



Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

CAMHS psychotherapy

Child psychotherapy

It has been suggested that your child might benefit from individual psychotherapy. This leaflet is to help you to understand what this will involve, in addition to the discussions that you will have had with other members of the team and with your child's therapist.

The task of the child psychotherapist is to understand and explore the nature of your child's unique internal world. By gradually building a picture of the whole of your child's imaginative world they will discover the deep seated roots of the difficulties. Their understanding and explanation to the child opens up new choices and therefore the possibility of different responses to external events.

The setting

In order to obtain as clear a picture as possible of the internal world, the external setting for the therapy has to remain as stable and consistent as possible. This means that the treatment has to take place at the same time each week, for the same length of time (50 minutes), in the same room, with the same furniture and the same set of toys that is personal to the child. The furniture will usually include a small couch or soft seating area to which the child can retreat at times of stress or high anxiety. You will be given the opportunity to see the room in which your child will be seen so that you have a clear picture in your mind of the layout.

Above all of course, your child will be seen by the same therapist, who will be concentrating on the work within the room. She or he will be involved in the external world of the child as little as possible and will not take part in professional meetings in general or meet with you very often.

All this is in order that any change that is noticed in the child can be thought about as reflecting internal change and not just as a response to disturbing alterations in the external environment.

To help to keep you informed of the progress of the therapy and to give you the opportunity to think about any concerns you may have about your child, another person from the team can meet with you regularly. This link person will be the one who is responsible for the liaison work with the outside agencies as we are well aware that the child exists within a network and cannot be viewed in isolation. This will particularly be the case if your child's symptoms impact heavily on his or her outside life, for instance leading to school phobia.

The treatment

As it is the child's internal world that is finding expression in the room, the psychotherapist goes into the session without any fixed ideas, but prepared to follow the material that the child brings. This way of working means that it is actually very difficult to give a firm idea of how long the child may need to be in treatment or at the beginning what intensity of treatment they may need. Some children manage very well on once a

week, others need to come more often for progress to be made. We are able to offer intensive treatment up to three times a week through our trainee psychotherapists under close supervision both within the community base and from their training institution.

Some children take to the method very easily while others find the uniqueness of the situation, i.e. not being told or guided by the adult, very much more difficult to deal with and it may make them reluctant to come to start with.

It is also highly likely that at some point later in treatment your child will find it difficult to come to their session. This is nearly always because something is being thought about that the child is finding it very hard to deal with. It is essential that at these critical moments your child is encouraged to come and talk about what is troubling them.

The method

In the room the child will be provided with their own set of simple toys that the psychotherapist will take care of between sessions. These will differ according to the age of the child. For younger children they will include both wild and domesticated animals, a family of toy figures, cars, modelling and drawing materials. Adolescents may work more with art materials or may prefer just to talk.

The training of the child psychotherapist enables them to 'read' the symbolic meaning of the play or activity which they then put into language that the child will understand.

We also use the changing relationship between the child and the therapist to judge the progress of the therapy. The way a child deals with separations is another way of judging progress. The therapist will therefore take regular breaks in the year.

These breaks will be talked about and thought about a lot and for the rest of the time the utmost consistency and continuity is what will be aimed for from both sides.

We keep children in psychotherapy for only as long as is absolutely necessary but in order to deal with deep-seated difficulties the process will inevitably take some considerable time.

The overall aim of psychotherapy is to give your child the emotional equipment and resources, not only to process the events of the past and what has been their unique response to those events, but also to help them manage better any future events that might threaten their internal stability and confidence.

What if you are not happy with the treatment?

We expect our staff to always behave in a professional and courteous manner. If at any time you are concerned about your treatment by staff, please do not hesitate to contact the CAMHS Team Manager to discuss any concerns that you may have.

We would also like you to tell us about any concerns, complaints or compliments that you have so that we can learn from your experience and make improvements to the way that we do things.

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) can help you to resolve any concerns that you have informally.

They would also like to know any compliments that you would like to make about our service.

Email:	PALS@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk
Freephone:	0800 328 7971
Address:	Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, Warneford Hospital, Oxford, OX3 7JX

Notes

If you would like to have information translated into a different language, please contact the Equality and Diversity Team at: EqualityandInclusion@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk

Arabic يُرجى الاتصال بنا إذا كنتم ترغبون في الحصول على المعلومات بلغة أخرى أو بتنسيق مختلف.

Bengali আপনি এই তথ্য অন্য ভাষায় বা আলাদা আকারে পেতে চাইলে অনুগ্রহ করে আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন।
Urdu اگر آپ یہ معلومات دیگر زبان یا مختلف فارمیٹ میں چاہتے ہیں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

Chinese 若要以其他語言或格式提供這些資訊，請與我們聯繫

Polish Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innym formacie, skontaktuj się z nami.

Portuguese Queira contactar-nos se pretender as informações nouro idioma ou num formato diferente.

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