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You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital.

If you are unhappy with the advice you have been given by your GP, consultant, or another healthcare professional, you may ask for a second (or further) opinion.

The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

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Having a Cognitive Assessment (page 1 of 3)

What is a cognitive assessment?

A cognitive assessment is a measure of brain function - what it can do and how it is working.

It is a formal assessment of your IQ and of your abilities in things like memory, attention, verbal and non-verbal processing, problem solving.

To help with the assessment you may be asked to do things such as remember words or pictures, solve puzzles, or be asked to complete pencil and paper tasks.

In a cognitive assessment there is no pass or fail. The tests are easy at the beginning, gradually getting harder. This shows us the limits of your ability and helps us to understand if things are working as they should.

Why do I need a cognitive assessment?

You have been referred for a cognitive assessment because someone in your care team would like to understand more about your brain function and how it is affecting you.

This could be for a number of reasons: you may have had a head or brain injury; you have/or may have had a neurological condition, or may have had difficulties since childhood.

Cognitive assessment also considers other things such as stress or depression, medication, drug and alcohol use, and other reasons affecting brain function in the short or long term.

How can a cognitive assessment help?

A cognitive assessment can be of great practical use.

It helps us to understand your individual strengths and any areas of difficulties. It helps us to plan your treatment. For example, we can find out if you need extra support during your rehabilitation; we can adjust your goals; or adapt the way we teach you new skills.

It also gives us helpful information about your future needs. This can help with planning care packages, making Continuing Health Care applications, or planning your return to work.

Assessment also enables us to monitor any changes in your condition over time.

How long will the cognitive assessment take?

A cognitive assessment typically takes 1½ hours but may take longer. You may feel tired during or after testing. If you need to take a break during testing that is fine. Sometimes we arrange to complete the tests over two appointments, close together, if it is easier for you.

Who will see the assessment?

Your cognitive assessment report will go into your medical records. The information it provides is sometimes requested by outside agencies such as your solicitor (if you have one) or by the DVLA if you are having a driving assessment.

Consent

Although you may be referred by someone in your care team, we will only carry out a cognitive assessment if you agree to it.

Please feel free to ask any questions about cognitive assessment and why it has been recommended for you.

Do I need to do anything before the assessment?

- If you use glasses or hearing aids, please bring them with you.
- Please bring a list of the medication you are taking.
- If you have a report from any previous cognitive assessment, please bring that with you too. This will help us to understand any ongoing concerns.
- You will be more comfortable if you have something to eat and drink before the assessment, to avoid feeling tired or hungry. Please do not drink alcohol before an assessment.
- If you feel unwell on the day, please let us know beforehand so we can rearrange the appointment. It is better to test you on a day you are feeling well.

What happens at the appointment?

- Cognitive assessments are carried out by qualified clinical psychologists who are trained to do these tests, or by trainee or assistant psychologists under the supervision of a qualified clinical psychologist.
- The psychologist will ask you some background questions first - for example, it helps us to know about your education and employment, any history of illness or head injury, and the medication you are on. You will also be asked about any difficulties you are having.
- You do not need to have someone with you during the assessment. However, you can bring someone else with you if want to. They may be able to tell us about your difficulties from another point of view. However, they cannot answer any of the test questions and you will not be able to ask them for help during the tests.

What happens next?

After you have left, the psychologist will work out your test scores. Each test is scored separately. This enables us to do two things:

1. to look at your scores and see your strengths and weaknesses
2. to compare your scores to the 'norms' for your age. 'Norms' are benchmarks of normal brain performance for people of your age and background. They are developed from studies of many hundreds of people. This allows us to see how you are doing compared to other people of the same age.

The psychologist will arrange to see you to talk about your scores and to discuss whether you might benefit from extra help from your care team.

A summary of these results is sent to the person who referred you and anyone else in your care team who you and the psychologist agree may benefit from this information. Usually this is your occupational therapist or physiotherapist. If a formal report is required, this is usually also sent to your GP.

You can request a copy of any report, but because it is full of neuropsychology technical terms and jargon, we would not usually send it without arranging to meet you to discuss it first.

Any questions?

If you have any questions about cognitive assessment, please contact the psychologist you have been referred to who will be happy to speak to you about it.

Your psychologist:

Telephone number: 01722 336262 ext