



 **PROMOTING EXCELLENCE IN  
PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH & WELLBEING**

## *Professional Profiles*

# Psychological Professions Network

North East and Yorkshire

Child and Adolescent  
Psychotherapist



Dr Rajni Sharma  
Director of Child and Adolescent  
Psychotherapy Training  
Northern School of Child and  
Adolescent Psychotherapy

# Professional Profile

## What led you to train as a child and adolescent psychotherapist?

I realised that child and adolescent mental health was going to be my area of work when I started a new job as an occupational therapist with a multi-disciplinary team in Rotherham. I enjoyed working with mental health nurses, social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists. I developed skills in play therapy approaches and wanted to learn more about working in this way. A colleague pointed me to a psychoanalytic infant observation and work discussion course. This is when I had my first contact with child and adolescent psychotherapists who taught the seminars. I was so taken by the effectiveness of close observation and attention to emotional experience in these seminar and how this improved my work as an OT. My previous scepticism about psychoanalysis was turned on its head as I learned about contemporary applications in day-to-day work. I was hooked! I built on these seminars with psychoanalytic theory, child development and research seminars to meet the pre-clinical requirements to train as a child and adolescent psychotherapist.



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What does this role bring to mental health/neurodevelopmental health/  
physical health/ learning disabilities/long term care?

The training embedded in NHS multi-disciplinary services enables grounded, accessible, and effective ways of helping a wide range of families with complicated and often long-standing mental health difficulties. These often involve debilitating emotional distress, experiences of not fitting in, or relationships not making sense. One young person said, “I don’t know what the point of me is” as she let me know of uncontrollable surges of anger, despair, and loneliness. Drawing on psychoanalytic and developmental training, (from infancy to early adulthood) and research skills, the role requires the delivery of a range of clinical interventions. Along with psychotherapy for children and adolescents, the work is with parents and families, providing specialist clinical assessments and working in many different infant, child, adolescent, and family settings. The child and adolescent psychotherapist brings an active involvement in evaluation and outcome monitoring as well as multidisciplinary consultations, supervision, training and taking up leadership roles in services.



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## What are your hopes/expectations for the profession?

I hope child and adolescent psychotherapy's commitment to work across disciplines and agencies continues and that there is an increased interest and willingness to recognise the significant contribution that we make. Working in this field is challenging, never more so with the huge disruptions of Covid 19. From this crisis there are openings and momentums for innovation, growth, research and becoming a more representative and visible profession. I hope our profession will be more across Britain and become an increasingly attractive and encouraging profession to those who want to train.