

## **Community Assessment and Therapeutic Service**

CATS is a specialised community resource concerned primarily with the assessment and treatment of children and young people who present with sexualised histories, attachment difficulties, have experienced separation and loss or trauma. CATS is an independent organisation that works directly with children and young people, their families and carers focusing on the child's needs. In addition to the above CATS also offers independent consultation and training to Local Authorities, health services and private organisations. Intervention includes therapy and programmes for children, victims of abuse, their non-abusing carers and perpetrators of abuse.

CATS is an independent organisation which is a subsidiary of Woodlands, an independent residential establishment providing a specialised therapeutic service for young people who require a closely supervised therapeutic environment.

We are a team of specialists who have a background in social work, therapy and ongoing specialist training in sexual abuse, trauma, attachment and safeguarding.

CATS services provided to the Family Courts, it's Solicitors, Guardians and Court staff, Child Safeguarding Agencies and Criminal Justice System include:

- An integrated family and individual assessment and intervention programme.
- Individually tailored assessment and intervention programmes for children or young people with sexually harmful behaviour.
- Therapeutic work with children, young people and adults.
- Psychosocial and educational input to carers to create a safe environment.
- Consultancy on individual cases to professionals, including teams.
- Training to multi agency professionals, foster carers, support workers, residential care workers on sexual abuse, awareness raising, assessment, intervention and creating safe environment.

CATS aim to assist with decision making and inform planning concerning family viability, future options, the management and reduction of issues of risk and to identify future intervention needs. Those needs include a programme of ongoing therapeutic work with individuals in the family system, or through family work.

We work to recommend an appropriate way forward for the children and young people referred whilst ensuring that the needs of the child are paramount. Cases are referred include concerns where sexual abuse had occurred, in the present or past, or is suspected to be a risk.

The specialist assessment and structured evidence-based intervention programmes for young people and adults who have exhibited harmful sexual behaviour are designed to complement statutory intervention. The aim of the intervention is to enable the individual to increase their ability to self-manage and reduce the risk of further harmful behaviour. Following an assessment, we provide individual therapy to children or young people designed to explore and address their experience of abuse

and facilitate the development of effective means of keeping safe in the future. This usually includes working alongside the carers and/or family members.

Referrals of children and young people who have shown or are alleged to have sexualised histories may include situations where there is insufficient evidence or willingness to lead to a criminal prosecution or where a child has been sexually abused and is reacting to others in a sexually inappropriate manner. Any intervention with children and young people is strengths based and places an emphasis on the developmental stage, personal and addresses the cause of unsafe behaviour and facilitates effective planning for a safe future. This may include a structured therapeutic programme. Examples of practice models used are available on request, as outlined below.

### **Timeframe**

Following receipt of written confirmation of the referral and agreement to the terms, then the assessment will be commenced i.e. file reading, meetings with key professionals and a minimum of six weekly sessions with the young person and prime carers will be undertaken, followed by report writing. This process takes on average 12 weeks. Any further intervention is usually then negotiated with the referrer and undertaken in 12 session blocks, after which a report is produced, and review held with those involved.

### **Assessment Framework**

The assessment framework and procedures are designed to assist professionals in assessing children and young people who have sexualised histories. Due to the unique nature of each family and individuals within the family system, the assessment is adapted in accordance to the identified needs.

The framework adopts a partnership approach, which is essential for the development of effective practice. It incorporates the concepts of the DoH 'Framework for the Assessment of Children in need and their Families' used by Social Services and other agencies, as well as the Asset framework used by Youth Justice Services and the Good Lives Model. It's use is intended to fit within the timescales agreed by criminal justice and child welfare systems.

The assessment model used is the first stage in gathering and analysing information, which will assist practitioners to consider what further assessments and interventions might be required to support the young person and their parents/carers. It recognises the importance of parents and family support for the child or young person throughout, so therefore adopts a holistic approach to assessing the young person and their family.

The assessment enables us to:

- Identify potential risk of re-offending/re-abusing or of being re-victimised
- In child protection terms identify risk to either the young person or their actual/potential victim(s)
- Identify the young person's needs

- Assess the young person's motivation and capacity to engage in services and plans
- Identify the capacity of the parents/carers to support the young person
- Suggest priorities for initial response
- Consider referral into the public protection system
- Consider the developmental issues
- Consider the family and environmental factors

### **Assessment report**

The assessment report will comment upon whether the young person poses a risk, either to children currently identified, or to others, whether children or adults and consider whether referral into the public protection system is necessary. The assessors will share the report with the young person and their parents and note any areas of disagreement before sharing it with other professionals.

Steps to assessment completion:

- Read files and collate any information held by other professionals
- Interview the young person
- Interview the parents/carers
- Draw conclusions around the young person's risk, strengths, needs, capacity to change and the degree of support parents/carers can provide
- Take the completed report to the multi-agency meeting where roles, tasks and resources can be identified and agreed

### **Costing**

As all referrals are viewed on an individual basis in order to reflect the unique position of individuals and their family, costings are according to needs. Costings are therefore negotiated and agreed prior to commencement of the work on a sessional or daily basis.