



Family Futures



# Family Futures

## Consultation, Assessment & Treatment Service

helping  
families  
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# Introduction

Family Futures provides a pre- and post-placement assessment and treatment service to adopted, fostered and special guardianship children and their families throughout the UK. We also provide a specialist consultation service to professionals supporting adoptive families.

**We pride ourselves on providing our pioneering multidisciplinary Neuro-Physiological Psychotherapy (NPP)<sup>1</sup> assessment and treatment programme and are committed to innovation based on clinical evidence and research from the growing field of trauma, attachment and neuroscience.**

We have been recognised as a centre of excellence by The Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO) and in 2018 received an Ofsted 'Outstanding' rating for the third time running.

**“Family Futures has always been a remarkable organisation to provide a wide range of specialised services for adoptive families and professionals throughout the UK. What is even more remarkable is that they keep getting better at what they do so well.”**  
Dr Daniel A. Hughes, PhD

## Background to our model

Relatively recent advances in research in the field of complex developmental trauma, neuroscience and attachment have broadened our understanding of adverse early childhood experiences for children in the short and long term and the impact of parenting.

The concept of 'Developmental Trauma' was first introduced by Bessel Van de Kolk (2005), who recognised that children who have experienced repeated trauma and a failure of the primary carer to protect them, consequently suffer impairment in all areas of their development. Being exposed to life threatening experiences in utero and in infancy can lead to children being hypervigilant to perceived threat and triggered into states of prolonged physiological dysregulation: fight, flight or freeze. This can lead to multiple somatic difficulties and impact on their sensory integration development and their emotional and behavioural responses. It can also compromise their ability to form trusting relationships and impact their future happiness and wellbeing. Therefore the original trauma permeates the child's attachment to their parents, their relationship with siblings and peers and their capacity to engage and flourish in education.

This holistic understanding has informed our practice and led to the development of Family Futures' Neuro-Physiological Psychotherapy (NPP) assessment and intervention programme. It is a biopsychosocial approach to working with traumatised children and their adoptive parents and carers.

1. (Vaughan et al, 2016)

# Working in partnership with parents

Parenting a child who has been removed from their birth family can sometimes be more difficult than you anticipated. We have learnt a great deal from families about the difficulties they encounter. At Family Futures we are here to help you be effective parents. We endeavour to work in a genuine partnership with parents.

**The majority of children placed for adoption today have come from abusive and traumatic backgrounds, which has shaped their behaviour and their view of the world. Family Futures has pioneered placement support in the UK.**

Family Futures' Neuro Physiological Psychotherapy model (NPP) model offers a multidisciplinary Assessment and Treatment Service.

## Our therapy team consists of:

- Child and Adult Psychotherapists
- Social Workers
- Clinical Psychologists
- Specialist Teachers
- Paediatric Occupational Therapists
- Paediatrician
- Child Psychiatrist
- Clinical Psychologist specialising in neurodevelopmental assessment
- Therapeutic Home Support Worker
- Assistant Psychologists



“4 years ago an incredible little girl joined our family. Her journey has been a long one; her history one of trauma and dreadful neglect, but her future is bright due to the help of Family Futures.”  
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Family Futures offers the following services:

## Consultations

**Following an initial enquiry Family Futures can offer a consultation to both parents and professionals.**

The consultation provides an opportunity to discuss the concerning issues with our experienced therapy staff who will offer advice, and make recommendations. Consultations are 1.5 hours long, after which a summary letter can be written outlining the issues discussed and any recommendations that were proposed.

Family Futures also offer a Skype Consultation service.

“The agency is a nationally recognised centre of excellence for therapeutic adoption and adoption support services which address the damage caused by early developmental trauma... Children and their families receive holistic care of exceptional quality, which results in excellent experiences, outcomes and progress.”

Ofsted report 2018

## Assessment Services

### Full Multidisciplinary Neuro Physiological Psychotherapy (NPP) Assessment

The NPP assessment process considers the following factors:

- The degree of developmental trauma the child experienced and how this impacts them in their current family dynamics
- The child's sensory integration system
- The child's attachment strategies
- The child's current family relationships and contact arrangements
- The child's understanding of their story
- The child's cognitive and executive functioning
- The child's current functioning at school, where relevant
- The child's needs for further therapeutic intervention
- The child's need for further specialist assessment or CAMHS intervention
- The parents' / carers' functioning and support needs
- The sibling dynamics
- The family dynamics



“It is something we will never forget and will always be grateful for... it was priceless...we had hands underneath us holding us.”

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Before the assessment day the following information is gathered:

- Pre-existing information about the child’s/children’s early history and any assessments or treatment interventions that have taken place
- A medical history
- Parent, teacher and self-report on a battery of Psychological screening tools, including the Sensory Processing Measure; Behaviour Rating Inventory of Executive Functioning (BRIEF); Assessment Checklist for Children/ Adolescents (ACC/ACA); Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL) and Parent Stress Index

Following this assessment, a comprehensive report is written, producing a biopsychosocial formulation and making recommendations for future intervention. The report may recommend further specialist assessments, Family Futures’ NPP treatment programme or smaller scale packages of therapy, or it may make other recommendations for services locally based or with other service providers.

If relevant, our assessment may identify a change in placement plans or changing contact arrangements. Where we are asked to make a pre-placement decision regarding sibling groups we are able to advise which siblings should be placed with whom or whether they should be placed separately.

The report could be the focus of a professional’s network meeting or could be used to inform decision-making within the Department who commissioned the work.

## Stand Alone Specialist Assessments

Family Futures also provide specialist assessments often required by our population of children. These are a Paediatric Occupational Therapy Sensory Integration Assessment, a Neuro-developmental/ Cognitive Assessment, a Psychiatric Assessment, and a Paediatric Assessment. A report is issued following each specialist assessment.

## School Observation

Family Futures offer a stand-alone school observation that considers the child’s functioning and support needs at school. A report is issued following the observation which can also be conducted alongside our full NPP assessment or a neuro-developmental assessment.

# Treatment services

## Our success

Family Futures engaged in an extensive evaluation of the Neuro-Physiological Psychotherapy model, the results of which indicate positive outcomes for a significant majority of families who received the package of care that was recommended at the time of their original assessment<sup>1</sup>. The evaluation is ongoing and families engaged in treatment are involved in an annual re-testing process that helps monitor progress.

1. (McCullough, et al, 2016)

## The NPP model

At Family Futures we realised that to help children recover and heal effectively from trauma, we needed to develop integrated multidisciplinary treatment programmes. We also realised that therapy needed to address all aspects of a child's development, and, most importantly of all, needed to be implemented at the earliest opportunity.

The Family Futures' NPP programme reflects the structure of the brain and its development in the following way:

Area of the brain	Focus	Theme	Interventions
Primitive Brain	Trauma Responses	Fear and stress reduction	Sleep, diet and toileting advice Medication Sensory Integration
	Physiological Regulation	Emotional and physiological awareness	Somatic and Sensorimotor work Mindfulness
	Emotional Regulation	Co-regulation and attunement	Developmental re-parenting with 1:1 time at home Play and Theraplay®
Limbic Brain	Attachment	Developing a more secure attachment	DDP and creative arts
		Shame reduction	Theraplay®
		Development of conscience and empathy	Developmental re-parenting
Cortical Brain	Integration Identity	Developing a coherent narrative and reflective capacity	DDP with a life story focus Facilitated contact Individual Psychotherapy Identity and self-esteem work

You can watch a video explaining a child's tri-part brain development and our approach on our home page link at [www.familyfutures.co.uk](http://www.familyfutures.co.uk)



## Stage one of the treatment process

The Family Futures model is based on the understanding of the tri-part brain and that in order to strengthen the child's attachment to their parent and to help the child form a more coherent narrative of their story we must first help calm their nervous system. By working with the child's propensity to be triggered into fight/flight/freeze as a result of environmental triggers the first stage of the model works with these primitive brain responses by using, amongst others, techniques from Sensory Integration, Somatic Experience and Mindfulness. If appropriate we also encourage a developmental re-parenting approach. Play and the integration of Theraplay® techniques are also key at this stage to encourage social engagement and the child's experience of feeling safe.

Due to the missed developmental stages the child has experienced, parents often have to go back in order to go forward with their child developmentally. Developmental re-parenting is a way of parenting that involves a parent thinking about the child's needs

developmentally rather than just in relation to their chronological age.

This developmental re-parenting is so called, not because we can undo the neurological damage caused but to support the laying down of new neuronal pathways and responses to environmental triggers based on experience, and the formation of an alternative template for relationships based on safety and attuned, sensitive care. Our model of re-parenting helps you to provide the child with experiences that lay the foundation of emotional and physiological regulation.

## Stage two of the treatment process

As the child begins to feel safe and they develop a capacity for co-regulation by their parent and skills in self-regulation the therapists and parents can engage in techniques that help build a more secure attachment and ways of relating for the child. The techniques also increase the parent's attunement to the child and confidence in their own parenting. We use Theraplay®,

the creative arts, including Drama Therapy and Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy to increase the parent's understanding of the child's strengths, their intersubjective experience and to enable them to sensitively attune and respond to their child.

## Stage three of the treatment process

Therapeutic Life Story work occurs at an appropriate pace and degree throughout treatment (perhaps using puppetry or art or other techniques). As the child's capacity to seek support from a parent, self-regulate and talk about their feelings and thoughts increases, so too does their ability to remain in their thinking, cognitive brain when discussing early life experiences without being triggered into trauma responses. Therefore, with the continued underpinning of a Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy approach, narrative forms of therapeutic Life Story work are more accessible and the child is supported to process and integrate their early history

into a more coherent narrative. Strategies from earlier stages continue to be used as the noticing and modulation of sensation and arousal is required to facilitate this process.

## Parent work and support

Throughout all three stages of treatment therapeutic parent support is essential. Parents are encouraged to consider their own history and experience of parenting and which of their child's behaviours and responses trigger them. They are encouraged to attend the Family Futures parenting programme to explore these triggers with other parents and to further develop their self-regulatory strategies. The therapy team will continue to support parents with these strategies whilst also drawing on strategies from somatic experience and mindfulness techniques. Parents are also provided with psychoeducation throughout and supported to understand the origins of their child's trauma and fear based responses. In some cases parents may be encouraged to engage in individual or couples therapy.





## Wrap-around Service Provision Extended Network Support

Parenting traumatised children can often have a socially isolating effect. The NPP model offers training and network liaison to the parents' network of family and friends to encourage understanding and support within their immediate system.

## Professional Network Liaison

If parents are to offer containment to children, then it is essential that the network supporting them is both cohesive and containing. Across the model, the team works to maintain good collaboration and communication throughout the professional network to ensure consistency and continuity in treatment. This will also involve liaising across health, social care and education bodies.

## School Consultation and Support

The impact of Developmental Trauma on a child's learning and peer relationships is an important factor in the Family Futures model. In the organisation's experience, responses

and strategies developed in the context of maltreatment can cause problems in the classroom. Compliance and dissociative strategies can lead to children's needs not being picked up until the transition to secondary school where their strategies collapse in the face of multiple demands. Defensive, aggressive behaviours often lead to exclusion. The NPP approach is to work with schools to reduce a child's fear-based responses and promote good cognitive and executive functioning in the classroom. The treatment programme also aims to improve relational difficulties and help the formation of positive peer relationships.

## Specialised Treatment Packages

In some cases, following an assessment a specialist, short-term treatment package may be recommended. These include:

- Theraplay® Treatment Package
- Dyadic Developmental Therapy Treatment Package
- Creative Arts Treatment Package
- Sensory Integration Treatment Package

Contact us to find out more about these.



# Glossary

**Attachment** refers to the emotional bond between a child and a caregiver which can influence emotional, social and cognitive development.

**Biopsychosocial formulation** brings together information about the interaction of biological factors, psychological factors and social factors in order to make sense of a child and family's presentation.

**Developmental re-parenting** is an approach to parenting children who have been neglected and abused in a manner that meets their developmental need and aims to help the child to develop first a capacity to be co-regulated, and over time to self-regulate.

**Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP)** developed by Dr Daniel Hughes is a dyadic parent and child therapy treatment for families with adopted or fostered children who had experienced neglect and abuse in their birth families and suffered from significant developmental trauma.

**MIM Assessment** is an assessment tool developed for use in **Theraplay®** which is designed to assess a child and parents' attachment relationship in terms of Structure, Engagement, Nurture, and Challenge.

**Mindfulness** is a technique used to help children and parents focus their awareness in the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting their feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations.

**Multidisciplinary approach at Family Futures** consists of a team of specialist professionals in the fields of Clinical Psychology, Psychotherapy, Social Work, Occupational Therapy and Education who contribute to the assessment and treatment of developmentally traumatised children.

**Neuro Physiological Psychotherapy (NPP)** is a therapeutic model and approach developed by Family Futures that focuses on healing the neurological, physiological and psychological harm to a child's development caused by neglect and abusive parenting in infancy.

**PACE** is the term used in Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) for the therapy or parenting approach being founded on engagement with the child that is Playful, Accepting, Curious and Empathetic.

**Sensory integration** is about how our brain receives and processes sensory information so that the body can be effective in everyday life. There is a theory of sensory integration and a therapeutic approach based on this theory.

**Social Atom** is a tool used to map children's interpersonal relationships. This can be conducted within a sand-tray or on paper.

**Somatic Experience** is a form of therapy aimed at relieving the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental and physical trauma-related health problems by focusing on the client's perceived body sensations (somatic experiences).

**Story Stems** is a non-intrusive assessment tool designed to elicit children's unconscious representations of relationships, caregivers and family roles by giving them the beginning of the 'story' and asking them to complete them.

**Theraplay®** is a child and family therapy intervention for building and enhancing attachment, self-esteem, trust in others, and joyful engagement. It is based on the natural patterns of playful, healthy interaction between parent and child and is personal, physical, and fun.

# Next steps

## Make an initial enquiry

Email us at [contact@familyfutures.co.uk](mailto:contact@familyfutures.co.uk) or call us on 020 7354 4161

## Find out about our upcoming training for parents, carers and professionals

Have a look at the Training section of our website or send us an email: [training@familyfutures.co.uk](mailto:training@familyfutures.co.uk)

## What's on offer?

### How to Play with your Traumatized Child



Play can provide a way in to help your child repair earlier traumas and re-connect with secure parents/caregivers. This two-day course will increase understanding of what your child is communicating through play and how your play can meet their needs.

### Sensory Integration



Damage to the sensory system can show up as lack of coordination, motor control and balance. We run training for professionals, parents and carers to provide the tools to help support children to regulate their sensory system and resolve their attachment difficulties.

### Helping Fostered Children Transition to a New Family



Looked After and fostered children can struggle with moving from one family to another. Our two-day course will encourage you to think through the key issues that could arise during a new placement and help you support your child through this big step.

### The Impact of Trauma in Infancy on Attachment and Development



This two-day course gives professionals, parents and carers an understanding of how early childhood trauma can impact development and lead to behavioural issues and other difficulties. It provides the theory behind developmental trauma and offers strategies and interventions to support children.

### A Day for Parents on Education Based Problems and Solutions



Early childhood trauma can prevent children from developing important skills needed to problem solve, organise, plan and keep calm. This one-day course will help you to support your child to develop these important skills so they can manage everyday tasks at school.

**“Unlike any training course I’ve taken part in. It’s given me a new perspective and understanding of children’s behaviours.”**

**“Allowed us to discuss real life cases and learn strategies to manage the different challenges faced.”**

# Useful information

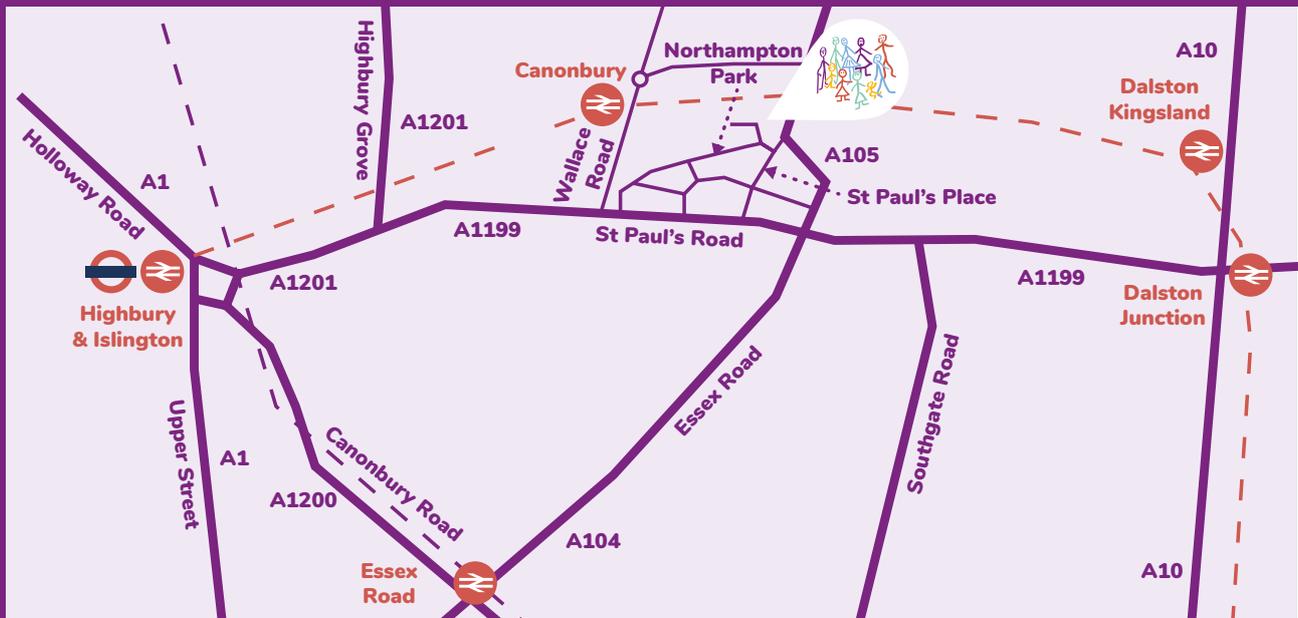
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W: [www.familyfutures.co.uk](http://www.familyfutures.co.uk)



## Car Parking

There is free car parking for families and we are not in the congestion zone.

## Food and Refreshments

Family Futures provides tea, coffee drinks and snacks. You can bring lunch or eat out locally. Every family is allocated their own room as a family room. There is a park nearby for picnics and play.

## Contact

If you need any more information please contact us: [contact@familyfutures.co.uk](mailto:contact@familyfutures.co.uk)



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