



## Information for Patients on referral to the Non-Specific Symptoms Pathway

Your GP has advised you may benefit from investigation through a Non-Specific Symptoms (NSS) pathway.

The Non-Specific Symptoms pathway (NSS) is part of a national programme which has been developed to offer an improved pathway for people with 'non-specific but concerning symptoms' and provide access to urgent diagnostic assessment.

Thank you for reading this information sheet. Please do take the time to talk to your family and friends about your referral.

### **What is the purpose of the Non-Specific Symptoms pathway?**

Many people visit their GP with 'vague' symptoms, such as appetite and weight loss, non-specific pain and/or tiredness. These symptoms are called 'non-specific', as they affect the whole person. In the majority of cases these symptoms are not indicative of anything serious, but in some cases require further investigation to rule out a more serious conditions such as cancer.

Although the risk of serious disease is low, the cause of these symptoms can be difficult to diagnose. As a result, there are some people for whom earlier scans and tests could diagnose the cause more quickly, allowing treatment to be started sooner.

The pathway will ensure people presenting with concerning non-specific symptoms have rapid access to the diagnostic tests and investigations to confirm wherever possible a diagnosis, enabling them to start treatment or rule out serious disease as soon as possible.

### **Referral to the Non-Specific Symptom Pathway:**

Your GP should have discussed the Urgent Non-Specific Symptom pathway with you prior to making a referral to Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust and provided you with a copy of this information sheet.

Once your referral has been made by your GP, a Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) will contact you by telephone to carry out a telephone assessment. This will normally be within 2-working days of the referral being received by the hospital. The telephone assessment with the Clinical Nurse Specialist will be to discuss the following:

- The reason for referral;
- Your current symptoms, including duration and severity;
- Your general health status including whether you have any other underlying health conditions or relevant past medical history and also your current medication as these may affect the next stages of your pathway;

Under the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018 we are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of any information we hold about you. If you or your carer need information in a different format, such as large print, braille or audio, due to disability, impairment or sensory loss, please advise a member of staff and this can be arranged.

- Social and lifestyle factors such as smoking status, alcohol intake and family history.

Following your assessment, the Clinical Nurse Specialist will discuss with you what happens next. This is likely to be one of the following:

- Requirement for further investigation such as a CT-scan;
- Onward referral to a specialist service if your symptoms are suggestive of a particular health condition;
- Onward referral for face to face assessment by the Non-Specific Symptoms Specialist; or
- Referral back to your GP.

During your telephone assessment with the Clinical Nurse Specialist, you will have the opportunity to ask questions and discuss your on-going management. To assist with this, you may want to make a list of any specific questions you would like to ask during your telephone appointment.

### **Making the most of your appointment**

Before your specialist assessment you may find it helpful to consider and write down on a piece of paper the following:

- The nature of your symptoms. How long have you had them? Is there any pattern associated with them?
- Is there anything you are particularly worried about, which you may want to discuss with the specialist?
- Are there any specific questions you would like to have answered during your assessment, such as What happens next? What are my options?



### **It's Your Health and Your Conversation, so.....**

- It's okay to ask your specialist to explain things differently, explain things again, or to write down information.
- It's okay to ask questions to make sure that you fully understand the benefits and risks of any next steps the specialist recommends.
- It's okay to ask for details of who to contact if you have any further questions after you leave.
- It's okay to ask for more information such as leaflets, websites etc.

### **Feedback**

Thank you for reading this leaflet. Feedback helps us highlight good practice and where we need to improve. There are lots of ways you can give feedback including completing a Friends and Family Test card or undertaking a survey. For further information please speak to a member of staff, see our Patient Experience leaflet or visit

[www.worcsacute.nhs.uk/contact-us](http://www.worcsacute.nhs.uk/contact-us)

**If you would like this leaflet in an alternative language or format, such as audio or braille, please ask a member of staff.**

