



## **Information for parents/carers**

### **What is Stephen's Place Children's Centre?**

Stephen's Place Children's Centre is a part of the Domestic Violence Intervention project (DVIP) and we have a team of psychologists who offer therapy to children and young people who have been affected by domestic abuse. It is a free service for children and young people aged between 3 and 17 years who live in the boroughs of Hammersmith and Fulham, Hounslow, Ealing and Wandsworth. Therapy is by appointment only; we do not offer a drop-in service. Therapy appointments are offered between 10 am and 5 pm, Monday to Friday at Stephen's Place Children's Centre and at offsite venues in Hounslow, Ealing and Wandsworth.

### **What do we offer?**

All of our rooms are bright and child-friendly with a wide variety of play equipment and materials, depending on what the child needs and their age. A child or young person could be seen on a weekly basis for therapy for up to five months. This gives the child time to build a trusting relationship with the therapist. For younger children, play therapy is used to explore the child's feelings (as play is a natural way a child communicates). Older children/young people are encouraged to explore their feelings in therapy using a number of ways, including the creative arts.

The weekly therapy sessions last 50 minutes and before a child or young person can start therapy an assessment needs to be completed with their main parent/carer. This is so we can make sure that therapy is a suitable option to meet the child/ young person's needs at that point in time.

### **Why is therapy important?**

Research shows that domestic abuse can greatly affect a child, even if they have not directly witnessed the abuse. You may have noticed some changes in your child, for example, in their behaviour. Some parents and carers who notice a change in their children may be worried that they will be blamed for their children's behaviour if they ask for help. Feeling responsible for a child's distress or problems is a normal part of caring. Having the commitment to start looking at these difficulties is a significant part of helping your child.

Our therapy service is there to offer children and young people a safe, consistent, confidential space to be able to work through their difficult experiences and often muddled

feelings. Rather than having to explain what is troubling them, children may use play and young people may use creative arts and/or talking to communicate. This helps to ensure that children and young people are going at their own pace and communicating at their own level, without feeling interrogated or threatened.

In order to help make the therapy space a safe space, the therapist would want to provide the child or young person with a certain level of confidentiality. This means that the therapist would not talk to a parent or carer and about the contents of the therapy session. During the assessment session the parent/carer will have the opportunity to discuss our confidentiality policy to make sure that they fully understand how it works before they consent to therapy taking place.

### **What happens when a referral is made?**

If you would like to refer your child to our service then please feel free to download the referral form from this website and fax, email or post it back to the therapy team at Stephen's Place Children's Centre. Before a child or young person can start therapy, an assessment needs to be completed with their main parent/carer. This is so we can make sure that therapy is a suitable option to meet the child/ young person's needs at that point in time.

It is important for children who are in therapy to have a stable environment. Therefore, it is unlikely that a referral will be accepted if the perpetrator of the abuse is still in the home or if there are other factors affecting the stability of a child. Please feel free to contact a member of Stephen's Place Therapy Team to discuss the suitability of a referral.