

Therapy with Children and Young People

A number of therapists based at the Therapy Rooms are experienced and qualified in working therapeutically with children and young people. The Therapy Rooms offers a calm, comfortable, well-equipped, bespoke space for children's therapy with a range of resources, creative and play media to help children engage well in therapy. Parents/guardians have the opportunity to wait in our comfortable waiting room whilst therapy is underway.

With **primary-aged children**, therapy is usually based around play. Play therapy can help with wide range of presenting problems, including:

- Anger and aggression
- Shyness and passivity
- Withdrawal and isolation
- Anxiety and fear
- Bullying
- Attachment difficulties
- Relationship difficulties
- Poor self esteem
- School refusal
- Boundary and limits issues
- Unhappiness
- Enuresis and encopresis
- Loss and grief
- Difficulties with change and transition
- Individuation and self identity

Play is the natural language of the child, this is how children best express their thoughts, feelings and desires, explore relationships and describe experiences. In therapy, children have the opportunity to 'play out' strong feelings and problems within a safe, accepting and containing space. The therapist is skilled in creating a relationship with the child based on trust, acceptance, and firm boundaries. Through play, children can find new and creative ways to express what is going on inside. Therapy can help children develop resilience, so that they are less likely to 'act out' at home or at school.

As with primary-aged children, therapy offered to **young people of high-school age** provides a safe, confidential, non-judgmental space for the client to explore issues that trouble them in an atmosphere of understanding and empathy. Therapists encourage client autonomy and empowerment, but will not offer advice, provide a mental health diagnosis or promise a quick fix.

Each therapist approaches their work with children differently. Varying approaches may be offered, according to the presentation of the individual child.

In non-directive therapy, the therapist works according to the presentation, needs, and developmental stage of the individual child or young person, they do not attempt to direct the child's actions or conversation in any way, or to hurry the therapy along. The therapist creates an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding, observing and reflecting back to the child their emotions and process in such a way that self-acceptance and emotional regulation are improved.

Integrative child therapy is based on an understanding that specific interventions are introduced at specific stages of therapy in order to achieve positive change. Accordingly, the therapist offers a different approach at each stage of therapy: namely, to facilitate the development of the counselling relationship; to help the child tell their story; to help the child process strong emotions; to work on positive change and an improved sense of self; and to help the child develop resilience and an ability to cope.

Young people often also engage well with therapeutic play and creative approaches, finding these kinds of approaches more comfortable than 'just' talking. An integrative counselling approach is often also helpful for young people, where the therapist offers more directive interventions in accordance with client need.

In all our work with children and young people, a positive therapeutic relationship between therapist and client is key; the therapist works to develop a warm, trusting relationship with the child or young person from the outset. As with adult clients, counselling with children and young people is confidential between counsellor and client, meaning the therapist will not automatically share the content of the session with parents or associated parties. However, the therapist does have a duty of care to the child or young person who attends, and whilst respectful of maintaining a confidential relationship, the therapist will share information to protect the well-being of the child, if necessary.

Therapists who work with children and young people are:-

Primary Aged Children (5 – 11)

Sharon Atack
Ali Murphy

Young People of High School Age (11-17)

Sharon Atack
Magdalena Szczurek (Meg)
Claire Hanley-Stakes
Julie Brocklehurst
Ali Murphy