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Supporting Your Child Through Therapy

A Beginner's Guide





WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

Welcome! If you're reading this brochure, it's likely that this is your first experience with a foster child or young person being referred to our therapy services.

Your therapeutic fostering journey will not be a solitary one; you will receive support from your assigned therapist, registered manager, supervising social worker, and fostering advisor. You will attend, or will have completed, our bespoke training in therapeutic childcare – the ISP Pathway.

Also, many of our experienced foster parents have extensive experience supporting children and young people through therapy. The peer support they can offer to those new to therapeutic fostering or therapy is invaluable.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to them with any questions you might have. In the meantime, we have answered some common questions below to help you on this therapeutic journey.





WHAT IS MY ROLE WHEN MY CHILD IS IN THERAPY?



You play a vital role in your child's therapy journey by fostering a safe and nurturing environment at home, being an active listener, and encouraging open communication with the therapist. Respecting your child's confidentiality with the therapist helps create a safe space for them to open up and make progress.

You'll have the opportunity to meet with your child's therapist monthly to reflect on their therapeutic journey, explore the part you can play, and your own triggers, and discover how best to support your child.

We recognise that foster parents are the main source of support for our children and so the focus of these meetings is to support your therapeutic relationship with your child. Together with the therapist, you can learn and reinforce healthy coping strategies that your child can use at home during challenging times.

Additionally, all foster parents are encouraged to participate in ISP's Therapeutic Pathway training, which offers insights into trauma and its effects, along with strategies for supporting children living with trauma and other complex needs. The therapist can also provide additional resources such as books or articles to deepen your understanding.

Whilst the focus of your meetings with the therapist remains the child and your relationship with them, we recognise that counselling can be helpful at times to support you in your role as a foster parent and the therapist may recommend additional support for you from our counselling service for foster parents – Dover Counselling – though it will always be up to you if you choose to access the service.



HOW OFTEN WILL WE HAVE SESSIONS, AND WHAT IS THE DURATION OF EACH SESSION?

The duration of therapy sessions can vary based on your child's needs and the therapist's recommendations. Typically, sessions occur once a week and last for 50 minutes. We encourage your child to attend all scheduled sessions, but we understand that sometimes rescheduling may be necessary due to family events.

During half-term breaks and holidays, your child may have a break from therapy. However, in some cases, the therapist may advise continuing therapy during these periods, as longer breaks may hinder your child's progress.





WHAT ARE FOSTER PARENT CONSULTATIONS? WHAT CAN I EXPECT?

Foster parent consultations are scheduled meetings between you and your child's therapist. These typically happen once a month and last 50 minutes. During these sessions, you'll have the chance to reflect on your child's inner world, share observations, express concerns, and receive updates on their progress.

These consultations offer a collaborative space where you can share crucial information about your child's needs and work together to support them.

Expect open discussions and feedback from the therapist as you collaborate to create a supportive environment that reinforces the therapeutic work.

The therapist will involve you by providing regular updates, discussing your observations and concerns, and seeking your input on your child's progress and goals. They may also offer guidance and provide resources for you to use at home to support the therapy goals. Collaborating with the therapist is crucial for establishing a consistent and nurturing environment that enhances the effectiveness of the therapy.



WILL I RECEIVE ANY WRITTEN UPDATES ABOUT MY CHILD'S THERAPY?

Yes. In addition to regular conversations in consultation sessions, the therapist will provide a 6-monthly report to the wider professional network.

This report offers a reflective overview of your child's progress, emerging themes, and recommendations for support. It is written in a way that protects your child's therapeutic space while helping the network understand how best to support them.

HOW CAN I EXPLAIN WHAT THERAPY IS TO MY YOUNG CHILD?

You can tell your child:

Therapy is a time where you get to talk and play with someone who wants to help you. The person you talk to is called a therapist, and their job is to listen to you and help you with any big feelings or problems you might have.

In therapy, you can share anything that's on your mind, like if you're feeling sad, scared, or angry. You can also talk about happy things! Sometimes, instead

of talking, you might play games, draw pictures, or do other fun activities.

These activities can help you show your feelings in different ways.

Therapy is a place where you can be yourself, and there are no right or wrong answers. It's all about helping you and figuring out ways to deal with tough situations.



IS THERE ANYTHING THAT CAN HELP MY CHILD UNDERSTAND THERAPY BETTER?

Yes. We have a **children's booklet** designed to explain therapy in a child-friendly and accessible way.

This can be a helpful resource to:

- Introduce therapy before it begins
- Support conversations at home
- Reduce anxiety or uncertainty

Your therapist, Consulting Centre Therapist or Registered Manager can share this with you and guide you on how to use it.



HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THERAPY TIME

We encourage all our foster parents to prioritise therapy over other activities. Creating quiet 1:1 time with your child before and after the session can help them ease into it and provide space to relax or calm down if challenging topics arise. The transition to and from therapy sessions can also be a lovely bonding activity for both the foster parent and child or young person. Many of our young people enjoy the journey to and from therapy, seeing it as quality time with their foster parents.

WHAT THERAPY ISN'T

Probably the most important thing to know is that therapy is not a quick fix. Therapy takes time, patience, and consistent effort. Progress may not be immediate, but with dedication, positive changes can emerge over time.

It's also worth remembering that therapy is a team effort. While you play a crucial role in supporting your child's therapy, progress isn't solely your responsibility. The therapist, child, and other professionals are here to support you and your child.

WHAT KIND OF THERAPY WILL MY CHILD RECEIVE?

Therapists may draw on different approaches depending on your child's needs. These might include:

Play Therapy - uses play and creative activities to help children express feelings and experiences

Talking Therapy - supports children and young people to explore thoughts and emotions through conversation

Creative Therapies (e.g. art, sand, drama & storytelling) - helps children communicate in ways beyond words

Trauma-informed approaches - focus on helping children feel safe, understood, and regulated EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing)- a structured, trauma-focused approach that helps children process distressing memories in a safe and supported way, reducing their emotional intensity over time

Attachment play - playful, relational activities that help build trust, strengthen connection, and support your child to feel safe and understood within relationships

Often, therapists will integrate different approaches to best support your child.



CAN I ASK THE THERAPIST TO DISCUSS A SPECIFIC TOPIC WITH A CHILD, E.G., A RECENT FIGHT AT SCHOOL?

It's best to leave the content of sessions for the child to decide. However, you should definitely discuss specific topics or concerns with the therapist. It's important to communicate any relevant information about your child's experiences, such as the recent fight at school, to the therapist. They can then work with your child with this in mind and be ready if your child wants to explore this in therapy. Open communication with the therapist is key to ensuring that your child's therapy aligns with their specific needs and goals.



WHEN I BRING MY CHILD TO THE THERAPY CENTRE, CAN I DROP THEM OFF AND RETURN LATER?

When bringing your child to the therapy centre, we strongly recommend staying on the premises throughout the session. Some children may struggle with separation anxiety and may leave the therapy room to check if you're still there.

Your presence can be highly therapeutic, providing reassurance and support. If a child feels upset or emotionally dysregulated during the session, knowing you're nearby can help them feel safe and secure. Additionally, staying for the session's entirety and being present afterward allows for a smooth transition and reinforces your child's sense of being supported and loved.



ARE NOTES TAKEN DURING CONSULTATION SESSIONS?

Yes. Therapists keep brief notes following consultation sessions to help maintain continuity and ensure important updates, reflections or actions are recorded.

These notes are stored on Charms

Accessible only to you and the relevant professionals within the child's network.

Written in a respectful and professional way, keeping your child's and your privacy in mind.

If you ever have questions about records or access, you are very welcome to ask your therapist.





HOW DOES THERAPY COME TO AN END?

Therapy endings are thoughtfully planned and gradual (allowing 3-4 sessions) wherever possible.

Ending therapy is an important part of the process. It gives your child the opportunity to:

- Reflect on their journey
- Make sense of changes and progress
- Experience a safe and supported goodbye

At times, some children or young people may express that they would like to end therapy. This is always explored carefully with them, to understand what is behind this feeling and to ensure that any ending is safe, supported, and in their best interests.

Decisions about ending therapy are usually made collaboratively between the therapist, child, you and the wider professional network. This may happen when therapeutic goals have been met, when the child feels ready, or when it is felt that a different type of support may be more helpful. Progress is regularly reviewed, and any plans to end therapy are discussed in advance so that the timing feels appropriate and well-supported.

You and your child will be prepared for the ending in advance, and there will be opportunities to talk about feelings related to this transition.

HOW DO WE KNOW IF THERAPY IS HELPING?

At the beginning of therapy, we work together to set Goal-Based Outcomes (GBOs). These are simple, meaningful goals that help us understand what your child would like to be different.

Where possible, children and young people are involved in setting their own goals, so that their voice is central to the process. These goals might relate to things like feeling safer, managing emotions, or improving relationships.

We also recognise the vital role of foster parents, and so we may set GBO goals with you as well, focusing on areas where you would like support in your relationship with your child or in managing specific challenges.

Progress is reviewed regularly by revisiting these goals together. This helps us reflect on what is changing over time and whether the therapy is supporting your child in the ways we had hoped.



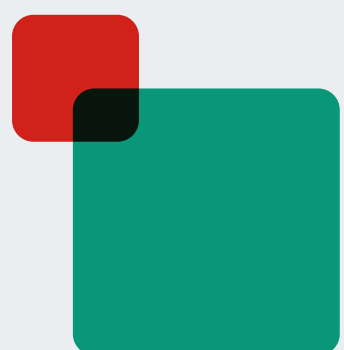
YOUR FEEDBACK MATTERS

Foster parents are invited to complete a therapy survey once a year, where we ask you to share your experiences of the service. We really encourage you to take part, as your reflections help us continue to develop and improve the support we offer.

You are also always welcome to share your thoughts, feedback, or any concerns at any time, either with the ISP team or directly with your child's therapist.

Your feedback is incredibly valuable. It helps us to:

- Understand what is working well
- Make improvements to our service
- Ensure therapy is meeting the needs of children and families





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