



We work to improve children's mental health, building hope and aspiration for the future

Who are we?

Impact (North) Ltd is a social enterprise, based in Leeds, focused on improving children's mental health. We are commissioned by the local authority and CCGs to provide a range of mental health and emotional wellbeing services for children and young people aged 0 – 25 and their families with wide-ranging complex needs in a variety of settings, including Children's Centres, primary and secondary schools. Our clinical team is made up of Child and Adolescent Psychotherapists (ACP) and Art psychotherapists (BAAT). Specifically in JESS, we have 3 psychotherapists who offer a total of 10 days of therapeutic support to the cluster per week.

How do we work?

- **Collaboration:** Psychotherapists **do not** believe in working with clients in isolation. We feel instead that children's difficulties can often arise or be further complicated by issues to do with external circumstances such as parental mental health, family dynamics or issues to do with school e.g. bullying. For this reason we always conduct a thorough information gathering period prior to meeting any child so that we fully understand all of these external influences. Throughout the work we also believe in working closely together with the network in order to support the necessary scaffolding around the child which can be highly influential in making long term changes.
- **Observation:** In the room, psychotherapists tailor their approach to the individual client and work in an age-appropriate way. They are trained to respond to the way a child or young person wishes to communicate. During an individual session, young children do not usually talk directly about difficult things but may communicate through play using the toys provided or through the art materials. Older children may also play or create whilst teenagers might talk more about their feelings. To a trained eye these are powerful forms of communication which may express how a child or young person feels.
- **Relationship:** The relationship between the child and the therapist is central to the treatment. Through the relationship with the therapist in a consistent setting, the child or young person may begin to feel able to express their most troubling thoughts and feelings. Confused, frightened, hurt, angry or painful

feelings can gradually be put into words rather than actions. The therapist can help the child make sense of their own experience and develop their own individuality and potential. The client may then begin to feel less anxious, more able to learn and better equipped to sustain friendships and other relationships.

What do we do?

Therapeutic services

We provide a psychotherapy service to primary and secondary schools as part of the Leeds citywide Emotional & Mental Health Early Help strategy that is available in all 25 school Clusters. We provide assessments for psychotherapy, State of Mind assessments, short, medium and longer term individual or dyadic therapy with children, young people as well as parent work, consultation and training.

The average length of therapeutic intervention is 17 weeks as the service is primarily aimed at an early intervention level. It is expected that before being referred to the service the child or young person will have received some support at a universal level i.e. support typically offered by schools such as nurturing groups, SEAL, one to one mentoring. Due to the short term nature of the work we are not commissioned to provide high level mental health support such as with clients with suicidal ideation, eating disorders or neurodevelopmental difficulties such as autism. These cases would typically be referred to CAMHS via the Mindmate SPA.

We offer a range of psychotherapy services to our children, young people and families:

- Consultation to professionals
- Psychotherapy assessment
- State of Mind Assessments
- Individual psychotherapy
- Dyadic (Parent-Child) psychotherapy
- Parent work
- Therapeutic group work
- Contribution in either writing or attendance to EHP meetings, CIN and CP reviews where appropriate.

Comments received for our core work:

- FSW – (The therapist) was incredibly supportive throughout the Early Help and she was part of the fundamental changes that the family were able to make

- FSW - It was really important that the family's emotional and mental health needs were addressed as part of the plan. (The therapist) offered fantastic support to acknowledge this and support the family with this.
- FSW -The support and experience that (the therapist) offered other professionals working with the family was invaluable.
- FSW - '(The therapist) built a fantastic relationship with the family to complete the work and was always available should professionals require a case discussion.
- School- '(The therapist) took time to understand the needs of the family and liaised with all other professionals at every opportunity.'
- School – 'A high level of support for school was provided by (the therapist)'
- Parent- 'You sat and listened and gave understanding where others have just given unhelpful solutions. You gave space for me to feel.'
- Parent - 'The joint art therapy sessions have really helped me and changed way I speak to my daughter, I used to get angry and tell her to go away, now I can think about how to manage these situations better.'
- Child – 'Doing art helped me. I like (the therapist). I feel safe with her.'

Weekly Consultation Slots

Our weekly consultation slots have been well attended by a variety of professionals such as family support workers, child protection leads and inclusion staff. This is an opportunity to discuss children or families who are presenting with concerning or complex needs and to think together about how underlying relational dynamics might be perpetuating or maintaining unhealthy family systems. It is also an opportunity to think in depth about any markers for risk and to see what work would be most helpful to the family so that we can ensure that families get the right service, first time. A detailed summary of the consultation is also then completed by the therapist and sent to the attendee's as a way of recording the learning process.

We are gathering the outcomes of this additional service and so far the feedback states:

- 100% of attendee's felt helped by the process of consultation
- 100% of attendee's felt that the consultation enabled them to explore their concerns around specific child, young person or family.
- 97.5% of attendee's felt that the consultation helped them to gain a better understanding of the child/ young person's difficulties
- 85% of attendee's felt more confident in responding to the needs of the child/ young person
- 100% of attendee's felt they were treated well throughout the process

Qualitative comments received so far include:

'I felt heard and understood as a professional and feel the consultation service is valuable to ensure the family's needs are being met.'

'(The therapist) has been supportive throughout the consultation period and the family have benefited greatly from me discussing their concerns.'

'I feel confident to carry out further exploration with the Mum following the discussion and happy that a plan for further assessment can take place.'

'Good thinking space'

'Great practical advice for direct work with parents'

'Useful and clear next steps'

Reflective Supervision - 'Your Space'

This is a 6-weekly space for JESS family support workers to share the demands and complexities of their roles with the aim of building reflective capacity and resiliency. There has only been one meeting so far this term but it has been well received. It is hoped that data will be gathered as we move forward about the usefulness in offering such a space and the impact it has on work productivity and wellbeing.

Training

Impact has also delivered a training event that was open to all professionals working in the cluster, RES and schools on the impact of trauma on children and the people around them. The training focused on helping staff to understand the often bizarre and complex behaviour trauma victims exhibit as well as understanding how we can play a part in both the exacerbation and healing of these relational difficulties. Again, the course was well attended and the verbal feedback received so far suggests that professionals felt it helped them in their day to day work with traumatized young people and families and that they felt hopeful about the impact they could make on bringing about change.

Addressing the Challenges

There continues to be challenges in both cluster working and children's mental health which has meant that Impact puts a lot of focus on adapting our packages of care to ensure, as best we can, that we provide a service which fits the needs of our community:

Complexity and Waiting List

Sadly, we will all have heard about the continuing crisis of mental health both in our city and nationally and this continues to be reflected in both the number of referrals we receive to the service and the complexity and level of need in the families. Children are also continuing to fall between the gap of early help and CAMHS so that we are left managing children who are at continuing risk to themselves or others or

are rapidly developing possibly lifelong mental illnesses. In order to address this worrying trend we have been invited to meet with the head of CAMHS to better understand jointly the gap in provision and how we could more effectively work together to prevent children slipping through the net.

We will also be bringing in an assessment clinic for those on the waiting list that have waited longer than 10 weeks. The assessment will consist of a meeting with parents and professionals (either jointly or separately) and then one meeting with the child. The purpose of this assessment will be to:

- ensure the child still requires therapeutic input
- ascertain whether issues have changed
- assess risk
- offer support and advice to parents and professionals to help support the child whilst they wait for therapy

Adult Mental Health

Parental mental health and its impact upon children's development continues to be the greatest challenge in the work we do and this is, to a large extent, due to the limited number of accessible adult mental health services. We are fortunate that many of our staff have experience in working in adult mental health or are trained in dyadic (parent-child) work but this does then mean that cases require twice the amount of work as we need to bring about change in both the child and parents' internal worlds.

In order to address the need for parental mental health services Impact have provided a placement opportunity for a student counsellor in the cluster who has capacity to see up to 4 parents a week. It is in the early days in terms of this work beginning but we hope that the student will be able to be with us for at least a year.

Impact are also developing a 'Scaffolding' model of working whereby greater emphasis is put on helping parents to better understand the communications from their children and equally the impact that they themselves have on their children. This would hopefully help to build more secure bonds between parent and child which is the bedrock for children developing good resiliency and emotional wellbeing. It would consist of a 3 session assessment with the child (as is typical of Impact's work) but then this will be followed by up to 6 sessions with parents afterwards to help them develop their understanding.

Proving Effectiveness

Alongside colleagues in other therapeutic services, Impact has long recognised the need to look for more meaningful ways of depicting change in the families and young people we work with. An opportunity arose earlier this year to take part in a qualitative evaluation of school based child psychotherapy conducted by a company called Research in Dynamic Environments, based at Huddersfield University. We

were thrilled that the study highlighted the unique aspects of how Impact works such as the close collaborative nature of working with the network around the child, the skills and experience in social, emotional and mental health assessments and the variety of packages of care offered. The study stated:

*'There is strong evidence that the service has **had significant impact on children's behaviour, families' social life and the school environment.** Parents report dramatic changes in their children's behaviour, better awareness of how their behaviour affected others and better communication with the child. Parents particularly appreciated developing better understandings of their child's needs and emotional wellbeing. Teachers and support staff also report reductions in aggressive and disruptive behaviour, while appreciating opportunities to discuss specific cases with the therapist. Close collaboration with staff and involving parents in joint or separate sessions were key to therapeutic success.'*

Further information can be found at:

Impact North Ltd website: www.impactnorth.co.uk

ACP (Association of Child Psychotherapists) <http://www.childpsychotherapy.org.uk/>

BAAT (British Association of Art Therapists) www.baart.org

BACP (British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy)
<http://www.bacp.co.uk/>



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