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The Windfall Centre

*Supporting the Emotional Health
of Children and Families*



Nurturing Families Programme

The Windfall Centre's Nurturing Families Programme is a new Early Intervention service funded by Children in Need. Based on Filial Therapy, it is a pilot project especially designed for parents and carers who want to strengthen their relationship with their babies or young children. It is delivered by BAPT Play Therapists specially trained in Filial Therapy and Infant Mental Health.

Approaches such as Filial Therapy, employing the active involvement of parents, and using skills based on early caregiving such as attunement and empathy to repair family relationships, have been extensively researched and supported in literature over the last 20 years. Such models have been shown to be helpful to a wide range of families of varying compositions. Research also indicates that the progress achieved in parent-mediated programmes tends to last rather than tail off after support ends.

What is special about The Nurturing Families Programme?

In this programme the focus is the **relationship** between caregiver and child. One of the key elements is the use of the interactive behaviours seen in the early years of development between parent and infant. These behaviours should come naturally, underpinning secure attachment and healthy child development; however, a wide variety of challenges can undermine the parent-child relationship and create the need for additional support and guidance.

Additionally, The Nurturing Families Programme is both reparative and preventative. Over the years such approaches as Video Interactive Guidance and Parent Infant Partnerships have highlighted the effective application of similar models to strengthen family relationships. These attachment-based approaches also assist maternal bonding in preparation for parenthood in the perinatal period.

The Nurturing Families Programme supports families with diverse needs and can be especially effective in strengthening family relationships where a child has been diagnosed with autism, disability or chronic illness. Its non-judgmental ethos reflects the core elements of unconditional acceptance and positive regard at the heart of Play Therapy and Counselling. Parents are collaborative partners in the process and the natural capabilities of families to work together and their individual and cultural approach to parenting is valued and respected.

What happens in the programme? The model has a basic structure of 16 sessions but is adaptable to meet the needs of individual families. The programme begins with finding out how the family interacts and plays and explores with parents their views on their children's lives and their own early experiences. This is followed by an introduction to Attachment and then skills-sharing sessions. The therapist then has the opportunity to observe these skills in practice within play sessions and through video feedback sessions. Weekly meetings are held to review home sessions with parents sometimes through the use of video recordings. At the end of the programme, families will meet with the therapist for follow-up reviews and final observations. Thereafter parents and carers can call in at any time if further advice and support is needed.