



The  
Apple Tree  
Centre

Wellbeing and Therapy for Children, Young People & Families

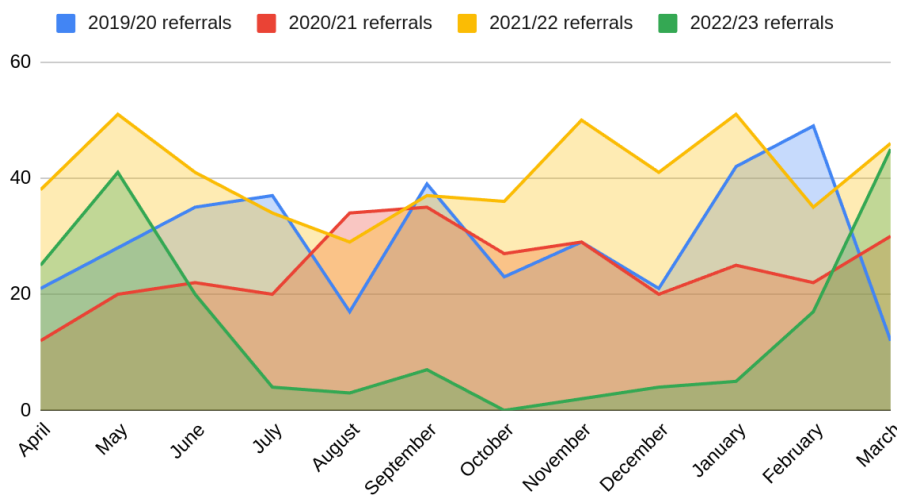
27 Brocco Bank  
Sheffield  
S11 8RQ

0114 2665546  
info@applecentre.co.uk  
www.applecentre.co.uk

# Annual Evaluation Report

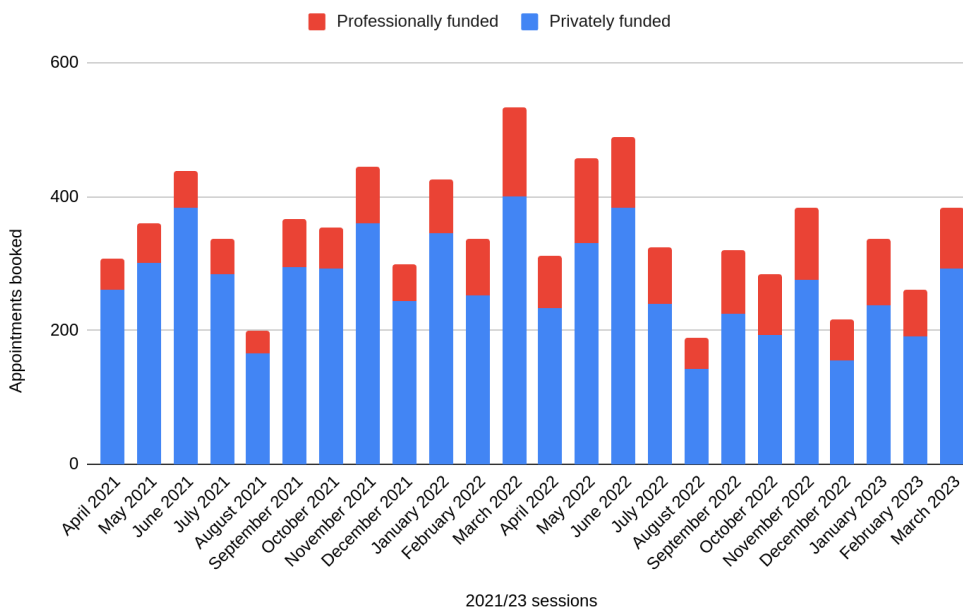
## June 2023

### Number of referrals



We were closed to private referrals between July 2022 and January 2023.

### Appointments offered by month



# Big Achievements

Over the past year, we have:

- Employed two therapists and increased cohesion and communication within our therapy team
- Passed our first full Ofsted Inspection with a judgement of 'Good, with Outstanding Leadership and Management'
- Streamlined our therapeutic team and consolidated our focus on our known strengths
- Focused our attention and our publicity materials on our key areas of expertise
- Updated and clarified our record keeping and confidentiality policy and updated the website
- Established a therapeutic service within a Wickersley Academy Trust school one day a week as well as delivered training to staff within the trust
- Completed a pilot programme offering therapy to children and young people affected by sexual abuse, in partnership with Sheffield City Council
- Prioritised Adoption Support work, including developing a better understanding of the new online tendering process of OneAdoption East Midlands by attending meetings with their team and establishing stronger links with the post adoption social work teams in Sheffield, Rotherham and Doncaster
- Delivered a full day's training on Working with Gender Diversity
- Delivered Trauma and Attachment training to residential care staff
- Spoken about supporting children and young people exploring gender identity on regional ITV news.
- Supported two trainee therapists in placement
- Offered short-term therapy to young people and one-off supportive consultations to parents and carers on our waiting list, and during periods where we were not able to accept referrals for therapy
- We have improved our internal supervision processes, including record keeping and regular check-ins with those therapists who need it
- Improved our referral process to ensure that we capture all necessary information at the outset.
- Standardised our process for ensuring HR documentation is up to date
- Successfully run a busy and complex therapy service taking account the challenges of perimenopause and its impact on both directors
- Returned to a largely face-to-face therapy service while sensitively supporting those therapists who are not able to offer this form of support
- Worked with therapists to ensure a thorough understanding and a clear protocol regarding establishing consent, including robust assessment of Gillick competency where appropriate

## Significant Challenges

- Balancing the needs of clients and therapists in response to the continuing cost of living crisis. We have increased our payments to associate therapists as discussed at our last annual review, but this has necessitated an increase in fees and we recognise the financial strain this puts on the families we aim to support
- We have trialled different approaches to managing the admin load of the centre and concluded that the best approach is currently to manage this by integrating employed therapists more fully into the overall working of the centre
- Due to increasing demand on our service, we have had to close our waiting list twice. Managing a long waiting list has proved difficult and time consuming.
- Managing a hybrid team, particularly continuing to support and integrate therapists working purely online within a team which is largely based in the centre. Children and young people have also experienced increasing difficulty engaging with online sessions as lockdown measures eased and this became less 'normal'
- Soundproofing between office and waiting room continues to be a difficulty, and there is a lack of space in the building for therapists to have conversations or make lunch etc outside individual therapy rooms
- There is a significant leak in the cellar which needs to be rectified - we need to find the documentation from the previous owners to identify whether this is covered by a warranty.

## 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. We ask all families for feedback at the end of therapy. This information is taken from:

- Notes left in the Comments Box in our waiting room
- Comments made to therapists during therapy sessions and review meetings
- Letters, cards, emails and phone calls to the centre during and after therapy
- Comments made by therapists about their experiences of working for the Apple Tree Centre

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

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:**

### **Contact with other agencies:**

The Apple Tree Centre received two specific complaints this year in relation to contact with other agencies, specifically relating to the way in which parents were kept informed about this process. We ascertained that therapists had acted throughout in accordance with our Confidentiality and Record Keeping and Safeguarding policies. We will continue to ensure that parents are kept informed promptly about any contact with other agencies.

### **Transitions and changes of therapist:**

Several therapists ended their work at the Apple Tree Centre and parents expressed concern about their children developing a relationship with a new therapist, with a few deciding to end therapy at this point. However in the majority of cases we were able to allocate a new therapist and received positive feedback about the families' experiences of how this transition was managed by the Apple Tree Centre. Parents also appreciated the speed and sensitivity with which children were accommodated on the few occasions where the therapist initially allocated was not a good 'fit' and families requested a change.

### **Neurodiversity and signposting:**

Several parents expressed appreciation for the therapists' role in supporting them and their children to explore potential neurodiversity, in the context of developing greater self understanding. This work included providing access to online resources and signposting other specialist organisations for information and assessment where appropriate.

## **Experiences of accessing therapy at the Apple Tree Centre**

### **Noticing change**

#### **Feedback at end of therapy:**

"....I just wanted to thank you! ... Things are still difficult but definitely better and she has some genuine friendships... she is now attending school full time and is excited at the prospects of selecting GCSE options soon! So please accept our thanks; all that time listening to her has certainly helped and we do appreciate that." (*parent, 18 months after ending therapy*)

“Sessions have helped ‘massively’; that being able to talk and have her feelings validated had really helped . Keep on doing what you are doing, it’s brilliant” (verbal feedback from parents after family therapy)

“ I wanted to say thank you to [therapist] for getting in touch with [my child’s] school to discuss the challenges they experience. This conversation has opened up opportunities for additional support from school. The student support staff now have a much better understanding of [my child’s] needs and are offering some small adjustments to their school day which could be really beneficial.” (parent)

“I feel as a parent I also have a much better understanding of how to support [my child] at home and at school.” (parent)

“Going forward the information on managing my child when I am also stressed is extremely useful as are most of the resources and the advice from [the therapist]. She is also really lovely and easy to talk to. I would definitely recommend her services.” (parent)

“[My daughter]... says she feels better than she did & is less anxious about the new school year.” (parent)

“I have more compassion for myself... I feel more boundaried about who I am within my own family... I feel more than enough within my own family now, than I did before... more okay to be different. For the first time in my life, I don’t now feel that there is something fundamentally wrong with me.” (Verbal feedback during final therapy session)

“I just wanted to let you know that I made it to all of my A-Level exams, got enough UCAS points to be able to go to university next September, and I somehow managed to get a job too which is pretty cool. I wouldn’t have been able to do any of these things without your help and I really do appreciate everything you’ve done for me.” (email from young person to therapist)

“We feel like we’ve got our daughter back and [therapist] has been instrumental in this.” (parent email)

“[Our child] is so much happier now, and so are we as a consequence.” (parent email)

**Immediate impact of therapy:**

“[My child] managed to go into the [new] school on his visit today, and he [managed to interact] with the learning mentor! I’m sure it helped that he’d had his art therapy session just before. He is always calm and relaxed after seeing [the therapist].” (parent)

“Thank you so much. The session was incredibly helpful” (parent)

### **One-off supportive consultations:**

“The one off consultation was absolutely invaluable and I can't thank you enough for the difference that one appointment made. “ (phone call from parent)

“The consultation was invaluable, thank you. [the therapist] really helped us as to how to move forwards and get beyond the rut we were stuck in, and reconnect with my eldest child. It has helped us get back on track and feel more positive about the changes that will now come in his behaviour and ours.” (parent)

“Hello I just had the MOST wonderful helpful constructive session with [therapist] in our parental consult- could you please feed back my big thanks.” (email)

### **Impact on Social Workers:**

“Just want to say a big thank you for all your hard work. I think it has made a huge difference!!!” (email from a post adoption Social Worker)

“Thanks for your report which was so nice to read. It has been a long road for them both but your support has been so beneficial for them. What a fantastic outcome!!! Thank you for everything you have done. Great piece of work.” (post adoption Social Worker)

## The therapeutic relationship

### **Initial meetings:**

“[Our child] felt the session with [therapist] was a bit awkward. I think she would prefer a bit more structure... and I think the fact it was online definitely made it harder.” (parent after first therapy appointment)

“My child absolutely loved her first session with [the therapist].” (verbal feedback to centre manager)

“Please can you send my thanks to [therapist] for a lovely first session with [my child] yesterday as she found [the therapist] really easy to chat to” (parent)

### **Ongoing therapy:**

“Thank you so much for your fantastic communication, approachability and support throughout [my child’s] time at Apple Tree. They seem to have really turned a corner and seem very content at the moment. [The therapist] has always been so gentle, patient and kind towards [my child] and myself. [The therapist] really allowed [my child] to relax and play freely - which I think really helped [my child] to just have some time to be a child and enjoy her creative side, along with role play. I would highly recommend the service to any one with a child who is experiencing a difficult time in their lives. I am very appreciative of the holistic care that you have provided - Thank you so much.”

“Thank you so much for the support you have given [our child] over the years, it has been incredibly helpful for her to have a space to discuss, think and process tricky (and more mundane) events as she has transitioned from a young teenager to an adult (!). I think you have given her some tools and processes that will set her up well to manage her emotions and circumstances, and also a good grounding in how useful therapy can be in helping us to look after our mental health.” (parent)

“We are so grateful to [therapist] for the work that she did with [our child]. She built a really good relationship with her which allowed [young person] to feel safe and comfortable to explore things she struggled with” (parent email)

### **Review sessions:**

“[Our] recent review was extremely useful - [the therapist] has been a hugely positive influence on [our child] - they have a great relationship which enables [young person] to explore all sorts of issues.”

## Experiences of the Centre

“Thanks, that’s very professional, responsible and reassuring to see you’re making plans. Fingers crossed we’re all cool and safe this coming week.” (parent, in response to heatwave)

### **Impact of Centre Manager**

“A parent called to enquire about re-referring as [the therapist’s] work with her daughter had been very valuable. She said that during lockdown in particular, she (mum) had had wonderful support and communication from the centre and particularly from [the centre manager] and still really appreciated it.” (phone call to the centre)

“Thank you [centre manager] - you have been a pleasure to liaise with. On behalf of both of us thank you for your kind, discreet and efficient support.” (parent)

### **Therapists’ experience of working at the Apple Tree Centre**

“Expectations part of the new referral template really useful :-)” (*experienced therapist*)

“I’ve never worked somewhere so kind and supportive and yet so functional.” (*recently recruited therapist*)

## **Plans and Priorities**

We reviewed all areas of our work and identified the following priorities for the coming year:

- Continue to recruit appropriate therapists who can commit a substantial number of hours per week to the Apple Tree Centre, to strengthen our therapy team and maximise our use of the building’s resources
- Continue to prioritise professionally funded work, particularly Adoption Support, through strong links with social worker teams
- Develop and expand our partnership with Wickersley Academy Trust, expanding our work into two additional schools and providing ongoing staff training
- Develop in-house training and written guidance for Associate Therapists to ensure a thorough practical and ongoing understanding of the Apple Tree Centre policies and procedures, particularly in relation to record keeping, safeguarding, competence and consent for therapy, and work with parents and carers.
- Research and adopt a system of standardised measures for monitoring the effectiveness of our work, particularly in relation to adopted and care experienced children and young people, in response to changing requirements of social care teams and funding bodies
- Actively market bespoke training through our website and mailing list, and through targeted marketing of appropriate organisation, using existing packages as a ‘demo’
- We will not organise and advertise ‘open’ training events in the coming year, but will re-package the content of our CCCYP and NDPT trainings for organisation
- Offer placements and supervision to suitable trainee therapists
- Both directors will undertake Clinical Supervision training, to support our personal and professional development and underpin our role in developing trainee therapists



We have identified the following areas for improvement over the coming year:

- More regular individual meetings with Associate Therapists - we have improved but there is still work to do
- Continue to improve referral process, ensuring we have addressed questions around parental consent and clarified that expectations match what we are able to offer.
- Continue to work towards creating a dedicated space for staff and improve privacy between the office and the waiting room. This may involve reconfiguring therapy and waiting room/office within the centre or utilising the space outside
- Continue to ensure that therapists understand and are able to communicate with parents and carers regarding the purpose of therapeutic reviews, and that these are arranged regularly with sufficient notice
- Work towards providing secure storage for bikes
- 

We have reviewed our pricing policy for private work as well as the sessional rates offered to therapists, and highlighted the following points:

- Around 50% of our appointments incur VAT. Because of our policy of charging a standard rate for all therapies, this takes up a substantial part of our income on those therapies affected.
- Due to the increase in fuel costs and the overall cost of living, we will increase the sessional rate offered to Associate Therapists to £37.50 per privately funded appointment as of 30th October.
- We increased our invoicing for professionally funded work for the financial year 2023-4. The rate paid to Associate Therapists for professionally funded work increased to £45 as of 1st June 2023.
- To ensure that we can continue to offer a sustainable service, and due to the increasing costs of running a small business (including tax increases), we will increase our charge to private clients to £70 per session from 30th October 2023.

Overall, we agreed that our main priority over the coming year will be to strengthen and consolidate our core therapeutic work by reinforcing links with referrers and commissioners, and by investing management time in support and training for our pool of Associate Therapists.