

Mental Health Therapy

Our charity has seen a big increase in the number of families with children and adults having mental health difficulties due to the current pandemic Covid-19. We feel that this situation is going to be the new normal for many of our families. We are therefore investing in a new service that can help improve the mental health of our members. In determining the most effective and positive way forward for an adult on the autism spectrum who has mental health difficulties ChAPS staff have considered a range of options.

Traditional counselling that has a heavy reliance on talk and communication is in our experienced viewpoint not always effective. Adults with ASC are at a high risk of co-occurring mental health conditions (Wigham et al 2017), non-suicidal self injury (Maddox et al 2017), and suicidality (Hirvikoski et al 2016). Given that autistic adults without intellectual disability are the highest risk group of contemplating suicide at 66% (Cassidy et al 2014a) it is no surprise that this area is poorly understood and under-researched.

Lack of support for autistic adults has been associated with increased risk of depression and suicidality. Autistic adults also report a significant higher number of unmet support needs than the general population (Cassidy et al 2018a).

Camm-Crosbie et al 2019 states that tailored treatment and support is both beneficial and desirable. Participants in this study described a lack of professionals' understanding of autism which contributed to barriers in accessing appropriate treatment and support.

Many autistic people have Alexythymia which is a difficulty identifying and describing one's own emotions (Bird et al 2010); difficulties with social and communication skills (APA 2013); and report 'camouflaging' their symptoms in order to fit into social situations (Hull et al 2017). These difficulties led to challenges in recognising they needed help, and successfully requesting help.

Participants reported the absence of, or inappropriate support or treatment not suited to their needs; was associated with feelings of disempowerment, perceived burdensomeness on family and friends, social exclusion and isolation, hopelessness and seeing suicide as an inevitability.

In contrast when participants received appropriate tailored support, the treatment empowered them, gave them autonomy, facilitated their inclusion in social networks and wider society, and gave them hope for a future where suicide was no longer an option.

Given the potentially tragic consequences of failing to support autistic people and treat mental health problems and suicidality in this group, it is crucial that services are trained in autism and prepared to adapt to their needs.

ChAPS feels that an integrative approach whereby our mental health practitioner (who is a qualified counsellor) would explore with the patient about understanding their autism, any sensory processing difficulties, emotions and depression would give them the tools they need to navigate both current and future challenges.

Inspiring families to achieve more

Our MHP works in a bespoke and person-centered way which provides a holistic approach to the patient. It is of paramount importance that the patient is given the opportunity to build up a relationship with the MHP which is a proven successful approach to working therapeutically with autistic people. As a qualified teacher our MHP uses her skills access to assess, target set and plan for specific needs to help tailor therapy to the needs of the person.

Emma Eager - Relevant experience and qualifications

- Whilst at university was elected Welfare Officer for the Student’s Union. Attended Student’s Union funded training including obtaining an Active Listening qualification and coaching training. Co-ran many support groups and was the first port of call for any students struggling with mental health.
- Worked for South Yorkshire Police as a fully trained Special Constable which included conflict resolution training and mental health.
- Have a PGCE in Primary Teaching and throughout career specialised in mental health including being Deputy Head of an “outstanding” primary school with the role of “Inclusion, Health and Wellbeing Lead” which was graded “outstanding” by Ofsted. This role included working closely with children and families who were struggling with mental health and attendance at TAF, CAF and other safeguarding meetings.
- Through teaching role obtained Level 3 in Child Counselling and a Play Therapy certificate both with distinction.
- Has a diploma (distinction) in DBT (Dialectical Behavioural Therapy) and Couples and Family Therapy.
- Have Prevent training certificate and Safeguarding (Level 2) certificates for both adults and children and First Aid at work.
- Current role as Specialist Teacher for ChAPS has allowed me to specialise with working with adults and young people with autism, with a particular focus on those that are struggling to integrate in society. Currently run “Learning 4 Life” for autistic adults to support with social and life skills.
- Recent training has included “We need to talk about suicide”, PDA, ARFID, “Growing up my way- helping autistic young people cope with change”, yoga in the classroom and “Communicating Effectively with Adults with Learning Disabilities”, Comic Strip Conversations and Social Stories.
- ACCPH senior member.

Costs

1:1 counselling in a private room at our Autism Centre in Northwich is £50 per hour.

Travel to other venues within Cheshire charged at HMRC guidelines currently £0.45 pence per mile plus any additional room hire costs. During pandemic lockdown Zoom with password and waiting room facility is an acceptable platform.

As a charity we are outside the scope of VAT. This quotation is valid for 6 months from today’s date.

This Statement of Terms for Mental Health Therapy is accepted by:

Name

Signature

Company / commissioner

Date