



## **BAPT defines Play Therapy as:**

*The dynamic process between the child and play therapist in which the child explores at his or her own pace and with his or her own agenda those issues, past and current, conscious and unconscious, that are affecting the child's life in the present. The child's inner resources are enabled by the therapeutic alliance to bring about growth and change. Play Therapy is child-centred, in which play is the primary medium and language (in the form of speech, sign or Alternative Augmentative Communication) is the secondary medium.*

Play is children's primary form of communication. Children tell us about their inner world through play long before they are able to link words to their experiences through language. Through play, children can experiment with, process and master different skills and experiences. They form a sense of who they are, whilst learning to understand that other people can be different from them. Relationship skills, such as being able to trust, respect, empathise, share and co-operate with people, can be developed through play.

Play Therapy, therefore, is a form of counselling for children that builds on this developmentally appropriate form of communication through play. It enables children to explore difficult experiences in a safe environment. The trust, acceptance, boundaries, modelling and reflectiveness of a BAPT Registered Play Therapist® working alongside a child playing can enable them to:

- Feel more confident in expressing their thoughts and feelings
- Develop their emotional vocabulary by accessing the language the Play Therapist relates to their experiences
- Develop more socially appropriate behaviour
- Improve their self-image and self-esteem
- Improve concentration and organisation
- Become more confident and creative in their play

## What is a BAPT Registered Play Therapist®?



A BAPT Registered Play Therapist® is a qualified mental health professional who has had intensive university and clinical training accredited by the British Association of Play Therapists (BAPT). Most BAPT Registered Play Therapists® are graduates who have already trained to work with children. For example, they may already be qualified as social workers, teachers, nursery nurses, teaching assistants and psychologists.

A BAPT Registered Play Therapist® must have a clear knowledge of the following:

- Child-centred Play Therapy
- Child development
- The developmental process and functions of play
- Developmental psycho-pathology, including attachment theory, mental health, social and emotional wellbeing, disability and trauma
- Ecological, systems and social constructionist theories of society
- Integrative Play Therapy methods
- Working with parents and carers
- Relevant legislation and policy
- Anti-discriminatory practice
- Contemporary research and practice

**To be a full member of BAPT a Play Therapist will have:**

- Completed Masters level (MSc or MA) Play Therapy training (accredited by BAPT)
- A current enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check (DBS)
- Public liability indemnity insurance
- On-going personal therapy (optional, after qualification)
- Clinical supervision of their Play Therapy practice
- Commitment to the BAPT Ethical Basis for Good Practice in Play Therapy

## How can Play Therapy Help?



Play Therapy can be effective to support people of all ages. A Play Therapist will complete an assessment to decide if Play Therapy is right for someone. Most commonly, Play Therapy is used with children, so we will refer to child/children in this document for simplicity. Play Therapy has been proven to be effective in addressing a range of difficulties, including those related to:

- Adoption and Fostering
- Attachment and Trauma
- Abuse
- Anxiety
- Bereavement
- Bullying
- Emotional and Behavioural Regulation Difficulties
- Family Breakdown
- Friendship Difficulties
- Illness
- Low Self-esteem
- Nightmares
- Physical Regulation Difficulties, i.e., Sleeping, Eating and Toileting
- Social Withdrawal

For more information you can read [Evidence-based Research](#) on Play Therapy or view our [Case Studies](#).

We offer resources for parents, carers, children and professionals which can be found on our [BAPT Play Therapy resources page](#).



## Timing of Play Therapy



There are times when it is unhelpful to start Play Therapy. Play Therapy can give children the opportunity to explore their deepest and most traumatic feelings and experiences. As such, it is not appropriate to expose them to this if they are not in a situation whereby people around them can keep their physical body and their powerful emotions safe.

It is also important to note that Play Therapy can also result in children's behaviour being more intense away from the therapy sessions and can also

result in them regressing to earlier developmental stages. It is crucial that the people around the child have stability in their own resources to be sensitive and support the child in what could be a very challenging time.

Examples of when it is not appropriate to start Play Therapy include:

- When the child remains at risk of harm
- When the child's carers lack stability in their own presentation and lack an effective support network around them
- When the child's environment is in a period of transition, i.e., moving school, house, caregivers.



## What happens in a Play Therapy session?



Play Therapy normally takes place in a private, child-friendly and confidential setting where the Play Therapist sees the child on a one-to-one basis.

Consistency is key in the development of a trusting therapeutic relationship. There will be practical agreements made to support this. The Play Therapist will meet the child on the same day, at the same time and in the same place each week with the same play materials.

The Play Therapist's role is to enter the child's world, to follow and track their play, reflecting their feelings and emotions.

This play is non-directive and child-centred, allowing the child to lead the way in their play and to choose materials and activities as they wish without having to provide verbal explanations.

The non-directive Play Therapy technique provides a child with confidence and helps them to build trust in their Play Therapist and themselves.

During play, the child has an opportunity to express deeper thoughts, ideas and wishes which allows the Play Therapist to gain valuable insights into how they experience their world.

Therefore, through the Play Therapy relationship, the child is able to make sense of their life experiences and to express difficult feelings through their play.

## Sharing Information about Play Therapy Sessions



Generally, the specific details of the therapy sessions will remain confidential between the Play Therapist and the child. Parents/carers and professionals will not be given weekly feedback and it is important that the child is not pressured into talking about what they have been doing in the sessions. This promotes the child's feelings of trust with the therapist and the safety of the therapy space.

There is one clear reason why specific details would be disclosed to other parties immediately – where there is a concern about a risk to the child or others. This safeguarding exception will be made clear to the child, parents and any relevant professional before Play Therapy commences.

The other occasion when information will be shared is during pre-agreed review meetings and any formal reports. On these occasions the general themes and progress of therapy will be discussed. Again, everyone will know about this beforehand, including the child.

If parents/carers or other professionals have any worries or concerns, they should contact the Play Therapist to arrange a time to discuss this away from the child.



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## What are the prices for Play Therapy?



Children are individual and their therapeutic requirement will be different from another child, so every therapeutic plan is unique and individually tailored to a child's needs. The costs may vary from one Play Therapist to another, depending on their level of expertise, other therapeutic interventions they offer, as well as needing to cover venue costs, insurance, registration and business costs.

The cost per session, includes the additional time needed for setting up, tidying up, preparing resources and note writing.



Additional charges may apply to parent reviews, travel, room hire, meetings around the child, reports or other required services agreed with the therapist.

Please [contact your local BAPT Registered Play Therapist®](#) for more information.



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## Finding a BAPT Registered Therapist®



If you feel that a child you know may benefit from Play Therapy, or you are interested in building connections with Play Therapists in your local area, please visit:

[Find A Play Therapist](#)

BAPT's Register of Qualified BAPT Registered Play Therapists® is accredited by the Professional Standards Authority (PSA). The PSA recommends employers and service users wanting to use a Play Therapist do so via an Accredited Register.

By using an Accredited Register to help you find a Play Therapist you can be assured that the organisation holding the Accredited Register has met the standards required by PSA, continues to be monitored and evaluated by the PSA and that the Play Therapist you are employing continue to evidence that they meet the standards of the profession.

Please see the [PSA Statement](#) on use of Accredited Registers. For further information you can use the [PSA website](#) to read reports in respect of BAPT.

[Search the BAPT Register](#)



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