



Free and confidential services
across North Yorkshire and York

HIV Wellbeing and Support

Information for patients, relatives and carers

① For more information, please email:

yhs-tr.socialsupport@nhs.net

or call our main clinic number on 01904 725423

www.yorsexualhealth.org.uk

Contents	Page
Introduction	3
What support is available?	4
Healthy living	6
Education and employment	7
Help with housing and benefits	8
Other areas of support.....	9
How to access the Wellbeing and Support Service	10
Tell us what you think of this leaflet	11
Teaching, training and research.....	11
Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).....	11
Leaflets in alternative languages or formats	12

Introduction

Whether you have just been diagnosed HIV positive or have been living with HIV for a number of years. We are here for you!

Here at YorSexual Health, we provide a Wellbeing and Support service for people living with HIV and their partners and carers across York and North Yorkshire.

The type and level of support we offer will be tailored to your needs. You may already be very clear about what you need support with.

Alternatively, we can offer you the opportunity to complete a needs assessment together with our team during which we can assist you to establish what your support needs are and then develop an action plan with you, which we will review regularly together.

Our support will be strengths-based, and we will work with you towards greater self-management of your continued HIV health and well-being.

We can provide support for as little or as long as you need or want.

What support is available?

Being told about a HIV diagnosis can be a shock, and it may take you some time to adjust. You may be thinking:

- How will people react to the news?
- Will this affect my career?
- Am I going to die a lot younger than expected?

There may be other things that worry you, too. You may wonder about HIV stigma and discrimination; or you may be feeling very alone and isolated. Or you might just be feeling a bit down.

The Wellbeing and Support service is there to give you emotional support and practical guidance. We offer support in a range of ways, so you can decide which option might be best for you.

One to One support

It can be useful to have a safe and confidential space to air your thoughts and feelings, and raise any particular concerns that arise from living with HIV or just life in general. We can offer emotional support as well as helping you to reflect on options available to you for dealing with any issue.

For example, talking through who you might want to tell about your HIV, and why and how you will tell them, can be very helpful in getting your thoughts clear.

Peer support and mentoring

We have a number of well-informed people living with HIV who are happy to share their experiences with you. This could just be a chat, or it might allow you to ask questions about what you have heard from the healthcare team. Sometimes it is hard to take in all the information at once, so it can be good just to go over it again with someone else. This is what we mean by peer support.

You may also have a more specific issue that you want to tackle. Here, you could work with someone in a more structured way, to define the issue, and think about how you might best be able to deal with it. This is helping you to help yourself through an issue. This is what we mean by peer mentoring.

Healthy living

Living well conjunction with your medication is a key part of staying healthy.

Like anyone else, taking care of your health involves more than taking pills. It will also help if you can:

1. Give up smoking if you are a smoker.
2. Eat a balanced diet to maintain a healthy weight, give you energy and get the nutrients your body needs.
3. Only drink sensible amounts of alcohol.
4. Get some exercise, which is good for the heart, lungs, circulation and mobility.
5. Get rest and sleep so that you can wind down and strengthen your immune system.

We can provide information and guidance on these issues, to help you lead a healthier lifestyle.

Education and employment

Looking for your first step on the career ladder or looking to get back into work from a period of absence?

The Wellbeing and Support service can help in a number of ways, whether you are looking to return to education or your job, start your first job, or look for a change in career. We can provide information and advice on things like:

- Your rights as an employee
- What your employer is obliged to do for you if you tell them about your HIV
- How to deal with stigma or discrimination in education or at work
- How to fill in application forms
- How to prepare a CV or personal statement
- How to prepare for an interview
- Signposting on where to look for work

Help with housing and benefits

It can be difficult to find your way around the housing system and benefits system at the best of times. Doing so when you are dealing with issues around HIV can make it even more stressful. The Wellbeing and Support service can help you on housing with things like:

- Filing a social housing application
- Homelessness
- Getting care in your home
- Applying for a mortgage

It is important to make sure that you get all the help that you are entitled to. There are many different types of benefits, and the system is complicated. The type of benefits you are eligible for can depend on whether you are working or unemployed, sick or disabled, a parent, a young person, an older person or a veteran. It can all feel very confusing. We can help you deal with the benefits system. We can give advice on things like:

- Support on entitlement to welfare benefits and how to claim.
- Support to complete welfare benefits applications.
- Support at welfare benefits assessment appointments.
- Support in appealing a welfare benefits decision; and
- Representation at appeal hearings.

Other areas of support

As well as the areas discussed above, the Wellbeing and Support service can give information and support on a range of other topics. These include:

- Travel plans and vaccinations
- Nutrition
- Budgeting and debt management
- Insurance issues
- Pensions
- Wills

Our Wellbeing and Support team is well networked with other services, organisations and professionals. We can signpost or refer you to services that are more appropriate to your needs. This may include housing services, social work or other specialist health agencies.

We like to think of ourselves as a personalised 'Citizens Advice Bureau.' If you need support with any query or issue not mentioned above, please check with us - we might well be able to help!

How to access the Wellbeing and Support Service

It is easy to access our service.

Your healthcare team can refer you to us if something comes up during one of your clinic visits, you will be given the option for one of the wellbeing and support team to call you following your clinical visit.

Alternatively, you can also refer yourself. By getting in touch with the below contacts:

Email- yhs-tr.socialsupport@nhs.net or call our main clinic number on 01904 725423

The support service is separate from the clinical service so even if you are not accessing the clinical service you can still get support.

There are other services you can also access for support:

- Terrence Higgins Trust <https://www.tht.org.uk/our-services/online-services>
- Positively UK run a helpline. Call 020 7713 0444
- PlusHealth provides easily accessible peer support- <https://www.plushealth.org.uk/>

Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

Clinical Support Team at YorSexual Health, Monkgate Health Centre, YO31 7PB or telephone 01904 725423.

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net.

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website:

www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/

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