

**The Mildred Creak Unit**  
Department of Child and Adolescent Mental Health (DCAMH)  
Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Trust  
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## Information sheet for parents, carers & young people

This leaflet provides information about the Mildred Creak Unit at Great Ormond Street Hospital and what to expect when your child is staying here. The Mildred Creak Unit is named after the hospital's first child psychiatrist and is an in-patient psychiatric unit for seven to fourteen year olds, although we do occasionally accept fifteen year olds where clinically appropriate. The MCU was recently 'Accredited with Excellence' by QNIC at the Royal College of Psychiatrists (July 2014), one of a small number of units nationally to have achieved this distinction.

### Why might young people be admitted?

Young people tend to be admitted to the Mildred Creak Unit with various emotional or behavioural difficulties, where community based treatments have been insufficient. They may have a variety of difficulties, which usually interfere with their capacity to function at home and school. In particular, these often include somatoform disorders, where a young person has unexplained medical symptoms, which may have an emotional/psychological basis, eating disorders (such as anorexia) or mood disorders (such as depression).

### Referral and assessment

We are always happy to discuss potential referrals on the phone with clinicians and/or parents prior to a formal referral. Dr Jon Goldin, Head of Service, can be contacted via the team administrator on 020 7405 9200 ex 5518. In his absence you can ask to speak to another senior member of the team. A formal referral would involve a detailed letter being sent by a Senior member of the local CAMHS team to Dr Jon Goldin, Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, MCU (address above). This letter would outline the background history and proposed aims of the admission.

On receipt of a referral one or more members of the MCU team will discuss the case with the referrer and arrange to meet with the family and other professionals who are involved. This meeting will usually involve the Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist and others as appropriate. It may take place locally or at Great Ormond Street Hospital. Following that meeting

we may suggest a course of action that does not involve admission to the Mildred Creak Unit or if admission seems the best way forward we will arrange for you and your young person to visit the unit, make a decision about admission and clarify the assessment and treatment goals. During the process of admission a member of the MCU team will remain in touch with you regarding such matters as timescale of admission and any other relevant issues.

Members of the team may arrange to visit you at home, in order to begin the process of getting to know you better. With your permission, the teachers will also be in contact with your young person's current school in order to find out more about that aspect of their life.

If admission is required, then the first six weeks is usually considered an assessment period so we can learn more about young people's difficulties through discussions with you and your family, by observing your child and by talking to your local team. Usually following this period a longer-term admission where these difficulties can be further worked on is advised, however occasionally young people are discharged to their community team following this assessment as it is felt their difficulties can then be managed at home. This is usually discussed in a review meeting with the family and members of the inpatient and community teams.

### **Members of the team**

The team caring for your young person is multidisciplinary and includes the child and adolescent psychiatrists, nurses, therapeutic care workers, teachers, family therapists, social worker, psychologists, physiotherapist and child and adolescent psychotherapists. Other members of staff from within Great Ormond Street Hospital are also called in if needed, like dieticians and occupational therapists.

### **How will my young person be treated?**

The aim of the unit is to be a therapeutic environment, so everything we do is aimed at addressing your young person's difficulties. For example, we provide a consistent and structured programme for your young person, which includes lots of opportunities for putting their feelings into words, both individually and as a group. We aim to provide an appropriate balance of therapeutic, educational and leisure activities. This structure provides a safe framework for young people to explore their feelings in spaces such as their individual therapy sessions; family therapy and group work also take place regularly.

Young people are expected to attend individual therapy each week, which may be with a psychotherapist, psychiatrist or psychologist depending on what is thought to be most suitable. They will also have weekly keywork sessions with one or both of their keyworkers, as well as meeting with their named doctor and other relevant professionals on a weekly basis. All parents are also expected to attend family therapy sessions every week as part of the treatment package. Our experience is that young people have much better outcomes and a better long term prognosis when families engage in family therapy alongside young people's individual therapy spaces.

Although the unit is open seven days a week, we aim for most young people to return home at weekends. During the week, young people have a timetable of activities, carried out both individually and as a group. The usual length of admission is around five to six months, however it can be longer or shorter depending on the young person's individual needs.

### **Can we visit our young person?**

As well as weekends at home, staying in contact with your child is, of course, very important. Visiting times on the unit are on a Tuesday and Wednesday evening from 17:00- 20:00, although families should not feel pressurised to visit both nights. If a young person is staying on the unit over the weekend families are usually encouraged to visit for an extended time between 13:00-20:00 on a Friday; 10:00-20:00 on Saturdays and 10:00-17:00 on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

Visiting times are strictly kept to as we know it is important and helpful for young people to have a clear understanding and knowledge of the structure to the day and what to expect. We therefore request that you do not come to the ward until visiting time starts and that you endeavour to leave the ward on time when visiting ends. If shorter visiting times are thought to be helpful then this can be discussed with parents and the team, however we are not able to offer longer visiting or visiting on a different day to above. Alongside visiting times, young people can telephone home each day when the day's activities are finished.

Other family members, siblings and friends can also visit the ward during allocated visiting times, and we request that parents let the ward know if somebody else other than themselves is visiting the ward so we know to expect them. Any visitor under the age of 18 (including siblings) should be accompanied by an adult and it is the responsibility of the accompanying adult to supervise them.

When visiting, families are encouraged to join the MCU mealtimes. If a young person struggles with eating as a part of their treatment it will be important for their family to be present in meals to get used to eating together as a family in preparation for time off the ward. For those young people who do not struggle with eating, it is understandable that they may want to have their meals with their family off the ward during visiting times. However we encourage families to balance this with having occasional meals on the unit (e.g. alternating meals on and off the ward) as this enables parents and families to get to know one another, offer support and allows parents and staff to work together in the young person's best interest. To allow staff to accommodate visitors in mealtimes, we ask that families let staff know when they return on a Sunday which days they will be visiting and whether they will be joining mealtimes. We will endeavour to accommodate all visitors in meals; however, on very busy occasions we might request young people have a maximum of two visitors with them in the meal.

### **Young people leaving the unit.**

Please let us know if you are taking your young person out in visiting or when you leave for weekend leave so we're aware of who is on the unit. Young people are not generally allowed to leave the unit without staff or family, although the MCU is not a 'locked' unit and we do not admit or detain young people under the 'Mental Health Act'. Occasionally leaving the unit can be incorporated into a plan if independence is thought to be a helpful and age appropriate thing for them to work on. Some young people want space when they get upset and we can facilitate this within the unit safely. If a young person leaves the unit without permission (which is rare) then staff will follow and ask they return to the unit to remain safe. If they refuse then security and sometimes police may need to be involved to maintain their safety. You would be informed of any such incidents as quickly as possible.

### **What facilities are there on the unit?**

The unit has a homely atmosphere where young people, families and staff come together to create a therapeutic environment. We have a lounge area with comfy chairs, TV, DVD, video and a Wii. There is a dining room where staff and young people eat together and we have a kitchen equipped to allow the young people and staff to cook together. Young people attend the main school at GOSH, joining other young people from around the hospital. We work and play on the unit, and make good use of our roof garden and local parks for outdoor activities. Young people sleep in either single rooms, or share a room with another young person of a similar age and the same gender.

We are a no smoking unit and do not provide any smoking facilities for parents or young people. If a young person who smokes does come into the unit, they will be offered nicotine replacement to help them stop smoking. Staff cannot take them outside to smoke. If a young person is found to have cigarettes or a lighter/ matches then these will be removed from them and returned to the parents/ carers at the next opportunity. This will need to be thought about as such items can be dangerous to other young people too.

## **How will you tell us about our young person's progress?**

Each young person is allocated a 'core team' who meet every one or two weeks to discuss your young person's treatment and progress in more detail. As part of this, your young person will have a 'Core Team Manager' who is your main point of contact. He or she will report back to you regularly and also liaise with your local team. You will receive daily phone calls from nursing staff to let you know how your young person's day has been each evening in a brief 'handover'. If you need to go out and want an earlier handover, please call and we can facilitate this.

Each week the team have a ward round meeting where all the young people are discussed and 'recommendations' are made about what the next stages in treatment might be or things the team suggest or 'recommend' happen. These ward round recommendations will either be given to you over the phone on a Thursday or when you come to collect your young person or visit on a Friday. If you don't agree with any of these, then please inform staff and these can be further thought about.

We hold regular review meetings which family, inpatient and community teams are invited to. These are held every 8-12 weeks and it's a space to discuss your young person's progress, hear your views and make future treatment plans. We will send you a copy of the report of this meeting and staff will meet with you before the review to let you know what is likely to be discussed.

As well as these regular spaces to hear about progress, on admission, the doctor writes a summary of the information known at that point about your young person's difficulties, and on discharge various members of the team who have worked with you will compile a discharge report. We may also provide specialist reports, for example those requested by the education department.

## **Confidentiality**

It is everyone's right to have privacy and confidentiality respected in relation to their care and treatment. Whilst on the MCU information about young people is shared within the team. In order to best care for young people the team share information about their progress and day to day management with one another in a staff 'handover' each day.

Sometimes young people want to talk to staff about things they are worried about and want that information to stay private. Discussions with staff can be kept private to some extent, however, any information that is important to a young person's care or treatment will be discussed in the team and may be shared with family if this is thought to be helpful. Young people will be asked if information can be shared with family as appropriate. Any information that informs staff that a young person or someone else is at risk of harm or have experienced harm will need to be shared with the team and if necessary other professionals like a social worker. Information about a young person's progress and treatment on MCU is also shared with local CAMHS professionals to help them know how best to support young people on discharge.

## **Accessing Health Records/ Second opinion**

If you wish to see your child's health records please speak to a member of staff who will inform you of the process. Normally a person with parental responsibility will have the right to apply for access to their child's health record. However, in exercising this right the team must give careful consideration to the duty of confidentiality owed to the child before disclosure is given.

If you wish to seek another professional opinion about your child's diagnosis or treatment please speak to a member of your core team or Dr Jon Goldin, Service Lead, who can help facilitate this.

## **How else can I stay involved?**

As discussed, each young person and family has weekly family sessions with a family therapist and other members of the team, which is an important part of their treatment, and parents are also invited to review meetings with the team.

You should also have regular contact with the Core Team Manager for your young person, whether that be face to face or over the phone, and this is a chance to ask questions and be updated about your young person's treatment. Please feel free to request such meetings as needed. Please also feel free to request a meeting with the Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, who is the Head of Service, as needed.

In addition, you will be invited to the MCU parents' forum, which is a place to exchange ideas and support with other parents, facilitated by senior MCU staff. This currently takes place every two months on a Friday from 12-1pm in DCAMH, level 4 Frontage building. Please ask staff when the next forum is taking place.

Nursing staff are also available 24 hours a day on the phone if you have any questions, worries, or just need to talk. In a busy period staff may not be available to talk for long as they may be needed to help with the young people, however staff will always be happy to call you back at a time convenient to you.

If your young person remains in hospital for 12 weeks and over, the hospital has a legal duty under the Young People Act 1989 to inform your local Social Services Department (SSD). The hospital administration will automatically write to the SSD and you will get a copy of that letter. The local SSD has a duty to ensure that your young person is receiving a reasonable quality of care while they are in hospital and, that an adequate discharge plan is in place. Where possible the social worker on MCU will speak to your local SSD and give them the information they need. However, in some cases the local SSD will want to speak to you as the parent, and may contact you directly. If you wish to discuss this further please ask to speak to the MCU Social Worker.

## **Friendships and relationships between young people**

Young people are likely to develop friendships with other young people on the unit due to the amount of time they spend with each other, and this can be helpful. However, romantic relationships between young people are not allowed as this can detract from the work. If there are concerns that a friendship is unhelpful or a romantic relationship is starting, then this will be talked about with the young person to encourage them to re-focus on the work they need to do.

## **Cameras, mobile phones and internet enabled devices**

No cameras or internet enabled devices are allowed on the unit to protect young people. When young people are on the unit, we have a duty of care to keep them safe and protect their dignity and confidentiality so we do not allow young people to take photos of each other during admission. Mobile phones are allowed on the unit but must be in lockers during programme time. Mobile phones must not have a camera or internet access. If a young person is found with one that does have a camera/ internet accessible then this will be removed and returned to parents/ carers at the next opportunity. Most young people buy a very cheap phone before coming in. Young people do have supervised access to the internet in free time.

Some young people like to bring handheld computer games and other electronic devices to use in free time. Any devices brought onto the unit must not have any internet access or a camera, and it is the responsibility of the young person to ensure it stays safe by keeping it in their locker. Any items brought to the unit are the young person's responsibility and the MCU is not responsible for any loss or damage to these items. All electric items and chargers need to be PAT (electrical safety) tested before use, so please be aware of this also.

## **What happens when a young person is discharged?**

When a young person is discharged from the Mildred Creak Unit, they will be discharged to the care of the local CAMHS team. They will usually have been a part of this discharge planning through attending review meetings and may arrange to see you locally prior to admission to start the transition work. As part of this process, we will write a discharge plan and send you a copy. While we cannot generally offer ongoing therapy, we are always happy to discuss treatment with the local CAMHS team and offer suggestions. If necessary, young people can be re-referred for assessment and treatment at any time until he or she is fifteen years old.

## **Services at GOS Hospital**

- Cafés are open to parents and families in and around the hospital, which serve hot and cold meals, snacks and drinks. Snacks and drinks can also be bought from vending machines.
- The hospital shop is open from 8:00am to 6:45pm in the week.
- There are coin and card operated telephones at various points throughout the hospital. Please turn off mobile phones while in the hospital.
- The hospital has an interpretation service. Please let us know in advance if you need an interpreter and this can be arranged
- Volunteers are available opposite the main outpatients' reception desk from 9:30am to 3:30pm, and can show you around.
- If you or your young person has mobility difficulties please ring the Voluntary Services Organiser on 020 7829 8861 before your visit and to make any necessary arrangements.
- Travel expenses: For those parents who are on Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance or Disability Working Allowance, fare reimbursements are available from the main hospital reception (ex 8152). Opening hours are 10am – 4.50pm Monday to Friday.
- Benefit advice and assessment can be accessed via our unit Social Worker. This includes information about how to access a Carer's Assessment from your Local Authority.
- There is a PALS (Patient Advice and Liaison Service) office in the hospital; who offer an impartial advocacy service for parents, young people and families. If you wish to speak to a PALS officer about your young person's treatment or any other difficulties you may be experiencing as a family their office can be found in the main hospital reception. They are open from Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm.

## **Questions, comments or complaints**

Please address these to your core team manager, young person's keyworkers or another member of the core team, as appropriate in the first instance.

If you are unhappy about any aspect of your young person's treatment please speak to your Core Team Manager, the Ward Manager or the Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist. PALS are available within the trust as discussed for impartial support and advice. If you remain unhappy following discussion with MCU staff or PALS, then information about making a formal complaint can be found on the MCU parent's information board as well as other useful information such as accessing medical records, obtaining a second opinion and other support services. Please be assured that making a complaint will not compromise your young person's care in any way.

**If you have any questions about the unit, please contact the  
Ward Manager on 020 7405 9200 extension 5006.**