

A Guide to Services for Parents, Guardians and Carers



Families Empowered help children and families
living with the impact of early trauma

Nurturing attachment. Rebuilding trust. Transforming lives.

About Families Empowered

Families Empowered is a post-adoption support agency who are dedicated to improving the lives of families and offer attachment-focused therapeutic interventions, training and specialist assessments to support children and families who have experienced relational trauma. We want children and families to stay at the heart of all we do and will work alongside you and your family with warmth, understanding and knowledge of the impact of trauma.

Driven By Dedication And Experience

Families Empowered is led by the passion and commitment of Founder and Director, Deborah Sharratt: Deborah is the Registered Provider of Families Empowered with OFSTED.

Deborah is a DDP-led Practitioner (Level 2 - becoming certified) and holds an MA in Advanced Social Work. She has over 25 years' experience across Children's Services, with a specialism in fostering and adoption.

Deborah has built a team of skilled practitioners, each with an extensive background in social work and children's services and immersed in the principles of an attachment-focused therapeutic approach.

Trauma Informed Therapies For Families

Our therapeutic services are all informed by the principles of Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) and PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy), developed by clinical psychologist, Dan Hughes, as well as current research in neurobiology.

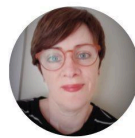
Meet The Team



Liz Stirrat
Therapeutic Practitioner



Jo Hines
Therapeutic Practitioner



Sonya Harris
Therapeutic Practitioner



Anne Cunningham
Therapeutic Practitioner



Hilary Walshe
Therapeutic Practitioner



Lucy Watt
Integrative Counsellor



Anna Harris
Therapeutic Practitioner



Tara Davey
Administrator

Our Services

Individual/Family Therapies

We offer a range of attachment-focused therapeutic services for your family, based on the principles of DDP and PACE parenting, that aim to build trust, develop insight and create a transformative sense of safety for your child. PACE is a way of thinking, feeling, communicating and behaving that helps your child to feel safe and is based on how nurturing parents connect with a very young infant.

The following services can be offered either in person or online for flexibility and convenience:

- DDP-led Family Therapy
- Theraplay®-Informed Therapy
- Psychodynamic Therapy
- Direct work with children
- Nurturing Attachment Groups
- Therapeutic Parenting Support using PACE
- Early Placement Support: Attachment-Focused Therapy
- Therapeutic Life Story Work

We recognise that it is not always straightforward to identify which therapeutic intervention will most benefit your family. We are always happy to offer individual consultations to help decide on the most appropriate service.

DDP-led Family Therapy

Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP), developed by Dan Hughes, is based on an understanding of attachment and intersubjective relationships. An initial meeting would identify the structure of the sessions as we often focus on working with the adults first before introducing the child/ren to the therapeutic space.

DDP is particularly suitable where you feel disconnected from your children, where bonding and attachment between is noticeably impaired, if you feel you may be in blocked care* or where you are worried that your relationship with your child or the stability of your family are at risk of breakdown.

*Blocked care describes a reactive parenting style focused on a child's most adverse or negative traits. It happens when a parent/guardian is constantly stressed or overwhelmed, triggering their survival-brain or limbic system to react.

Therapeutic Parenting Support with PACE

Therapeutic parenting is an approach that focuses on healing past trauma and helping the child to feel safe. Sessions will support you to increase your understanding, knowledge and skills around parenting a child with early relational loss and trauma using PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy), developed by Dan Hughes, and the House Parenting Model, developed by Kim Golding. It can be particularly effective with children who have difficulties building attachments and who are unable to trust the good care and availability of their caregivers to meet their needs. These sessions aim to build confidence in parenting a troubled child therapeutically in order to support the child as they learn to trust adults again.

Theraplay®-Informed Therapy

Theraplay®-Informed Therapy is a fun and engaging child and family therapy for building attachment, self esteem and trust through natural patterns of play. It is based on a playful, healthy interaction between parent and child and focuses on the four essential qualities of engagement, nurture, structure and challenge found in parent and child relationships.

Theraplay®-Informed Therapy is ideally suited where you feel disconnected from your child/ren, where bonding and attachment between is difficult, where there are attachment difficulties or where there is a risk of placement breakdown.

Theraplay® is a registered service mark of [The Theraplay® Institute](http://www.theraplay.org.uk), Chicago, IL, USA www.theraplay.org.uk

Psychodynamic Therapy

The aim of Psychodynamic Therapy is to bring the unconscious mind into consciousness, helping individuals to experience and understand their true, deep-rooted feelings in order to resolve them. Psychodynamic Therapy is recommended where you have your own issues around loss or childhood trauma which are impacting on your ability to be the parent you want to be.

Early Placement Support: Attachment Focussed Therapy

Early placement support is designed for new adopters, foster carers and guardians in the early weeks and months following placement, when the risk of breakdown is higher.

The early sessions will explore the impact of early relational trauma and loss on a child's ability to trust good care and enable you to understand more about the behaviour you are observing in your child and how this might impact on you. In later sessions the practitioner will help you to develop a therapeutic mindset through understanding and implementing therapeutic parenting using PACE.

Therapeutic Life Story Work

Our Therapeutic life story work is based on the work of Richard Rose and embedded with the principles of DDP. The programme draws from the latest in current research and is a best-practice approach to support children when navigating the sensitive area of learning about themselves and their birth families.

Direct Work with Children

Our direct work with children enables us to build relationships carefully and give children a safe, therapeutic space to talk about big feelings and difficult emotions. Underpinned by Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) and using the values of PACE, we support children to express themselves and help them to make sense of their world.

We can use a variety of tools to support our work, for example: storytelling, drawing and other creative activities, work with puppets, games and worksheets to explore emotions.

We are able to support children who are struggling with a range of feelings such as anger, anxiety and sadness, which they may be left with following early relational trauma, abuse, loss, and separation.

Nurturing Attachment Groups

Families Empowered Therapeutic Group Services can benefit adopters, guardians and foster carers in a way which is different, but no less valuable, than individual support. This is a closed-group setting where participants often value sharing experiences and ideas in a safe space with others who understand what they are going through and in a way that family and friends are not always able to. The groups can provide a social aspect for families who can often feel isolated.

Our Nurturing Attachment Groups (NAGs) are therapeutic group programmes designed to support, guide and develop insight for parents, carers and guardians of children who experience attachment difficulties following loss and trauma. They are based on Kim Golding's Programme and are underpinned with DDP & PACE, developed by Dan Hughes. The group is delivered across three modules of six sessions each. Whilst on the group, each family has access to the support, guidance and consultation from their therapeutic practitioners.

Training Services

Families Empowered have developed attachment-focussed, specialist training for adopters, foster carers, special guardians and parents and enables support and ongoing development of families through effective, targeted training. Our training sessions have been carefully developed to be delivered both in-person and online for convenience and flexibility and includes:

- **Developing a therapeutic mindset**
This course is ideally suited for foster carers, adopters and special guardians in assessment or just post approval.
- **Understanding and recovering from blocked care**
This course is suitable for foster carers, adopters and special guardians at any stage
- **Introduction to Attachment Theory**
This course is suitable for Foster carers, adopters and special guardians at any stage
- **Therapeutic Life story work**
This course draws on the work of Richard Rose but with DDP at the heart
- **Transitions and Endings for children with relational trauma**
This course is based on the work of Kate Cairns and Eileen Fursland but with DDP at the heart
- **Managing challenging behaviour**
This is based on using PACE with discipline
- **Play techniques to support therapeutic parenting**
Learn how to develop attachment, self esteem and trust in children through natural patterns of play.

All of our training is fully evaluated through online feedback forms, to enable an assessment of its impact and to help in ongoing service development.

The Adoption Support Fund

The Adoption Support Fund (ASF) was established to provide families with access to the therapeutic support and services they need following adoption or permanent placement.

Who Is Eligible For The Adoption Support Fund?

The Fund is available for children living in England up to and including the age of 21 (or 25 with a Statement of Special Educational Needs or Education Health & Care Plan) who:

- are adopted and were previously in local authority care in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- are adopted from overseas.
- are under a Child Arrangement Order (CAO) to enable the assessment of a potential special guardian, while the CAO is in force.
- are subject to a Special Guardianship Order and were previously in care. Comprehensive online information for special guardians has been published by the [Family Rights Group](#)

What Do I Need To Do?

To access the Fund, you will need to have an assessment of your family's adoption support needs by the local authority. This is a current legal obligation of all local authorities.

The local authority that places the child with you is responsible for assessing your adoption support needs for three years after the adoption order. After three years it becomes the responsibility of the local authority where you live (if different).

Where the assessment identifies that therapeutic services would be beneficial to your family, the local authority will apply to the Fund on your behalf, who will then release funding to the local authority.

The local authority social worker will be expected to talk to you about who can provide the types of service that you need and which provider you would prefer.

Who Provides The Services?

Local authorities, independent providers (who are either OFSTED registered or individual practitioners where the local authority making the application assumes responsibility as an OFSTED-registered organisation themselves) and NHS providers e.g. Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS – who offer services within the scope of the ASF) can all provide services through the ASF.

What Support Will I Receive Through The ASF?

The Fund will provide money to the local authority to fund a range of therapeutic services. The amount per child per year is capped at £5000 for therapy, as well as a separate amount of up to £2,500 per child if specialist assessments are needed. Therapy and assessment above this amount and up to a limit of £30,000 requires match funding by the local authority.

The therapies funded are those identified to help achieve the following positive outcomes for you and your child:

- Improved relationships with friends, family members, teachers and school staff
- Improved engagement with learning
- Improved emotional regulation and behaviour management
- Improved confidence and ability to enjoy a positive family life and social relationships

To achieve these outcomes the Fund will pay for therapeutic support and services including but not restricted to:

- Therapeutic parenting training
- Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy
- Theraplay
- Attachment focussed therapy
- Psychodynamic therapy
- Extensive life story work with a therapeutic intervention (where therapy is used to help the young person understand and cope with the trauma and difficulties that their life story work might revisit)
- Attendance at therapeutic parenting groups

The following are not in scope of the Fund:

- Stand alone assessments for single conditions, e.g. ADHD, FASD, autism, sensory integration, unless they are part of a wider specialist assessment which meets the criteria for the Specialist Assessment FAL i.e. are in depth, covering trauma and attachment, led and undertaken by a qualified clinician and resulting in a therapeutic support plan.
- Standalone specialist assessments, including any baselining specialist assessments, are also out of scope of the Therapy Fair Access Limit.
- A general social work assessment of adoption/SGO support needs remains the responsibility of the local authority/regional adoption agency.

The ASF will not pay for:

- Support for physical medical conditions
- Speech and language therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and other universal health services.
- Education support
- Membership of clubs and organisations
- Legal support
- Support provided by private sector and third sector organisations that are not Ofsted regulated unless commissioned through local authorities
- Training of staff
- Support not delivered in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
- Animal, pet or equine therapy
- Ex- local authority (associate) social workers

Receiving a service from Families Empowered

If your support is funded through the ASF funding, once the ASF process is complete they will send us a referral form, having sought your consent to do so. Once we receive the referral your allocated therapeutic practitioner will contact your local authority support team to confirm the start of the work and arrange an initial joint meeting with you where this has been requested.

If you are self-referring and self-funding, we will ask you to complete a self-referral form.

Introduction and/or Initial Meeting

Once we have received the referral form and contacted the social worker (if you were referred by your local authority), your allocated therapy practitioner will contact you to arrange a telephone call to introduce themselves, share their contact details, explain the process, discuss your needs as a family and plan your session timings. We will be as flexible as possible regarding the day and time of your sessions. If you have any questions or worries you can contact your therapeutic practitioner who will be happy to support you.

If there is a planned initial meeting prior to the commencement of the work, a date will be agreed for this. This will be with you, your local authority support or social worker and the Families Empowered Therapeutic Practitioner. If the children have an allocated social worker (for example, in pre-adoption) they may also be part of the initial meeting. It will help everyone to think about the focus and desired outcomes of the support.

Therapy Contract & Consent Form

Prior to the first session, your therapeutic practitioner will send you a therapy contract & consent form to complete. This is a 1-page form and will only take a few minutes to complete. It asks for your consent to proceed with the therapeutic intervention, for Families Empowered to hold your personal information and sets out an agreement for both parties to notify the other should the agreed session times and dates need to be changed for any reason.

The consent form also clarifies when information may need to be shared with other professionals.

'Thinking About Your Child' Questionnaire

At the start of the intervention, we will ask you to complete a 'Thinking About Your Child' questionnaire. This questionnaire gives you an opportunity to think about areas of your parenting and the relationship you have with your child. The questionnaire is repeated at the end of the therapeutic intervention and provides an opportunity for reflection on your family's journey. You will receive a copy of the questionnaire when you submit it.

The Intervention

During your therapeutic intervention you will be supported by your therapeutic practitioner, who will be your main point of contact throughout. If for any reason you need to contact Families Empowered and do not wish to go through your therapeutic practitioner, the contact details for the managers and administrator are given on the last page of this booklet.

Cancelling or Re-arranging Sessions

We ask for a minimum of 48 hours notice if you need to cancel or re-arrange a planned session. Please contact your therapeutic practitioner as soon as you know you are unable to attend a session. If we have not received prior notice of cancellation we may need to count that session as having taken place. We do understand that there may be times when you are unable to give notice due to sudden and unforeseen circumstances such as illness or emergencies. We will always be as flexible and understanding as possible - we know that family life can be complex and challenging. In such cases we will endeavour to rearrange your session.

Midpoint Review Meeting

For work commissioned through your local authority, a review meeting normally takes place. This is between you and your therapeutic practitioner and will include your local authority worker. Your therapeutic practitioner will arrange the meeting; its purpose is to review the intervention so far and plan for the remaining sessions - including if you feel that any further sessions will be required following the end of the current sessions. If a midpoint summary report has been requested, this will be prepared by your therapeutic practitioner and sent to you for agreement prior to the meeting and then sent to your allocated worker..

The End of Your Therapeutic Intervention

Again, for work commissioned through your local authority, a final review may be requested at the end of the work to review the support you have received and discuss if any further support is recommended or requested. A final report will be prepared by your therapeutic practitioner and sent to you for agreement prior to sharing with your local authority support team. We give 15 working days for the report to be completed following the end of the support.

Submitting Feedback

Families Empowered welcomes all feedback, on every aspect of our service. When your intervention is complete you will receive an invitation to give us feedback about your experience. This will be sent to you by our Administrator.

Your feedback will help us to ensure we are giving children and families a high quality service. By providing valuable information about your experience of working with us, you enable us to build on what we are doing well, learn from our mistakes and respond to the voices of those using our services to undertake meaningful development, improvement and change.

If You Are Not Happy With Our Service

Families Empowered wants you to be happy with the service you receive from us and we strive to operate within the principles of good practice at all times. Families Empowered aims to:

- Be client focused
- Deliver excellent service
- Be honest, open and accountable
- Act fairly and proportionately
- Address complaints promptly
- Strive for continuous improvement and development

Families Empowered has a responsibility for making sure that all staff undertaking work for us in any capacity have seen, understood and agreed to follow our Code of Conduct.

Talking To Us

If you are not happy with any aspect of your service, we would like you to share your concerns directly so that we may work with you to ensure you receive a positive experience from Families Empowered. We understand that some people may wish to express a concern without having this framed as a formal complaint, or may have a complaint which can be quickly and satisfactorily addressed without recourse to the formal complaints procedure. Our Director, Deborah Sharratt, is always available for a telephone or in-person discussion.

When a complaint is raised we will first try to resolve the matter satisfactorily using Stage 1 of our Complaints Policy and Procedure. This is outlined in full on our website:

familieempowered.co.uk

Making A Complaint

If a concern or complaint cannot be resolved satisfactorily at Stage 1, then it should progress to Stage 2 as a formal complaint, which will be completed by the Director. Please refer to our Complaints Policy & Procedure, which acts as a step-by-step guide on how to make a formal complaint. You will find this on our website: familieempowered.co.uk

Children's Guides

These are child-friendly guides, for ages 5-10 and 11-18, outlining what to expect when receiving a service from Families Empowered and what to do if a child needs to make a complaint. They can be found on our website: familieempowered.co.uk

Additional Information

Families Empowered have a range of policies and procedures which are available to view on our website familiesempowered.co.uk, including our:

Privacy Policy

Keeping your personal information safe is central to the integrity of our relationship with you. Our privacy policy sets out what information we hold about you and why.

Environment Policy

Families Empowered are committed to reducing our environmental impact and improving our environmental performance. We encourage colleagues and clients to do the same.

Registration & Regulatory Compliance

We are registered as an Adoption Support Agency with Ofsted, who are the regulatory body for Adoption Support Agencies. Ofsted's contact details are:

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
Telephone: 0300 123 1231
Email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Ofsted Registration Number: 2664647

Contact Us

Contact details for the Director and Administrator are set out below:

Name and Role: Deborah Sharratt, Director Phone number: 07917 440683
Address: Unit 1C, The Gattinets, Hadleigh Road, East Bergholt, Essex, CO7 6QT
Email: deborah@familieempowered.co.uk

Name and Role: Tara Davey, Administrator
Phone number: 07917 891868
Address: Unit 1C, The Gattinets, Hadleigh Road, East Bergholt, Essex, CO7 6QT
Email: tara@familieempowered.co.uk

www.familieempowered.co.uk

Facebook: facebook.com/famempowered

Twitter: [@famempowered](https://twitter.com/famempowered)

Monitoring, Review and Revision

This guide came into force on 26th April 2021.

Families Empowered are committed to reviewing documents annually.

Review Date	Reviewer	Reason for Revision
31/3/2022	TD	Review
13/6/22	WE	Change of registered address
17/5/23	WE	Update staff details
12/4/24	WE	Update staff details
07/05/24	CA	Review