

An NHS outpatient service for patients with complex needs
including personality disorder

The Fitzjohn's Unit



The Fitzjohn's Unit is a specialist service that offers a treatment approach specifically tailored for adult patients with personality disorders and other severe and enduring mental health problems.

Our approach is based upon the most current understanding of the causes and treatment of:

- personality disorders
- affective disorders or manic-depressive disorders
- psychotic episodes
- eating disorder
- certain psycho-somatic illnesses

The location of the service within a national training and research centre provides an environment in which clinical services are kept up to date.

Who is this service for?

Patients treated in the unit do not fit a single diagnostic group, but display and suffer from severely disorganised mental functioning. They often experience major breakdowns in relationships, work and education. They are likely to suffer from severe depression, anxiety, suicidality, self-harm, impulsive behaviours or eating disorders, such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia. Some patients have established mood disorders (e.g. bipolar). Often the patients who come to us are regarded as being 'hard to help' and have difficult or anxiety-provoking relationships with other services and community mental health teams. Some have experienced exclusion from mental health services, making it difficult for them to get help.



What can we offer your patients/clients?

Evidence-based treatment

The service provides evidence-based outpatient treatment which aims to:

- reduce the demand on local services
- decrease frequency and duration of hospital admissions
- reduce self-harming and self-sabotaging behaviours
- help patients to develop a capacity to tolerate and reflect on their emotions
- better manage relationships
- to improve the overall quality of their lives

We have a dedicated clinical governance team, who ensure our familiarity with NICE guidance and undertake and develop our outcome monitoring.

Outcome measures

The Unit uses a nationally recognised evaluation tool (CORE) to provide data and outcome measures compatible with other services. Individualised care plans with treatment goals, regular treatment reviews with senior clinicians and self evaluation, supplement the CORE data to provide a broad outcome evaluation. The Fitzjohn's Unit is currently working together with the Portman Clinic (the Trust's forensic service) to develop improved outcome measures for this group of patients.

Treatment programme

An important part of our approach derives from an understanding that patients with personality disorders and other severe mental health problems need a significant length of treatment to provide sufficient containment for a developmental process to take place. We offer assessment, consultation and treatments, individually tailored to each patient and to the context of each referring service. We liaise closely with referrers throughout treatment, but expect that during the time patients are in the Unit that there is only limited active use of other services.

An extensive review of the available evidence concludes that effective psychotherapy treatment for this patient group should:

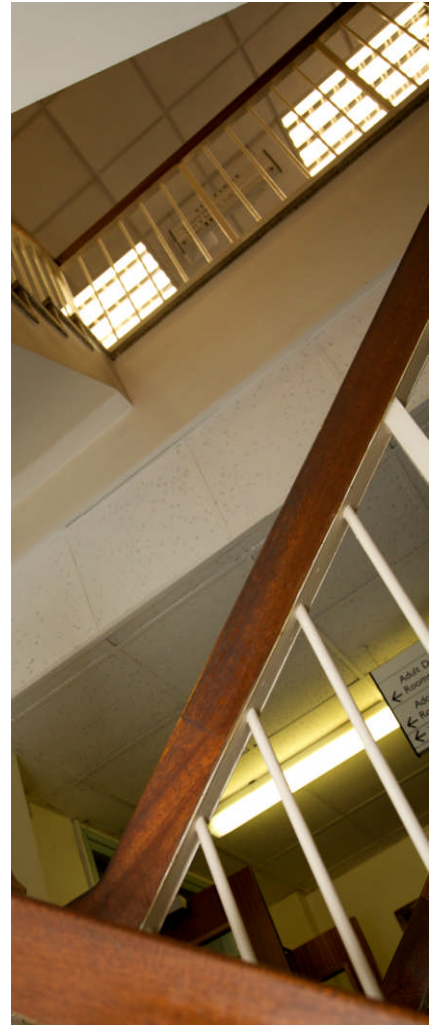
- be well structured
- devote effort to achieving adherence
- have a clear focus
- be theoretically coherent to both therapist and patient
- be relatively long term
- be well integrated with other services available to the patient
- involve a clear treatment alliance between therapist and patient (Bateman & Tyrer, 2004)

Our treatment model exemplifies these guiding principles. The broadest aim of our treatment approach is to help patients to explore how their past difficulties effect current functioning leading to repeated and counter-productive ways of managing, thereby broadening the possibilities available to them and promoting emotional development.

The components of each treatment programme are drawn from:

- Therapeutic and extended case-consultations. In some cases these consultations form the only intervention and can be very beneficial both to the patient and the referring service.
- Individual psychotherapy once or twice weekly for two years followed by a group for two years.
- Alternatively group therapy is sometimes recommended as sole treatment.

Working in partnership with other health professionals (e.g. GPs, psychiatric services such as CMHTs, recovery centres, social services), extensive liaison, outreach assessments and detailed case consultations are some of the interventions that make it possible to build up a consistent, coherent and reliable clinical management framework for the ongoing needs of this patient group.



Delivering a high quality service

In the Fitzjohn's Unit, quality is understood as a comprehensive look at all aspects of a patient's experience. Quality is measured by the outcomes achieved, such as symptom reduction, improved relationships or returning to work; in the provision of evidence-based treatment; in the number of patients successfully treated who have complex diagnoses; and in the safety record of the institution.

There are other measures of quality that are important to this service:

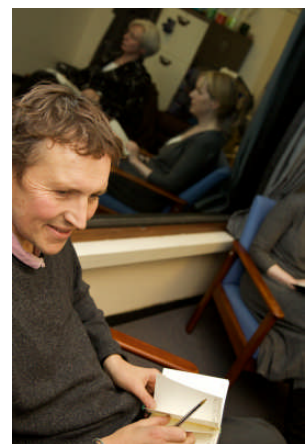
- minimal waiting time from referral to assessment and from assessment to treatment commencing
- time spent with each patient
- making sure each patient is treated in a humane way with respect and dignity
- ensuring appointments are on time
- ensuring patient information is available to all relevant professionals involved in the patient's care whenever it is needed

The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust was awarded Foundation Trust status in 2006 and has consistently achieved the highest rating for clinical care each year to date.

Delivering value for money

The National Institute for Mental Health in England (NIMHE) makes the observation,

"What is clear is that people with personality disorders make heavy demands on local services, which are often ill equipped to deal with these. One of the characteristics of this group is that they often evoke high levels of anxiety in carers, relatives and professionals. They tend to have relatively frequent, often escalating, contact across a spectrum of services including mental health, social services, A&E, GPs and the criminal justice system." ('Personality disorder: No longer a diagnosis of exclusion', NIMHE, 2003)



There is generally a significant cost savings benefit in providing a containing treatment setting for these patients who tend to make very heavy demands on resources. In our experience, once patients have settled into the treatment programme, they use local services less frequently and to better effect. We are in the process of collecting data on health care utilisation in order to measure the cost-benefit implications of the service. We provide both high quality and cost efficient patient care.

The clinical team

The Fitzjohn's Unit is staffed by a multi-disciplinary team of mental health professionals with backgrounds in psychiatry, nursing, psychology, social work and psychotherapy. Patients are seen by experienced, qualified senior clinicians, all of whom have expertise in working with personality disorders. Clinicians are selected on the basis of their training, specialised clinical skills, their ability to work together in a team and, most importantly, their aptitude for work with this challenging patient group. In addition to their clinical practice many staff members conduct research, are involved in training and supervision and regularly publish articles, chapters and research papers in peer reviewed journals and books.

Our approach is built on working together, encouraging clinicians to freely consult with each other about patients and to discuss clinical work in a team setting. This provides the containment necessary for the appropriate management of this group of patients.

Equality of access

The Fitzjohn's Unit service is available to anyone who fulfils the inclusion criteria regardless of race, culture, sexual orientation, gender, religion or abilities. It is wheelchair accessible and an induction loop is available for patients with hearing difficulties. Where necessary an interpreter can be provided.

Developments

Jointly with the Portman Clinic we are developing new services for patients suffering from Anti-Social Personality Disorder. We welcome discussion with Commissioners and local communities on developments which complement existing specialised services.

How to make a referral

Patients can be referred to the Fitzjohn's Unit from all parts of Greater London, as well as from further afield. We welcome referrals from a wide range of professionals, services and agencies such as :

- GPs
- Psychiatric services
- CMHTs
- Addiction
- Eating disorder services
- Social services