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Child and adolescent psychotherapy

A guide for parents, carers and families

Feedback

We welcome any suggestions you have, please send your **comments, concerns, complaints and compliments** to: PALS, Complaints & Incidents Team, Trust Headquarters, Redesmere Building, Councess of Chester Health Park, Liverpool Road, CH21BQ.

For more information see www.cwp.nhs.uk

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Child & adolescent psychotherapy

Children and young people may behave in ways that they do not understand and cannot control. Their emotions can be very powerful and are often expressed through their behaviour which can cause distress to themselves and to those around them. Child & adolescent psychotherapy is a treatment aimed at helping children and young people with their emotional and behavioural problems.

Psychotherapy is not just about clearing up symptoms; it is concerned with the child's overall long-term development. In other words; what sort of person will your child grow up to be?

Child and adolescent psychotherapists are trained to carefully observe a child or young person and understand what they might be communicating through their behaviour and play. They are skilled at putting into words the troubled feelings that children may experience. They tailor their work in an age appropriate way, responding to how the child wishes to communicate. The relationship between the child and the therapist is central to the treatment.

How does treatment work?

We hope that through regular, reliable sessions in a consistent setting, a relationship develops between the child and therapist where the young person can begin to feel able to express their most troubling thoughts and feelings. Confused, frightened, hurt, angry or painful feelings can gradually be put into words rather than actions. The therapist tries to help the child make sense of their own experiences. This may help the child begin to feel less anxious, be more able to learn, feel better equipped to sustain friendships and other relationships, and better able to cope with their difficult feelings.

Is this right for your child?

To begin with the therapist will meet with your child a few times. After this you and the therapist can think together and decide whether this style of help seems right for your child.

The lengths of treatments vary according to need; some are brief and some are longer term. Some children need regular appointments for at least a year and sometimes children are seen for much longer.

What should I say to my child about coming?

Let your child know that you think it will help them to meet with the therapist because she/he helps children with powerful and difficult feelings.

What do parents and carers need to do?

Children in therapy need to know that their parents/carers support the process. This gives the child confidence and allows a reliable base for work to be established. As a relationship develops with their therapist the child may sometimes have mixed feelings about attending sessions. It can be hard for a child to face their upsetting feelings and they need to know that you will help and encourage them to attend regularly and stick with the process. There may be times when they need your support before, during, and after the session.

Sessions last for 50 minutes and it is important to be consistent and arrive on time. You may need to wait for your child in the waiting room, particularly for the first few sessions. The therapist will give you notice of any breaks in treatment. It would be helpful if you could also give as much notice as possible if your child will be unable to come to a session.

The child's sessions are confidential. This allows the child to explore his or her feelings without worrying that he or she may upset other people or say something wrong. Sometimes children want to tell you about the sessions and sometimes they don't. It is best to show interest but not to push them to say what they have done.

Your child's difficulties may feel hard to manage and have an impact on you and other members of your family. When a child is seen for long term individual treatment we ask you to make a commitment to work together with one of our colleagues alongside your child's sessions. This is so we can try to understand their difficulties. If you have concerns about your child, this is the place to discuss it, not in front of the child when they come for their treatment.

If a child indicates that they are in danger or at risk of harming themselves this would usually be shared with you and, where appropriate, with other agencies to ensure your child is kept safe.

Reviews

We usually review treatment once a school term with you and your child.

The Child Psychotherapists for Wirral Child & Family Service (CAMHS) work at:

Adcote House
Kent Street (off Columbia Road)
Prenton
CH43 6TX

Tel no: 0151 4888111