

The Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust

## ***Child and Family Department***

In the Child and Family Department we offer to help families, children and parents with emotional or behavioural problems. We see children of all ages up to school leaving age. Families may come to us with specific problems. Children in the family may have problems with bed-wetting, eating problems, sleeping difficulties or depression. Perhaps a child has behaviour problems such as temper tantrums or stealing. There may be worries about a child's development, about physical or sexual abuse, problems with learning or in school, or difficulties with relationships with friends or family. Often families who come to us have had a crisis such as the death of a close friend or relative, worries about pregnancy or childbirth or early difficulties with babies or young children. We also see children with learning disabilities as well as children on the autistic spectrum.

### What we can offer

The help we offer involves talking and thinking about the difficulties that caused you to come for help. We try to understand what might have contributed to the problem and to help families look for new solutions or new ways of relating to one another. We try to help people recognise patterns of behaviour by helping them understand their feelings. This, in turn, helps in understanding the problem. Often this means talking more widely about life experiences and relationships in families.

Some people find this process difficult or upsetting because it involves facing up to painful and difficult issues in your life and recognising the part you may have played in them. However, it can help you to cope better in the future.

### How can I get an appointment?

You can contact us by phoning or writing. Or you may be referred by your GP, another health care professional, or by schools, social services or other professionals who are involved with your family.

With your agreement we will contact your GP to let them know that we are seeing you. If you agree, we may also involve schools or other professionals who are concerned with your family.

### What can I expect at my first appointment?

For your first appointment we will usually ask you to come with all the members of your family who live at home. This is because we find that a problem experienced by one family member also affects others in the family and it is helpful to understand the situation from everybody's point of view. In your first appointment you will probably be thinking with your therapists(s) about what brings you here. We understand you may feel nervous and we will help you talk about this and the difficulties you have.

What will happen next?

After the first or second appointment we will discuss with you how best we can help. You will often need only a few sessions. We find that even a limited number of sessions can lead to an understanding of your problems which can be helpful. We may recommend that individual members of the family meet with therapists for a more specific assessment. In some situations we recommend further help within the department.

What kind of therapy is available?

#### Family Therapy

We may suggest that you come to more appointments with your family, perhaps once a fortnight or once a month. This may be for a limited number of appointments, or may be open ended. It will involve meeting as a family to explore and understand how your family is working together and how you deal with difficulties in the family.

#### Individual Therapy

We may recommend regular psychotherapy for individual children or parents. This involves one-to-one sessions with a therapist. Sessions last for fifty minutes at agreed regular times, usually once a week. Again, this may be open ended or for an agreed length of time. Children and parents may be seen individually or we may suggest that parents come as a couple.

#### Group Therapy

We may recommend a children's psychotherapy group or a parents' group. These groups meet once a week usually for about a year.

There may be a delay before we can arrange individual or group therapy. We try to keep the waiting time as short as possible and would continue to meet with you during this period.

How will the therapist work with my child/ren?

Sometimes therapists see children on their own. In this case, your child will usually have a box of toys to play with, or if they are older, some writing materials and stationery. This is to help your child communicate what is on his/her mind to their therapist.

Can I be with my child in his/her session?

In many cases, therapy will take place with the whole family together, or parents and children together in various combinations. However, there are other times when it seems helpful for your child to have their own space and time with the therapist.

How will I know what progress my child is making?

After an extensive period of initial exploration, your child may have ongoing individual therapy. You will always be offered regular meetings to discuss the progress your child is making, and you will be able to discuss all the concerns and pre-occupations you will undoubtedly have.