

Play Therapy

"It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken adults" ^(sic)

Frederick Douglass

Play therapy is a developmentally sensitive intervention. It is ideally suited to children aged between 3 and 14 years old but has been effectively used by both slightly younger and older children dependent on their development, temperament and individual circumstances as well as adults.

We specialise in providing play therapy services to children who have experienced

- Attachment related issues
- Developmental Trauma
- Sexual Harm

"Play is the highest expression of human development in childhood, for it alone is the free expression of what is in the child's soul."

Friedrich Froebel

Play Therapy Structure

Play Therapy can progress after an assessment of therapeutic need has established this is the right intervention for the child and legal consents have been received. The intervention is an eight-phased process;

- Phase One - Information Gathering
- Phase Two - Development of Psychodynamic formulation and hypotheses
- Phase Three - Preparation of parent/carer, agreement and consent at parent/carers home. Review hypotheses
- Phase Four - Engagement, rapport building and basic agreement with the child at child's home. Review hypotheses
- Phase Five - Assessment sessions at this point if appropriate.
- Phase Six - Play therapy sessions in blocks of twelve weekly sessions in the playroom
- Phase Seven - Review and review of hypotheses (further blocks of 12 and review until closure)
- Phase eight - Ending, closure and evaluation

Whilst the initial meetings with the Parent/ carer and the child are at their respective homes, the play therapy itself will be conducted in an appropriate therapeutic space, usually at our centre.

The sessions are undertaken at the same time, on the same day at the same venue, in the same room, for the same period of time until the intervention is complete.

"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



A parent/carer or professional must bring the child and the best attempts must be made for it to be the same person. We expect the child's escort to remain in the building until the session has ended. We will not see unaccompanied children or children sent alone in a taxi.

Contra-indications

There are a number of contra-indications to play therapy; circumstances where interventions should not take place. These include;

- Where the child is currently at risk of harm or abuse.
- Where the child is in a chaotic environment, where there is no parental desire for change.
- Where the child is in a situation where imminent transition or change is about to occur (However, play therapy can help bridge placements if the therapist has enough time to develop a therapeutic alliance with the child).

Legal proceedings are not contra-indicatory

Play Therapy Information

Models of Play Therapy

There are a number of different models of Play Therapy practiced in the UK. The model employed by Tiptoes is Non-directive play therapy (NDPT), which is a child-centred approach.

NDPT is often mistaken as an easy therapeutic option and often 'over-simplified' by practitioners and non-practitioners alike. The term 'Non-directive' does not mean that the therapist is 'non-interventionist' or simply observing the child's play, indeed they are actively involved, particularly in the use of Rogers core conditions of empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard, whilst remaining sensitive to the child's experiences.

NDPT is based on the work of Carl Rogers and later Virginia Axline. This model was taught at York University by the author and play therapist Virginia Ryan.

The Impact of Trauma and Harm

Trauma and harm impacts on how children view and relate to the world. The outcomes of such negative experiences are often seen in the child or young person's behaviour that can cause problems for those caring for the child or those around them.

We believe that the child's behaviour is not the problem, but the child's answer to the problem.

Play Therapy is a developmentally sensitive therapeutic intervention that enables children and young people to make sense of and overcome their experiences through the reduction of the impact of associated feelings, thoughts and physical sensations, which leads in turn to adaptations in their behaviour.

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Play therapy is a child-centred intervention that is often wrongly assumed to only consider the referred child. Indeed, whilst the child has their weekly sessions the child's wider support networks are actively involved in the process.



Why Does Play Therapy Work?

- Reduces anxiety about traumatic events in the child's life
- Facilitates a child's expression of feelings
- Promotes self-confidence and a sense of competence
- Develops a sense of trust in self and others
- Defines healthy boundaries
- Creates or enhances healthy bonding and attachments in relationships
- Enhances creativity and playfulness
- Promotes appropriate behaviour





The following is a statement from BAPT

PROFESSIONAL TITLE PROTECTION

BAPT is a members led organisation. This means our members are at the heart of what we do; we listen and we act.

One of our members greatest concerns was the unprotected nature of the title 'Play Therapist'. Although it is a very special and specific term to us, unfortunately it can be used by anyone, regardless of whether their training has been three days or three years. This causes confusion for the public, is damaging to our clinical profession and harmful to children and families.

As an organisation, BAPT wanted to ensure a way of legally protecting our members and the public. We wanted to ensure our professional identity is clearly defined. Unfortunately, this is no longer possible for any profession via government legislation (which is how job titles are usually protected in health and social care), so we got creative and found a different way forward.

BAPT has gone through the legal trademark process to safeguard the title of BAPT Registered Play Therapist®. Now, when you see this trademarked title, you can be assured that the practitioner has undertaken years of post graduate university clinical training, which includes hundreds of hours of clinical practice, academic learning, infant observations and in-depth assessments. You can also be assured that practitioners using the title BAPT Registered Play Therapist® have undergone their own personal therapy as part of their training. This is so important as it ensures our members are as safe and self-aware as possible when they enter the playroom with children.

BAPT Registered Play Therapists® are held to the highest standards of supervision and continuing professional development. They are also eligible for registration with the Professional Standards Authority, another indicator of BAPT's commitment to quality. However, our journey is not yet complete. Protecting our supervisors and trainers is also important to us and our members; more titles will be announced in the near future.

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Research and Evidence Base (From the Association for Play Therapy)

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