

# Play Therapy Core Competences

## Introduction

The effective deployment of skills and knowledge in Play Therapy are of the up-most importance to clients, families, the public and the profession. Play Therapists must ensure that their practice is based on clear and coherent competence. The core competencies of Play Therapists are defined in 3 main areas **Knowledge & Understanding, Personal Development, Practice Skills** and a list of **personal qualities** that are a pre-requisite of good practice. A Play Therapist's core competencies are:

## KNOWLEDGE & UNDERSTANDING

### 1. Knowledge of theories of child development

Understand some of the key theories of healthy child development processes within the context of familial and social diversity; and be able to discuss these in relation to observed behaviour:

### 2. Knowledge of developmental psycho-pathology

Understand the clinical needs of specific groups of children affected by disrupted development; drawing on theories of attachment, mental health, social and emotional wellbeing, disability and trauma. Understand the emergence of psycho-pathology within human development:

### 3. Knowledge of ecological, systems and social constructionist theories of society

Understand how the wider systems of family, community, culture and social /government policy impact on children, young people and families and be able to integrate systems thinking and analysis into therapeutic practice with individuals

### 4. Knowledge of theory and practice of play therapy

Understand the theory and practice of play therapy, including the humanistic child-centred approach. Understand models of the change process in a play therapy intervention

5. Knowledge of different models of play therapy, including integrative approaches

Understand and integrate different models of play therapy including directive, non-directive and developmental approaches.

6. Knowledge of theories of play development and of the functions of play

Understand theories of normal and abnormal play development, the role of play and the use of play as a therapeutic metaphor

7. Knowledge and practice of working with parents/carers

To have the ability to articulate /translate Play Therapy practice /process and if appropriate to engage with the child's parents /carers in the therapeutic process.

8. Knowledge of the legislation and policy context for play therapy

Understand current legislation and policy relating to the practice of play therapy in the context of health, education and social care in the UK, both public and private sectors, including child protection and safeguarding

9. Knowledge of theories of anti-discriminatory practice in play therapy

Understand principles of anti-discriminatory practice in relation to children, young people and their families within the context of a diverse society

10. Knowledge of contemporary research and practice

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of contemporary practice and research in play therapy. Understand evidence-based practice principles

## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

11. Possession of the essential personal qualities for a play therapist

Demonstrate identified personal qualities of a play therapy practitioner to promote public protection and ethical practice ( see Personal Qualities of a play therapist)

12. Application of ethics and values in practice

Understand ethical practice relating to play therapy to ensure protection of children, young people and families and the public – as detailed in Ethical Basis for Good Practice in Play Therapy 4th Edition

Conform to the required standards for clinical governance laid out by BAPT

### 13. Maintenance and effective use of clinical supervision

Use clinical supervision to promote and ensure ethical play therapy practice and the protection of the public

Use clinical and/ or managerial supervision to review and consider own strengths and limitations; operate and practice efficiently within own levels of competence and within limitations of role.

Comply with BAPT's recommended guidelines for clinical supervision

### 14. Utilisation of personal therapy and support for development

Integrate personal therapy and developmental support in an appropriate and effective manner; Demonstrate ability to be self-reflective and to integrate learning into therapeutic practice to ensure effective and ethical standards of practice and promote public safety

### 15. Maintenance of continuing professional development

Maintain Continuing Professional Development in accordance with BAPT requirements, for promotion of high standards of play therapy practice.

### 16. Maintenance of basic skills in independent business practices

Demonstrate and maintain skills needed to manage their own independent business, including effective financial management, compliance with regulations for self-employment, management of personal data, procedures and policies to ensure public protection, health and safety etc.

## PRACTICE SKILLS

### 17. Engagement and facilitation of a therapeutic relationship

Demonstrate effective engagement and facilitation of the therapeutic relationship with clients and significant others.

### 18. Assessment of need

Understand and be able to undertake assessment of the emotional, psychological and social needs of clients; and to formulate appropriate therapeutic objectives

### 19. Planning and contracting for play therapy practice

Formulate clear, meaningful and appropriate therapeutic contracts, including therapeutic aims, objectives, boundaries and rules.

## 20. Intervention and provision of direct therapeutic service

Intervene and provide play therapy to achieve identified therapeutic objectives; monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of play therapy interventions and adapt skills and techniques to a diverse range of children, young people and families

## 21. Provision of well-planned therapeutic endings

Provide planned and coherent opportunities to enable work with clients to end in a therapeutic manner

## 22. Maintenance of rules and boundaries within play therapy practice

Maintain clear professional, personal and therapeutic boundaries

## 23. Maintenance of confidentiality and privacy

Maintain the confidentiality and privacy required by clients and significant others; meeting both legal and ethical standards, including Data Protection requirements.

Recognise the limitations of confidentiality in relation to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

## 24. Clinical record-keeping and writing skills

Accurately record play therapy interventions, working within the requirements of Data Protection legislation

Communicate effectively in writing through clinical records, written assessments and reports of therapeutic progress

## 25. Effective work with different client groups

Work in an effective anti-discriminatory way with a diverse range of children, young people and families, considering the individual's identity and cultural needs

## 26. Communication skills

Communicate effectively, through non-verbal and verbal expression, with clients and significant others. Use a range of therapeutic person-centred skills, including active listening, empathic responding, questioning, paraphrasing, tracking, reflection and summarising.

## 27. Inter – personal communication through use of creative media

Demonstrate and facilitate a range of verbal, non-verbal and symbolic communication using a variety of play and creative media with children, young people and families

## 28. Maintenance of effective inter-professional relationships

Collaborate and communicate with other professionals; demonstrate effective inter-professional working for the benefit of children, young people and families. Work within agency policies and procedures and work effectively as part of a team around the child, young person and family.

## 29. Develop and manage a playroom/ play therapy environment

Take responsibility for the development and safe management of the play therapy environment/ playroom, in line with Health & Safety standards. This includes selection and maintenance of play materials, risk assessment of the environment and taking appropriate steps to ensure continuing safety; ensuring privacy during sessions, preserving confidentiality in use and storage of therapeutic materials produced in sessions.

## 30. Effective work in different settings

Contribute effectively to the work of organisations, demonstrate understanding of agency functions and priorities. Consider the dilemmas of integrating play therapy practice within organisational contexts.

Work independently, set priorities, plan and manage own workload and organisational tasks efficiently

## 31. Application of evidence-based research to play therapy practice

Identify and critically evaluate relevant current research evidence and integrate into play therapy practice.

Demonstrate that play therapy practice is informed by contemporary evidence-based research.

Demonstrate an understanding of research methods and the application of research methods within clinical contexts. Application of evidence-based approaches in the evaluation of Play Therapy outcomes and effectiveness to assure quality of service delivery and enhance the evidence base for Play Therapy

## **Personal Qualities**

### **Empathy**

To empathise with the emotional and psychological expressions, experiences and needs of clients and significant others

### **Sincerity**

Commitment to being sincere and genuine to self and others



## **Honesty**

To act truthfully and with integrity towards self and others

## **Respect**

To acknowledge and show acceptance towards other people's understanding, experiences and abilities

## **Ethical**

To be committed to ethical practice and able to comply with the ethical code and values defined by the British Association of Play therapists

## **Knowledgeable**

To be able to apply knowledge, evidence and experience critically

## **Self – Awareness**

To assess, review and consider own competencies, strengths and weaknesses as a Play Therapist

## **Self-Responsibility**

To operate and practise efficiently within own level of competencies

## **Congruence**

To be authentic and genuine in conduct with clients and significant others

## **Compassion**

To be emotionally warm, caring and concerned towards others

## **Critical Reflection**

To critically reflect upon the emotional, social and psychological world of clients, significant others and the Self and to integrate reflection into practice

## **Commitment to professional development**

To continue professional development as a play therapist in a responsible and effective manner

## **Commitment to personal development**

To be reflexive, to integrate personal insights into future practice, to continue personal development in a responsible and effective manner