Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy  
A Brief Guide

**WHAT IS CHILD AND ADOLESCENT PSYCHOTHERAPY**

Child and Adolescent Psychotherapists are core members of multi-disciplinary child and adolescent mental health teams. Child and adolescent psychotherapy is a psychoanalytic mode of treatment based on detailed observation and understanding of conscious and unconscious communication. The therapeutic relationship is developed through talking or play depending on age. The child has an opportunity to work towards a better understanding of themselves, their relationships and their established patterns of behaviour. Child and Adolescent Psychotherapists are able to work individually with children and young people on a long-term basis or provide brief interventions when this meets the needs of the patient. They also work with parents, carers, families, groups and provide consultation to the network.

**WHO DO WE SEE ?**

- 0 – 18 year olds
- Parents and carers
- Infant-parent dyads
- Families
- CAMHS and network professionals (Consultation)

**WHAT CAN WE HELP WITH?**

- Complex/co-morbid presentations particularly linked to early deficits, parental mental health difficulties and incremental developmental trauma
- Developmental breakdown including psychotic-like symptoms, gender confusion and high risk “acting out” characteristically but not exclusively seen in adolescence
- Moderate to severe impairments in personality development rooted in early infancy e.g. serious attachment difficulties
- Mind-body disturbances including somatisation, psychosomatic problems and the emotional/psychic impact of chronic medical conditions
- Depression – moderate and severe with suicidal ideation
- Severe, deep-seated anxiety states
- Underlying internal states in children and adolescents exhibiting challenging behaviour
- Eating disorders
- The emotional development of diagnosed ADHD and ASD children and young people
WHAT ARE OUR DISTINCTIVE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE BASE?

- Close and detailed observation of infants, children, young people and parent-child interactions
- Capacity to observe and make sense of unconscious processes in personality development and their impact on current relationships and behaviour
- Systematic use of transference and counter-transference dynamics to effect change
- Psychoanalytic perspective on development and behaviour
- Psychoanalytic understanding of institutions and organisations
- Capacity to contain, understand and manage high levels of anxiety and disturbance and the impact of this on individuals, teams and organisations
- Ability to deliver an evidence based treatment modality effective in changing/modifying pathological internal mental states with long term benefits ("sleeper effect" outcome*)
- Cross-discipline research mindedness
- Breadth and depth of knowledge and experience of whole range of difficulties presenting to CAMHS

* Sleeper effect – observation and evidence of continuing development and improvement extending beyond termination of therapy.

WHAT DO WE OFFER?

- State of Mind Assessments
- Contribution to multidisciplinary team assessments including infant/child observations
- Interpretation of the child’s experience and understanding of the world inside and outside of her/himself
- Range of therapeutic interventions
- Brief psychotherapy (young people, parent-infant psychotherapy)
- Long term weekly psychoanalytic psychotherapy (min 30 sessions)
- Long term intensive psychoanalytic psychotherapy (3 times per week for min 1 year)
- Parent work (individuals or couples)
- Placement support for kinship carers and local authority foster carers
- Family consultations
- Network/professional consultations
- Groupwork
- Interventions and Consultation at Tier 4 level of severity averting the need for inpatient treatment and/or facilitating community based treatment
- Support and consultation to the multidisciplinary team
- Risk assessment and Management
- A psychoanalytically informed clinical opinion ("second opinion")
- Consultation and support to Tier 1 and 2 practitioners
- Contribution to forensic assessments
WHERE CAN WE CONTRIBUTE TO SERVICE IMPROVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT?

- Distinctive, highly specialist contribution to CAMHS skill mix
- Service response to Looked After Children
- Early Intervention to provide positive long-term outcomes for children and better use of resources for services
- Tier 4 to 3 Pathway
- Intensive community based treatment
- Work in schools and learning environments including services for Children with Special Needs
- Complex, high risk and forensic presentations
- Paediatric Liaison
- Perinatal/postnatal adversity

IS CHILD AND ADOLESCENT PSYCHOTHERAPY EVIDENCE BASED?

- There is evidence to support the effectiveness of psychoanalytic psychotherapy for children/young people with a range of psychological disorders.
- Beneficial effects are shown with treatment on a variety of outcome measures and many studies showed that improvements were sustained or even enhanced at long-term follow-up.
- The majority of studies were undertaken in clinically referred samples rather than samples recruited for research.
- The majority of studies involved children with a range of diagnoses and co-morbid problems.
- The findings are likely to have relevance to the 'real world' setting.
- Child and adolescent psychotherapy is recommended in the NICE guidance for depression in children and young people.

NSCAP
April 2008