Seeing a Psychologist
Basildon/Billericay

A brief guide for people with memory difficulties
What is a Psychologist?
Part of the role of psychologists in the NHS is assessing difficulties reported by people who have concerns about the way their brain is working e.g. difficulties with memory, concentration or attention. This process is called neuropsychological assessment. Psychologists are not medical doctors and do not prescribe medication. They listen carefully to you talking about your difficulties and give you information about what will be involved in an assessment to help you decide if you would like to take part. Psychologists are able to offer information, support and therapy where appropriate to meet your particular needs after assessment.

What does neuropsychological assessment involve?
At your first meeting with your psychologist, they will explain in detail the nature of the assessment. You will be encouraged to consider together whether or not you wish to take part. The psychologist will also ask you questions about your difficulties and how they affect you.

If you decide to take part, assessment typically involves a further two to three sessions. Sessions last between one and two hours, depending on what you agree with your psychologist. You will be asked to complete a variety of tasks e.g. reading, remembering, learning, naming objects, problem solving. These tasks will help determine if you are experiencing more difficulties than expected for a person of your age and background. Many people describe finding these tasks interesting.

Occasionally, you may be offered appointments by a trainee or assistant psychologist. Their work is always fully supervised by a qualified psychologist.

Can I bring someone with me to the appointments?
You are welcome to bring someone along with you. With your consent, the psychologist can find it very helpful to ask someone who knows you well whether they have any concerns about your memory. However, when you start to complete tasks with the psychologist, it is important that you are not assisted by whoever accompanies you.
What happens to the results?
Your psychologist will share your results with the Memory Assessment Service team. The results will help determine the nature of any difficulties you are experiencing. Your psychologist will also offer you an appointment to discuss the results (unless you previously indicated you did not wish to be informed) and prepare a written report which will be sent to the person who referred you and to others involved in your care. You will receive a copy of this report.

Will there be any follow-up from the psychologist after the assessment?
Sometimes your psychologist will recommend that you are re-referred to the Memory Assessment Service in 12 – 18 months if your abilities change. They might suggest certain strategies to help you with your memory, based on your strengths and weaknesses. You might be offered the opportunity to attend a group to help you practice your skills, or individual sessions with the psychologist to help you manage your feelings where appropriate.

Confidentiality
All personal information is kept confidential, but we keep records and share key information with other professionals and services involved in your care. Your psychologist will discuss this with you when you first meet and you will have the opportunity to make choices about how your information is shared.

Can I be referred?
If you would like to be considered for neuropsychological assessment, ask a professional involved in your care to refer you to the Memory Assessment Service. You can refer yourself if you prefer. You will meet with the Memory Assessment Service nurse who will help determine whether a neuropsychological assessment is appropriate for you. If it is considered helpful, you will be referred to psychology and your name will be added to a short waiting list. You can contact the psychologist in your area to find out the length of time you will have to wait.
Dr Mhairi Donaldson
Consultant Clinical Psychologist/Head of Service

Telephone number: 0300 123 0808

For enquiries in Basildon/Billericay please contact:

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Memory Service Psychology
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**Patient Experience Team**

If you have any concerns or need advice about accessing NHS services, you can speak in confidence to the Patient Experience Team on 0800 085 7935 or you can email epunft.pals@nhs.net

This leaflet can be produced in large print, CD, Braille and other languages on request.

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