



One minute guide

Multi-Systemic Therapy

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What is Multi-Systemic Therapy?

Multi systemic therapy (MST) is an internationally recognised and proven evidence based treatment programme aimed at supporting families to reduce the need for children and young people to become looked after. In the UK, MST (Standard) and MST CAN (Child Abuse and Neglect) are both recognised by [NICE](#) (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) and the [Early Intervention Fund](#) as effective interventions.

MST teams work intensively with all the systems around a child/ young person (e.g. families, carers, schools, other professionals and local communities) to develop and align intervention plans to achieve positive outcomes.

The standard MST model was developed specifically for anti-social behaviour in adolescents, but since its inception the model and principles have been applied to other presentations in young people, and a number of adaptations have been developed. In Leeds we currently have MST-CAN and MST Return Home as well as standard MST.

What is MST (standard)?

MST standard works with families and young people aged 11-17 who demonstrate severe antisocial behaviour that puts them at risk of entering care or custody. It uses pragmatic solution focused approaches such as parenting, family work and [Cognitive Behavioural Therapy](#) to empower families to no longer need services. Following a specific model and a set of principles that continuously inform the work, input lasts for no longer than 20 weeks.

Therapists have small caseloads, can offer 24-hour support and are committed to the MST approach of doing 'whatever it takes' to engage families and help them achieve the best outcomes that they can. This involves high commitment and adherence to [restorative practice](#). The MST therapist takes the lead practitioner role for the young person for the duration of the treatment, which provides consistency and reduces the number of practitioner and professional contacts for the family. There are standard MST teams in Leeds covering all areas of the city.

What is MST-CAN?

Multi Systemic Therapy Child Abuse and Neglect (MST-CAN) an evidence-based programme aimed at helping families with severe and complex difficulties whose children are in receipt of child protection services or are at risk of being taken into care due to neglect and/ or physical abuse. Whilst working in many similar ways to standard MST, utilising the same analytical process to understand behaviour and target interventions, the focus is on child protection concerns, and therapists are additionally trained to deliver specific evidence-based treatments that address substance use and trauma in both children and adults. Treatment is intensive, lasting for 6-9 months, and can focus on several family members during the same treatment period. MST-CAN also offer 24-hour support.

Referrals can only be taken for families who have a child/ children aged 6-17 years old, subject to a child protection plan under the specific categories of neglect and physical abuse. There is currently one city-wide team, receiving referrals through the area social work teams.

MST-CAN is recommended in the NICE guidance for therapeutic interventions after abuse and neglect and in the [Early Intervention Foundation's Handbook](#).

What is MST Return Home?

MST Return Home is an exception to the MST Standard model which aims to support and enhance the period of transition of the young person aged 11-17 from local authority provision to home or to a permanent placement with an identified care giver.

MST Return Home referrals are appropriate where young people currently display challenging behaviours, or displayed them for at least 6 months prior to being placed away from home.

An MST therapist works with the family for eight weeks before the young person returns home full time, and for a further 20 weeks after the young person has returned home. MST Return Home builds on the MST model and treatment approach with the addition of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) and Motivational Interviewing.

Referrals for this service are considered on a case by case basis and are co-ordinated between the supervisor for MST Return Home, the Leeds Reunification team and the young person's Children's Social Work Team.

Key contacts and more information

The Programme Manager for MST in Leeds is Emma Ross emma.ross@leeds.gov.uk. For general queries about the use of MST in Leeds, you can contact the service by emailing Emma. If you would like to make enquiries about a referral, please contact the relevant supervisor using the contact details below.

The MST Team Supervisors are:

MST Return Home and West North West - Lydia Burfield Lydia.Burfield@leeds.gov.uk

MST-CAN—Emmal Lemdani emmal.lemdani@leeds.gov.uk

MST East North East Alex Bloom alex.bloom@leeds.gov.uk

MST South South East Gina Baxby gina.baxby@leeds.gov.uk

For more information about the use of MST nationally see [MST UK](#).