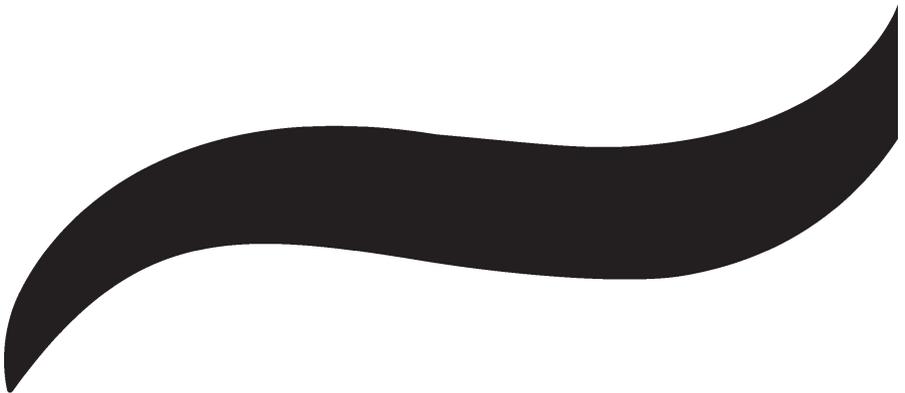




Child and Adolescent  
Mental Health Service

# Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy Service

Information for Professionals



## **WHAT IS CHILD AND ADOLESCENT PSYCHOTHERAPY?**

Psychoanalytic Child Psychotherapy is a highly specialist child-centred psychological therapy treatment for children and young people with moderate to severe emotional difficulties, anxiety or depression, and for children and young people experiencing a wide range of problems where there are underlying emotional issues. Individual child psychotherapy aims to bring about change and emotional growth and resolution of emotional problems for the child or young person in the context of the family/carers.

## **WHY WOULD A CHILD BE REFERRED FOR CHILD PSYCHOTHERAPY?**

Emotional problems can occur at any age or time in the life of a child or family, from birth onwards. They can be expressed in different ways. Problems may include difficulties with relationships or social interaction, aggression, lack of motivation, irrational fears or worries, and many anxieties that are expressed in behaviour such as bed wetting, sleep difficulties, soiling, refusal to eat or drink, and risk-taking or self-harming behaviour. A child may seem unhappy, depressed, anxious or withdrawn for no apparent reason, or there may be known life events or circumstances such as bereavement, divorce, chronic illness, disability, trauma or abuse. These may be in the context of either children in their own family or children who are accommodated or looked after by the local authority.

Child Psychotherapy is usually considered where problems are moderate to severe, longstanding and/or complex and are having a significant effect on a child's everyday life, functioning or relationships. It is often considered where other approaches have been tried without success.

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

Child Psychotherapy aims to understand how feelings and anxieties can affect the ways a child or young person experiences or makes sense of people and situations, and how he or she sees the world. Sometimes – for a variety of reasons - feelings and anxieties make children and young people come to see and experience the world in very fixed or distorted ways, which can seriously interfere with relationships and development. Child Psychotherapy helps children and young people to get to know and understand themselves better, to be more in touch with their feelings and anxieties and better able to manage them, to be more resilient, and to be less stuck in particular emotional responses or patterns.

Child Psychotherapy offered in this service is based on extensive psychoanalytic knowledge and training combined with an understanding of child development. In this form of psychological therapy, the therapeutic relationship between the child or young person and the therapist is a key tool for understanding and change.

Sometimes it may not be necessary or possible to offer a child individual psychotherapy but the Child Psychotherapist may offer consultation to professionals or agencies involved with the child.

Child Psychotherapists also offer Parent-Infant Psychotherapy where there are significant concerns about the parent–infant attachment relationship and the baby’s emotional development and well-being. This work is undertaken with the parent and infant together and the focus is on the relationship and on improving the quality of communication and interaction between parent and infant.

## **ASSESSMENT**

Child Psychotherapists may undertake individual assessment of a child either with a view to the possibility of ongoing individual psychotherapy, or to contribute to a wider assessment of a child and family within the team.

Where a child is referred for Child Psychotherapy, an assessment will help to decide whether a child or young person is able to benefit from it and wishes to engage in this way of working. Assessment usually involves three or four individual sessions; for younger children this would be followed by a discussion with parents or carers to reach a decision about psychotherapy, taking into account the views of the child, while with older adolescents they would usually make this decision themselves.

Where psychotherapy is agreed upon a standard Child Psychotherapy contract form is routinely used to plan duration and frequency of work and to identify hopes and expectations of those involved.

## **WHAT HAPPENS IN THE SESSIONS**

Sessions are non-directive, unstructured and child-led; the focus is on the here and now of what happens in the session. Particular attention is given to non-verbal as well as verbal communication and behaviour. The Child Psychotherapist makes use of how the child or young person behaves and relates towards her/him to understand the child or young person's state of mind and preoccupations. The therapist will talk with the child or young person about what they might be feeling or thinking, and will pay special attention to how the child or young person responds to what she or he says.

In therapy young children naturally communicate through play as well as speech. Younger children are provided with a box of toys and art equipment. Adolescents' sessions more often involve talking, though some may wish to use art materials. Sessions are confidential unless the child or young person reports something that indicates a serious risk of harm, in which case it may be necessary to share this with the parents/ carers and/or other professionals.

## **FREQUENCY AND DURATION**

Individual psychotherapy sessions are for fifty minutes and take place at a regular time and on a regular day each week. Most often sessions are once weekly, although more frequent sessions up to 3 times weekly may be necessary. Child Psychotherapists offer short or long term therapy, though for most children and young people a minimum of one year is usual, and sometimes much longer is needed. Parent-Infant Psychotherapy is usually long term. Child Psychotherapists also offer brief Under 5s work with parents and child(ren).

## **WORK WITH PARENTS AND REVIEWS**

Where a child is receiving Child Psychotherapy, it is usual for parents or carers to meet regularly with a colleague at a frequency that is felt to be helpful, as part of a package of input. This is both an essential support for the therapy and for the parents or carers. These meetings provide an opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the child; and to think together about the most helpful ways of responding to the child and how to support her/ him in the process of change and development. Reviews are held a minimum of once a term; parents and carers can meet with the Child Psychotherapist to reflect on how the child or young person is responding to the therapy and whether to continue it, and how the child is getting on in the family and other settings.

Child Psychotherapists may also work with parents to support them as carers where a child is not receiving psychotherapy.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY AND RECORDS**

Sessions are confidential unless the child or young person reports something that indicates a serious risk of harm, in which case it may be necessary to share this with the parents/carers and/or other professionals. A child's treatment and progress may be discussed within the CAMHS team where appropriate. A record is kept in the file of themes, progress and review of the psychotherapy. These are kept for 25 years by NHS Lanarkshire. It is routine practice in CAMHS to inform and update GPs about a child's treatment and progress, and child psychotherapy is offered on the basis of consent to this by the parent(s)/carer(s) or young person where appropriate. GP records will be kept for the lifetime of the patient.

## **WHO WORKS IN THE CHILD PSYCHOTHERAPY SERVICE?**

Child and Adolescent Psychotherapists who work in the service have all undergone clinical training and qualified at one of the NHS approved Child Psychotherapy Training Schools in the UK. These Training Schools are accredited by the professional body, the Association of Child Psychotherapists. Alternatively, they have undergone clinical training and qualified abroad as Child and Adolescent Psychotherapists, and have been approved to work as such in the UK by the Association of Child Psychotherapists. All Child and Adolescent Psychotherapists in the service are members of the Association of Child Psychotherapists, and have to abide by the ACP Code of Ethics and standards of professional practice. The Association of Child Psychotherapists is regulated by the Professional Standards Agency. From time to time the service also has a Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist in Training.

## COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Comments and suggestions about the Child Psychotherapist Service are welcome and can be addressed to:

Head of Child Psychotherapy

CAMHS Glenshirra  
Coathill Hospital  
Hospital Street  
Coatbridge  
ML5 4DN

If you are unhappy with our service please speak with the child psychotherapist concerned or the Head of Service in the first instance. If we are unable to resolve any concerns to your satisfaction you can write to:

Patient Affairs Manager

NHSL Headquarters  
Kirklands Hospital  
Fallside Road  
Bothwell  
G71 8BB

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East Kilbride G75 8RG  
Telephone 01355 585000

University Hospital Monklands  
Monkscourt Avenue  
Airdrie ML6 0JS  
Telephone 01236 748748

University Hospital Wishaw  
50 Netherton Street  
Wishaw ML2 0DP  
Telephone 01698 361100

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