

# The Feelings Team

## Supporting someone who has been referred to the Feelings Team

### Guidance for family and carers

The Feelings Team provides art therapy, music therapy, dramatherapy and counselling to people with learning disabilities for a range of emotional needs and situations.

This work takes place under the same confidentiality that anyone would expect. Occasionally, not knowing the content of the therapy work can cause anxiety for the people who support the person taking part in therapy and it might be helpful to speak to the head of the team. The therapists in the Feelings Team have a duty to protect the people they work with and will communicate with key people if there's a concern for a person's safety and/or wellbeing.

In our experience, some people like to share their experiences in therapy with those outside the sessions whilst others prefer to keep it to themselves. Both situations require sensitivity. For those who wish to share, it's useful for the listener to acknowledge what the person is saying without adding anything major; like advice or a strong opinion. The task is perhaps one of being with someone as they make sense of their experience rather than making sense of it for them. It's sometimes useful to suggest the person takes their question, feeling, idea, etc to their next therapy session (writing it down might be helpful). For those who prefer to keep the experience to themselves, it is helpful to acknowledge the confidential nature by ensuring privacy in day to day conversations with the person and their peers.

Sometimes, particularly in the early days, someone taking part in therapy can appear to get more upset. This is often because emotional material is being worked on and therefore more in the forefront of the person's mind. However, this 'getting worse before it gets better' often passes as therapy progresses. If in doubt please contact the therapist who will be happy to talk with you within the bounds of confidentiality established with the client.

The end of therapy can stir anxiety. One of the tasks in therapy is for the person to take inside themselves (internalise) the therapy experience and the learning and insights gained during the course of the work. This becomes part of the person and acts as an inner emotional resource. Sometimes people worry that the end of therapy will herald the return of the difficulties that brought the person into therapy in the first place. However, in our experience, when the time comes most people discover that they have the strength and resource to live without their regular therapy sessions and return to an 'ordinary' life. For some people, the pleasure, confidence and self-esteem gained by having engaged well in a particular modality, i.e. music, can mean that they may wish to access sessions in the community after therapy finishes. The therapist can guide the person to what may suit best.

There are some things that can help make therapy as good as it can be and some of the most important ones are listed below:

- Keeping appointments. Therapy and counselling are processes that require reliable attendance wherever possible. Coming to therapy can be difficult emotionally. It is important to get a good balance between encouragement and recognising that someone is making an informed choice not to come. Therapy, of course, requires the person's consent and if after sensitive attempts at support the person doesn't wish to attend it must be recognised as their choice. A call to the therapist is appreciated as it helps to allay any concerns brought about by the person's absence. It could be that not wanting to come is only about that particular week, but if a pattern of missed sessions builds up, discharge might be considered. If a person misses three consecutive appointments at the very beginning of therapy we will normally discharge the person from our caseload with the offer of future support should they wish it. It is sometimes the case that it just isn't the right time for therapy; we therefore routinely offer the opportunity for re-referral at some point in the future.
- When supporting a person to attend their sessions, it is important to resist any discussion about the client with the therapist before or after the session, as we find that this damages the trust the client has in the therapeutic relationship. If there's an important concern or piece of information you might have, please contact the therapist at another time.
- Therapy and counselling are hard and occasionally necessarily upsetting things to be involved in. It's a temptation to ask someone if they've enjoyed themselves at the end of a session. It would perhaps be better to ask if the session had been helpful or useful.
- Therapy sessions aren't like the activities that people often do, even if they have confusing names such as sand tray therapy or art, music or dramatherapy. The 'doing' part is exclusively linked to the expression of emotional material. It's helpful to the person therefore to have this understanding held by members of their care team/family as it helps in keeping things separate and unconfused.
- Being late for sessions. The therapist or counsellor will be available in their room for the whole period even, if the client is late. The session will go ahead for the remaining time but cannot be extended beyond that.
- Holidays. It is vital to prepare for breaks in therapy. Therefore, we will let you know of our plans and would appreciate if you could let us know yours too.
- Therapy can be compromised by 'gossip' particularly about the therapist/counsellor or the therapy itself. Keeping good boundaries ensures that the client get the maximum possible benefit from their experience.

If in doubt about anything at all please don't hesitate to get in touch with us.

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*We support people to lead independent, healthy lives*