

## Child and Adolescent Therapy & Counselling Information for Parents and Carers



### What is Child and Adolescent Therapy & Counselling and how does it work?

At Creating Calm, both therapy and counselling are person-centred, integrative and holistic. They draw on many types of therapy and counselling techniques. These types of therapy or counselling can work alongside most other kinds of support that your child may have in school or through your GP. Therapy works with all clients, regardless of age or individual needs. Counselling tends to work best with pre-teens, adolescents and adults who prefer a more talking based approach but often a blend of both is used to support each client in a holistic way that responds to their needs.

Client-led therapy and counselling means your child decides what they do in the studio and how they approach the issues and concerns they want to work through. Depending on how we decide to work together, time in the studio may sometimes be more directive and often involve working with you as a parent/carer.

As well as Creative Arts and Play Therapy and Counselling, TraumaPlay, AutPlay and Emotional Logic can be used to support your child. How we propose to work together can be discussed at the initial intake meeting, when we can discuss what has brought you and your child to meet me and plan the best way forward for them together. Depending on the approach we take sessions may include working 1:1 with your child, working together with your child and you or working with just the key adult/s for the child.

If your child is coming to see me because of issues like anxiety or anger management, the **TraumaPlay** approach is a great way of working for them because they have a chance to develop specific skills and techniques that will help them, even if there is not a traumatic experience involved in them coming to therapy. TraumaPlay combines effectively with other therapy and counselling techniques.

**TraumaPlay** was created to support children and adolescents who have experienced trauma, either as a one of event such as a bereavement, or over a more sustained period of time. It is component based, allowing for your child's specific needs to be met.

I have used TraumaPlay extensively and very successfully with numerous clients and their families. I am the first person to become a TraumaPlay certified therapist in the UK and I am currently training as a supervisor for the TraumaPlay model.



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Over time we work through these things together:

- Building safety and security
- Developing coping strategies
- Enhancing emotional literacy
- Play based gradual exposure to the trauma
- Experiential mastery play
- Trauma narrative work (around telling the story of what happened)
- Making sense of the post trauma self (creating a new identity)

The family (or caregivers) are also involved in TraumaPlay and as well as helping parents (or other key adults) be better partners in regulation, TraumaPlay helps them learn how to hold the hard stories of the children they care for. Towards the end of therapy, when the child is learning about their new post trauma identity, the family are encouraged to also look at their post trauma selves, both as individuals and as a family.

**Parents as Partners** is a component of TraumaPlay that is focussed on working with parents. It looks at parenting styles and reflects on the ways to best support everyone in the family dynamic. This element of family support works with the adults around the child or adolescent and can be used to support the whole family alongside separate work with the child or the adolescent.

**AutPlay** supports children and adolescents with ASD as well as their families. This is a more directive approach that focuses on:

Three primary target areas:

1. Emotional regulation ability
2. Social skills development
3. Connection (relationship development)

and three secondary target areas:

4. Anxiety reduction
5. Sensory processing improvement
6. Behavioural change

The AutPlay therapy approach is both therapist and parent/care-giver led. The adults are involved in working with and supporting the child with help and guidance from the therapist outside of the therapist and child sessions.

AutPlay is great for supporting the social, emotional and relational issues that children with ASD struggle with.



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These include:

- Cognitive development (learning, thinking, planning)
- Social skills (social interaction, roles and routines)
- Relationship development (gaining attention, turn-taking, enjoyment)
- Language skills (talking to other people)
- Problem solving (negotiation, asking for help, solving challenges or difficulties)
- Emotional development (managing feelings, understanding others, empathy)

Children with play skills are more likely to be included in play and conversations by their peers making social times in or out of school much easier to cope with.

**Creative Arts and Play Therapy** forms the main part of their time in the studio for many children, regardless of the therapeutic approach. It includes drawing, painting, creating, working with clay and creating sand trays but other creative aspects are also used. Play Therapy can also be integral to an individual child's therapy, because play supports a child (or young person's) development physically, emotionally and socially. A lot of the techniques used in the studio are also adult therapies, and I do work with some adults too, especially those who dislike talking therapies.

Play allows children to develop their imagination and creativity and it encourages confidence and concentration. It helps children to make friends and to make sense of their ever changing and growing world and also allows them to make mistakes safely.

Working through play and creative arts is a symbolic communication – a child will often communicate through the arts and/or play what they cannot express with words. It allows them the safety of showing their worries without having to talk about them when they may not have (or want to use) the words. They can talk too, and many do, but this way of working allows children to say as much or as little as they need, or choose, to say.

Much of how we work also acts as a bridge between the conscious awareness and emotional experiences, allowing children to explore 'what is me' and 'what is not me' in a safe environment as they work through the issues or concerns that have brought them to therapy.

**Play and Creative Arts Counselling** uses established skills and techniques based in Gestalt therapy as well as drawing on the work of Carl Rogers, Virginia Axline and Phenomenological Theory. Traditional 'talking therapy' skills are used, but often clients are asked to explore ideas and themes using play and creative arts including sand, clay, paint and drawing to further deepen their understanding. It's not about being an amazing artist but more about representing something complex in colour, line and shape so that things that are unspeakable can be voiced.

Combining therapeutic skills with counselling skills is a particularly effective way of supporting children and adolescents.



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**Emotional Logic** is a coaching method for older children, young people and adults. It helps make sense of loss emotions such as shock, anger and denial and how to understand and use these emotions to find a way out of the hard place they are currently in.

Therapy and counselling are not a quick fix – each client has weekly sessions. Sessions will ideally be at the same time each week. Just as what has brought the child to therapy is unique, so is the length of time each child needs therapy and the balance of modalities (ways of working) that are used.

Therapy and counselling helps children to:

- ✓ Understand relationships
- ✓ Experience and identify emotions
- ✓ Act out troublesome issues
- ✓ Practise roles
- ✓ Explore situations
- ✓ Learn, relax and have fun
- ✓ Develop physical skills
- ✓ Find out what is 'me' and what is 'not me'

Time in sessions enables your child to consider and acknowledge their feelings. It helps them learn that is OK to feel and teaches them to cope with big feelings in a safe and constructive way.

Therapy has very few rules, but as many as necessary:

- Everyone in the room is safe
- Everything in the room is safe
- You can choose to tell anyone anything about therapy as long as it is the truth

The equipment offered in each session includes:

- ✓ A sand tray with dry sand (each child can add water, if they choose)
- ✓ A selection of symbols that will encourage the child to create any story in the sand tray, on the floor, or a table
- ✓ Clay – usually grey and red
- ✓ Art and drawing materials – paints, glue, glitter, collage etc.
- ✓ Small world figures including people, animals, vehicles and houses
- ✓ Music and movement equipment, including instruments
- ✓ Creative arts activities
- ✓ Games
- ✓ Dolls and caring equipment
- ✓ Medical equipment for role play

My COVID-19 risk assessment will be available for you and you can make decisions about things like masks in the room when we meet. If you have any questions about keeping your child safe and what to do if they are unwell, I can answer these at our initial meeting.



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Please be aware that your child may get a little messy when visiting the studio. I do provide aprons, but because therapy is generally non-directive, I won't insist your child puts one on (although I may suggest it).

The first time we meet, I will try and greet you outside (or in reception if it's raining), so that we can meet 'face to face' and not in masks and your child can meet 'me'. After that feel free to come to the side entrance of Mendip Court and tap on my window, which will minimise your time in the building. (I'll show you how to get there when we meet.) Each session will last for 40 minutes. Please make sure I have your current mobile number and that you stay on site for the duration of the session. Occasionally, children want to finish a bit earlier than planned and it's important they can get to you, if they need you. Therapy is hard work, so please be understanding if they are tired when they come back to you and let them share, if they want to, in their own time.

During sessions, big feelings can come up for a child and this may mean their behaviour can get worse before it gets better as they process those feelings. This is quite normal. If you're worried, or there is anything you think I need to know, please send me an email (or text me if it is urgent - I don't generally check emails in my working day). Likewise, if there is anything important that I need to tell you, I will of course let you know too. I know it's tempting to ask what is happening in sessions, but please don't quiz your child.

Children coming to therapy are always told they can tell anyone anything they like about their time in the studio as long as it is the truth, so please let them tell you, rather than you asking them.

Conversely, I will generally give you little information about 1:1 sessions in order that they are confidential for your child. When we meet formally (usually around session 10-12) I will say a little more about themes and things I may have noticed. Obviously, if there is a safeguarding concern, I would share this immediately, as appropriate. I will also give you a cue, such as a 'thumbs up' at the end of each session and we can follow up by phone if it's needed.

I work early mornings, after school and during the evenings to make it as easy as possible for you to fit therapy for your child around school, extra-curricular activities and family commitments. I won't always be able to offer you the exact time and day you want so please be as flexible as possible. If a session that's available is not ideal it's often worth starting as I will offer you others as they become available if I can, so we can make sessions at the most convenient time possible. Generally, I work during school terms and have some of the school holidays off. I will give you plenty of notice if I am taking holiday and will let you know as soon as I can if I need to reschedule a session with you.



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If you decide therapy is for you and your child, we initially will contract for 20 sessions but often the need for therapy extends beyond that and we can discuss this at our initial meeting. Depending on how we move things forward, sessions may involve you too, especially if we are working with the AutPlay or TraumaPlay models, but we can discuss this at the intake meeting. Sessions cost £75 each and are paid for at the start of each session using card payment via Zettle. (This means an initial episode of therapy will cost £1500.00 in total.). I do sometimes have concession places available, but there is generally a long waiting list for them and the times they are available are limited to during the day.

Should you need to contact me between sessions, please feel free to email and I will answer when I can. If you would like to talk something through with me, my office times are on my email footer (sometimes they vary) and you are welcome to give me a ring then (or email me / text me and ask to make a time to chat if that's easier). If anything is urgent, please also send me a text. My work phone number is 07512 749504.

I will make time to talk with you towards the middle of your child's sessions – usually around session 10-12, so that we can review progress so far and plan together what is going to happen next. Depending on why they have come to therapy or counselling, some children only need one episode of therapy, but others may need a lot longer. Children are always welcome back for another episode of sessions at another time if they need it.

There are lots of short videos on my website answering commonly asked questions, but you are welcome to ask me anything you need to know. I'm always happy to chat, if I can, or answer emails. The videos can be found at [www.creatingcalm.co.uk/youask](http://www.creatingcalm.co.uk/youask). There are also a series of FAQs (frequently asked questions) for parents, clients, and professionals on the website blog: [www.creatingcalm.co.uk/blog](http://www.creatingcalm.co.uk/blog).



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## About me

My name is Elaine Hutchinson and I have worked with children and their families for over 30 years. I am a child and adolescent therapist and counsellor who works mainly through Play and Creative Arts Therapy and Counselling, Autplay, TraumaPlay and Emotional Logic.

Before I was a therapist, I was a SEN teacher and I worked in a variety of educational settings including mainstream primary and secondary education, alternative provisions, pupil referral units and as a medical tutor.

I am a trainee supervisor with TraumaPlay and will also start working as a trainee supervisor with PTUK in 2022.

I am currently completing a PhD at Exeter University and my research is looking at how children and teens experience and manage trauma and whether being left, right or ambihanded makes a difference to their experience and their therapeutic journey. If you are interested in knowing more, please ask, I will happily talk about what I am doing!

## About Orca

Orca is my therapy dog, she often works in my studio with me, but you can decide if this is right for your child when we meet. There is lots of research supporting animal assisted therapy (AAT) and how a dog can make therapy more effective for a client – even if the dog is asleep in the corner! If Orca is working with a child, they always meet first and I will share with them how best to play with Orca.

Orca is half collie, half miniature poodle and she looks like a little black rug! She loves people and her favourite snack is cheese. She loves popping bubbles for children in the studio, playing ball and being fussed.

We both look forward to sharing the studio with you.

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