



## WHAT IS PLAY THERAPY

A therapeutic approach to help troubled, distressed children, using play, offering an opportunity for children to explore painful feelings and distressing or traumatic experiences, which they may not be able to recall in words.

Toys and equipment are selected to enable a child to explore issues that are important to them, although no suggestions or guidance is given. They are enabled to use their experiences – including the relationship with the therapist – to understand and resolve their difficulties.

A child's behaviour may be causing stress or difficulties to him or herself or others. They may be showing their feelings in the way children usually do, through their behaviour rather than in words.

A child who is frightened, distressed or angry might show it in ways that do not seem to make sense to those who care for them. Play therapy can help a child express those feelings and make sense of them in some way.

Sometimes it is more appropriate to work on specific issues, for instance bereavement, in which case some direction will be given during part of the hour.

## IMPORTANT POINTS FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

- Play therapy encourages the expression of feelings – this can be painful and your child needs support from home. If you can show you support the child and want them to have therapy this really helps.
- As the process of 'working through' the child's difficulties continues, their behaviour may get worse before it gets better. Please do not despair and give up – this is likely to be a good sign! It is really important to persevere with the number of sessions agreed at the beginning.
- Children very often express their 'messy' feelings by making a mess. This is often an important part of the process. Please bring your child in old clothes.
- Your child may want to tell you what happens in the sessions, but please allow him or her to do this in their own time, do not question them about what they have said or done. It is important that they feel this is 'their' hour.
- An important part of the process is its regularity and reliability. Please do bring your child regularly and on time. It is important for your child that you wait for them during the hour, there will be facilities for this.