

# South Thames cleft service: adults' service

**This leaflet will tell you who we are and what we do, as well as what to expect from your first multi-disciplinary team (MDT) appointment.**

## What is the South Thames cleft service?

Our service is a regional service (based at St Thomas' Hospital, but with outreach clinics across the south east of England) dedicated to providing care for patients who were born with a cleft lip and/or palate, from birth through into adulthood. Our team is made up of a variety of professionals from different specialties who work together to provide a complete and personalised package of care for each patient.

## Who make up the South Thames cleft service team?

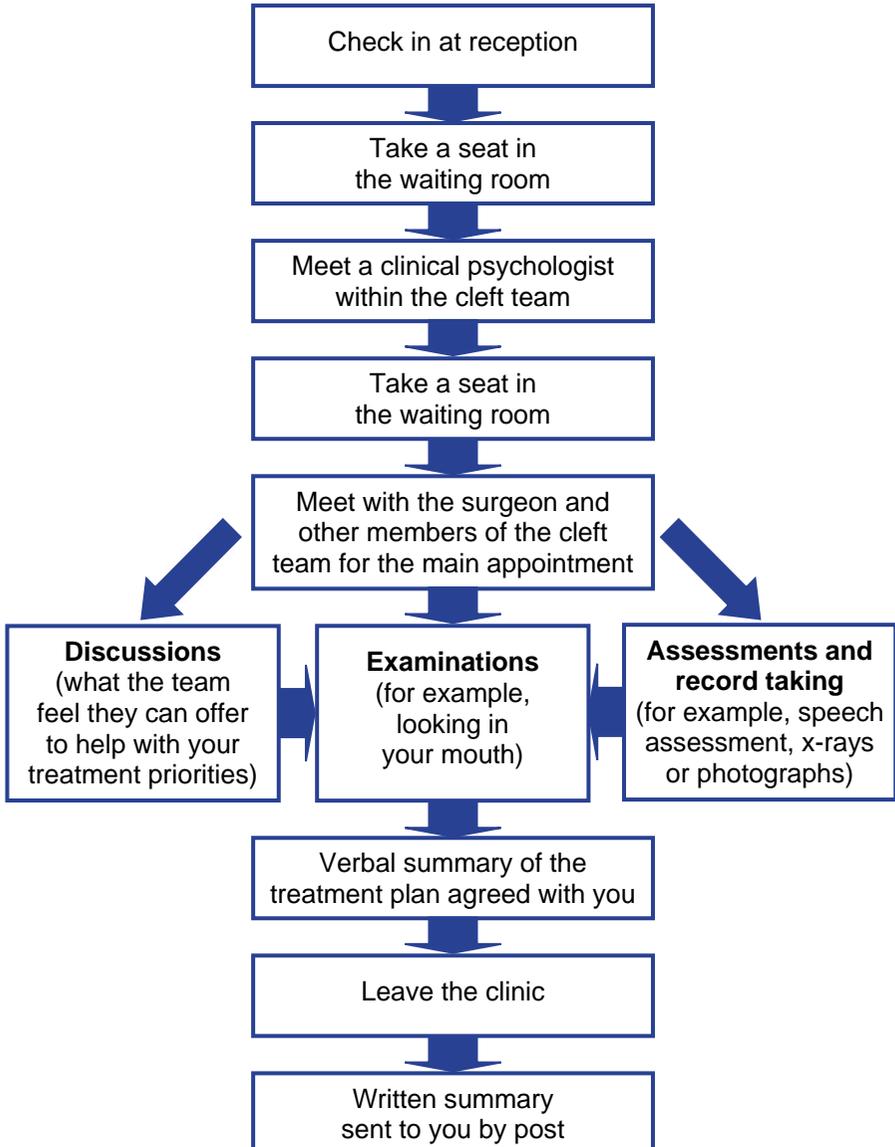
Job title	Responsible for
Consultant cleft surgeon	Performing the cleft lip and palate repairs, together with any later surgery required (for example, bone graft, speech surgery, lip/nose revision).
Cleft fellow	Working with the surgeon to perform procedures (they are fully qualified surgeons who are in their final years of training).
Orthodontist	Managing the development of the teeth and jaws, specialising in positioning teeth and fitting appliances. Often working closely with the surgeon to prepare patients for operations.
Restorative dentist	Restoring teeth to their best appearance (reconstructing, reshaping, replacing and maintaining), for example, using implants, bridges, veneers. Often working closely with the surgeon both before and after surgery.

Speech and language therapist	Overseeing speech and language development, from childhood and into adulthood.
Clinical psychologist	Providing input and support for people with cleft lip and/or palate, and their families if they experience developmental, emotional, behavioural or social difficulties.
Administrative team and admissions officer	Organising appointments so that the team can see you as quickly as possible, and that you continue to receive the care you need – for as long as necessary. Also, organising surgery dates in consultation with other team members.
Audiologist	Diagnosing, managing and treating issues related to hearing.
Geneticist	Advising patients with cleft on the chances of it being an inherited problem.

This means that, there are likely to be quite a few different health professionals sitting in the room with you at your appointment.

We will make sure that everyone introduces themselves to you, and we will try to make you feel at ease.

# What will happen at my first appointment?



## Why do I see a clinical psychologist first?

As part of the treatment plan, we offer appointments with a clinical psychologist before the initial MDT appointment. This is for all adult patients who are newly referred, or have been re-referred to our service after a long time. We will aim to book this appointment one hour before your MDT appointment (although the session may not last for the whole hour) and it will be in the same department but in a different room. The psychologist will collect you from the waiting room.

We know navigating the service and making decisions about treatment options can be tricky, so we aim for the psychology appointment to provide an opportunity to discuss your hopes, expectations and priorities, any concerns or questions, and cover any background information that would be useful for the team to know. In our experience, a meeting like this can make your first MDT appointment less nerve-wracking, run a bit more smoothly and help you to communicate what you want.

It might be that this discussion is short and straightforward, or it might be difficult and bring up deep emotions. We will never force you to talk about things that you do not feel comfortable with. We can also explain more about our role and what type of support we can offer, if you feel this is something you may want or need. You can read more about this support in our leaflet, **The clinical psychology team: who we are and how we can help.**

Once you have met with the clinical Psychologist, they will briefly update the MDT team of any useful information, for example, regarding what your main concerns/priorities are. Once you are called in to the MDT appointment, the psychologist will remain with you for the duration of the consultation.

Some patients find it useful to have a chat with the psychologist after the appointment, to clarify their understanding of what was said or ask further questions. We are flexible with this so it can be decided on the day.

## **What will happen in my main clinic appointment?**

The consultant surgeon or the cleft fellow will lead the consultation, with input from the other team members, and ask you some questions about your reasons for coming to see us. You may wish to discuss:

- hearing
- speech
- teeth or bite
- appearance or function of nose/lip/other aspects of your facial appearance or shape

As part of the appointment, the team might do the following:

- The surgeon may ask to examine your mouth to check your palate and how it moves.
- The orthodontist may examine your teeth and ask you to remove any plates/dentures if you have any.
- The surgeon may ask to examine your face closely, and ask you to point out, using a mirror, what you would like to change.

## **Speech**

If you have concerns about speech, the speech and language therapist may ask you to say some sentences to assess for problems.

## **X-ray**

You may be sent to have an x-ray of your teeth and/or mouth and then be asked to come back to clinic afterwards (you will be shown where to go).

## **Medical photography**

You may be sent to the medical photography department to have some clinical photos taken for our records (you will be shown where to go).

## **Top tips**

- Some people find it useful to bring a notebook with a list of questions to ensure they remember to ask everything, and to write things down from the appointment.
- You are encouraged to ask questions and it is fine to ask if you do not understand something, or want the plan or next steps to be explained further.

## **Useful sources of information**

**CLAPA** (Cleft lip and palate association) – A charity providing support for new parents, for people with the condition and their families, from infancy through to adulthood.

**w:** [www.clapa.com](http://www.clapa.com)

## Contact us

If you have any queries about any information in this leaflet, please contact us. The South Thames cleft service, 1st floor, Staircase C, South Wing, St Thomas' Hospital, Westminster Bridge Road, London, SE1 7EH. **t:** 020 718 81321. **e:** [cleftservices@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:cleftservices@gstt.nhs.uk)

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets)

## Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

**t:** 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

## Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

**t:** 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

**t:** 020 7188 3514 (complaints)

**e:** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk)

## Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch.

**t:** 020 7188 8815 **e:** [languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk)