

ADVICE FROM YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR DISTRESSING SENSORY EXPERIENCES IN CAMHS

FOUNDATIONAL APPROACHES

01

Trauma-informed, compassionate care should be the norm, supported by training for every CAMHS practitioner.



INTENTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

02

Building trust starts with authenticity, respect, and giving young people the space to lead in their own story.



POWER, CONSENT AND ADVOCACY

03

Young people must be heard, involved, and supported to shape their care — working together helps break down unfair power differences.



WHOLE-PERSON, INCLUSIVE SUPPORT

04

Mental health care should recognise complex experiences, offer practical options, and affirm young people regardless of diagnosis.



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01. FOUNDATIONAL APPROACHES

- **Put Kindness and Respect First:** Mental health care should be based on empathy, safety, and respect for each person's story. All staff should be trained to give care that feels supportive and meaningful.
- **Build Trust Through Real Connections:** Young people feel more comfortable when professionals are honest, kind, and respectful. Using their preferred words, asking about the present, and letting them lead their story helps build trust over time.
- **Be Well-Prepared:** Before appointments, staff should prepare carefully so young people don't have to repeat painful memories. This protects their feelings and makes the time together more helpful.
- **Make Every Moment Count:** Even short sessions can make a big difference. Every meeting should be thoughtful and caring. A warm first impression helps build a strong, supportive relationship even when time is limited.

02. INTENTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

- **Focus on the Individual:** Young people should be part of every decision about their care. Their personal experiences should help shape the support they get.
- **Train for Real-Life Challenges:** Staff need to understand complex family situations and always put the young person's wellbeing first.
- **Support Youth Voices:** Create clear ways for young people to speak up about what they need, how they feel, and what matters to them.
- **Work Together with Respect:** Families, care teams, and young people should work as partners. The goal is to support the young person's wellbeing, not just follow rules or systems.

03. POWER, CONSENT AND ADVOCACY

Short-term, solution-focused interventions should be clearly introduced as targeted tools for managing symptoms — not as substitutes for deep therapeutic relationships.

Framing these options clearly helps young people to make informed decisions by:

- Setting clear goals so there's no pressure to "fix everything" fast. Everyone moves at their own pace.
- Show that therapy is about feeling better — not about meeting targets.
- Give enough info so young people can choose what works best for their emotions and coping style.
- Make care feel personal, safe, and meaningful — so it truly supports them.

When care is built around emotional support and real-life coping skills, it stays kind, personal, and based on what matters most to young people.

04. WHOLE-PERSON, INCLUSIVE SUPPORT

Sensory experiences like voice hearing or felt presences exist on a spectrum — treating them as isolated symptoms can limit access to meaningful support. Care should look at the full picture and not just labels or categories. Every young person understands their life in their own way, and support should respect that.

Effective care means:

- Prioritising impact and support needs over strict diagnostic criteria.
- Providing psychoeducation that helps build personal insight and agency.
- Responding with empathy when service eligibility isn't met, ensuring young people feel heard and not dismissed.
- Offering signposting to alternatives, so no one leaves without a pathway to support.