Assessments of Therapeutic Need

“It is not enough to be compassionate. You must act”.

Dalai Lama

An assessment of therapeutic need is completed where there are worries about a child/ren that need further specialist assessment to consider the emotional/behavioural, cognitive, psychological and somatic needs of a child/ren.

A therapeutic assessor who has sound experience in child development, child psychopathology, attachment, developmental trauma and assessing the holistic needs of child/ren and family will be allocated to the child.

When a referral is received for a therapeutic assessment to be undertaken with a child/ren the following is to be considered as part of the assessment process.

An initial meeting with the child/ren social worker and parents/carers to understand what the presenting need is for the child and why a request for a therapeutic assessment has been made.

The therapeutic assessment is undertaken over approximately 9 sessions.

Obtaining information about the parental worries or concerns and child/ren:

- The therapist will request to read any social care files that may be held on the child/ren
- An initial meeting with the parent/s to understand the presenting behaviours and worries that have caused them to seek specialist support at this stage.
- Within the initial meeting an understanding of the child’s experiences is to be gathered
- Written agreements regarding parents agreeing to the assessment, video of the sessions and expectations of attending the weekly sessions on a specific date and time.

Observations of a child/ren in school setting

- Before meeting the child, it is beneficial to undertake an observation of the child/ren in school so this can remain as objective as possible.
- The therapist will also take time to gain information from the child’s teacher/significant adult in school to understand how the child/ren manages in the school setting.
- The information gathered in the observation will inform the therapeutic assessment.

Obtaining child/ren history and experiences

“You are mistaken if you think we have to lower ourselves to communicate with children. On the contrary, we have to reach up to their feelings, stretch, stand on our tiptoes.”

Janusz Korczak 1925
It is important to obtain as much information as possible about the child/ren early history to gain an insight into any early experiences and developmental trauma in the child’s life.

Adopters often have a wealth of information and paperwork that they have from when they adopted their child/ren and often will share this.

**Parental history and experiences**

It is important to obtain information from parents/carers to understand their own attachment histories, experiences and any developmental trauma they may have experienced. This gives the therapist an understanding of where the parent/carers emotional development is at and how they can respond to their child/ren needs.

**Observations of parental – child/ren relationship and attachment behaviours**

During the assessment process the therapist will observe the attachment relationship between the parent/carer and child/ren.

**Psychometrics completed by child/ren and parents**

The therapist will undertake psychometric testing with the parent/s/carer/s and child/ren, some of the psychometric tests undertaken are:
- TSCYC: undertaken by the adult on the child
- TSI–2: undertaken by the adult on themselves
- TSCC: Undertaken by the child on themselves
- TSI: sometimes used instead of the TSI-2

**A conclusion and recommendation regarding future work**

At the end of the assessment period the therapist will write a report analysing all the information gathered during the assessment and concluding with recommendations for any future work.

The assessments are:

- Child centred
- Rooted in child development
- Ecological in their approach
- Able to ensure equality of opportunity
- Able to involve working with children and families
- Able to build on strengths as well as identify difficulties
- Inter-agency in their approach to assessment and the provision of services
- A continuing process, not a single event
- Carried out in parallel with other action and provision of services
- Grounded in evidence-based knowledge.

A therapeutic assessment of need can be referred from a local authority, NHS, private agency or by the parent themselves.

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