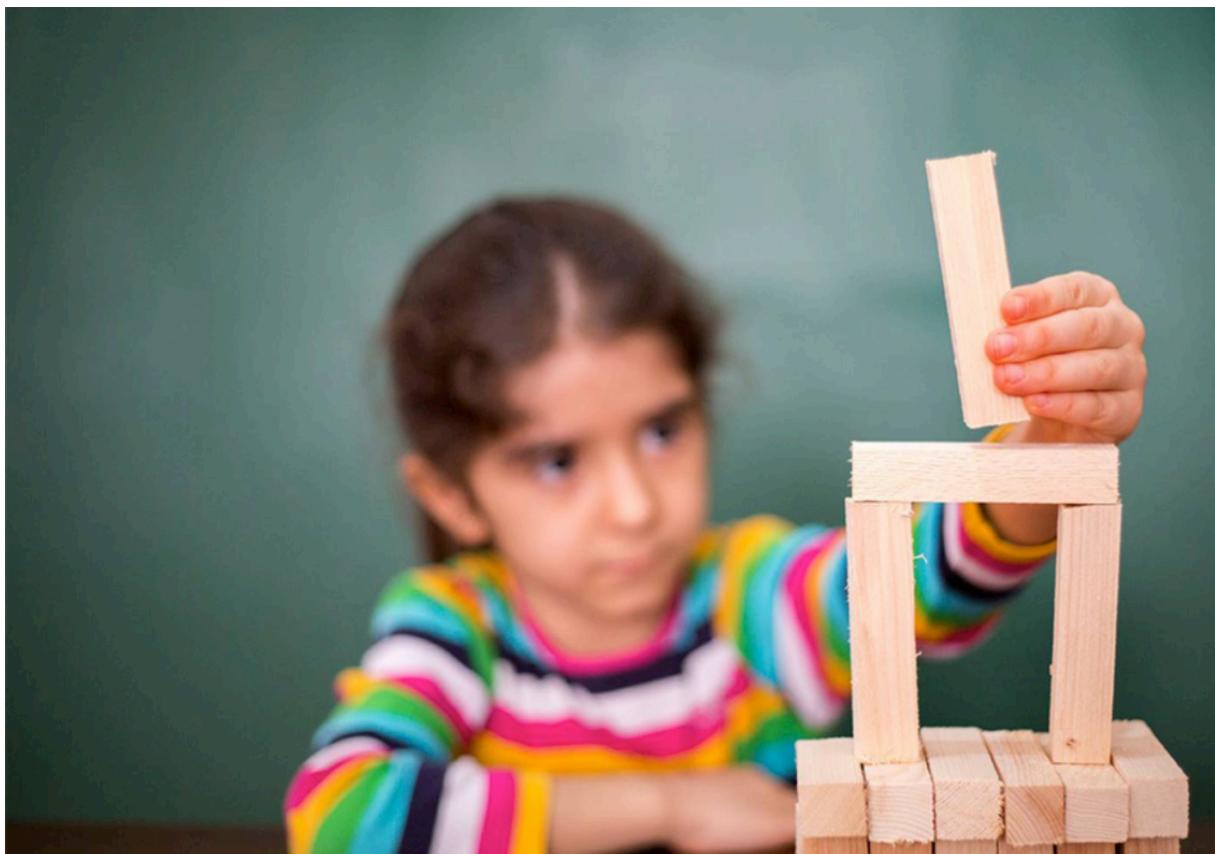


SafeBase Therapeutic Parenting Programme

Information for professionals



SafeBase Information for Professionals

SafeBase is an established therapeutic parenting programme for adoptive families and other permanent carers, including families with older children and teenagers.



SafeBase was developed in response to After Adoption's experience of requests from parents for practical ways to address and manage their children's challenging behaviour. The programme was first delivered in 2005 and was originally known as SAFE (Strengthening Adoptive families in England). It was originally funded by the 'Strengthening Families' strand of DfES funding and delivered between July 2005-March 2008. Since then the programme has been continuously developed and has extended its reach with assistance of generous funding from the Timpson Foundation from 2008 to 2017.

SafeBase is a strengths-based approach which seeks to develop and strengthen the personal resources, confidence and resilience of carers and to develop the specific skills needed to care for and nurture a looked after child. It is listed as a course in Scope in the ASF Service Categorisation Guidance document:

http://www.adoption-support-fund.co.uk/Portals/0/Service%20Categorisation%20Guidance_22%20April%202016_V2.pdf

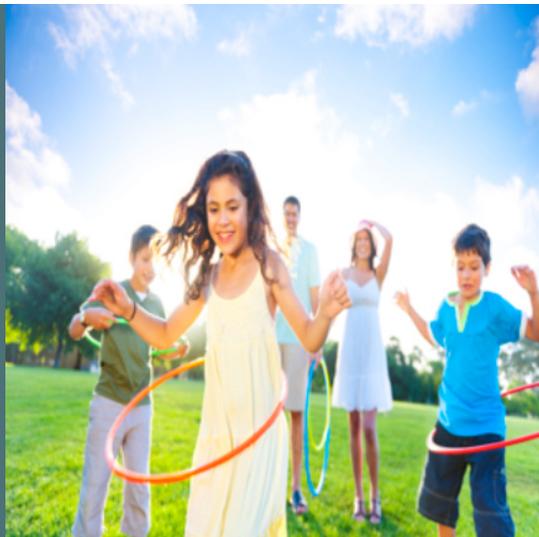
SafeBase explores the impact of loss and trauma upon a child's attachment and development and helps adoptive parents and carers to develop an understanding of the impact of their child's past experiences of trauma and loss. The use of Theraplay® principles and activities gives a framework for parents to engage with their child in a non-threatening and fun way and helps them to reflect on ways to respond to their child in a sensitive and attuned way.

SafeBase is effective in:

- Helping parents and carers feel more confident in using new tools and strategies to parent their child
- Increasing understanding around the impact of adverse childhood experiences on their children
- Enabling participants to become more sensitive to their child's needs by providing insight, and context, to their behaviours
- Explaining the impact of early adversity on brain development and functioning
- Building secure attachments
- Improving parents and carers well-being and the general well-being of their family, bringing hope for the future
- Providing a support network of other parents and carers

The Structure and Content of the SafeBase programme

Prior to the course parents and carers are asked to complete a parental self-reflection. Developing the capacity to reflect is one of the core concepts of the SafeBase programme. How parents make sense of their childhood experience has a profound effect on how they parent their own children. This questionnaire is to help parents to begin to reflect on their own experiences as a child and of being parented and also to prepare for the 4 day programme. There is also an opportunity to discuss their reflections as part of the feedback session which follows the family session.



The programme has 3 elements delivered over a 5-week period:

The Family Session is based on the principles of Theraplay® and helps families to understand the interactions within their family. The family is asked to carry out a series of simple play activities and a SafeBase trainer observes and discretely films the session. This provides a valuable insight to a parent's strengths and ways in which they can build on these strengths and manage the challenges that their child may present. A follow up ***feedback session*** is then arranged to discuss identified strengths and challenges in detail; parents receive a copy of the film and a detailed written report.

The 4-day Parenting Programme is based on the principles of Theraplay®. The programme is designed to help parents better understand their child and their behaviours. It also gives practical techniques that will help them to feel more competent and effective as a parent

On-going Support including access to regional topic-based groups, which enable parents and carers to meet together. They also have access to an online community where they can share experiences with other families and access resources.

Feedback and evaluation

The positive benefits of the programme are reflected in families' feedback and evaluation which demonstrates an increase in carers' confidence, insight and skills and that these benefits boost both carers' and children's wellbeing and gives hope for the future. Participants have also consistently commented that the course is well informed with a good mix of theory and practical learning and opportunities to learn from others.

Data has been regularly collected about the effectiveness of the SafeBase programme. This includes a baseline questionnaire (Likert-type scale), completed before and immediately after the intervention; and a follow-up questionnaire sent out to all previous participants at six-monthly intervals, which includes Likert-type questions and a section for written comments.

An external review of the programme between 2005 – 2010, undertaken by Carol Meredith (unpublished) concluded:

*In summary, the evaluation found clear **evidence of long-term change, discernible and permanent benefits, and happier families**. Adoptive parents attributed the impact on the lives of family members directly to the valuable combination of the SafeBase theory of attachment disorder and their new parenting approaches based on the Theraplay® model and techniques. There was a strong conviction from parents' responses that SafeBase provides the foundation for **an appropriate and lifelong approach** to parenting an adopted child with attachment disorder.*

A new logic model for SafeBase has been developed which seeks to demonstrate a clear link between the activities and inputs provided as part of each intervention and the intended outcomes, through identified mechanisms of change.

These models have been developed in conjunction with the internal team in After Adoption alongside Dr. Heather Ottoway from Bristol University and informed by work carried out by Aleron. They are built on the experiences and learning from over a decade of developing and delivering the SafeBase Programme to over 1,500 adoptive families across England and Wales and After Adoption's wider work supporting all parties to adoption.

After Adoption has recently commissioned Nottingham Trent University to evaluate the programme over the past 12 years. The objectives of the evaluation are:

1. To assess the short and long-term impact of the SafeBase parenting programme on parents and carers
2. To identify strengths and weaknesses of the programme
3. To suggest how the programme might develop into the future

Feedback from programmes in 2017

“The training was so useful – I wish we had this every year. Staff were amazing! This gave me a chance to think about myself and my reactions and triggers, and gave me new tools on how to help my children and for us as family cope and thrive.”



“The course highlighted areas of concern and what has had an impact on my son’s life – and importantly the work we need to do to change the situation and make all our lives better.”

“It made me open my eyes more to what is going on in my children’s heads.”



“SafeBase has given us some invaluable information, which has already worked well in many situations and made an immediate, positive difference. Feeling much more positive, reassured and confident.”

“My child has only been in placement (not long) but the strategies I have learnt together with experiences shared by others have been invaluable.”

“SafeBase has provided me with lots of great ideas, given reasons for particular behaviours and given me a greater understanding of our child’s needs.”

Costing

The cost per family to attend a programme is £2,000 plus VAT

Related SafeBase Programmes

SafeBase in the Teenage Years

A 2 day programme which aims to strengthen the relationships between carers and the children and young people they are caring for during the challenging years of adolescence. The programme deals with the specific issues that are faced by carers with teenagers that may have experienced a difficult start in life.

The programme aims to help parents and carers to:

- Develop an understanding of the developmental stages of adolescence including the changes that happen in the brain during these years.
- Develop an understanding of their teenager's needs
- Learn strategies to help and support their teenager and to stay connected when things get difficult
- Improve parenting and family relationships.



SafeBase in Schools

SafeBase for Schools is a training programme, developed by After Adoption, which uses a whole school approach to help schools effectively support adopted pupils and those in local authority care to reach their full potential. The training for teaching staff includes practical techniques for support, improving understanding of the challenges adopted and looked after children face, and practical strategies based upon Theraplay® principles.

Key Benefits for Schools and Pupils:

- Better understanding about early life neglect and abuse: how this shapes brain development and the child's ability to learn
- Greater confidence in dealing positively with children who have faced early childhood adversity
- Improved classroom management and a reduction in disruptive behaviours
- Children who are happier, more stable and better able to learn and progress
- Support in meeting Pupil Premium performance indicators and Ofsted inspection requirements



We offer three or six hour training as twilight, half-day or full-day formats. Price is available upon enquiry and ranges from £400-600 (three hour) and £750-900 (six hour) plus travel, expenses and VAT.

For further information please contact: Bridget Betts, National Manager, SafeBase
bridgetbetts@afteradoption.org.uk

More Information

If you would like to learn more about our work please visit www.afteradoption.org.uk
To receive our newsletter, please visit <http://www.afteradoption.org.uk/about-us/subscribe/>

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After Adoption is committed to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults and promoting their welfare. We work with statutory guidelines, regulations and seek to set and attain the highest standards of developing practice. Find out more: www.afteradoption.org.uk/safeguarding

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