

Eastern Trauma Advisory Panel
Services for people who have experienced
TRAUMATIC STRESS





How people react to a traumatic event can vary greatly. Many people experience severe and distressing reactions including fear, feelings of helplessness, sadness, anger and guilt. There may be physical and social impacts after trauma.

Most people cope with the help of family and friends, and the distressing psychological symptoms settle after a number of weeks. These are normal human reactions to abnormal situations.

This leaflet focuses on the needs of people whose problems are persistent and cause disruption to their personal and family life, and how they might be helped.

Why might I need help?

You might need help if you are having ongoing problems such as those described below:

- Thoughts about the traumatic event continue to overwhelm you in intensity and frequency, making you to feel exhausted
- You feel you must keep active in order to block out your feelings
- You still feel numb about the event or you sometimes have to pretend it did not really happen at all
- You continue to feel a strong sense of shame or guilt about the event or your reactions to it
- You feel you are becoming increasingly withdrawn from people in social situations
- You are continuing to have difficulties with sleep
- You are becoming more irritable and angry or are low in mood
- Your work performance is suffering
- There is no-one you can really talk to about how you feel
- You find you are drinking and smoking more or using drugs that are not prescribed for you to help you cope
- Your are experiencing pain as a result of physical injury
- Your relationships are affected.



What help is available?

There is a growing range of support services and treatments available. These include psychological treatments, prescribed medication, complementary therapies and different types of social interventions. Treatments can be used on their own, or in combination, depending on your particular needs. The Eastern Trauma Advisory Panel Services Directory describes a comprehensive range of organisations which provide help and support.

Can my General Practitioner (GP) help?

Your GP may be able to help you to deal with your difficulties without having to refer you on for more specialist support, and some GP practices offer counselling services. However, treatments and support for people who are traumatised are available through general mental health services, which are also accessible through your GP.

How do I find out about services?

A range of support services is available through the health service, voluntary and community-based organisations, some of which offer specialist provision for individuals and families affected by the trauma of the 'Troubles'. Psychotherapy and counselling, training, befriending and social support are available. You can find a full list in the Eastern Trauma Advisory Panel Services Directory.



Services for people who have experienced Traumatic Stress

People react in different ways to stressful events. Often people manage with the help of family and friends and through time begin to feel a little better. Sometimes, though, people need more help.....WHY?



How do I find a practitioner and what can I expect from counselling or psychotherapy services?

Many people feel embarrassed about admitting that they have emotional problems. It is important that you do not avoid seeking help for this reason. It can be difficult to focus at a time of distress, hopefully the following information will be useful before visiting a practitioner.

The relationship formed between you and them must be based on a clear understanding that you have agreed together. With this in mind, you should be clear about **two issues** – the practitioner's qualifications and the service they will provide:



Ask about the practitioner's qualifications and experience.

It is helpful to ask about the qualifications of your counsellor or practitioner and to use only those who are registered and who subscribe to their professional body's recognised code of ethics and professional practice. For example, ask if they are a member of one of the following:

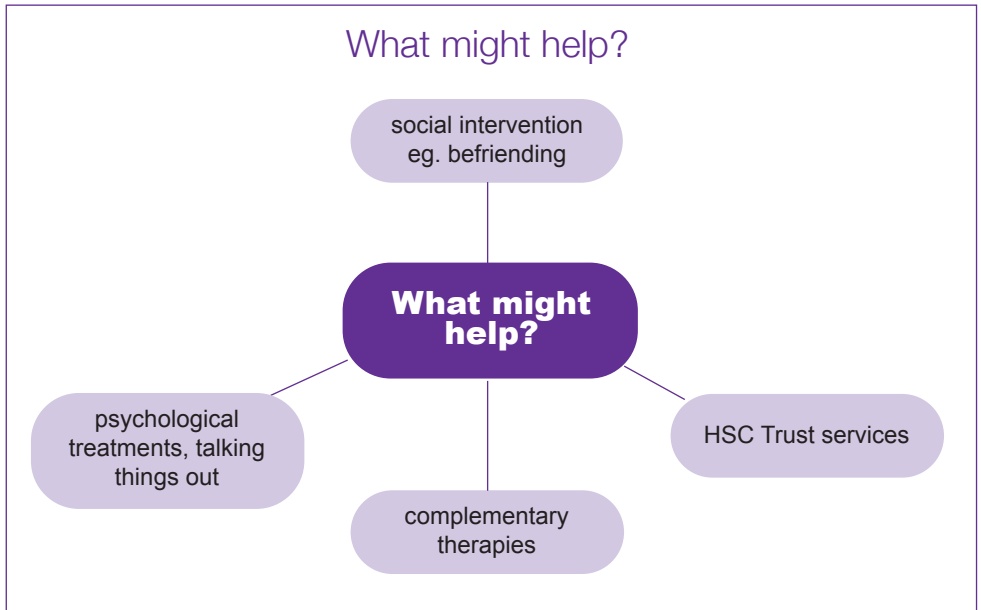
- British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP)
- Irish Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (IACP)
- British Psychological Society (BPS)
- United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP)
- British Association for Behavioural & Cognitive Psychotherapists (BABCP)
- Since July 2009 all psychologists are registered with the Health Professionals Council (HPC).

Be clear about the service to be provided.

A professional practitioner should offer a full assessment of your needs and the opportunity to agree what you hope to achieve by engaging in the work. Good practitioners will help you to decide if they are the right source of support for you and will be willing to refer you to a more specialist service if that is what you need.

What are self-help, listening ear and befriending services and what can I expect from them?

It can be reassuring to meet with people who have had experiences similar to your own. You may decide that other services – such as a support group, befriending or listening ear – can offer you the help you need. These are sometimes called 'psycho-social' services and are provided by organisations whose volunteers and befrienders are trained 'competent helpers' with awareness of trauma and traumatic bereavement. It is important to be aware that this is not counselling. A good competent helper will always be supportive of your needs, and can refer you on to a more specialist service should you require it.



Can complementary therapies help and what can I expect from these services?

A wide range of complementary therapies (e.g. aromatherapy to help relaxation, massage to alleviate muscular pain etc.) is now available, and the physical and psychological impact of traumatic stress may be successfully managed through the use of such therapies – particularly in terms of relaxation and stress management.

However, proceed with caution if you also have a physical injury. Most complementary therapies have accreditation boards and councils and you should choose a practitioner who is registered with one of these. As with counselling and psychotherapy you should check the qualifications and accreditation of your complementary practitioner.



AND FINALLY.... If you need help, even if you are not sure what that help might be, ask for it and persist until you get what you need.



If you are unsure about what this help will be like, talk to your GP or the Eastern Trauma Advisory Panel Coordinator who can give you more information. They will explain it fully. Also ask lots of questions of the person who is helping you. They will be happy to explain about:

- Their qualifications
- Times and number of appointments
- What will happen
- Cost (if any).

If you have any problems, contact the Eastern Trauma Advisory Panel on 028 9056 4951.

Contact:

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