



The  
Apple Tree  
Centre

Wellbeing and Therapy for Children, Young People & Families

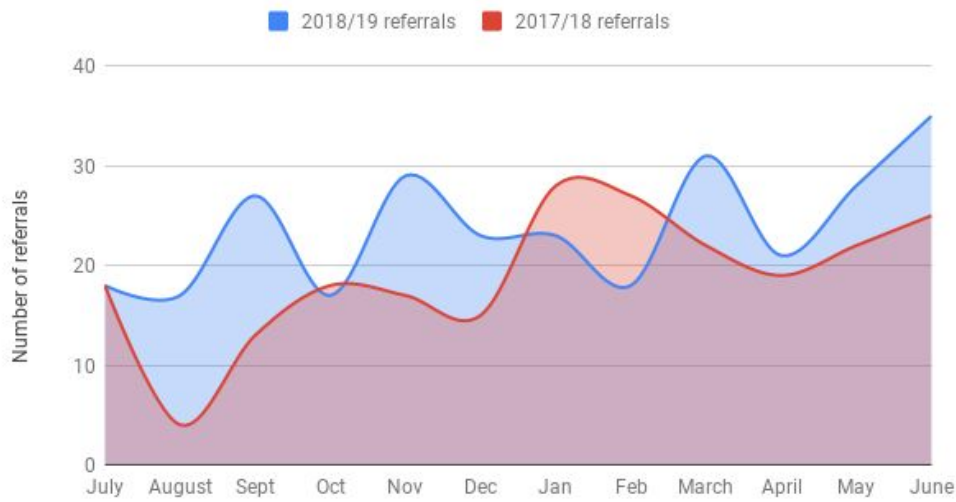
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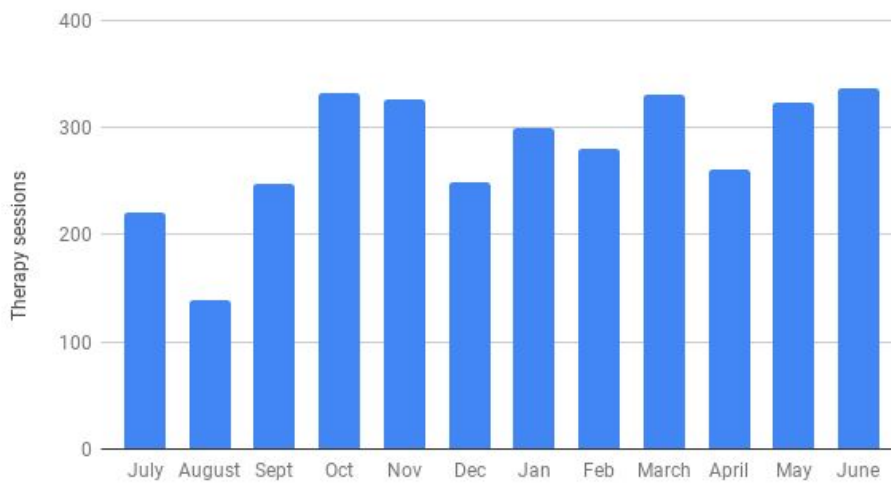
# Evaluation Report

## July 2019

### Number of referrals



### Therapeutic sessions offered (by month)



## **Big achievements**

Over the past year, we have:

- Been accepted onto the North Yorkshire Approved Provider List, which is used by all Local Authorities in our area to source therapy for children, young people and families
- Become registered with Ofsted as an Adoption Support Agency
- Employed a Centre Manager and continued to provide work for ten self-employed therapists
- Successfully provided a supervised placement for a trainee therapist
- Delivered our Certificate in Creative Counselling for Young People for the second time
- Published a chapter in a book and presented this at the conference of the British Association of Play Therapists

## **Feedback from Monitoring and Evaluation**

We use a range of non-intrusive measures to collect feedback from the children and families who use our service. This information is taken from:

- Notes left in the Comments Box in our waiting room
- Comments made to therapists during review meetings
- Letters, cards and emails sent to the centre after therapy has ended

We actively look for and monitor feedback relating to key aspects of our Model of Care and Theory of Change. These are:

- Children and families' experiences of change (in themselves and their relationships)
- Experiences of the therapeutic relationship
- Experiences of the centre

As this is our first formal report, it contains feedback collected throughout the time that the Apple Tree Centre has been open, although the majority is from the last year.

We acknowledge the potential for bias inherent in this method of evaluation. Some of these quotes are selected and recorded by therapists, who may tend to favour positive feedback over negative, and children and families may also find it easier to offer compliments than criticism. We have analysed all the comments collected in our Monitoring and Evaluation folder and identified the following themes, illustrated by anonymous quotes.

## Suggestions and complaints:

### **Biscuits in the waiting room**

A therapist received a complaint that the biscuits offered were of poor quality. The tin was immediately refilled and we restocked the cupboard with more appealing biscuits. Positive comments made by the same child the following week, as well as three other separate pieces of feedback, indicate that biscuits play a significant role in making children feel welcome and nurtured within the centre.

### **Waiting room atmosphere**

A young person coming for therapy commented that the waiting room felt like a place for 'little kids'. We responded by tidying the toys into a smaller space, replacing the brightly coloured 'younger child feel' cushions with pale green covers in line with our branding and providing a larger selection of age-appropriate books for older children and young people.

### **Waiting room smell**

Several comments referred to the unpleasant smell from the drains in the waiting room. We have had this investigated by two plumbers and some remedial work undertaken, but have been advised that this cannot practically be addressed. We provide essential oils to cover the smell when the weather changes, and are in the process of looking for more appropriate premises for our expanding service.

### **Merchandise**

We have received one request for 'merch' to sell. We are investigating the likely costs of this and demand for Apple Tree Centre branded products.

### **Autism assessment**

We have received several requests for assessments of autism in children and young people, and are in consultation with other professionals who may be able to deliver this service through the Apple Tree Centre.

## Experiences of accessing therapy at the Apple Tree Centre

### **Reliable, consistent, safe**

"We did an exercise where I had to think of a safe place, and I immediately pictured this room."  
*(parent)*

### **Fun, happy, creative**

"I like that we can find different ways of thinking about my emotions that are better than talking"  
*(9 Year old Child)*

"It is very helpful coming here. Many kinds of things you like they have got a session for: drama, art, play."  
*(child)*

### **Relationship, talking, feeling valued and validated**

"It is so refreshing and so helpful to be able to talk through the details and have you listen and say 'yes, that sounds really stressful' rather than people's usual response of 'Oh come on, it's not that bad'"  
*(young person)*

"I can't talk like this anywhere else, no-one else would listen like this"  
*(young person)*

### **Learning strategies**

"[The therapist's] methods, advice and tools have proved invaluable"  
*(parent)*

"We have come away with much more than we expected, we would happily recommend you to others"  
*(parent)*

### **Feeling supported by the centre as a whole**

"I am so pleased that I can get support as quickly as this and at such a friendly place"  
*(parent)*

"It's so lovely to be offered books to borrow! Really generous and trusting, thank you"  
*(parent)*

"Everyone is very welcoming and it feels like coming to someone's home"  
*(parent)*

"A lovely group of warm caring people it has been a pleasure to get to know"  
*(a grateful mum)*

### **Relief**

"The best thing about The Apple Tree Centre is just being able to come in to this room and talk and throw away all your problems"  
*(child)*

"I feel so much more open and light now, thank you"  
*(young person)*

### **Unique, compared favourably with experiences of other services**

"It's such a weight off my mind and such a relief that we're getting some help"  
*(parent)*

"I've said more in the first 30 minutes than I did in six months at another service"  
*(young person)*

### **Confidentiality**

"It helps to know I can talk to you and you don't pass it on, people aren't gossiping about me"  
*(young person)*

"He needed to talk to someone other than us, not to hurt us, I think"  
*(carer)*

## Noticing change

### **Immediate effects**

"When I play my imagination can be free and I don't have to worry as much" *(9-year-old)*

"I have this knot of anxiety and sometimes talking eases it" *(young person)*

"I feel better after each appointment like I can see the light at the end of the tunnel a bit more" *(young person)*

### **Longer term change**

"The change has been quite staggering and we feel like we have our little girl back" *(parent of young child)*

"It has made a tangible change in my daughter's life and kept her safe in a really difficult time" *(parent of young person)*

"The change has been amazing, none of this would have ever happened without play therapy" *(parent)*

### **Parents understanding, valuing and appreciating their children's creative expression**

"I'm happy that I've had the opportunity to gain insight and have some food for thought"

### **Parents' confidence**

"Attending sessions has made me stronger and more equipped to support my children through our family trauma"

### **Understanding**

"You helped me make connections and opened stuff up which made things feel different"

"I feel like I understand myself a lot better now and it's easier to talk to other people too." *(young person)*

"The way we look at things has changed so much, it's been about us changing and us getting better. It's been more like counselling for us" *(parent of toddler)*

### **Relief, lightness**

"My daughter is much happier, lighter and is doing so many more things now, her self esteem and confidence have come back" *(parent of 13-year-old)*

"I feel like a weight's been lifted" *(young person)*

### **Ending and moving on**

"I feel I've had all the help I needed and I'm ready to move forward"

"I feel like I can move on to the next stage of my life feeling confident and brave"

*(young person)*

### **Coping strategies**

"[My therapist] was very good at helping me with my sleep."

*(child)*

"My child did have a small wobble but dealt with it admirably using coping skills that you had taught him"

*(parent)*

## Child-Parent Relationship Therapy groups

### **Parents' experiences of the group therapy training:**

"It's so good to know I'm not alone."

"This group has been very nurturing"

"This is the best thing I've done; to take on my parenting responsibilities in a different way"

### **Safety and honesty**

"You don't share this stuff with other people, even friends"

"This has helped me to be more honest with myself as well as with other parents I know"

### **Changes noticed in children:**

"He's a lot more confident now"

"She is happier, less angry"

"We had a wobbly moment with my child this morning, and normally that would have escalated... but it's not 'normally' any more"

### **Techniques for improving parent-child relationships**

"I feel as if I've been given a secret key"

"I've been doing the play sessions whenever I feel there's a distance growing in my relationship with my child. It's a great way of pulling it back in"

## Conclusions and reflections

Parents feel supported by the centre as a whole - there is potential to lose this personal connection as we become busier, and we need to take measures to safeguard this.

Families value instant access at the point of most need - we would lose this if we needed to hold a waiting list

Children, young people and families value the 'homely' atmosphere of the building; at the same time, we recognise its limitations, including size, occasional bad smells, and the lack of a wheelchair-accessible bathroom. We will need to work hard to maintain the welcoming atmosphere if and when we move to new premises.

## **Review of current services**

Taking into account the feedback we have received, as well as our experiences of managing referrals and delivering the service, we reviewed each area of our current service in order to plan our focus for the coming year.

### **Individual and Family Therapy**

Allowing for the two therapists whom we have recruited to begin work with us in September, we have reached the capacity of our building. We have plans to develop and expand our team as and when more space becomes available. Current priorities would be an additional Family Therapist, and therapists specialising in work with younger children.

### **CPRT**

We acknowledged that this course is time consuming and costly to deliver, but has also been extremely valuable to some families.

We agreed not to set and promote a specific date but to keep this information on our website and run a group as and when there is sufficient demand.

### **Training and CPD**

We are currently promoting our Certificate in Creative Counselling for Young People, and Non-Directive Play Therapy: Principles and Practice.

Agreed to arrange external one-day training events:

- Attachment and trauma for post-adoption therapy - priority
- Non-Violent Resistance - priority
- Gender - possible, need to decide exact focus
- Therapeutic limit setting (in-house, may also offer more widely)

We also need to:

- Arrange First Aid at Work training for staff and associates (as soon as possible)
- Make sure our associates have good, up-to-date Safeguarding training
- Jenny to identify suitable management training to meet Ofsted requirements and begin this.

### **Supervision**

We now have several therapists able to offer clinical supervision and need to add this information to our website.

### **Additional risks and challenges**

- People asking for services which we're not able to provide (eg psychological assessment (clinical and educational), court reports, BUPA etc funded therapy)
- We need to continue to monitor our website to make sure all areas are up to date and easily accessible
- If the Adoption Support Fund comes to an end, this poses a risk to our overall income.

## **Priorities for beyond September 2019**

Begin trading as a limited company

Advertise as an Ofsted registered ASA

Action Fire Safety improvements identified during last inspection

Work towards providing autism assessments

Produce a video children's guide to the Apple Tree Centre ASA

In order to continue to allow our service to expand, we will need to find new premises. We would prefer to move the service to avoid splitting between two sites, although this is also a possibility. We identified requirements for a new building and possible ways of acquiring this.