

Psychologist in Town

Under-16s Therapy Agreement - Ms Michelle Magri and Dr Mark Flynn

1. Introduction

1.1. This document constitutes an agreement between the therapist and the parents or guardians of an adolescent undergoing psychological treatment. The agreement aims to clarify the therapist's position, to define the limits of parental involvement and to highlight issues surrounding the law and safeguarding of children and adolescents. It is important for you to understand my approach to therapy with adolescents prior to assessment; this document highlights some of the fundamental issues.

1.2. Please raise with me any concerns you have about any aspect of this Therapy Agreement. It will be inferred that you have read, understood and agreed to this Therapy Agreement if the adolescent under your care is attending assessment/therapy.

2. Assessment

2.1. Over the course of the assessment (typically, four sessions) we will explore the issues for which you are seeking therapy and attempt to get a clear understanding of matters which are important to you so that I can formulate your difficulties and find a focus for therapy. The assessment sessions allow you the chance to see if we can create a shared understanding of your difficulties in a manner which feels purposeful to you. You are not obliged to complete the assessment or embark on further sessions after the assessment period. Because I have a duty of care, if I think that you would be better helped by a therapist with a different specialty then I will offer to refer you on to them.

2.2. If you have any concerns about the process of therapy then please discuss these with me.

3. Regularity of Sessions

3.1. Once you have agreed to therapy and we have found a mutually convenient weekly appointment time (of 50 minutes) I will reserve it for you at the same time each week. This is so that we can commit to engaging and discussing areas of your life which are of concern to you.

4. Charges and Payment

4.1. Fees, per session, are: £140 for Individual therapy, £160 for Couple therapy, and £180 for Insurance clients and Consultation (no VAT is payable).

4.2. If you book online then card payment will be required to reserve and confirm your appointment.

4.3. If for whatever reason you have not paid for your session prior to your appointment date, then payment can be made by BACS or in cash at the end of the session.

4.4. In your first session you will be asked to pay in advance for the following session should you wish you to continue with therapy. That is, there should always be payment made one week in advance of your ongoing appointment.

4.5. For online therapy sessions and instances when someone else is paying on your behalf, payment will need to be transferred in advance of any appointment. Payment details will be sent to the payee.

4.6 Cardholders outside of the U.K. may be charged for currency conversion by their card issuer because payments are processed in their country's official currency.

Refunds

4.7. Self funded appointments, booked and paid for online, are processed via **Stripe**. Stripe submits refunds to a customer's bank immediately when we submit a request. However, it might take five to ten business days, depending on your bank's processing time, before a refund shows up in your bank account.

Unpaid bills

4.8. If you do not pay your bills I will not be able to reserve future appointments; therefore, if you are having or are likely to have any difficulties with payment please discuss this with me immediately.

4.9. Any unpaid invoices could be sent to a debt collector.

5. Cancellation Policy and Planned Breaks

5.1. Any cancellation of or non-attendance at your agreed reserved slot will be charged at the full fee. This cancellation policy applies to holidays, work commitments, illness and other emergencies. Please discuss with me in session any intended holidays or absences or the ending of therapy. Please advise me of any foreseeable difficulties in attending; if it is possible I will try to accommodate your needs by providing an alternative slot if one is available.

5.2. As your therapy sessions will take place on the same day and at the same time each week, this time slot will be reserved for you on an ongoing basis. If you are away for a period of time and cannot attend therapy, I can hold your session slot only if you agree to pay for the sessions for which you are away, unless I have another time slot available that you can attend.

Why is this? This 'pay to reserve' policy is common in therapy. In order for a therapist to focus on your psychological needs an appointment is reserved for you weekly at the same time on the same day, which your therapist obviously has to reserve their own time for. While an appointment slot is being reserved for you your therapist can not accept any new referrals for that reserved time slot, and s/he still has business overheads to consider - so waiving of fees is not sustainable. Additionally, we build our practice around the evidence indicating that weekly therapy, with minimal non-essential absences, facilitates progress by helping both client and therapist to focus on the agreed tasks and avoid mere firefighting and therapeutic drift.

5.3. If you forfeit your regular appointment there will be no guarantee of a readily available weekly slot upon your return from absence. However, you are welcome to go on my waiting list and once an appointment becomes available it will be offered to you (it is important to note that it will most probably not be at the same time on the same day that you previously had your appointment).

5.4. I require one week's notice for concluding therapy from clients with whom I've worked weekly for less than six months, and two weeks' notice from clients with whom I've worked for six-plus months. From clients with whom I've been working more than once weekly I always require a minimum of two week's notice.

6. Non-weekly Sessions (e.g. review sessions, or general difficulties attending weekly sessions)

6.1. Ad hoc sessions are typically advisable only to review your progress and well-being after a course of therapy. It is common practice that psychological therapy occurs at the very least weekly. My flexibility is likely to be limited as my diary is typically full with regular weekly clients. If you are unable to attend at the same time/day every week or you cannot attend weekly, then please let me know from the outset. Until we are able to get a full understanding of the reasons you are seeking therapy and what your needs are regarding days/times and commitment, it will be difficult for me to provide complete assurance that I can meet your needs.

6.2. Please note that your fee may increase if you decide to attend on a non-weekly basis, depending on the agreement we make in person.

7. Contact Outside of Session Time

7.1. I would encourage you always to discuss any concerns or problems during your therapy session (i.e., rather than contacting me in between sessions). However, if you have to late-cancel, or you experience difficulties attending your appointment, you can always advise me by the professional contact details that I will provide you with at the outset.

7.2. I am typically in clinic, so I will try to respond to any non risk-type issues within 72 hours unless I am on planned leave. Occasionally an appointed administrator may contact you on my behalf.

8. Therapist Absences

8.1. I will give you as much notice as possible of my holidays and also of any ad hoc absences, which latter I will try to keep to a minimum. You will not be charged for my absences.

9. Arrival and Late Attendance

9.1. I regret that I cannot make up time if you arrive late. Sessions will still need to end at 50 minutes.

10. Safety and Good Practice

10.1. Please do not arrive under the influence of alcohol or non-prescribed drugs. If I have reason to believe that you are intoxicated I will end/not commence the session.

10.2. Unless agreed, no children or animals should come with you to your therapy appointment. If you feel you could benefit from bringing someone to your appointment then please discuss this with me in advance of your session.

10.3. I recognise that the process of therapy may generate strong emotions for some clients - and we can try to work through these together. In the rare circumstance that I think that a client's emotions can not be safely contained I will draw the session to an early close.

10.4. I do not offer emergency support outside of sessions as I cannot guarantee my availability to you. If you are in danger in any way please contact emergency services (A&E), your GP or the Samaritans and discuss this with me in our next session.

10.5. If I believe that I am not able to support and alleviate your psychological distress at any point in the process of therapy then I will discuss this with you and consider what your options are (e.g., a referral on to another therapist or service).

10.6. If you are attending therapy online then please familiarise yourself with our online guidelines for good practice.

11. Ending Therapy

11.1. Therapy is not a magic 'cure' and you will be expected to share responsibility for your progress. Therapists and clients hold different experiences of how therapy is proceeding and I encourage you to discuss how you are finding the process. If you think therapy has lost meaning or focus, if you are not feeling any benefits, or if you are finding therapy difficult, please discuss this with me - it can be beneficial to work through these challenges.

11.2. If you or I think it is time to end the therapy then a discussion should take place including of how best to end the therapeutic relationship. If you decide to terminate your therapy sessions I will require a minimum of one week's notice if we have been working together for less than six months, and two weeks' notice for if we have been working for six-plus months, with relevant fees (one, or two sessions) applying.

12. Confidentiality and Risk

12.1. The primary legislation affecting children and adolescents in England and Wales are the Children Acts (1989, 2002, 2004). They provide the legal framework that establishes the responsibility for all Chartered Psychologists/Psychotherapists in respect of child protection and promotion of the welfare and development of the child.

12.2. I have a duty under the Children's Act 1989 to investigate situations where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child or a young person is suffering or is likely to suffer harm. Wherever possible every attempt will be made to collaborate with you, the parents/guardians, so that it can be decided what action, if any, is required to protect the child or promote their welfare. It may be that the situation is not thought to be serious enough to need the use of formal procedures and that by providing help and support the child can be protected.

12.3. In order for psychological therapy to be effective it is necessary for children and adolescents to have an environment in which they feel able to discuss personal matters freely, so confidentiality in the therapy is essential. Individuals aged 16 and above have a right to as full confidentiality as adults enjoy, and it is my practice to not share with you what your child has disclosed to me without your child's consent unless risk is involved. If I ever believe that your child is at serious risk of harming himself/herself or another, I will inform you.

12.4. We must discuss your views on what you expect me to disclose about the content of my sessions with your child, at the outset, in order to minimise differences in expectation.

12.5. If differences of opinion occur between parents, or between parents and child on the one hand and me, regarding the best interests of the child, I will listen carefully so that I can understand your perspectives and fully explain my own. What remains paramount is that the adolescent's treatment and their relationship with me are not compromised. In most circumstances some shared understanding can be arrived at; however, in circumstances in which a difference of opinion occurs resulting in the decision to end therapy, I ask that you allow me the option of having a few closing sessions to appropriately end the treatment and my therapeutic relationship with your child. It is unhelpful for an abrupt ending to occur that does not allow opportunity for therapist and child to say goodbye to each other.

12.6. All sessions are conditionally confidential. I am under a legal obligation to:

12.6.1. inform appropriate agencies if I perceive you are a danger to yourself or to others;

12.6.2. share information if required to do so under a court order or by law;

12.6.3. disclose information if required to do so for the prevention, detection or prosecution of a crime.

12.7. These situations happen very rarely, and normally I will inform you if I have to act in this way.

12.8. By signing this agreement and/or continuing with the first therapy session you give permission for me to hold your assessment information and any other information provided in the course of our work together. I will, of course, maintain this in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act, 1998 (as amended), clinical governance audit standards, requirements of my professional body and any other relevant legislation.

12.9. By signing this agreement and/or continuing with the first therapy session you are also giving permission for me to hold such information as is required to service our working arrangement. This includes but is not limited to data stored in paper form and/or electronically; processing of your personal data including but not limited to contact details, bank details, accident forms; processing of your sensitive data, including but not limited to data in respect of your racial or ethnic origin and your physical and mental health; and transfer of your personal data and/or sensitive data outside the European Economic Area.

12.10. I am required to participate in supervision as part of my commitment to good practice and the duty of confidentiality extends to my supervisor/s. Any process notes taken in therapy appointments or supervision sessions are confidential and full names will not be used. Such notes will not be kept for longer than is necessary, usually a few weeks after taken.

12.11. All process notes taken in session will be stored securely and disposed of in accordance with current data protection guidelines.

13. Extra Work Undertaken

13.1. If you want me to write any reports or letters on your behalf, my time spent preparing such reports will be charged for at my hourly rate. Please let me know in advance if you are seeking a professional letter of any kind or are seeking therapy as part of a legal claim.

14. Therapy Agreement

14.1. The Therapy Agreement is not with Psychologist in Town, it is with your individual therapist. Psychologist in Town does not accept any liability arising from the advice and treatment provided by me.

15. Indemnity Insurance

15.1. As an independent practitioner I hold professional indemnity insurance.

16. Complaints

16.1. It is natural at times to experience feelings of frustration or dissatisfaction about the process of therapy; these should be discussed with me as described earlier (please refer to section 10).

16.2. Should you have a complaint about my conduct which we have been unable to resolve to your satisfaction or which you believe is so serious that you wish to escalate it directly to my professional body (HCPC or BPS) then they can be contacted by email: enquiries@bps.org.uk or tel: +44 (0)116 254 9568, and <https://www.hcpc-uk.org/contact-us> or tel: +44 (0) 300 500 6184

16.3. The relevant code of conduct may be found on the following website www.bps.org.uk

16.4. Complaints about building maintenance or administrative support at Longcroft House or 84 Brook Street should be directed to me, and I will raise the matter with the building managers. Office staff are not able to address issues to do with our therapeutic relationship or my conduct and should you approach them they will advise you to speak to me or to contact my professional body.

In proceeding with an appointment you are deemed to have accepted the above terms and conditions.