

I think I may have schizophrenia or bipolar disorder

The situation

You or the people close to you have noticed a change in your thoughts and behaviour. You have looked at the signs and symptoms of schizophrenia or bipolar disorder and some of them are similar to what is happening to you.

What happens now

Don't delay. If you are worried enough to be reading this you need your GP's advice. Early treatment usually means a better outcome, whatever is causing your symptoms. Focus on getting the support you need to deal with these. A detailed explanation of what is happening to you may take longer although you should get answers to your questions as you need them.

If your GP thinks severe mental illness explains your symptoms, you might be referred to your local Community Mental Health Team for an assessment before a decision about treatment is made. Depending on the urgency of your situation the length of time you have to wait will vary and you may be referred directly to a consultant or a hospital.

Actions to take

- Book a double appointment with your GP.
- Take someone with you if you want their support – they may be able to help describe what is happening to you.
- Write down in advance any questions you have and any information that you think will be relevant, it's easy to forget once you're in there.
- Make notes during the appointment so you don't forget the GP's advice.
- Find out what will happen next and when.

Rights

- You have the right to be registered with a GP. If you are experiencing difficulty with this, contact your Local Health Board who will arrange for you to be registered.
- You have the right to confidentiality.

Further information

www.hafal.org – Information and local support services in Wales.

<http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/index.cfm> – Mental Health Foundation web-site for information on general mental health.

0800 132737 – Wales-wide mental health helpline hosted by the North East Wales NHS Trust (10am-2pm & 7pm-11pm Mon-Fri; noon-midnight Sat & Sun)

For more copies of this or for other factsheets please call us on 01792 816600 or visit the Hafal web-site www.hafal.org