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Adult Mental Health Teams

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Systemic Therapy

Psychological Therapies

**Introduction**

Psychological Therapies

Adult Mental Health Teams

Psychological Therapy is part of the Adult Mental Health Team specialist services and offer talking therapy assessment and treatment for people over the age of 18 years. This leaflet describes one of a range of approaches to therapy that we offer.

People seek therapy for many reasons — usually combinations of mood changes, especially anxiety and depression, physical symptoms associated with forms of stress, problems in making and maintaining relationships and doubts about ourselves.

The difficulties outlined above can be associated with the ways we learned to live our lives, negotiate relationships and manage ourselves during our early years. They may also be associated with recent illness or events in our lives which change how we see our situation. The varying psychological approaches address this from different perspectives and therefore each therapeutic treatment differs in its approach.

**What is Systemic Therapy?**

Rather than seeing only the person who is distressed, in family and couple therapy the people who are close to them are also consulted about what might be happening. Their views can help build a shared understanding of complicated situations and to find solutions. Family work is especially helpful if you are worried about relationships within your family, including with your children and about how your problems might be affecting you all.

Family therapists help family members share their views and feel heard and understood. Therapists are skilled in managing the kind of differences of opinion and stressful feelings, which can sometimes be produced by family discussions. They also help family members look for solutions to their difficulties; this might mean sharing their ideas with family members as well as helping them find their own answers. In addition, therapists help families to think about their strengths and encourage them to recognise what they are still managing in life, despite the difficulties.

**What can I expect when I’m in therapy?**

To begin with, an appointment will be offered to the person who is distressed or unhappy and whichever family members would like to come along. After that first discussion, if everyone agrees that further conversations might be helpful, more appointments will be arranged. These appointments generally last for an hour and a half and take place every 2 - 4 weeks.

Sometimes the whole family comes to sessions, sometimes only part of the family. It may also be appropriate to involve a professional colleague with whom the family are involved such as a community psychiatric nurse. The number of meetings varies depending on the difficulties. Sometimes it is 2 sessions; an average is around 6 sessions, but some families may need to attend more. The number of sessions will be agreed with you during treatment.

Family consultation and therapy is provided by family therapists and associate family therapists. Associate therapists are qualified professionals, who, like many doctors working in teaching hospitals, are learning more about their specialism, in this case the particular skills that are needed for working with families. Family therapy and consultation has for a long time involved working in small teams because of the value to the team and family of different points of view.

Family therapists generally work in teams of at least two members. They may sit in the same room listening closely to the conversation or in an adjoining room watching and listening through a one-way screen as the therapist talks with the family. Depending on where they are sitting, they may make contributions themselves directly or via the therapist.

Families can see a therapist alone without a team, if they prefer.

**Likely Results of Therapy**

Some people find working this way is very helpful in sorting out their problems or at least providing some steps on the way. Some families tell us that their main problem may not be resolved, but at least their understanding of the problem and their family relationships are much improved. And that helps them to manage the problem better.

Therapy can sometimes be tough and sometimes it can be upsetting to discuss situations in order to get a long term benefit. For instance, people are often advised to face up to anxiety-provoking situations, or to talk about upsetting memories. Though this may make you feel worse temporarily, it offers the chance of feeling much better in the long run. Such difficult tasks will be discussed beforehand and will not proceed without your agreement.