

# Your guide to common mental health problems

## Welcome

Welcome to ‘Your guide to common mental health problems’.

This guide aims to give you some information on common mental health problems. It also aims to give you some information about the mental health services available for adults and help that you can access in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

We hope that you find this guide helpful. If you have any compliments or complaints, you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) at Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Primary Care Trust, on 0845 170 8000.

If you would like further copies of this guide, you can contact Outlook South West on 01208 871414.

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## Information about common mental health problems

One in four people will experience mental health problems at a time in their life. This means different things to different people. They may appear as a temporary exaggeration of our usual emotions or behaviour, resulting in stress, anxiety or depression. Sometimes, these problems become severe and/ or enduring, and occur to such an extent that they make it difficult for a person to cope with everyday life.

This section of the guide will give you some information about the common mental health problems that many people experience.

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## Depression and feeling low

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Depression is a common condition. Sometimes there is a trigger for depression. Life-changing events, such as bereavement, having a baby or losing your job, can all cause depression. You can also become depressed for no obvious reason.

Symptoms can include:

- Lasting feelings of sadness
- Losing interest in the things you used to enjoy
- Feeling constantly tired
- Having difficulty getting to sleep
- Loss of appetite
- Feeling life is not worth living.

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## Stress

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Stress is the way you feel when pressure is placed on you. A little bit of pressure can be productive, give you motivation, and help you to perform better. However, too much pressure or prolonged pressure can lead to feelings of stress, which is unhealthy for the mind and body.

Everyone reacts differently to different levels of stress, and some people may have a higher threshold than others. Too much stress often leads to physical, mental and emotional problems. Stress is one of the most common problems people go to see their GP about.

Some common signs of stress are:

- Worry
- Tiredness
- Panic attacks
- Feeling on edge
- Anger and irritability
- Inability to switch off
- Feeling like the worst may happen
- Tearful
- Drinking too much
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Poor sleep.

## Anxiety

Anxiety is a feeling of unease, such as worry or fear, which can be mild or severe. Everyone experiences feelings of anxiety at some point in their life.

There are six main anxiety disorders. These are explained in more detail in the following pages.

- Panic
- Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD)
- Social anxiety
- Phobias
- Obsessions and compulsions— Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Problems after trauma —Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

## Panic

There are many people who suffer from panic. One of the common effects of experiencing panic are 'panic attacks'. Some people have only one, others may have them for many years. Some people have them every day, some people only once in a while. They are quite common and are not dangerous, or a sign of serious mental or physical illness.

Some people may have all or some of the symptoms below:

### Body

- Heart pounds, beats fast or skips a beat
- Chest pains

- Changes in breathing, either gulping air, breathing fast or feeling short of breath
- A pounding head
- Numbness or tingling in the fingers, toes or lips
- Feeling as though you can't swallow or feeling sick
- Feeling as though you're going to faint (wobbly legs)

### Mind

- Feelings of utter terror
- Feelings of unreality, as though you're not really there
- You feel anxious in situations where you have been panicky before.

## Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

Chronic or severe worrying is a part of generalised anxiety, which can affect any person at any stage of their life. It is estimated that about 1 in every 20 people experience significant generalised anxiety at some point in their lives.

While worrying and feeling nervous is something we can all experience, as with anything, too much of something can be bad for you.

Normal anxiety can become a problem when it is:

- Excessive
- Feels uncontrollable
- Is intrusive in your life
- Is persistent—seeming to always be around
- Causes you significant distress, or impairs your ability to go about your day-to-day life

This is when normal anxiety becomes generalised anxiety.

## Social anxiety

People who suffer from social anxiety often believe that other people will think badly of them or that they will be constantly judging them. They think that they are being closely observed by others and are always thinking about or trying to give a good impression. At the same time, they may fear that they are not as good as other people.

Someone with social anxiety is more than what can be described as self-conscious or a little bit shy. It is a surprisingly common problem, though people may not often talk about it.

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## Phobias

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People with phobias often have a persistent and excessive fear of something that is in fact not dangerous to them. This fear can result in a strong desire to avoid objects or situations, even though the person may recognise that this is not actually rational or reasonable.

When in a 'safe' place, they may be able to admit that there is nothing to be afraid of, but when faced with what they fear, once again they believe there is a real danger.

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## Obsessions and compulsions— Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

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OCD is a chronic mental health condition that is usually associated with both obsessive thoughts and compulsive behaviour.

An obsession is defined as an unwanted thought, image or urge that repeatedly enters a person's mind.

A compulsion is defined as a repetitive behaviour or mental act that a person feels compelled to perform.

OCD is one of the most common mental health conditions and the symptoms can range from mild to severe.

Some people with OCD will spend around one hour a day engaged in obsessive compulsive thinking and behaviour, while for others, the symptoms completely dominate their life.

Unlike other types of compulsive behaviour, such as an addiction to drugs or gambling, a person with OCD gets no pleasure from their compulsive behaviour. They feel that they need to carry out their compulsion to prevent their obsession becoming true.

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## Problems after trauma— Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

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PTSD can emerge immediately after or some time after a particularly stressful or traumatic event in someone's life. It is an anxiety disorder which can cause significant problems for a person in their emotional, social and working life. It can also have physical effects on a person.

People with PTSD are likely to relive the traumatic experience, may experience hypersensitivity to certain stimuli and may employ avoidance tactics to help manage their distressing symptoms.

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## Bereavement

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Bereavement can have various emotional and physical effects. Someone who has been bereaved may feel angry, suffer from mood swings, depression or feelings of guilt. This can result in various physical reactions, such as:

- High blood pressure
- Headaches
- Disruption of sleep
- Irritability

People's reactions to bereavement can become severe and impact on other areas in a person's life.

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## Anger

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Anger is an emotional response towards a perceived grievance that can be real or supposed. This reaction can become an excessive response for some people. Everyone will be angry at some point in their lives.

A person with excessive or uncontrolled anger can learn to better identify and manage the triggers, and reduce the effects of their response.

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## The benefits of being physically active

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Being physically active can bring physical health benefits, and improve the ability to manage stress. Being physically active can produce body chemicals that help to improve feelings of being low. It gives you more energy and makes you feel better about yourself.

Exercise is a natural 'antidepressant' and can help to prevent you from getting overly stressed and low in the future. There are many ways in which you can be more physically active to help your mood. Every day activities like walking, housework or gardening can make a real difference.

If you have any concerns about becoming more physically active, you should talk to your GP before you start.

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## Where you can get help and further information

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You can get help and further information for mental health problems. There are many places where you can access help and support; this guide covers just a few.

In the following pages, you can find information on:

- Outlook South West
- Cornwall Mental Health website
- Books on Prescription
- Glasgow Steps website
- Cruse Bereavement Care
- Suicide Liaison Service
- Cornwall Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre
- Women's Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre
- Carer Support Worker Service
- Information and support for young carers
- Young Carers Project
- Couple and family therapy—Relate
- Long term conditions—Expert Patients Programme
- Domestic violence—SUSie Project
- Other places you can get help and further information

## Outlook South West

Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Primary Care Trust and Cornwall Council commission Outlook South West to provide a range of therapies to adults with common mental health problems. This service is free.

Outlook South West provide psychological therapy services for people aged 16 plus throughout Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. Outlook South West's services can be helpful for people with common mental health problems, who may have common difficulties like stress, depression or anxiety. They can also be helpful for people who have problems that are more difficult, like problems after trauma.

### Referrals

To access Outlook South West's services, you can:

- Contact your GP and ask to be referred to Outlook South West
- Or, you can refer yourself, by calling the head office direct on 01208 871414

### What can you expect?

Outlook South West will invite you for an initial assessment session (this may be done over the telephone). You will discuss the choices that are available and make a joint decision with one of the psychological wellbeing practitioners about the best way forward.

### Confidentiality and record keeping

Information about you and your treatment will be confidentially and securely stored on an NHS approved system similar to the one used by your GP. Information about your treatment will also be conveyed to your GP in a brief summary of their work with you—you are welcome to see this.

If you wish to know more about confidentiality and record keeping, Outlook South West can provide you with a detailed information sheet upon request.

### Contact details

Address:  
Outlook South West,  
2D Restormel Estate,  
Lostwithiel  
PL22 0HG

Telephone:  
01208 871414

Website:  
[www.outlooksw.co.uk](http://www.outlooksw.co.uk)

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## Cornwall Mental Health website

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This new website provides information on services that are involved with the emotional health and wellbeing of people in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

This is an interactive website which hosts a growing directory of services available and an online calendar showing up and coming events relevant to mental health, as well as informative articles, forums and podcasts.

### Contact details

Website:  
[www.cornwallmentalhealth.com](http://www.cornwallmentalhealth.com)

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## Books on Prescription

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Reading self help books can be a very effective way of helping you overcome common mental health problems. They can also be used as a great alternative or addition to other forms of treatment. The books cover a wide range of subjects including depression, anxiety, low self esteem and stress, as well as relationship and weight problems.

This service is free and confidential. You can access the books on prescription at your local library, or a library of your choice.

### Contact details

Telephone:  
01208 871414

Email:  
[books@outlooksw.co.uk](mailto:books@outlooksw.co.uk)  
or  
[agunderson@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:agunderson@cornwall.gov.uk)

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## Glasgow Steps website

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The Glasgow Steps website is a place where you can access self-help resources, particularly around stress and its effects on your physical and emotional well-being.

Stress links to many areas in people's lives and can have an enormous impact on a person's mental health. This website gives practical tips and advice on a number of matters. If you wish, you can also do a self-assessment on your stress levels.

### Contact details

Website:  
[www.glasgowsteps.com](http://www.glasgowsteps.com)

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## Specialist bereavement services— Cruse Bereavement Care

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Cruse Bereavement Care helps people bereaved by death to understand their grief and cope with their loss. Cruse also promotes the well being of people who have been bereaved.

As well providing free care to all bereaved people, the charity also offers information, support and training services to those who are looking after them.

### Contact details

Telephone:  
01726 76100

Website:  
[www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk](http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk)

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## Specialist bereavement services— Suicide Liaison Service

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Outlook South West provide a service to support people who have been bereaved by suicide.

The Suicide Liaison Service provides short term follow-up and support. This support may include information, practical support and guidance, contact with a trained liaison worker and referrals to other organisations as may be required.

### Contact details

Address:

Outlook South West,  
2D Restormel Estate,  
Lostwithiel  
PL22 0HG

Telephone:

01208 871414

Website:

[www.outlooksw.co.uk](http://www.outlooksw.co.uk)

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## Specialist trauma services— Cornwall Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre

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Cornwall Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre offers counselling for anyone who is being sexually abused, or has been sexually abused or raped in the past. The service is for both men and women. The Centre can either talk to you on the telephone or in person. This service is free.

### Contact details

Telephone:

01872 262100

Website:

[www.visioncornwall.com](http://www.visioncornwall.com)

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## Specialist trauma services— Women's Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre

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Cornwall's Women's Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre provide counselling services, crisis support, advocacy and information for those women affected by rape and sexual abuse. This service is free.

### Contact details

Telephone:  
01208 77099

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## Carer information and support— Carer Support Worker Service

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The Carer Support Worker Service provides advice, information and support to people caring for an adult with a severe and/ or enduring mental health problem.

This service is being expanded to include more carers, including those caring for a person with a common mental health problem. This service is free.

### Contact details

Telephone:  
01209 613456

Website:  
[www.ccvsonline.org.uk](http://www.ccvsonline.org.uk)

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## Carer information and support— information and support for young carers

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Information on adult mental health for young carers is available in an accessible booklet.

### Contact details

Email:  
[lesley.hartgrove@hov.org.uk](mailto:lesley.hartgrove@hov.org.uk)

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## Carer information and support— Young Carers Project

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There are many children who live with disabled or chronically sick adults, who have caring responsibilities.

The Young Carers project empowers and advocates individual young carers between the ages of 4 and 18 years to sustain their caring role by informing, helping, and arranging time out and listening to them. The project also provides great benefits to the young people of Cornwall by ensuring that their voice is heard.

### Contact details

Telephone:  
01872 243556

Website:  
[www.cornwallrcc.co.uk/  
young\\_carers.html](http://www.cornwallrcc.co.uk/young_carers.html)

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## Couple and family therapy—Relate

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Relate offers a range of services, relating to couple and family relationships. Relate offers relationship counselling for individuals and couples; family counselling; counselling for children and young people; and sex therapy.

There may be a charge for accessing Relate's services.

### Contact details

Telephone:  
01726 74128

Website:  
[www.relatecornwall.org](http://www.relatecornwall.org)

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## Long-term conditions— Expert Patients Programme

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The Expert Patients Programme is a free course open to anyone living with a long-term health condition.

It is run by trained volunteer tutors who live with long-term conditions themselves. Anyone with a long-term health condition can attend.

The programme supports you to learn how to take control of your own health by learning to self-manage your health conditions.

### Contact details

Telephone:  
01208 252507

Website:  
[www.expertpatients.co.uk](http://www.expertpatients.co.uk)

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## Domestic violence—SUsie Project

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The SUsie Project stands for Survivors Supported into Empowerment, Education and Employment.

The project works with people who have been affected by domestic violence. It aims to use training and confidence-building to encourage women to make a fresh start in their lives.

### Contact details

Telephone:  
0845 0567999

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## Other places you can get help and further information

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There are many places where you can access help and support; this guide covers just a few.

### GPs and GP surgeries

You may wish to speak to your GP to discuss any mental health problems you may be experiencing.

If you do not have a GP, call NHS Direct or visit the website.

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### Contact details

Telephone:  
0845 4647

Website:  
[www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)

### Pentreath Ltd

Pentreath is a mental health charity working throughout the whole of Cornwall and Isles of Scilly.

Pentreath aims to inspire and support service users through a journey of both personal and vocational (work) development with the aim of securing future employment, education or training.

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### Contact details

Telephone:  
01726 862727

Website:  
[www.pentreath.co.uk](http://www.pentreath.co.uk)

## Other places you can get help and further information

### Rethink

Rethink offers a wide range of services for those people affected by more serious mental illness. The support offered spans from acute and long-term care through to practical support and advice.

### Contact details

Website:  
www.rethink.org

### Libraries and One Stop Shops

You may wish to use your local library to access more information, or you may wish to speak to someone at your local One Stop Shop.

You can find out about your local services by calling Cornwall Council or visiting their website.

### Contact details

Telephone:  
0300 1234 131

Website:  
www.cornwall.gov.uk

## The types of help you can access from Outlook South West

There are various sources of help available to you to access, if you have a mental health problem. Some of these are outlined in the pages 18—34.

Outlook South West is commissioned by Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Primary Care Trust and Cornwall Council. Outlook South West is commissioned to provide a range of therapies for common mental health problems, for adults in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

Information about the range of therapies available from Outlook South West for common mental health problems can be found on the next few pages. These include:

- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)
- Interpersonal Therapy (IPT)
- Counselling
- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)
- Telephone Therapy
- Stress Buster and Educational Groups

You can find information about Outlook South West and its contact details on page 18.

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## Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

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CBT focuses on understanding how people's thoughts (cognitions) and actions (behaviours) affect their feelings.

It is an active process which focuses on how thoughts affect feelings and behaviour, and helps to identify vicious cycles and find ways of changing situations. It involves setting clear goals and completing tasks outside of your sessions.

You will be supported in using the recommended CBT based self-help material and helped to develop coping strategies to manage your difficulties.

Evidence suggests it is one of the most helpful approaches for many problems, including anxiety and depression.

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## Interpersonal Therapy (IPT)

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IPT focuses on people's relationships and interactions with others.

IPT seeks to improve a person's communication skills, expression of emotion and ability to be appropriately assertive.

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## Counselling

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Counselling focuses on providing people with an opportunity to talk through their difficulties and explore different solutions or ways to manage them.

It can be helpful when there are many or sudden changes in your life.

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## Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)

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EMDR addresses emotional difficulties that often relate to disturbing or traumatic events.

Research suggests that when someone experiences extreme levels of panic or anxiety their memories of this event can become 'trapped'. EMDR helps the person to access and then 'reprocess' this trapped memory.

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## Telephone Therapy

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Telephone Therapy may be suitable for those people who work from 9am—5pm, or for those who find it difficult to get to places, due to transport, disability or other reasons.

Telephone Therapy involves speaking to an experienced and trained practitioner on the phone.

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## Stress Buster and Educational Groups

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Educational groups give people the opportunity to attend courses that teach ways to manage their difficulties. The groups may be useful for those looking to meet other people with similar experiences.

Stress Buster courses offer information on effective ways to control stress.

The course focuses on stress, understanding its effects on the way we think, feel and behave and learning ways to tackle it. This is an educational class, not group therapy.

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## Equality and diversity

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We embrace the richness and diversity of the society that we live in and aim to ensure that nobody is denied treatment on the basis of disability, gender, ethnic or national origins, religious belief, social status or sexual orientation.

We also recognise that our commitment to equality and diversity and improving our services is an ongoing process and that it is equally important to obtain the views and feedback of service users and the community that we serve.

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## Further information

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If you wish to compliment or make a complaint about this guide and its contents, you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) at Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Primary Care Trust, on 0845 170 8000.

If you would like any of these documents in other formats, such as in large print, please contact PALS on 0845 170 8000.

This guide was produced by Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Primary Care Trust, with the assistance of Outlook South West and Cornwall Council.

## Notes

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01503 264379

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