We are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, and we will send you the information you need in the post.

### Need to talk to an adviser?

If you need practical advice, call us on 0300 5000 927 between 9:30am to 4pm, Monday to Friday. Our specialist advisers can help you with queries like how to apply for benefits, get access to care or make a complaint.

### Can you help us to keep going?

We can only help people because of donations from people like you. If you can donate please go to **[www.rethink.org/donate](http://www.rethink.org/donate)** or call 0121 522 7007 to make a gift. We are very grateful for all our donors' generous support.



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