

# Psychotherapy and training services for commissioners



020 7383 0700  
[respond.org.uk](https://respond.org.uk)

Registered Charity 800862

**RESPOND**   
from hurting to healing

## About Respond

Respond is a national charity providing specialist support for people with learning disabilities and autistic people who have experienced abuse, violence or trauma.

Respond offers three distinct services: psychotherapy support, advocacy support, and training.

Respond was founded to support autistic people and people with learning disabilities who have experienced trauma, including sexual abuse.

For over 30 years, our mission has been to reduce the lasting impact of trauma. Many individuals come to us with multiple traumatic experiences and a history of exclusion. Our creative, accessible approach is inclusive for people with learning disabilities and autistic people and provides the space and time for people to process their experiences.

This commitment to supporting people not only to survive, but to thrive, continues to underpin our work today.



# Respond's Trauma Informed Approach

Respond has developed a distinctive model of disability psychotherapy and advocacy.

The Respond Model is a **trauma-informed, psychodynamic, systemic, and creative** approach developed over more than three decades. It reduces the impact of trauma for autistic people and people with learning disabilities by combining relational therapy, systemic engagement, advocacy, and reflective organisational practice.

At its core, it is a model that holds both individuals and systems in mind, and commits to continuous learning, survivor voice, and deep reflection, to enable people not just to survive trauma, but to thrive.

## Theoretical Influences

Respond's model draws on a wide range of clinical traditions:

- Trauma theory
- Attachment theory and object relations theory
- Systemic approaches
- Arts therapies
- Outcomes

## Respond's Clinical Principles in Practice

Therapy is long-term (minimum one year recommended) to build trust and allow deeper work.

Each client has a **primary therapist** and a **liaison therapist**. The primary therapist works directly in sessions. The liaison therapist supports the client's wider network.

Problems are understood within family, organisational, and societal systems. Therapy includes work with carers, schools, hostels, and social care.

Practical support, case management, and advocacy are part of the therapeutic process, ensuring safety, building networks, and reducing re-traumatisation.

Clinical supervision and reflective practice help staff manage countertransference and avoid burnout.

Experts by experience and family carers play a central role in shaping services, training, and evaluation.

# Specialist Psychotherapy

Respond provides specialist trauma-informed psychotherapy for autistic people and people with learning disabilities who have experienced complex trauma, abuse, or systemic exclusion.

Our work aims to reduce the impact of trauma and enable clients and their networks to recover, relate, and thrive.

## What we do

- Long-term 1:1 psychotherapy (1-3 years), building trust, relational depth, and trauma integration
- Liaison therapy: specialist assessments and consultation for social care, courts, NHS, and commissioners, including safeguarding input and complex risk formulations
- Survivors Service: 1:1 therapy for victim/survivors of sexual abuse.
- Creative therapies: art, drama, play, and dance-movement psychotherapy for clients with limited verbal expression
- School-based therapy: early intervention for children and young people

We also offer consultation to professionals, social workers, and commissioners when mainstream services are unable to meet complex neurodivergent needs.

## Who we support

- Young people (aged 11+) and adults.
- Gender-diverse and neurodiverse individuals with complex trauma and co-occurring needs.
- Families and carers requiring relational or psychoeducational support after trauma.
- Schools, local authorities, and NHS partners commissioning bespoke packages or spot contracts.

We support people who are often excluded from statutory therapy due to communication differences, behavioural presentations, or diagnostic overshadowing.



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# Spot-Contracted Psychotherapy

Respond delivers spot-contracted psychotherapy for people with learning disabilities and autistic people who have experienced abuse, violence, or trauma.

These agreements are commissioned on an individual basis by NHS Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) or local authorities, providing a defined package of therapy for a specific person, typically lasting around 44 weeks. Each contract sets clear goals, funding periods, and review points, ensuring the work is tailored to individual needs.

Therapy is delivered through Respond's dual-therapist model:

- **The Primary Therapist** offers weekly one-to-one psychotherapy, using psychodynamic and trauma-informed approaches to build safety, trust, and emotional understanding.
- **The Liaison Therapist** works alongside the primary therapist to support the person's family, carers, and professional network, providing consultation, containment, and reflective support so that insight and change are sustained across systems.



This structure reflects Respond's trauma-informed and relational approach, recognising that lasting change requires both individual therapeutic work and systemic support.

Spot contracts enable commissioners to fund specialist, time-limited psychotherapy for people whose needs fall outside standard service pathways, combining clinical depth with flexibility and accountability.

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# Training

Respond offers a range of specialist, trauma-informed training courses for professionals who support people with learning disabilities and autistic people.

Through coproduction, creativity, and clinical depth, we equip professionals to work more compassionately and effectively with people impacted by trauma and disability.

Respond's innovative, compassionate, and clinically grounded approach:

- Strengthens cross-sector understanding of family trauma and system impact.
- Embeds trauma-informed and reflective principles across multiple service contexts.
- Models best practice in coproduction with lived experience trainers.

## Courses

- Understanding trauma in the lives of people with learning disabilities and autistic people.
- Frontline practice in trauma-responsive services for autistic people and people with learning disabilities.
- Leading trauma-responsive services for people with learning disabilities and autistic people.
- Working with families of people with learning disabilities and autistic people affected by systemic trauma.
- Clinical supervision for professionals working with trauma, learning disability and autism.
- Reflective practice and consultancy for services supporting people with learning disabilities and autistic people.



**Get in touch to discuss training at**  
**[training@respond.org.uk](mailto:training@respond.org.uk)**

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