

Understanding Your Child: A Comprehensive Psychological Assessment and Formulation Pathway for Children and Adolescents

Every child and young person deserves to be truly understood. If your child has been struggling — at school, at home, in their relationships, or within themselves — and you've been searching for answers that no one has yet been able to fully provide, you are not alone. Perhaps your child has received conflicting information from different professionals, tried various interventions without lasting improvement, or simply never had the opportunity to be assessed thoroughly and compassionately by someone with the time and expertise to see the whole picture. Perhaps your teenager is finding it increasingly difficult to cope, and neither they nor you can quite make sense of why. Whatever has brought you here, your child deserves more than a hurried appointment or an incomplete explanation. They deserve to be genuinely seen, heard, and understood. This comprehensive psychological assessment and formulation pathway has been designed specifically for children and adolescents, offering a thorough, expert, and child-centred evaluation of their mental health and psychological functioning — delivered with care, clinical rigour, and deep expertise by a skilled and experienced psychological professional.

Designed for children and young people from early childhood through to late adolescence, this pathway recognises that children are not simply small adults — their psychological lives are shaped by development, family, education, relationships, and the challenges of growing up, and any meaningful assessment must take all of these factors fully into account. Parents and carers are valued and essential partners throughout this process and will be fully involved at every stage — from the initial consultation through to the feedback session and written report.

Rather than navigating uncertainty alone, you and your child will be supported by a qualified psychologist or psychological practitioner who brings expertise, warmth, and genuine care to every stage of the assessment process. This pathway goes beyond the assignment of a diagnostic label — drawing on your child's full developmental history, current presentation, family context, and psychological profile to develop a rich, individualised formulation that makes genuine sense of their difficulties in the context of their whole life and experience.

What Is Psychological Formulation?

A psychological formulation is more than a diagnosis. While a diagnosis identifies and names a pattern of symptoms, a formulation goes deeper — offering a personalised, evidence-based explanation of why your child is experiencing the

difficulties they are, how those difficulties developed, what is maintaining them, and what is most likely to help. Drawing on your child's developmental history, family relationships, educational experience, and current circumstances, the formulation will help you and your child to make meaningful sense of their mental health in a way that is unique to them — and will form the foundation for all recommendations about treatment, support, or further assessment.

What Does the Assessment Process Involve?

Your child's psychological assessment and formulation pathway will typically involve the following stages:

- **Initial parent and carer consultation** — a detailed introductory appointment with parents or carers to discuss your child's developmental history, family background, educational experience, presenting concerns, and goals for the assessment, ensuring the pathway is fully tailored to your child's individual needs and circumstances
- **Child and young person interview** — a warm, age-appropriate, and carefully structured conversation with your child or young person, conducted at a pace and in a manner that feels comfortable and safe for them, ensuring their own voice, perspective, and experience are placed at the very heart of the assessment
- **Comprehensive clinical assessment** — an in-depth evaluation of your child's presenting difficulties, developmental history, attachment history, family dynamics, peer relationships, academic functioning, and current wellbeing across all areas of their life
- **Psychometric assessment** — the administration of a carefully selected battery of validated, age-appropriate, standardised psychological measures and questionnaires for both the child and parents or carers, chosen to provide objective, evidence-based data across relevant clinical domains including mood, anxiety, behaviour, trauma, attention, and social communication
- **Review of relevant history** — where available and with your consent, a review of relevant previous assessments, clinical records, school reports, or professional correspondence
- **Psychological formulation** — the development of a detailed, personalised formulation that integrates all assessment findings with your child's developmental history and clinical presentation, explaining how and why their difficulties developed, what maintains them, and how they relate to one another
- **Diagnostic clarification** — where clinically appropriate and meaningful, the pathway will include formal diagnostic assessment using recognised

classification systems including the DSM-5 and ICD-11, providing clarity and, where indicated, formal diagnoses

- **Feedback session** — a dedicated appointment in which your assessor will share and discuss the formulation and any diagnostic conclusions with parents or carers in clear, accessible language, answer your questions fully, and explore the implications for your child's care, education, and next steps
- **Age-appropriate feedback for your child** — where appropriate, your assessor will also provide your child or young person with honest, compassionate, and empowering feedback about the assessment findings, in language that is carefully tailored to their age and developmental level, helping them to understand themselves and feel hopeful about the future
- **Written report** — a comprehensive, professionally written report documenting the assessment findings, psychological formulation, diagnostic conclusions, and detailed, tailored recommendations for home, school, therapeutic intervention, and onward referral where appropriate, suitable for sharing with schools, SENCOs, paediatricians, CAMHS, or other involved professionals

Flexible Appointments to Fit Around Your Family

We understand that arranging a psychological assessment for your child shouldn't add to the pressures of an already busy family life. That's why appointments are available during evenings and weekends, as well as standard daytime hours — making it easier for working parents and carers to access the thorough evaluation their child deserves without unnecessary disruption to the school day or the working week. All appointments are conducted securely online, removing the need to travel and allowing your child to engage with the assessment process from the comfort and familiarity of their own home — an environment in which many children and young people feel significantly more relaxed, open, and able to express themselves freely.

What Conditions Can This Pathway Assess and Diagnose?

This pathway is equipped to assess, formulate, and where appropriate provide diagnostic clarification across a wide range of childhood and adolescent mental health, neurodevelopmental, and emotional presentations, including:

- Anxiety disorders including generalised anxiety disorder (GAD), separation anxiety, social anxiety, panic disorder, and specific phobias
- Depression, persistent low mood, and bipolar spectrum disorders in young people
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and complex trauma (C-PTSD)
- Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and related conditions

- Eating disorders including anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and avoidant restrictive food intake disorder (ARFID)
- Selective mutism and school refusal
- Attachment disorders including reactive attachment disorder (RAD) and disinhibited social engagement disorder (DSED)
- Conduct disorder and oppositional defiant disorder (ODD)
- Tic disorders and Tourette syndrome
- Emerging personality difficulties in adolescence
- Co-occurring and dual diagnosis presentations involving multiple neurodevelopmental or mental health conditions
- Presentations that have not responded to previous intervention or that remain diagnostically unclear

Is This Pathway Right for My Child?

This pathway may be particularly valuable if your child or young person is:

- Struggling emotionally, behaviourally, or socially in ways that are significantly affecting their daily life, relationships, or education
- Experiencing difficulties that have not been fully explained or adequately addressed by previous professional involvement
- Living with an existing diagnosis that no longer feels accurate, complete, or helpful as they have grown and developed
- Experiencing complex or overlapping difficulties that don't seem to fit neatly into a single diagnostic category
- A young person who is finding it increasingly difficult to cope and who deserves a thorough, compassionate understanding of their inner world
- Requiring a comprehensive psychological assessment report for educational, medical, legal, or EHCP purposes
- Facing significant transitions — such as moving schools, approaching examinations, or entering adulthood — where a clear psychological formulation would be of significant benefit
- A child or adolescent who has felt misunderstood, unheard, or inadequately supported by previous services, and who deserves a fresh, thorough, and genuinely compassionate evaluation

If you're unsure whether this pathway is the right fit for your child, our team will carry out an initial consultation with you to ensure the assessment is appropriate, relevant, and fully tailored to your child's specific needs, age, and circumstances.

This pathway is conducted by qualified and experienced psychological professionals working within their area of competence and in accordance with relevant professional, ethical, and safeguarding guidelines. The written report produced following your child's assessment is a formal clinical document and will be treated with the utmost care and confidentiality. Parental or carer consent is required before any assessment can take place. Where safeguarding concerns arise during the assessment process, your assessor will follow all relevant statutory and professional obligations. This pathway is not a substitute for urgent or crisis mental health care. If your child is in crisis or you require immediate assistance, please contact your GP, local CAMHS crisis team, or call 999.

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