

HELPING YOUNG HEARTS FEEL
SEEN, SAFE AND STRONG,
FOR LIVES LIVED WELL

INHERITED CARDIAC CONDITIONS
CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST
SERVICES OFFERED



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**POPPY'S LIGHT
FOUNDATION**

In Association with



SUPPORTING HEARTS & MINDS

Psychological Support for Children, Young People & Families After Inherited Cardiac Diagnosis

Why Psychological Support Matters

Diagnosis can be life-changing, not just medically, but emotionally. Children and young people face unique challenges: identity, school, lifestyle, and fears about the future. Families experience uncertainty, guilt, and stress. Evidence shows early psychological support improves coping, outcomes, and family resilience. *"Emotional care is cardiac care."*

Common Psychosocial Challenges

Children (5-12): Fear of doctors/hospitals, separation anxiety
Adolescents (13-18): Identity issues, loss of independence, peer stigma
Parents: Guilt (genetic), fear of loss, decision overwhelm
Siblings: Feel overlooked, worry they're "next"

Our Vision

"To provide compassionate, age-appropriate psychological care alongside medical treatment, supporting the emotional well-being of every child and family navigating inherited cardiac conditions."

Our Goal

to Normalize support, empower families and reduce long-term distress.

Proposed Service Structure

At Diagnosis:
Family intake with psychologist
Initial assessment of emotional needs
Ongoing Support:
Individual therapy (CBT, play, trauma-informed)
Family and sibling support
Group sessions and peer networks
Accessibility:
In-clinic and telehealth options
Materials tailored to age/literacy level

Integration Into Cardiac Services

Embedded within the inherited cardiac care team:
• Clinical psychologists
• CBT Therapists
• Cardiology nurse specialists
• Genetic counselors
• Social workers
• Specialist Family Therapists

Benefits of the Service

- Better mental health and quality of life
- Greater adherence to cardiac management
- Reduced family distress
- Improved transition to adult services
- Long-term savings on acute/emergency care
- Evidence-based. Holistic. Preventative.

Implementation Plan

1. Needs assessment with families and clinicians
2. Recruit pediatric psychologist(s) with cardiac expertise
3. Staff training on trauma-informed, family-centered approaches
4. Pilot in clinical psychologist attending Freeman Hospital once a week to work alongside psychologist and nursing staff
5. Evaluate with outcome and feedback data
6. Expand based on demand and findings

CHOOSING THE BEST APPROACH

Child Psychology and Therapy with Poppy's Light Foundation

Child counselling and psychotherapy can help your child understand and manage their emotions, improve communication, and feel more secure in a safe and supportive environment.

With Poppy's Light Foundation, your child can work one-on-one with a qualified psychologist, counsellor, or therapist, even attend sessions with family members where helpful. Our aim is to help them overcome emotional and behavioural challenges and feel happier both at home and in everyday life.

Therapies We Offer Include: Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Play Therapy, Mindfulness, Family Therapy and Routine & Structured Habit Development

These therapeutic approaches are designed to help children and teenagers manage complex emotions such as depression, anxiety, or anger, and address issues related to school, friendships, bullying, or disruptive behaviour.

Many parents prefer talking therapies as a first step over medication. All of our offered child-focused therapies are evidence-based and delivered by highly trained professionals with extensive experience helping children and families navigate life's challenges.

How to Choose the Right Therapy Approach for Your Child

1. Understand Your Child's Needs

Choosing the right therapy approach for your child can feel overwhelming, but it becomes clearer when you consider your child's unique needs, the nature of the difficulties they're facing, and their age or developmental stage.

Start by identifying the primary concerns:

- Is your child struggling with anxiety, low mood, or confidence?
- Are there behavioural issues at home or school?
- Has your child experienced trauma, loss, or a major life change?
- Do they have a diagnosis (or suspected diagnosis) like autism or ADHD?

2. Explore Evidence-Based Therapies

Here are some common options and what they're best suited for:

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT):
Helps children, teenagers, and adolescents identify and challenge unhelpful thinking patterns and negative thoughts - Ideal for anxiety, low mood, phobias, and behavioural problems.

Play Therapy:
Best for younger children (typically under 12) dealing with trauma, grief, behavioural issues, or emotional regulation - Offers a creative outlet for younger children to process difficult emotions and experiences.

Mindfulness:
Useful for children experiencing stress or anxiety - Encouraging calmness, self-awareness, and enjoyment of the present moment.

Family Therapy:
Effective when issues involve family conflict, communication breakdowns, or shared grief or trauma.

Structured Habit & Routine Support:
Especially helpful for neurodiverse children (e.g. autism, ADHD) to build consistency and reduce overwhelm. Helps to support families and children in establishing daily routines.

3. Involve a Professional for Assessment

A qualified Child Psychologist or Therapist can assess your child's needs and recommend the most suitable approach. Initial consultations often include input from both the child and parents or carers, and can help shape a clear therapeutic plan.

4. Be Open to Trying and Adapting

Children may respond differently to different approaches. Therapy isn't one-size-fits-all, and a therapist may adjust the approach based on how your child engages and progresses.

THERAPY GUIDE FOR TEENS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

1. Understanding Emotions and Difficult Thoughts

Children and teens with chronic health conditions often experience anxiety, fear of death, isolation, and sadness. Naming these experiences reduces their intensity and normalizes the emotional response.

The goal is to help young people recognise and name their feelings and thoughts.

2. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) Tools

CBT involves a range of techniques to help individuals identify and challenge negative thought patterns and behaviors, ultimately promoting positive change. These skills can be learned and practiced to improve mental well-being.

Key CBT skills:

Identifying and Challenging Negative Thoughts | Cognitive Restructuring | Behavioral Activation | Problem-Solving | Exposure Therapy | Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques | Journaling | Goal Setting | Assertiveness Training

3. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) Tools

ACT is a therapeutic approach that helps individuals develop psychological flexibility by accepting thoughts and feelings, rather than fighting them, and committing to actions aligned with their values.

Key ACT skills:

Mindfulness | Acceptance | Cognitive Difusion | Values Clarification | Committed Actions | Self-as-context | Self-compassion meditations | Positive reinforcement

4. Problem-Focused Interventions

A problem-focused intervention is a strategy that actively addresses a stressful situation by modifying or eliminating the source of the problem through actions or behavior changes. This approach contrasts with emotion-focused coping, which focuses on managing the emotional response to a stressful event rather than directly tackling the problem.

5. Child and Family Therapy Integration

Child and family therapy integration involves combining different approaches to address both the child's individual needs and the family's overall functioning. This approach recognizes that a child's problems are often rooted in family dynamics and relationships. By integrating these perspectives, therapists can help improve communication, resolve conflict, and enhance the child's well-being within the family context.

6. Psychotherapy: Holding the Space for Healing

In psychotherapy, "holding the space" means creating a safe and supportive environment where a client can explore their feelings and experiences without judgment, allowing for healing and growth. This involves the therapist's presence, attentive listening, and a focus on the client's well-being, facilitating emotional processing and self-regulation.

ADAPTING THERAPY FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Adapting therapy for younger children (typically ages 4-10) involves using developmentally appropriate, play-based, and concrete tools to help them understand and apply therapeutic principles. Children at this age process the world through play, sensory experience, routine, and relationship—so therapy must align with how they naturally communicate and learn.

1. Use Play as the Primary Modality

Children use play to express emotions, understand the world, and work through experiences.

2. Visual & Concrete Tools for Abstract Ideas

Younger children struggle with abstract thinking. Make concepts tangible.

3. Scaffold Language and Emotional Literacy

Children may not have words for complex feelings or thoughts.

4. Shorter, Repetitive, Routine-Based Sessions

Younger children benefit from predictability, repetition, and shorter durations.

5. Caregiver Involvement Is Crucial

Children regulate emotionally through co-regulation with adults.

LET'S SUPPORT THE WHOLE HEART

Emotional well-being and medical treatment go hand in hand, Families deserve integrated, compassionate care

Our support services can transform outcomes for years to come, Join us in making psychological support a standard part of inherited cardiac care.

NEED HELP DECIDING?

At Poppy's Light Foundation, we've got you! Every step of the way. Our experienced team can guide you through the process and match your child with the therapist and method best suited to their needs.

