

Annual Conference 2026

When The Bough Breaks

ACP

Association of Child
Psychotherapists

WEDNESDAY 17 JUNE | ONLINE

SATURDAY 20 JUNE | THE CUTLERS' HALL, SHEFFIELD

WEDNESDAY 24 JUNE | ONLINE

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

When The Bough Breaks: Work with Looked After Children/Care Experienced Young People, Adoptive and Special Guardianship Families and Networks

The inner worlds of Looked After Children, Care Experienced Young People, and adopted children have long inspired the work of Child Psychotherapists. Their experiences - and those of their families, foster carers, and professional networks - are rich, complex, and often deeply traumatic. Yet, in recent years, fewer forums explore these children and families in depth. This conference provides a dedicated space to do just that.

Recent changes in the care system - shaped by the Munro Report, cuts to council funding, and evolving patterns of permanency, fostering, kinship, and Special Guardianship - have added new layers of complexity to the lives of these children and the adults who care for them. Despite shifts in the system, the challenges remain profound: enduring distress, intergenerational trauma, strained professional dynamics, and the testing of adult capacities to meet their mental and emotional needs.

These children often carry feelings of loneliness, confusion about identity, and a sense of being outsiders. In adolescence, they are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, and the effects of early trauma continue into adulthood, influencing mental health, education, employment, and social belonging. Their experiences also deeply affect foster, adoptive, and kinship families, residential homes, schools, and workplaces.

The growing presence of unaccompanied minors and asylum-seeking young people adds urgent new dimensions to this work. These children may have survived trafficking, war, torture, or abandonment, and they require extraordinary psychological support to process dislocation, grief, and loss - often in a social climate marked by hostility toward migrants.

This conference is a vital opportunity for ACP Child & Adolescent Psychotherapists to come together, reflect, and deepen their understanding of these vulnerable children, their families, and the networks that support them.

THIS YEAR'S SPEAKERS

ACP CONFERENCE CHAIRS

Katie Argent

Katie Argent is a Child and Adolescent Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist and an Adult Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist. She has a special interest in the usefulness of psychoanalytic thinking outside the clinic. Her working background was in public-sector housing and homelessness and women's refuges. After qualifying as a child psychotherapist in 2005, she worked in the Tavistock Refugee Service, Outreach in Primary Schools, Community CAMHS and Fostering, Adoption and Kinship Care Teams, and had teaching and leadership roles in education and training. She was Tavistock Head of Child Psychotherapy from 2016 until she retired from work in the NHS in 2024.

Joanne Miley

Joanne Miley works as a Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist and is an Associate Member of the Institute of Group Analysis. She tutors on the Professional Doctorate in Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy at the Northern School of Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy (NSCAP), where she is the Lead for Service Supervisors of trainee psychotherapists. She has taught infant observation on the Tavistock Intercultural Psychotherapy training and tutored on the MA in Psychodynamic Approaches to Working with Adolescents. For several years, she consulted to managers and led reflective practice groups for staff across residential children's homes in South Yorkshire. She maintains a small independent practice.

PRESENTERS

Jo Collinson; Lynne Conway; Simon Cregeen; Dr Joanne Dornan; Nikki Eriksen; Alice Field; Isla Fitchie; Becky Hall; Lorraine McLeod; Sheila Melzak; Marigemma Rocco; Helene Ross; Kate Rothwell; and Lauren Schneider.

CHAIRS OF PRESENTATIONS

Katie Argent; Annie Baikie; Charlie Beaumont; Andrew Dawson; Kanese Da Costa; Joanne Miley; Jemima Phorson, Rajni Sharma

SPECIAL GUESTS

Monica Lanyado & Margaret Rustin

CONFERENCE ORGANISING GROUP

Jo Collinson; Simon Cregeen; Elena Della Rosa; Penny de Ruyter; Kate England; Becky Hall; Hannah Israel; Claire Pestana; Louise Phillips; Ruth Thomas

THIS YEAR'S FORMAT

When The Bough Breaks spans three events - two webinars via Zoom and one in-person event, in Sheffield. You will have either signed up for the full Conference, which includes all three events - or the online only Conference Sessions - which include the two live and recorded sessions.

ONLINE SESSIONS

DATES & TIMES

The Zoom webinars run as follows:

1. **Wednesday 17 June 2026:** 6:00pm to 8:00pm
2. **Wednesday 24 June 2026:** 7:00pm to 9:00pm

You will be sent a Zoom link a few days in advance of the Conference.

TECHNICAL PREPARATION

You can download the Zoom application via this link: <https://zoom.us/download>

In order to access and enjoy the conference with limited disruption, please remember to check your equipment to ensure it is working properly:

- Check that you have a stable internet connection
- Test your microphone, speakers, camera, and screen sharing functions, and adjust the volume and lighting as needed
- Use a wired connection instead of Wi-Fi if possible, and close any unnecessary applications or tabs that might slow down your computer or cause interference

Someone will be available at the ACP to support your access.

Please email: admin@childpsychotherapy.org.uk or call: 020 4591 1500

CONFIDENTIALITY

To ensure a safe, respectful, and professionally contained learning environment, all participants attending conference sessions via Zoom are expected to maintain strict confidentiality regarding any clinical material, personal experiences, case discussions, or sensitive information shared during presentations and discussions. Recording, photographing, screen capturing, or distributing any part of the online sessions is strictly prohibited unless explicit permission has been granted by the conference organisers and presenters. Participants are asked to join sessions from a private setting wherever possible and to take reasonable steps to prevent conversations from being overheard by others. By attending the online conference sessions, participants agree to uphold these principles of confidentiality and professional conduct throughout the event.

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE VENUE

PLACE & TIME

When The Bough Breaks in-person Conference takes place at Cutlers Hall in Sheffield City Centre on Saturday 20 June from 8:30am to 5:00pm.

LOCATION

The Cutlers' Hall is located 800 metres from Sheffield's Railway Station, a short walk, tram or taxi journey away. The tram can be boarded at Sheffield railway station which drops off directly in front of the Hall. The nearest tram stop is Cathedral Station, opposite the venue. [Directions by road can be found here.](#)

ADDRESS: The Cutlers' Hall, 7-15 Church Street, Sheffield, S1 1HG **PHONE:** 0114 276 8149



HADFIELD HALL - ARRIVALS, REFRESHMENTS & EXHIBITION

Registration will be held in the Lobby on the ground floor entrance. All refreshments, (arrivals, morning break, lunch and afternoon break) will be served in the Hadfield Hall, also on the ground floor. A research poster exhibition and various stalls will also be displayed here.

MAIN HALL - MAIN PAPERS & PANEL DISCUSSION

The Welcome and the first two presentations can be heard by all delegates in the Main Hall on the first floor starting at 9:15am. Delegates will then make their way to the relevant breakout rooms on the same floor, for the afternoon parallel sessions and return to the Main Hall at 4pm for the Chairs' reflective space.

OLD BANQUETING HALL, DRAWING ROOM & RECEPTION ROOM

The two parallel sessions that you've registered for will take place in one of these three breakout rooms. You will be reminded of your session choices on the day and guided to the correct room.

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE VENUE

The Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire was established by an Act of Parliament in 1624. In 1638, the Company purchased land on Church Street and built its first hall. The current Grade II listed Cutlers' Hall, the third on this site, was constructed in 1832 and is renowned as one of the finest livery halls in northern England. Since the 17th century, the Cutlers' Company has been instrumental in shaping Sheffield's industrial growth, supporting the development of its major industries and the city itself. Find out more about the [History of Cutlers' Hall](#).



ACCESSIBILITY

Cutlers' Hall is a fully accessible venue designed to accommodate the needs of all delegates. The hotel provides step-free access, accessible restrooms, and facilities that support individuals with limited mobility. If you require any specific accommodations or assistance on the day, please contact our operational team in advance so we can ensure your needs are met.

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation is available at the nearby Leopold Hotel at a discounted rate. See the Conference page on our website for a more in-depth accommodation guide.

TOILET FACILITIES

There are toilets located on the ground floor. Accessible toilets can also be accessed on this floor and gender neutral toilets will also be available.

INTERNET ACCESS

Complimentary Wi-Fi is offered to all guests. To connect to Wi-Fi, turn on Wi-Fi on your device setting, choose from the listed networks – Cutlers Guests. Enter the password – CutlersGuest1234.

CLIMATE CONSCIOUS VENUE

The Cutlers' Hall is committed to integrating sustainable practices into every aspect of their operations. They aim to conduct business in a way that minimises negative environmental impact, supports local suppliers and communities, promotes ethical procurement, and preserves the integrity of their Grade II listed building for future generations.

EVENT PARTICULARS

PREPARATION & ATTENDANCE

In order to access and enjoy the conference with limited disruption, you are advised to:

- Pre-plan and book your travel and accommodation. Please see the ACP website for more details on the venue, accommodation and FAQs.
- Arrive before the programmed start time of 9:15am to allow for registration and morning refreshments.
- Check which parallel sessions you booked to attend, upon registration.
- Have your mobile device to view the official digital programme (limited hard copies available).

Our Delegate Package includes the following:

- Breakfast pastries
- Three servings of tea and coffee including snacks
- Standing Buffet Lunch
- Wi-Fi in the meetings rooms and public areas of the hotel

ACP staff and Conference Organising Group members will be present to support your access and assist with any on-the-day queries. You will find a team member present at all times, in the registration area, in the main entrance.

CONFIDENTIALITY

This conference is committed to providing a confidential and professionally respectful environment for all attendees, speakers, and contributors. Participants are reminded that any clinical material, personal reflections, case discussions, or sensitive information shared during presentations, workshops, or discussions must remain confidential and must not be disclosed outside the conference setting. Photography, audio recording, or video recording during sessions is not permitted without prior consent from both the conference organisers and presenters. All attendees are expected to uphold professional and ethical standards by respecting the privacy and contributions of others throughout the event.

Please arrive promptly to sessions and silence mobile devices to avoid disruptions. We encourage active listening and thoughtful contributions during presentations and discussions, respecting the diversity of perspectives and experiences in the room. When engaging in dialogue, please be mindful of allowing space for all voices to be heard. If you need to step out during a session, please do so quietly. Our aim is to foster a welcoming and professional environment where all participants feel valued and heard.

RECORDING DISCLAIMER

In line with GDPR and Intellectual Property Rights, and as an event exclusive to ACP Members, attendees are NOT permitted, in any circumstances, to record or share content during or after this conference.

FULL PROGRAMME

ONLINE SESSION 1

Wednesday 17 June - 6:00pm - 8:00pm
via Zoom

| | |
|---------------|--|
| 18:00 - 18:15 | Chair's Welcome and Introduction |
| 18:15 - 19:15 | Another Place: Disorientation, Identity and the Uncanny Simon Cregeen <i>Chairs: Katie Argent & Joanne Miley</i> |
| 19:15 - 19:50 | Discussion |
| 19:50 - 20:00 | Chairs' round-up & close |

IN-PERSON PROGRAMME

Saturday 20 June - 8:30am to 5:00pm
Cutlers' Hall, Sheffield

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|---------------------------------------|--|
| 8:30 - 9:15 <i>Entrance Lobby</i> | Arrivals & Registration in the entrance lobby, ground floor |
| 9:15 - 9:30 <i>Main Hall</i> | Chairs' Welcome: <i>Katie Argent & Joanne Miley</i> |
| 9:30 - 10:50 <i>Main Hall</i> | Starting Out in Life: Early Trauma, Fostering and the Parental State of Mind Becky Hall <i>Chairs: Katie Argent & Joanne Miley</i> |
| 10:50 - 11:15 <i>Hadfield Hall</i> | 25-Minute Refreshment Break |
| 11:15 - 12:35 <i>Main Hall</i> | 'Bring me her heart': exploring the internal couple through the phantasies of care experienced young people linked with the fairytale of 'Snow-white'. Dr Joanne Dornan <i>Chairs: Katie Argent & Joanne Miley</i> |
| 12:35 - 13:45 <i>Hadfield Hall</i> | LUNCH BREAK |

IN-PERSON PROGRAMME

**Saturday 20 June - 8:30am to 5:00pm
Cutlers' Hall, Sheffield**

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|--|---|
| 13:45 - 13:55 | Move into rooms for parallel sessions |
| 13:55 - 14:55 | SET 1 PARALLEL SESSIONS: |
| <i>Room TBC</i> | A) The L-AC Consultation as a Root System When the Bough Breaks Dr Kate Rothwell <i>Chair: Andrew Dawson</i> |
| <i>Room TBC</i> | B) 'From Bad Therapy to Real Therapy' – the role of intensive case supervision and its impact on intensive psychotherapy with a 13-year-old girl in foster care. Alice Field & Marigemma Rocco <i>Chair: Jemima Phorson</i> |
| <i>Room TBC</i> | C) Invisible Developmental Needs, Invisible Foreign Young People Sheila Melzak <i>Chair: Dr Rajni Sharma</i> |
| 14:55 - 15:15 <i>Hadfield Hall</i> | 20-Minute Refreshment Break |
| 15:15 - 15:20 | Move into rooms for parallel sessions |
| 15:20 - 16:10 | SET 2 PARALLEL SESSIONS: |
| <i>Room TBC</i> | A) Living on the inside: The therapeutic journey of a young person in kinship care Dr Isla Fitchie <i>Chair: Charlie Beaumont</i> |
| <i>Room TBC</i> | B) The Emotional Task of Being in Contact with Contact; Models of Intervention Dr Nikki Eriksen; Lynne Conway & Helene Ross <i>Chair: Annie Baikie</i> |
| <i>Room TBC</i> | C) It Takes a Community to Raise a Child Lorraine McLeod & Lauren Schneider <i>Chair: Kanese Da Costa</i> |
| 16:10 - 16:20 <i>Main Hall</i> | Move back to Main Hall |
| 16:20 - 16:50 <i>Victoria Suite</i> | Conference Chairs' Reflective Space <i>Led by Katie Argent & Joanne Miley</i> |
| 16:50 - 17:00 | Conference Day Close |

**ONLINE
SESSION 2**

**Wednesday 24 June - 7:00pm - 9:00pm
via Zoom**

19:00 - 19:15

Chairs' Welcome and Introduction

19:15 - 19:55

Sibling Work and Loosening of Entrenched Dynamics

Jo Collinson

Chairs: Katie Argent & Joanne Miley

19:55 - 20:15

Discussion

20:15 - 20:50

Guest Speakers' Reflections and Conference discussion

Monica Lanyado

Margaret Rustin

20:50 - 21:00

Chairs' round-up & close

PAPERS & PRESENTATIONS

Another Place: Disorientation, Identity and the Uncanny

SIMON CREGEEN

Chaired by Katie Argent & Joanne Miley

This paper describes experience of disorientation, uncertain identities, and the uncanny which occurred during clinical work with Maria, a Looked After latency aged girl seen for once weekly psychotherapy. My clinical experience with Maria was often deeply unsettling as it moved between symbolic play, episodes of frank violence, and incorporation of me into dramatic enactments which I experienced as happening in an uncertain psychic location, bringing a sense of the uncanny. Clinical work illustrating these different states of mind and some working hypotheses are described. Theoretical ideas about the uncanny, disorientation, and symbolic states are outlined. I discuss how the work with Maria can be used as an illustration of the common experience for LAC and adopted children of how failures in the primary infantile containing relationship may be associated with self-object disorientation, difficulties in symbol formation, identity confusion, and an evocation of the uncanny. For LAC and adopted children, the experience of strangeness, of belonging and not belonging in their new family, may in part be associated with a feeling of something familiar and not familiar, corresponding to the uncanny, a translation of which is 'the unhomely'.

Simon Cregeen

Simon Cregeen is a Child & Adolescent Psychotherapist and a Couple Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist. Until NHS retirement, he was the CAPt Lead in Manchester and Salford NHS CAMHS. His work was primarily with Looked After and adopted children, adolescents, parents and networks. Simon now works independently with adolescents and couples in Manchester and supervises colleagues. For many years he worked on the NSCAP CAPt training and is now on the BPF couple psychotherapy training team. He has published work with children, adolescents, parents and couples. Simon is a Trustee of Manchester Psychoanalytic Development Trust (mpdt.org.uk).

Starting Out in Life: Early Trauma, Fostering and the Parental State of Mind

BECKY HALL

Chaired by Katie Argent & Joanne Miley

This paper begins with the understanding that the early development of the mind depends in the first instance on the supported mental capacities of a parent to meet the primitive states of feeling in their newborn baby. It considers the task of the short term 'baby carers' who temporarily adopt the state of mind of a primarily preoccupied mother and put themselves in the immediate vicinity of unimaginable states of infantile pain and distress, supported by the third presence of the Local Authority. The paper describes how the therapist must quickly feel her way into the state of mind of a young child whose adoption has broken down and determine the capacities of the carer to engage in the necessary mental and emotional work, including demanding contact with revived infantile states and disturbing childhood events in her own life. The efforts to work together with the child and her 'baby carer', and the unwanted child revived in the carer by the therapeutic work, result in new possibilities for both as they each start out in life, again.

Becky Hall

Becky Hall trained as a Child Psychotherapist at the Tavistock Clinic and subsequently as a Psychoanalyst with the BPA. She works two days a week in a multi-disciplinary co-located NHS LAC CAMHS and in private practice. She teaches Infant Observation, supervises, writes, and is a Training Analyst for the ACP. She is also a Trustee of the Stuart Hall Foundation through which she co-ordinates the NHS bursary scheme at the Tavistock and personally supports a number of students.

‘Bring me her heart’: Exploring the internal couple through the phantasies of care experienced young people linked with the fairytale of ‘Snow-white’

DR JOANNE DORNAN

Chaired by Katie Argent & Joanne Miley

Snow White was a care experienced child. Care experienced children often struggle with how they feel about their birth parents. At times it can seem that the damage is beyond repair. Psychoanalytic psychotherapy attends to the phantasies of the internal couple that underpin problematic perceptions of relationships. The experience and the challenges of attending to phantasies of the internal couple will be considered within a paper about 17-year-old Emily and 12-year-old Katie (pseudonyms).

Like Snow White, Emily and Katie each spent time in foster care after fleeing danger or harmful treatment. During psychotherapy treatment, initial feelings of despair lifted to reveal developing notions of the internal couple. Intriguingly, many of the symbols which emerged in the sessions echoed themes from Snow White. These symbols illuminated how evolving phantasies of the internal couple interplayed with emotional development. Psychoanalytic theoretical perspectives will be considered throughout the paper.

Dr Joanne Dornan

Dr Joanne Dornan is a Child and Adolescent Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist based in educational settings across Leeds and Bradford, as well as in private practice. Joanne has a specialist interest in psychoanalytic work with autistic young people, and a paper on the subject entitled: ‘Back in the swim of it: autistic withdrawal and the nature of desire expressed in unconscious phantasy’ will be published in the Journal of Child Psychotherapy. Joanne wrote a doctoral thesis using discourse analysis to explore the nature of unconscious anxiety during Child Psychotherapy Assessments. The thesis illuminated how the specific nature of internal object relationships emerged within therapeutic discourses. Joanne has also published fictional short stories.

The L-AC Consultation as a Root System When the Bough Breaks

KATE ROTHWELL

Chaired by Andrew Dawson

This short paper, using the analogy of a mycorrhizal network as the alpha function, presents a psychoanalytic perspective on a consultation model offered to a professional network as a reflective space for curiosity and wonder when care systems become emotionally stuck and struggle to think about the babies and infants in their care. Rather than providing solutions or prescriptive guidance, the consultation creates a containing environment in which professionals can attend to their own emotional experiences in relation to the infants they support, whether in kinship or foster care placements.

The model emphasises the importance of understanding how trauma - particularly following the removal of infants from their parents and siblings - affects not only the child but also the wider caregiving system. Such traumatic ruptures can compromise the system's capacity to think, feel, and mentalise about the infant's inner world. By focusing on emotional and relational processes, the consultation aims to restore reflective functioning within the professional network, enabling a deeper appreciation of the infant's lived experience and the complex dynamics shaping their care.

Dr Kate Rothwell

Dr Kate Rothwell is a Child, Adolescent and Perinatal Psychotherapist working within North Bedford CAMHS Early Years and the Bedfordshire Looked-After Children's Service. She specialises in Parent-Infant Psychotherapy and leads work within the under-5s pathway for the Looked-After Children (LAC) service. Her role encompasses comprehensive assessment, ongoing therapeutic intervention, professional consultation, and clinical supervision. In addition to her NHS work, Kate is a psychotherapist at Youth Talk, a charity providing psychodynamic psychotherapy for adolescents. She is also a member of the Anna Freud forum. Her research interests centre on infant mental health and the development of the parent-infant relationship, reflecting her longstanding commitment to early intervention and relational approaches to care.

Andrew Dawson

Andrew is the Professional Lead for Child Psychotherapy in NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. He is a core member of the senior teaching team for the Doctoral Training at Human Development Scotland. He has particular interests in research, leadership in clinical work, infant mental health, stuck/perplexing cases, complaints, patient safety, and working with unintentionally harmful parent-child interactions.

‘From Bad Therapy to Real Therapy’ – the role of intensive case supervision and its impact on intensive psychotherapy with a 13-year-old girl in foster care.

ALICE FIELD & MARIGEMMA ROCCO

Chaired by Jemima Phorson

Simone (pseudonym) was a girl with a disturbed and disturbing relational early life. She was referred to psychotherapy due to the impacts of multiple, traumatic separations and abuses. Adults raised concerns about her not seeming ‘real’, her inability to connect or empathise with others, and confusing behaviours. Alice had been working with Simone for 2 years in once-weekly psychotherapy. Simone was engaged in the work – but it seemed an engagement in an unhealthy repetition. When intensive therapy with Marigemma was agreed, Alice found it painful to have to bring such ‘bad therapy’ to supervision... to feel useless (at best) and repeating harm (at worst). The supervisor spotted signs that Simone was trying to reach the therapist, who was unable to receive these bids for connection. What was this telling us about Simone’s early experiences of relationship? How was this reflected in the supervisor/supervisee relationship? Once a process of a meaningful therapeutic relationship started there was a remarkable change within Simone and the network around her over the course of a year. Early memories began to emerge and Simone’s capacity to function and relate transformed. We want to focus on what supported this change through an exploration of the supervisor/supervisee relationship.

Alice Field

Alice Field is a Newly Qualified Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist, who trained at IPCAPA. She is currently working in a Generic CAMHS Service in London, having completed her training at a Specialist CAMHS Team for Looked After Children. Alice has spent all her professional life working with Looked After Children. She set up and managed a high-support residential home for young women in care transitioning from psychiatric inpatient, secure care or children’s homes. She has worked in a variety of frontline, therapeutic, supervisory, safeguarding and managerial roles with children and young people in local authority care.

Marigemma Rocco

Marigemma Rocco is a Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist, trained at the Anna Freud Centre, London. She has held senior clinical roles within CAMHS, including Clinical Lead. She has worked in the Family Unit at the Cassel Hospital with parents diagnosed with severe personality disorders and their children, many of them infants. She has provided consultation to social workers and contributed to the development of specialist CAMHS provision for Looked After Children. She is an experienced supervisor and teacher in the UK and internationally. She is now retired from the NHS and working in private practice.

Jemima Phorson

Jemima Phorson is a Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist based in the West Midlands, with over 10 years’ experience working in CAMHS. She is currently Co-Head of Training and Director of Operations at Birmingham Trust for Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy, overseeing delivery of Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy Training (CAPT) in the Midlands. Her clinical interests include children in care, and she previously served as Lead for Looked After and Adopted Children. Committed to applying psychoanalytic thinking beyond the consulting room, Jemima has extensive experience working across multi-agency networks and groups, and previously held a national EDI lead role supporting greater diversity across psychotherapy training schools in England.

Invisible Developmental Needs, Invisible Foreign Young People

SHEILA MELZAK

Chaired by Dr Rajni Sharma

This paper explores, experiences and needs of children and adolescents, separated from parents, family and community in countries where children are exposed to organised violence and child and adolescent specific human rights abuses. Decisions are made that they should leave home and country and move into exile, alone, to a country with a different culture, values and community resources from their own.

I like very much an old proverb: "It takes a village to raise a child." Our conference begs the question of what happens to children: When the bough breaks? How do communities meet the needs of children who are separated from their parents? For me a further question emerges: "What happens to children when half the adults in the village don't want to or cannot think about the needs of children and the future?" Unaccompanied young people arriving in the UK often, meet 'a climate of disbelief,' often being assessed to be adults while their developmental needs are not thought about, let alone met. Questions will be raised, and thoughts and observations shared, about developmental needs.

All experience changes, in their sense of self, rooted in their experiences of violence, loss and unplanned change. As a consequence all demonstrate vulnerabilities and resiliencies. Vulnerabilities include difficulties making sense of fragmented identities; managing extreme and challenging feelings; making and sustaining trusted relationships; and in self care; sustaining confidence and self esteem. Resiliencies develop when opportunities to learn are combined with opportunities to build relationships. Young refugees needed space to reflect on experiences that are often, for psychological and cultural reasons, initially unspeakable. This long term work raises questions about distinctions between real and transference relationships with social workers, lawyers, clinicians and administrators who play key roles in their lives in exile.

Sheila Melzak

Sheila Melzak is a Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist who qualified as a psychotherapist with children and young people in 1983 from the Anna Freud Centre. She has specialised in holistic and integrated psychotherapeutic work with young asylum seekers and refugees who have experienced child and adolescent specific human rights abuses, since 1989. Sheila led the Child and Adolescent team at the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture (now called Freedom from Torture) and in 2008, founded, with others, a new NGO - the Baobab Centre for Young Survivors in Exile - specialising in work with young refugees arriving in the UK as unaccompanied minors. In 2025, Sheila moved from the managerial role as Director and continues to work psychotherapeutically and independently with young asylum seekers and refugees and to be involved in research, the preparation of reports, teaching, supervision, and writing for publication.

Dr Rajni Sharma

Dr Rajni Sharma has worked in NHS mental health settings, mainly as a consultant child and adolescent psychotherapist for many years. She has worked across the North of England and has a strong commitment to multi-disciplinary and multi-agency working. Rajni is interested in how the culture of groups and organisations contribute to effective and meaningful work. She took up the role of Director of Child & Adolescent Psychotherapy Training at NSCAP (Northern School of Child & Adolescent Psychotherapy) in Leeds just before the pandemic. She has led on developing, difference, identity and diversity teaching and the integration of research learning into clinical and professional practice. Group Relations has been a fertile area of work and learning over the last 10 years.

Living on the inside: The therapeutic journey of a young person in kinship care

DR ISLA FITCHIE

Chaired by Charlie Beaumont

Care-experienced children and young people often suffer traumatic separations. Their sense of where and with whom they belong is severely disrupted, giving rise to psychic defences that we later see in the therapy room. This paper aims to provide a window into how we understand and work with these survival mechanisms through exploring therapy with a borderline psychotic young person in kinship care. For her, to belong meant to inhabit an imaginary world of 'characters', which once afforded respite from harsh circumstances and a consequent threat of internal collapse. A strong pull to daydreaming was now creating reality confusion, stopping her from establishing relationships and pursuing her life goals. The paper will chart technique adaptations, including balancing contact with a wider network whilst protecting the primacy of a therapeutic dyad. The paper will argue that by galvanising what is creative and hopeful about a young person's search for belonging, her therapy became an effective conduit to facilitate connection with others and the wider world. Situating this therapy in the current climate of hostility towards 'otherness', where care-experienced children and young people are increasingly marginalised, this paper will emphasise the urgent need to focus our attention on this clinical remit.

Dr Isla Fitchie

Dr Isla Fitchie trained as a Child and Adolescent Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust. She currently offers psychoanalytic psychotherapy to adolescents, young adults, and parents at Open Door Young People's Consultation Service, and leads a team of therapists in a secondary school. At Islington CAMHS, she worked for several years across teams including the Children Looked After team and the school service. She enjoyed teaching on the Tavistock pre-clinical course (M7) and has specialist interest in child psychotherapy research, and applied psychoanalytic work in community settings. She runs reflective groups with school staff, and facilitated therapeutic groups in the National Probation Service prior to training.

Charlie Beaumont

Charlie Beaumont is Head of Psychotherapy in Islington CAMHS and contributes to the clinical training of child psychotherapists at the Tavistock Clinic, where he also serves as Psychotherapy Placements Manager. His work brings together clinical leadership, training, and a longstanding interest in group and organisational dynamics. Charlie has extensive experience facilitating experiential groups and has staffed a number of Group Relations events. Alongside his professional interests, he is a passionate football fan, with a particular appreciation for the dynamics and culture of teams.

The Emotional Task of Being in Contact with Contact; Models of Intervention

DR NIKKI ERIKSEN, LYNNE CONWAY & HELENE ROSS

Chaired by Annie Baikie

Child psychotherapists working within a CAMHS care experienced multi-disciplinary team in Scotland, share their model of consultation and training with professional networks referring infants and young children removed from birth parents due to severe injury, abuse and/or neglect. These infants and young children are frequently attending intense levels of contact or 'family time' during 1-2 years of protracted legal processes, decision making and parental assessment. They often express significant distress, yet their needs can become lost or hidden, with far reaching consequences for emotional well-being and mental health. Help is provided to the networks around these infants and children with the emotional tasks around contact, the feelings of helplessness, systemic barriers and defences arising. The presenters will share their model of observation-based training, supporting social workers and assistants in safely reflecting on and developing confidence and skills in observing, recording and assessing the emotional quality of 'family time' contact, enlarging the focus on the infant or child. An example from clinical work will be shared, which highlights dilemmas arising as well as positive outcomes achieved through the work, with time for participant discussion in groups before final gathering up of whole group reflections.

Dr Nikki Eriksen

Nikki Eriksen is based in the Child Psychotherapy team within CAMHS Lanarkshire, working primarily with care experienced infants, children and young people and those impacted by severe and enduring parental mental health difficulties. During her 25-year career as a teacher prior to training as a child psychotherapist, Nikki worked with children with additional support needs and completed research into educational needs of children in kinship care. She recently published two doctoral research papers on parent work in child psychotherapy, and since qualifying has contributed regularly to teaching at Human Development Scotland.

Lynne Conway

Lynne Conway is a Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist and Clinical Lead for Psychotherapy within CAMHS in NHS Lanarkshire. She has developed a particular expertise in working with care-experienced young people and those affected by complex trauma. Alongside her clinical practice, Lynne has long been committed to the development of the profession through teaching and mentorship. Since qualifying, she has contributed to the Psychoanalytic Observation and Reflective Practice programme: Therapeutic Work with Children and Young People, where she has also served as Joint Organising Tutor. For eight years, Lynne held the position of Joint Head of the Doctoral Clinical Training Programme, playing a central role in shaping the training and professional growth of future clinicians.

Helene Ross

Helene Ross is a Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist with over eight years of experience working within NHS Lanarkshire's specialist care-experienced Camhs team for infants, children and young people. As part of her role, Helene offers consultation to the team around the child and delivers training to social workers and social work assistants, utilizing an observational approach to enhance their practice in supervising family contact. Before embarking on her clinical training, Helene gained extensive experience working with children and their families in residential and community settings. She later trained and was employed as a Youth Justice and then Children and Families Social Worker. This background has shaped her outlook and clinical work.

Annie Baikie

Annie worked in Grampian CAMHS for over 20 years where she ran a specialised consultation service for care experienced children and young people and their families, carers and professionals. After retiring from the NHS Annie worked for Barnardos Fostering North working directly with children/ young people and their carers and running training for staff and foster carers. Annie now lives in Glasgow where she works for Barnardos Scotland Adoption supporting adoptive parents as well as people exploring adoption. Annie jointly provides the care experienced workshops on the CAP training.

It Takes a Community to Raise a Child

LORRAINE MCLEOD & LAUREN SCHNEIDER

Chaired by Kanese Da Costa

The proverb “It takes a village to raise a child”, rooted in African cultures, highlights that a child’s development is not the sole responsibility of parents but a shared community endeavour. This discussion examines themes of intergenerational trauma, displacement, and the psychological impact of separation. Both the child and their kinship carer experienced significant dislocation - the child through removal from their birth parent and relocation to a new country, and the grandmother through her earlier migration from her country of origin. Drawing on Bion’s theory of thinking, we explore how traumatised minds can struggle to develop the internal structures necessary for thought. Within the containment offered by the psychoanalytic frame in community CAMHS, experiences could be held, processed, and transformed into meaning - supporting the formation of what Bion called the “thinking apparatus.” The focus is an intensive therapeutic intervention delivered by a child and adolescent psychotherapist in clinical training, supported by parallel parent work. The analysis considers the wider network that surrounded the child and carer: the case worker, MDT, service supervisor, intensive case supervisor, and training institution. Each contributed - often implicitly - to the containing framework that enabled the therapeutic process.

Lorraine McLeod

Lorraine McLeod is a Principal Child and Adolescent Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist. She qualified in 2014 from the Birmingham Trust for Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy (BTPP). Lorraine currently works at Alder Hey Children’s Hospital and has extensive experience working with children in care, kinship care, and adoption. She is the lead Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist for the new Children and Young People’s Gender Service (North). In addition to her clinical work, Lorraine is a training tutor on the Doctorate in Child Psychotherapy at the Northern School of Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy, and she also serves as a service supervisor and training tutor for BTPP.

Lauren Schneider

Lauren Schneider is a Child and Adolescent Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist who graduated from NSCAP in December 2025. After completing her training, she joined the Oxford NHS Foundation Trust, where she currently works within CAMHS across both North and South Oxford. Lauren has a particular interest in working with Looked After Children. She also brings substantial clinical experience, from previous roles, with adults and young people with learning disabilities who are looked after, alongside a background in inpatient settings.

Kanese Da Costa

Kanese Da Costa is a Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist who trained at Birmingham Trust for Psychoanalytic Psychotherapists. She currently works as a Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist in CAMHS and has previously worked as a Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist based within the Local Authority LAC team. She is also a tutor for the work discussion, infant observation and young child observation modules on the Perinatal, child Adolescent, and Family Work Course (M7), delivered at BTPP.

Sibling Work and Loosening of Entrenched Dynamics

JO COLLINSON

Chaired by Katie Argent & Joanne Miley

This session focuses on how the practice of child psychotherapy can be used to work with a sibling pair. I am going to describe my work with two adopted siblings age 7 and 8, seen once weekly for psychotherapy together over one year. I will talk about how the work appeared to help the siblings loosen a tight enmeshment between them (Debbie Hindle) and consequently allow in, and be more available to, the love and care of their adoptive parents. With a colleague who provided parent work alongside, the sibling work helped the children begin to open up new ways of relating with each other and to take some small but significant steps towards connecting with their peers. For two young children who had joined closely together in an idea that adults weren't to be trusted or relied upon, the shared experience of psychotherapy seemed at very least to cast this conviction into doubt. I will explore the shift that seemed to occur in terms of a shift from a 'gang state of mind' towards a 'group' state of mind (as defined by Hamish Canham). I will suggest that working with siblings together, and working with their shared experiences is a valuable intervention to be considered, and possibly a good first 'stage' before other forms of work. I will briefly highlight some aspects of the importance sibling relationships can play for children who have experienced the painful losses of parental relationships and the huge losses and disruptions of coming into care.

Jo Collinson

Jo Collinson is a child and adolescent psychotherapist working in West Sussex County Council Children's Services ATTACH team. The ATTACH team is a 'psychologies hub' (formerly a specialist CAMHS for looked after children in the NHS), providing support and intervention into the local authority teams for children in care, care leavers, unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people, special guardianship and kinship families. Jo has been part of this service since qualifying from the Tavistock in 2012. Alongside this she also worked part-time in a community CAMHS team in Hampshire 2019-24. Prior to discovering child psychotherapy Jo worked in the voluntary and community sector in Brighton and Hove. She led a play service, bringing together children with learning disabilities with their non-disabled peers and providing training to play and childcare workers.

SPECIAL GUESTS

Monica Lanyado

Monica Lanyado has worked with severely neglected and traumatised children for over 50 years. Now retired, she was an intensive training case supervisor at IPCAPA and HDS, and taught and lectured internationally. She has published many papers and was co-editor of the Journal of Child Psychotherapy from 1995-1998. Monica's publications have been translated into a number of languages and include *The Presence of the Therapist: Treating Childhood Trauma* (2004) and *Transforming Despair to Hope: Reflections on the Psychotherapeutic Process with Severely Neglected and Traumatized Children* (2018). She has co-edited a number of books with Ann Horne including *The Handbook of Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy* (1999, 2009), *A Question of Technique* (2006), and *Winnicott's Children* (2012).

Margaret Rustin

Margaret Rustin has been an Honorary Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist at the Tavistock Clinic since her retirement in 2009. She was head of child psychotherapy at the Tavistock from 1985 – 2009. She has continued to teach and supervise widely in the UK and in many other countries. She has had a long-term special clinical interest in children not brought up in their birth families. Margaret has written many books and papers, most recently a collection of clinical papers "Finding a Way to the Child", Routledge 2023, and a second collection "Observation and the Psychoanalytic Imagination: Papers from Child Psychotherapy" will appear later this year.

A BIG THANK YOU

We would like to extend our gratitude to all those who have contributed to this year's Conference, to those of you have joined us for the online sessions, and to those who have travelled to be gathered in person in Sheffield.

WE VALUE YOUR FEEDBACK

The ACP highly values feedback from its members, as it plays a vital role in shaping the direction and quality of its work. Member insights help the ACP understand what is most relevant, useful, and engaging for the professional community it serves. Feedback directly informs improvements to current offerings and sparks ideas for future events, ensuring they are responsive to the evolving needs and interests of child and adolescent psychotherapists. By listening to its members, the ACP fosters a more inclusive, reflective, and dynamic professional environment.

You will receive an email in the next two days with a link to a feedback survey - and we'd be grateful to hear how you experienced the day. Please do take a few minutes to complete it.