



One minute guide

Therapeutic Social Work Team

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What is the Therapeutic Social Work Team and who is it for?

The Therapeutic Social Work Team (TSWT) is Leeds Children's Services' innovative response to promote the emotional well-being of children and young people who are looked after, living in [kinship care](#), subject to child protection plans, or subject to a supervision order.

The team works with children and young people up to the age of 18, or to 25 if the young person is a care leaver.

The TSWT does not work with children subject to Child in Need plans (unless children are placed with kinship carers and would otherwise be in care). Support for these children and young people should be sought within localised cluster services or directly from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (assuming their threshold is met) through the [Leeds MindMate Single Point of Access](#).

The TSWT is staffed by experienced social workers many of whom hold additional therapeutic qualifications, they work as Therapeutic social workers not therapists. The team also benefits from clinical psychology input on children already held by the team.

THE TSWT undertake a limited number of neurodevelopmental specialist assessments for children looked after who are held by the team, to help inform their wider therapeutic needs (this service is not available for children on child protection plans). Those seeking assessments for Autism or ADHD should consult the child's G.P and access assessments via the Right to Choose pathway.

Why are children and young people referred?

Children and young people may be referred if their difficult, early life experiences are significantly impacting on their emotional well-being.

This might include:

- Severe abusive or neglectful experiences (physical, emotional or sexual harm);
- Abandonment and loss;
- Parental substance or alcohol misuse;
- Domestic abuse; and / or
- Multiple placement breakdowns.

The kind of symptomatic behaviour which might be routinely seen includes:

- Extreme dysregulation: Children struggling to manage their emotions;
- Acting out (aggression) or internalising (withdrawal) behaviours;
- Regulatory difficulties (eating, toileting or sleep disturbance);
- Self-harmful behaviour;
- [Harmful sexual behaviour](#);
- Problems with attention, concentration and impulsivity.

What do they do?

The team provides therapeutic interventions to help children, young people, and their carers address the effects of abuse, trauma, and neglect. Based in east Leeds, the TSWT service is citywide and easily accessible by public transport, with much of its work in the community. Services include:

- **Fostering Surgery** is typically the first intervention we offer. It provides an opportunity for carers of Leeds children and Special Guardians to discuss concerns about the children in their care. Carers can book appointments directly.
- **Life Story Clinic** supports social workers in carrying out life story work with children and young people. Social workers can book appointments directly. This work helps looked-after children make sense of their experiences and typically takes place before therapeutic intervention.
- The **SW Discussion Clinic** offers hour-long sessions for any social worker within children's services to support care planning and decision-making for complex cases involving a child's therapeutic needs.
- Therapeutic support to six **Local Authority Children's Homes**.
- **Carer support and therapeutic parenting work**, including the *Foundations for Attachment* program for foster and kinship carers, available through direct referral from SSWs.
- **Direct therapeutic work**, which typically begins with support for a child or young person's caregiver, as the most effective approach to trauma is empowering those around them to be agents of healing.

In some circumstances, we offer direct work to children and young people, usually involving their carers or key adults. Individual sessions are provided only when caregiver involvement is not possible or for older young people living independently. Before referral, a child's life story work should be completed or at least planned and in progress.

- **Direct work** is influenced by various therapeutic models including Psychotherapy, Family Therapy, DDP (Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy), Neurodevelopmental approaches and CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy), depending on the child's presenting behaviours.
- **Training and consultation** to professionals, including social work practitioners and schools.

How are referrals made?

The child's social worker or personal advisor (for care leavers) is welcome to contact any team for a brief discussion about whether the service is appropriate. If a more detailed conversation is needed, please book a SW discussion slot by calling the main number.

A referral form must be completed via Mosaic with the informed and meaningful consent of the child, young person or family. The social worker must also obtain approval from their team manager before submitting the referral.

Once received, the TSWT team managers, in collaboration with TSWs, will make a decision on the referral. If approved, it is placed on a list for allocation, and within the first six weeks, a therapeutic need screening is conducted. This six-week assessment explores the required support and generates a formulation or recommendation.

Following this, the referral is either closed or work begins. If the referral is not accepted, the reasons are explained, and alternative services are recommended.

Want to know more?

For more information or to discuss a child's eligibility for TSWT support, contact the team at 0113 3781800 or email TherapeuticTeam@leeds.gov.uk

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