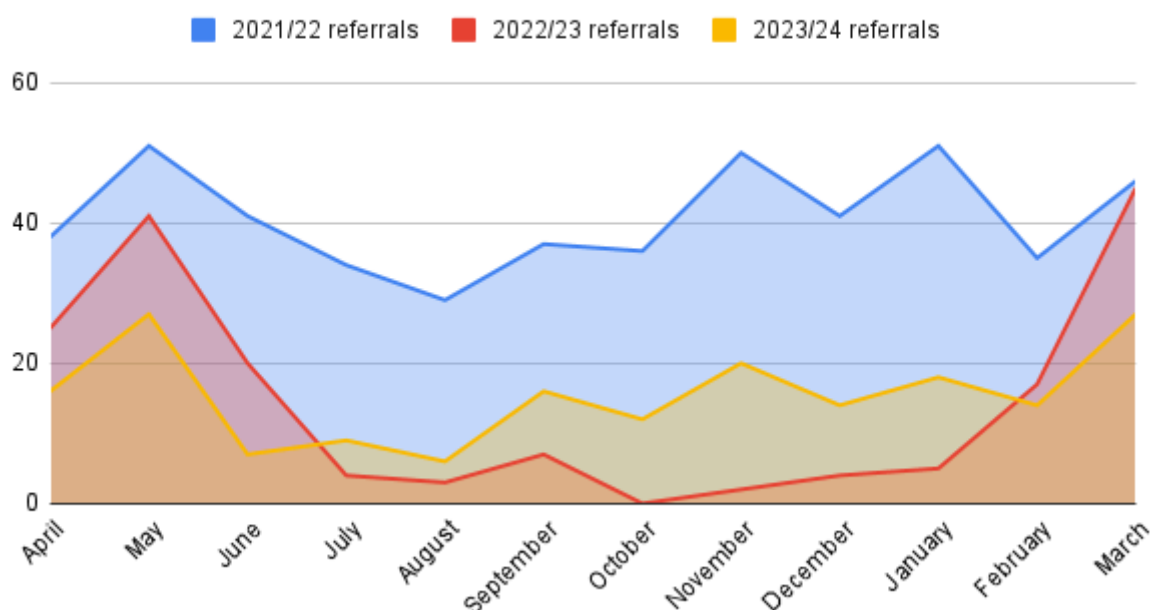


# Annual Evaluation Report

## July 2024

### Number of referrals



## Big Achievements

Over the past year, we have:

- Employed a third therapist and continued to consolidate our core work with our team of employed and self employed therapists.
- Offered one-off supportive consultations to parents and carers of children on our waiting list.
- Reached capacity in terms of our ability to manage a safe and consistent therapy service, including appointments offered in our building, online, and in schools.
- Offered a successful placement to a therapy trainee, including refining our supervision structure to provide more consistency.

## Significant Challenges

- Funding through the ASGSF has now been frozen for seven years, and is no longer sufficient to meet the complex needs of many of the families referred to us.
- We have not always collected sufficient information at referral to understand complexities around parental consent for therapy, and this has caused confusion and delays. We have updated our referral form to improve this process.
- We no longer have capacity to offer and publicise training for other professionals. We have collated information about similar training organisations so that we can signpost this as appropriate.
- Supporting and supervising a trainee therapist with significant health needs.
- Delegating day-to-day tasks has provided an ongoing challenge. We contracted with a new cleaning service but have not yet found successful methods of delegating admin.

## **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:**

One of our therapists commented on the difficulty of having nowhere to go during breaks

between sessions. We have now created a comfortable seating area with hot drink making facilities where therapists can relax between appointments.

A parent reported that our garden benches were in very bad repair and unpleasant to use. We have installed new benches and arranged for the old ones to be removed.

A therapist reported seeing several bees in the area around the garden benches. We identified an apparent nest and contacted an expert. The pest control expert advised that these appeared to be mason bees which presented no risk to public health, so no action was needed.

Therapist reported that a child had been hurt by a damaged foam sword during a therapy session. This was recorded in our accident book and ensured we have sufficient foam swords to replace them as soon as they are damaged; we subsequently replaced these with a safer design.

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

### **Noticing change**

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

"Looking back on the journey we shared I cannot believe how far we have come as a family."

"this is the first time [my child] has engaged in therapy for her own benefit and not to please others"

"[Therapist] has been unwaveringly kind and supportive, always coming up with different approaches as to how to reach out to my child and re-engage with him and integrate us as a unit."

"The sessions were a safe space for [child] to explore music and his internal world."

"[Child] has felt very comfortable with [therapist] and is aware exactly how much you have helped her. She has felt safe in your presence to be who she is and to open up and share in a way that she has somehow not known how before meeting you and it has benefited her in all of her relationships and interactions."

"I can't thank you enough for what you have done for [our child]. It was the highlight of her week, and it has been great to have someone to talk about everything to."

"[My child] feels they can handle situations much better and she is feeling more confident and for that we thank you."

"We found [therapist] to be warm, welcoming and approachable."

"We are very pleased with the whole experience and would highly recommend you to others. [Therapist] has been amazing throughout and had such useful input and advice."

"[My child's] sessions with [therapist] have been the best money I've ever spent. It's turned her life around."

"The therapy has really helped us to better understand our child."

"We've found [therapist] really supportive, kind, gentle, diplomatic & with lots of practical suggestions & ideas."

"I miss our sessions and I'll always remember them" (*written by a child and posted in our waiting room postbox*)

### **Immediate impact of therapy:**

"Personally, what I found really helpful was the initial session put [my child] at ease from the off, they felt as though they were speaking with someone who would understand and were able to open up and speak freely."

"Her self care has improved and she is looking after herself more"

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

"I'd like to go on record thanking [therapist] for being so open and friendly from the off. It's a fairly big deal getting [Young Person] to turn up and talk a little and I felt [therapist] pitched it just right."

"I have learned a lot from our call and will be taking this back to my manager and team. It feels like there is more clarity now."

### **Quality of written reports:**

"[The report is] so clearly structured and written that it was a fast read. We're more than happy with this. Please pass on our thanks to [therapist]."

"Thank you for this report, we enjoyed reading the detailed, thoughtful account of [our child's] therapy. We've been grateful for the support and can see this has benefited [child]."

## **The therapeutic relationship**

### **Initial meetings:**

Feedback from a parent whose child didn't feel ready for therapy: "Parent really valued the consultation session with [therapist] and felt it was very useful in itself"

### **Ongoing therapy:**

"I really enjoy coming, thank you [therapist] for making me feel able to talk to someone"  
*(written by a child and posted in our waiting room postbox)*

"I have seen a marked improvement of [my child's] ticks"

"[My child is] really enjoying the opportunities for creativity and experimentation! She is definitely more confident now and seems to be more able to deal with the feelings she was experiencing as problematic before."

"I love therapy with you!" *(written by a child and posted in our waiting room postbox)*

### **Review sessions:**

"I found my meetings with [therapist] really helpful (invaluable!). The therapy has really helped us to better understand our child.". I'm so grateful to you for all your help and support."

## **Experiences of the Centre**

"I feel so lucky that we found Apple Tree Centre as you have all always been so helpful and caring"

"We really appreciated the excellent communication and professionalism that we experienced in all our communications with The Centre"

"The online option worked well for us and we appreciated being able to miss sessions in the school holidays when we had no childcare options."

"The flags in the background and the lack of formal clothing were things commented on by my child."

## **Experience of Centre Manager**

"Thank you for being so helpful and giving so much information over the phone!"

"Thank you too for listening to us today, it helped a lot."

## **Therapists' experiences of working at the Apple Tree Centre:**

"I am always struck by the detail and thorough work that you have done throughout the years"

Therapist gave positive feedback in relation to changes to the format for recording consent on our Essential Information and New Client Assessment forms, saying this made the process a lot clearer and was supportive of her conversations with parents.

Employed therapists fed back that the initial caseloads we offered were not manageable. We agreed to reduce and titrate caseloads to ensure the continued mental health of our therapists and high quality therapy for all clients, including ongoing monitoring.

## **Plans and Priorities**

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

- Reviewing the format of therapeutic packages within the frozen Fair Access Limit for adopted and SGO children.
- Promoting and maintaining working relationships with professional referrers.
- Increasing our therapeutic offer within schools to a target of five days per week, spread across the partnership trust.
- Work with therapists to ensure consistency in record keeping and report writing.
- Develop short term therapy / support during the summer holidays for young people on our waiting list.
- Providing secure bike storage for therapists and clients.
- Closer communication between management team members to ensure more efficient management of email and other tasks.
- Close waiting list for the summer period and update waiting list before reopening.

Overall, we agreed that our main priority over the coming year will continue to 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 Employed and Associate Therapists.