



ATTACH-Manchester

Behaviour Regulation Policy

The purpose and scope of this policy statement

We recognise that due to our children's and young people's developmental trauma they may be functioning emotionally and in terms of self-management at a developmental age that is much younger than their chronological age. Previous negative experiences in educational settings and/or in the community may have made them fearful of education and unfamiliar people, places and activities, and they may have missed periods of education and/or be socially isolated. They may have additional diagnoses which mean that their difficulties are further compounded, for example foetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD, organic brain damage), autism, pathological demand avoidance (PDA), ADHD, sensory integration difficulties, executive functioning difficulties, dyslexia, dyspraxia. These circumstances are likely to mean that they experience high levels of anxiety in everyday situations, may misinterpret social cues, have difficulty managing uncertainty and have low trust in adults, experiences that often manifest themselves in a need to control situations and/or sometimes acute difficulties with emotional regulation. They are likely to be easily triggered to fight or flight, and to shame. And they may be hypervigilant and highly sensitive to perceived rejection.

The primary goal of ATTACH-Manchester, therefore, is to create an environment that is experienced by individual children and young people, as well as their families, as safe by developing relationships based on openness and genuine trust. To do this, ATTACH-Manchester uses the principles of attachment theory and PACE – playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy – developed by Dan Hughes as part of Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy/Practice, an approach developed specifically for developmentally traumatised children and young people and their families.

Staff and mentors, training and supervision

The mentor and supervising manager will develop an understanding of each child or young person, their history and triggers, and of the way they interact with adults and other young people, with the aim of anticipating and avoiding potential triggers; and managing escalation and dysregulation safely by means of co-regulation, avoiding behavioural interventions

that may trigger shame and/or dysregulation. The development of safe relationships and working practices will be supported by the following:

- Information is sought from parents/carers and the children and young people themselves, where appropriate, to give insight into the child or young person's likes, dislikes, triggers and likely reactions, as well as successful strategies for supporting them to experience safety. Parents' and carers' continuing input is sought and feedback given through regular meetings with them and the supervising manager.
- Staff are given time to read assessment information from clinical and other sources and to reflect on the implications of this for working with the child or young person and the family.
- Weekly supervision is provided by the supervising manager to ensure any support and training needs are identified; to ensure procedures are correctly followed and recording is accurate and up to date; and that any risks or incidents are identified early and properly managed and recorded.
- Staff attend any network meetings to enhance their understanding of the child or young person and to allow them to feed into any plans for developing the service provided to them.
- All staff receive training in Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy/Practice to at least Level 1 at the earliest available online opportunity. This is a 4- or 5-day professional training in a therapeutic approach developed specifically for developmentally traumatised children and young people and their families; it forms the basis of ATTACH-Manchester's relationship development and behaviour regulation. Some mentors may decide to extend their training over time by doing DDP Level 2 and further training beyond that. Supervision will include reflections on both DDP and PACE in practice.
- All staff receive initial training on safeguarding, data protection, ATTACH-Manchester's case recording procedures, with 'refresher' courses undertaken to timescales specific to each course.
- Individual staff will receive training specific to other diagnoses of the child or young person they are working with as necessary.

Parents/carers

ATTACH-Manchester believes that parents/carers are the experts on their children and have valuable insights to bring to the staff team and the professional network. Sharing even apparently inconsequential information with parents/carers, and them with us, can enable us to better anticipate and avoid triggers and dysregulation.

Parents/carers are considered valuable partners in developing the child's experience of safety.

Regular meetings with parents and involvement in the network enable ATTACH-Manchester to support the family as well as the child or young person and to ensure that the team around the child is fully informed regarding progress, future possibilities, risks and incidents.

Staff have close working relationships with all parents/carers, which enables any emerging difficulties to be addressed at the earliest possible opportunity.

Records

Children and young people have individual profiles that include clinical and other assessments and associated recommendations, e.g. SALT, Sensory Diet, where consent is given.

Profiles include additional information from parents/carers and a section that identifies triggers and the most likely dysregulated behaviours; appropriate strategies to support children and young people when such behaviours occur; and containment strategies appropriate to each individual child or young person.

Staff make a record after each visit/session using the appropriate template. Staff use the recording system to record dysregulation incidents. This allows the management team to spot any patterns and take appropriate action as well as helping to build up a picture of the young person's presentation over time. Staff training and supervision is recorded on their staff profile.

For data protection regarding record keeping and consent, see ATTACH-Manchester Data Protection Policy.

Containment

ATTACH-Manchester will supplement an initial risk assessment, undertaken with the family and professionals, with a dynamic risk assessment process based on family reports and the child/young person's presentation on the day, including repeatedly during an outing or activity when necessary.

Where a risk assessment highlights the possibility of physical aggression, specific steps will be documented to minimise that risk, to respond to it and to document it.

Relationship repair

Where misunderstandings arise, ATTACH-Manchester uses the 'double empathy problem' as the basis for re-establishing understanding and repairing the relationship. This principle establishes that both parties are responsible for successful communication and for breakdowns in communication.

Where a social communication breakdown or social misunderstanding has occurred, staff will work with the young person to enable them to understand each other's perspective, facilitating mutual understanding. This must take place only after sufficient coregulation and without triggering shame.

Staff should be able to apologise to children and young people when necessary, modelling that apologising does not involve loss of face or humiliation. It is a strength to be able to apologise for hurting someone or causing distress.

Serious incidents

Where there are any behaviours that cause staff particular concern, a system is in place for engaging appropriate external professionals involved in the network for assessment and guidance.

Serious incidents and any follow-up are recorded and discussed with parents/carers.

Recognising success

Staff will recognise times when children and young people have overcome difficulties using either their own resources or the support provided. As some of the children and young people ATTACH-Manchester works with find it difficult to accept praise, the ways in which this might be done (directly to the young person, via the parent/carer) will be specific to the individual. Examples include:

- Initiating repair
- Anticipating a trigger
- Recognising self-sabotage
- Identifying a feeling
- Identifying unhelpful beliefs that aren't true (e.g. statements including 'always', 'never')
- Recognising when they need to take a break, use a distraction technique or end an outing or activity

Inclusion

ATTACH-Manchester recognises that families may be at risk of disruption without its services, so all reasonable attempts will be made to engage with children and young people and their families and to maintain a predictable and reliable service.

In cases of consistently dangerous or violent behaviour a temporary break might be part of the strategy to give the staff, other involved professionals, family and young person time to discuss the best way of re-establishing safety. In such cases, when the service resumes, activities away from the home will be discontinued or shortened until such time as all parties are confident that they are likely to be safe. Where necessary, a change in the member of staff may be proposed.

A decision by ATTACH-Manchester to withdraw services will be an absolute last resort and will be taken only after discussion with all involved parties and where there is agreement that there is no safe and helpful way to maintain them.

Director and supervising manager

Justine Giuffra

justine@attach-manchester.co.uk

Director and supervising manager

Lisa Williams

lisa@attach-manchester.co.uk

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