



If we're going through something difficult ourselves, it can be quite easy to forget how other people are affected. With family therapy this can be addressed, giving members of the family a chance to express their concerns and communicate in a controlled environment.

## What can family therapy help with?

Family therapy can help with a range of difficulties, from relationship difficulties to dealing with trauma and mental illness. Common examples of how family therapy can help include:

- When a family/couple wants to improve their **relationship**.
- When a member of the family is struggling with **addiction**.
- When a member of the family is living with a **mental illness**.
- When a member of the family is living with a **disability** or chronic illness.
- When parents/guardians are worried about their **child's behaviour**.
- In the case of **separation**, and parents are worried about the impact on the family.
- When a family is coping with **loss or trauma**.
- When family members are going through a life change (e.g. moving away, changing schools, getting married etc.)

### For further information:

Email: **BICS@barnet.gov.uk**

Support Line: **020 8359 3130**

Website: **www.barnet.gov.uk/bics**





## Why Family Therapy and not just individual work?

There are benefits to both individual and family therapy approaches. However, if the individual makes changes but the family system has not then it becomes harder for that person to sustain any changes. Often difficulties are not just occupied in the individual but have affected the whole family. For example, grief and trauma.

Families can be very complicated things. We're all unique, we have different perspectives and experience life events a little differently. When you throw family dynamics into this mix, it's perhaps unsurprising that relationships can become fraught.

Lots of different events and circumstances can make family life stressful, from mental health problems to getting married. When things become overwhelming within a family, or when you're finding it difficult to move out of old, unhelpful patterns, family therapy may be able to help.

Family therapy looks to help members of a family understand each other better, change negative behaviours and resolve conflicts. It is appropriate for all ages and can even be useful for individuals. Here we'll take a closer look at what's involved in family therapy and how it could help you.

# What is family therapy?

Family therapy gives families the chance to express and explore their feelings in a safe, non-judgemental environment. Working alongside a therapist, families can discuss **difficulties and differences** within their relationships with the aim of improving communication and finding a way forward, together.

This approach looks to be inclusive and considerate of every member of the family, avoiding any sense of 'ganging up'. It looks to recognise an individual's strengths and build on these within sessions and to work with members of the family in a collaborative way. Family therapists will invite engagement and be sensitive to the diverse nature of family relationships, forms, beliefs and cultures.

Family Therapists use a Reflecting team of clinicians (up to four) to sit in the room or sit virtually to help the families and the therapist focus on what is important. Or to reflect on maybe an idea that would be useful to expand on. It is like having more than one therapist which is there to really help think about what is helpful.

Family therapists don't exclusively work with an entire family. They may only work with certain members of the family, with children and adults individually or with couples. They may even work with other groups and communities - the term family can cover a range of relationships and is generally used to describe a group of people who care about each other and call each other 'family'.

Family therapy has been described as "Long Brief Therapy" so 6 sessions are offered and then there is a review after 3 and again after 6. Family therapy understands that Families and individuals want to feel happier and "better" now and not in the future.

Some family therapists will specialise and work with people and groups under-represented in mainstream services, such as

**LGBT clients** and those from **minority ethnic communities**.

