



# Symbol Family Support Services Ltd



## Brochure



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## CONTACT DETAILS

### HEAD OFFICE and NEWINGTON MANOR RESIDENTIAL UNIT

Newington Manor  
Callaways Lane  
Newington  
Kent, ME9 7LU

Tel: 01795 844440  
Fax: 01795 844414  
E-mail: [info@symbolfss.org](mailto:info@symbolfss.org)  
Website: [www.symbolfss.org](http://www.symbolfss.org)

#### **When to contact the Head Office:**

All referrals and enquiries and written correspondence should be addressed to the Head Office.

Please contact the Head Office for all matters relating to a client's assessment, including organisation of meetings, filing of reports and Court attendance.

Should you wish to contact a client within one of our units, or speak to a member of the assessment team about the status of an assessment, please contact the FSS Administrators at our Head Office who will take a message for you. Unfortunately, we cannot re-direct phone calls to the units. You will appreciate that the support teams within the units are busy with clients, and cannot always answer the telephone. To ensure that your calls are dealt with efficiently, please contact the FSS Administrators who will ensure that your call is handled in the most appropriate way.

### WOODLANDS FARM RESIDENTIAL UNIT

Paddlesworth Road  
Snodland  
Kent, ME6 5DL

### CLIFTON PARK RESIDENTIAL UNIT

12 Clifton Park  
Clifton  
Bristol, BS8 3BX

## **INTRODUCING SYMBOL**

Symbol Family Support Services bring together service users, skilled practitioners, commissioners and funding, to develop innovative services that enrich the lives of children and adults who have special needs.

Symbol works with people who experience disadvantage associated with a range of special needs, in particular, learning disabilities and physical disabilities.

Our work supports clients to develop their skills and confidence, to make choices about how to live their lives, and improves their opportunities to engage with and contribute to the community.

## **OUR MISSION STATEMENT**

“Symbol exists to create choices for individuals and innovate effective solutions for organisations. We strive to work in partnership with others to improve the quality of knowledge and opportunity for those we support.”

## The Symbol Family Support Service

A specialist Assessment and Support Service providing Residential and Community based Care for families who have special needs.

Assessment  
Support  
Teaching  
Communication  
Independence

Symbol Family Support Service aims to promote the value of family life for parents who have special needs. Through bringing together a specialist team of expert practitioners, Symbol offers a unique service to clients who themselves encounter disability and resulting social exclusion. Nowhere is exclusion more keenly felt, than when a disability prevents a person from experiencing a family life.

Being able to raise one's own child is a very special gift. For many parents, nobody questions their right to do so but for those people who face disability, be it a learning disability, physical disability or sensory disability, that opportunity is too often denied. For parents who have additional emotional and/or psychological needs the need for sensitive and informed assessment and support is paramount.

Naturally, the most important person in these situations is the child, and any parent, whatever the circumstances, must be able to offer a safe, secure, nurturing environment for their family. The standards expected of parents with a disability should be no less, and no more, than those standards expected of all parents. Each child has the right to a loving, secure family life which recognises and meets their physical, emotional and psychological needs. For parents who have disabilities, achieving this for their children may need additional assistance, support and training.

### Beliefs

Not every family is able to care for their children but at Symbol, we believe that where concern exists, every person has the right to have their parenting potential assessed, supported and understood.

We believe that our clients benefit from skilled, sensitive assessment and support from an expert, multi disciplinary team, which from the

outset include their ongoing professional network. We do not avoid difficult issues and work in a spirit of honesty and transparency with our clients.

Our emphasis is on identifying difficulties and seeking solutions through skilled intervention. Where solutions cannot be found then our role is to evidence this in our practice in order to assist families, Social Services and the Courts to reach accurate, fair decisions that serve the best interests of the children in our care.

### Service Philosophy

- Symbol Family Support Service believes that where concern over parenting exists every person has the right to have their parenting potential assessed, supported and understood.
- We believe that our clients benefit from skilled sensitive assessment and support from an expert multi-disciplinary team.
- We base our services on the principle that the best assessment and support works in collaboration with the client's own local professional network.
- We work in the spirit of honesty and transparency with our clients, ensuring that they understand the targets set before them and the goals to reach, in order to ensure their parenting attains a 'good enough' standard.
- Our emphasis is on identifying difficulties and seeking solutions through skilled intervention.
- We believe that most people with special needs, the task of parenting will be a challenging one. For those clients facing additional disability or psychological/emotional needs, this task is ever more complicated.
- For these parents to be able to look after their children, we need to understand that the potential for long-term neglect is ever present. In most cases, this potential may be ameliorated by the successful intervention of services.
- Service provision should be viewed in the long term. There are no short, sharp solutions for achieving parenting for people with special needs.

## The Assessment Team

At Symbol we have an unrivalled multidisciplinary, expert team. Our Assessment Team includes a consultant grade clinical psychologist, senior social work practitioners, health visitors and nurse advisors, specialist speech and language therapists, a psycho-drama therapist, counsellor, occupational therapist and nursery nurses.

Our Support Team is made up of experienced and qualified staff from a wide range of disability and child care backgrounds. Key to our team is the client's existing professional network, so as to aid transition and ongoing support. At our residential service families are supported on a day-to-day basis, by a skilled support team experienced in working with adults with special needs and young children.

Our Community Support team offers short term, assessment and long term community support programmes. Many families who have progressed through our residential services continue to use our community support service which includes housing, support and advice.

### TESSA DUFFY - Managing Director

Tessa Duffy is the Managing Director of the companies within the Symbol Group; Symbol UK Ltd and Symbol Family Support Services Ltd having established the Symbol Services in 1994. Tessa qualified as a speech and language therapist in 1982 and since that time has provided services to adults and children with disabilities. Following the publication of the seminal work 'Communicating Quality' Tessa was awarded a Fellowship of The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists.

Tessa holds a Post Graduate Diploma in the Psychology of Mental Handicap and Family Assessment. She has a Postgraduate Diploma in Child Studies and is currently enrolled in the Masters Child Studies Programme at Kings College. Tessa has focused her practice around Safeguarding and Parents with disabilities for the past 20 years both within health, social services and independent provisions.

### **RON BLOOMFIELD - Director of Assessments and Head of Social Work Services**

Ron Bloomfield is a qualified social worker. Ron has an MA in Sociology and Community Mental Health. Ron qualified in 1993 and holds a Certificate of Qualification in Social Work and a Post Graduate Diploma in Applied Social Studies. Ron also has a Postgraduate Diploma in Child Studies from Kings College. Ron leads the social work team at Symbol and practices as a part time Children's Guardian.

### **ALEX HALL - Director of Business Development and Consultancy and Family Support Service Manager**

Alex Hall qualified as a Speech and Language Therapist and has a Master's degree in management. Alex has developed, managed and delivered multidisciplinary services for people with special needs and disabilities in the statutory, voluntary and commercial sectors for over twenty years. Alex's particular areas of interest include parent child relationships, social interaction and emotional, behavioural and social difficulties.

### **FRANCIS HARVEY - Consultant Clinical Psychologist**

Francis Harvey is a consultant clinical psychologist with West Kent Health and Social Care Trust. Francis provides services to Symbol via a contract that we have with the Trust.

### **SIAN MANN - Consultant Clinical Psychologist**

Sian Mann qualified as a Clinical Psychologist in 1992 and has been a Consultant Clinical Psychologist for the last 8 years. She has twenty years experience of working with people with learning disabilities. When not working for Symbol, she is a Consultant Clinical Psychologist working in a joint NHS/Local Authority Adult Learning Disabilities Service. Here, she has a key role in the development of local community assessment and support for parents with a learning disability in the area. She also has an intermediate level family therapy qualification, from the Association of Family Therapy.

### **ROMAN RACZKA - Consultant Clinical Psychologist**

Roman Raczka is a Chartered Clinical Psychologist with 25 years experience in the public and private sector, with extensive experience

of staff supervision, teaching and organisational consultancy in addition to clinical and managerial responsibilities.

### **CHLOE DALTON - Case Manager / Assistant Psychologist**

Chloe Dalton is the Centre Case Manager for Newington Manor and Woodlands Farm Residential units and has a BA (Hons) degree in Psychology from Bristol University. Chloe has experience of working with adults and children with learning disabilities and works directly with children and families across our three residential services at Woodlands Farm, Newington Manor and Clifton Park. Chloe is currently undertaking further study of the Master's programme in Child Studies at Kings College in London. Chloe holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Child Studies from Kings College.

### **JACQUELINE STONE - Nursing Advisor**

Jacqueline Stone is a Registered General Nurse and a Specialist Health Visitor for people with Learning Disabilities. Jacqueline has over 30 years experience as a practitioner working with children and families.

### **KEVIN DALTON - Intervention Team Leader**

Kevin Dalton is the lead of the Therapeutic team with Symbol. Kevin is a qualified psycho drama therapist with over twenty year's experience of working with people with learning disabilities. Kevin has also received post graduate training in the use of cognitive behavioural therapy in mental health.

### **HEATHER HINTON —Assessment Team**

Heather Hinton is a qualified social worker. Heather qualified in 1991 and holds a CSS and is a registered social worker. Heather has over 20 year experience working with people with learning disabilities and vulnerable adults. Heather has previously managed residential homes for people with learning disabilities.

### **LOUISE ELLIOTT - Community Support Service Manager**

Louise Elliott is a qualified Speech and Language Therapist Qualified at University College London in 2000 and has a masters degree in Intervention and Analysis in Learning Disabilities from the Tizard Centre, University of Kent in 2005. Louise leads the Community Support Service at Symbol.

### **JUDITH REEP - Consultant Occupational Therapist**

Judith Reep is a Consultant Occupational Therapist with the NHS and is one of the first occupational therapists to take on the consultant role and the only consultant OT specialising in adults with learning disabilities in the UK. Judith has an MSc in Interprofessional Health and Social Studies and is also currently enrolled on a part time PhD course in the Health and Social Care Department of London South Bank University.

### **ALISON KEENS - Speech and Language Therapist**

Alison Keens qualified as a speech and language therapist in 1987 and specialised in working with people with learning disabilities. She then went on to gain experience in business management and general management before securing her current role which is Health Team manager for AWLD in Lewisham and Southwark for Guy's and St. Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust. Alison gained her MBA in 2001.

### **DEIRDRE CLARK - Speech and Language Therapist**

Deirdre Clark has been a registered specialist speech and language therapist for over 40 years and has 15 years of experience within Symbol as part of our specialist assessment team

### **LUCY BERRY - Centre Manager for Clifton Park / Research Psychologist**

Lucy Berry is the assistant psychologist within the assessment team and has a BSc (Hons) in Psychology and an MSc in Neuropsychology. Lucy is the Team Manager at Clifton Park, located in Bristol.

### **DYLAN GILLETT - Centre Manager for Newington Manor, Kent**

Dylan Gillett is the Centre Manager for Newington Manor, located in Kent. In 2005, With over 10 years experience of working in children and adult services, Dylan obtained a BA (Hons) in Early Childhood Studies and Psychology, from Canterbury Christchurch University.

## Service Model

Symbol offers assessment, support or a combination of both service elements. We consider the needs of the adults in their own right as people who are vulnerable and their potential to parent their children.

Our services are tailored to meet the needs of individual families and their supporting services. Sometimes it is appropriate to assess a family's skills within their own home, and in this case our community assessment team may be utilized. Clients receiving community assessment/support may attend a centre on a daily or overnight basis.

In other cases a residential based assessment and support service is required. Some of our families begin their time with us on a residential basis and we complete our assessment once they return home. We have a semi support service that provides a staged return home or a less supervised assessment model.

Our residential services are based in Kent and Bristol and serve clients from all geographical locations throughout the UK. Our community teams also work across a wide geographical area as required.

The Symbol team consider the needs of families and this includes parents and their children. Given the expertise within our team we are able to offer advice concerning the developmental progress of the children we meet.

Our team is extremely experienced in considering the needs of children and, in particular, children who themselves have developmental delays and special needs in their own right. We are able to advise on the parenting needs presented by children who particularly face extra challenges in life.

Whether our service is provided in one of our units or in the community we aim to build an environment which enables the professional team to make sound, robust recommendations for their future.

## **New Referrals / Enquiries**

On a daily basis, the administration team in our Head Office deal with your Frequently Asked Questions about our Assessment Process. We hope that the following information will answer any initial questions that you have.

### **Will my client meet your criteria?**

Our criteria for assessment are that one or both parents must have a diagnosed learning disability.

### **How do I refer my client to your service?**

At the back of this brochure there is a Referral Questionnaire to be completed and returned to the Head Office.

### **Would you consider my client for a Residential Assessment?**

Before we admit a family into one of our residential units, the assessment team will carry out an Preliminary Assessment to look at the merits of carrying out a full parenting assessment. In some cases, we can offer a placement within our units to conduct this assessment., in other cases a Preliminary Assessment is undertaken whilst the family remains in its current placement/s.

### **What is a Preliminary Assessment?**

This type of assessment allows us to assess whether we believe there is merit in the family undergoing a full parenting assessment within the residential unit or in a community setting. More detailed information about this assessment can be found on page 14.

### **How long does a Preliminary Assessment take?**

Usually, we will be able to file a report within eight weeks from receipt of a letter of instruction. If we are instructed to answer extra questions from the parties, which indicate to us that extra work needs to be carried out, our timescales for filing our report may increase. Timescales will be confirmed on receipt of the instruction.

Dependent on workload, at times work may not start on the assessment for 3-4 weeks from receipt of the letter of instruction;

however, this does not affect the length of time taken to file our report.

Due to the demand on our services it is vital that referring agents check with us as to the appropriateness of any timescales that we can offer. Whilst we will always endeavour to be helpful and are mindful of ever pressing timescales, Symbol cannot be responsible for achieving deadlines that have not been agreed in advance.

### **What is a Community Assessment?**

Sometimes we may recommend a further detailed assessment, not within our residential unit but in the clients own home, over a shorter timescale.

For more detailed information on the style, structure and timescales of this type of assessment please refer to page 16.

### **What is a Cognitive Assessment?**

A Cognitive Assessment is an assessment of the intellectual ability of a person based upon the results gained from the administration of a standardised psycho metric instrument. This is not a full Psychological Assessment, although we can undertake Psychological Assessments if instructed to do so.

### **How many clients successfully pass through the Initial Assessment stage to participate in a Residential Assessment?**

In approximately 60% of our Preliminary Assessments we go on to offer a full parenting assessment and make a recommendation as to the most appropriate model of assessment, i.e. community or residential. In the remaining percentage of cases we either recommend alternative services to ourselves or do not recommend that any further assessment is indicated.

### **What are your costs for carrying out an assessment?**

Our Schedule of Costs are outlined in this brochure on pages 28—31, with a summary sheet located on page 32. As soon as we are provided with the nature of the instruction and we are able to estimate the work that will need to be undertaken and the time to do so, we will be able to provide an estimate of costs.

## Preliminary Assessments

We offer a full Preliminary Assessment, which is aimed at advising the parties as to the suitability of further detailed assessment and whether such assessments should, in our opinion, be undertaken in a residential or community setting.

A full Preliminary assessment will be undertaken by two members of the Symbol Assessment Team and will include the following:

- Review of the filed documents pertaining to the family.
- Interview with the parent or parents.
- Observation of a parent(s) contact with their child/children.
- Possible interview with Foster Carer.
- The assessors will consider the merits of further assessment against our published criteria for further assessment and will make recommendations as to the appropriateness of further assessment and whether such assessment should be undertaken by us. Page 19 outlines those criteria in full.
- The assessment team members undertaking this Preliminary Assessment will discuss the case at an Assessment Team Meeting and a team opinion will be formulated.
- A Preliminary Assessment may be combined with a Cognitive Assessment undertaken by a member of our psychology team. Please see description of a 'Cognitive assessment'.

Our report will normally be filed within eight weeks of the receipt of the letter of instruction and will be structured around our own criteria. An instruction that requests us to answer specific questions in our report may increase the timescale for filing a report.

Costs for the Preliminary Assessment can be found on page 34.

## Document Review

This service offers the opportunity for parties to send us key documents, including a Chronology of events, the most recent Social Worker Statement and Key Experts reports for the assessment team to review and produce a letter providing our opinion of the validity of conducting a preliminary or detailed assessment of the parents. We will also require the instructing party to complete the referral questionnaire. This service is being offered as free of charge.

## Paper Based Assessment

This service offers a more detailed report than the Document Review letter. Dependent on the specific nature of the instruction, the report will be written against our own criteria. Costs for this service are dependent on the volume of papers to consider, but start at £902.

These services may be useful in situations where the parties are essentially agreed or where funding or time constraints do not allow for a face to face preliminary assessment to take place. They are not intended to replace our full preliminary assessments as a detailed means of assessing the suitability for families to attend our residential units. They are intended to provide parties with further evidence that the parent should be considered for assessment of their suitability to undergo a full parenting assessment.

We do not attend court for Document Reviews or Paper Reports, as we do not meet with families for these short pieces of work; we are only reviewing the information provided by others and therefore have no new evidence.

## Residential Preliminary Assessment

For varying reasons, there are parents who face the prospect of being separated from their children without having had the opportunity for an appropriate assessment. For example, where a mother has recently given birth and she may be facing the reality of leaving the hospital without their child, without having had the appropriate consideration for assessment.

To prevent children being separated from their parents, the team at Symbol will allow families to enter our residential unit for a four week preliminary assessment. This four week assessment will be concluded with a Professionals Meeting which will outline our recommendations for further assessment. This type of assessment has historically been offered in emergency cases. It is not intended to be used as a replacement for undertaking a full preliminary assessment where it is possible for this to be undertaken, but recognises that timescales sometimes do not allow for the typical form of assessment to be undertaken.

The costs of this assessment are at the same rate as our weekly residential rate, and more information on these costs can be found on page 34.

## Community Assessments

A community based assessment is undertaken where our initial preliminary assessment indicates that this is the preferred model for the children concerned. If we are instructed to undertake a community assessment and we have not completed a preliminary assessment, we will undertake an initial assessment for planning purposes before embarking on the full community assessment. Should we conclude that an assessment of this nature is not appropriate we will advise the parties immediately.

The length of a community assessment and the exact nature of the process to be undertaken is determined by the findings of our preliminary assessment, or our initial assessment for planning purposes and the letter of instruction. We will provide a recommended Assessment Plan; however in summary we offer the following information to assist parties in determining the nature of the instruction that they may wish to place before us.

Community assessments are usually undertaken with the parents remaining in their home in the community, the children may be in the care of the Local Authority and observed as part of the contact that they have with their parents, or they may be resident at home with their parents.

Upon receipt of the Instruction, the assessment will be allocated to a member of the assessment team to act as the Lead. They will finalise the assessment plan, indicate the duration of the assessment and the number/types of appointments that need to take place, and confirm the filing date of the report.

A community based assessment may take place over a period from 6 to 16 weeks and may involve the following as appropriate:

- Full review of all documentation supplied
- A series of interviews undertaken with the parent(s). These may be individual and/or joint interviews.
- Observations of contact of the children with their parents as part of the children's normal contact schedule. On occasions we may ask for a contact session to be extended to enable us to spend longer with the family.

- Interviews with other professionals, such as foster carer or school teachers.
- Interviews with other adults resident with the parents
- Assessment by one or more of our specialist team, including Speech and Language Therapy Assessment, Psychological Assessment, Cognitive Behaviour Assessment, Occupational Health Assessment, Cognitive Assessment.
- Support hours provided to the family on a weekly basis to test potential package for short and long-term support
- Interim and Final professionals meetings dependent on the length of assessment
- The Symbol Assessment Team will meet regularly to discuss the progression of the assessment and a team opinion will be formulated.
- Final report

A community based assessment is aimed at forming an opinion as to the abilities of a parent to care for their child in the long term. In exceptional circumstances the outcome of the community based assessment may be that we consider a family has the potential but would require further work to realise this potential.

A community based assessment, in principal, is aimed at making firm recommendations as to the future plans for the children of parents being assessed and provide the detailed evidence on which we base that opinion.

A detailed community based assessment report prepared by the multi-disciplinary assessment team is filed at the completion of the community based assessment. The file date is the date agreed at the point of instruction, but is generally two weeks after the completion of the work with the family.

Costs for the Community Based Assessment are confirmed by our administration team once the Assessment Plan has been finalised. As guidance, assessments of this nature can range from £7,000 - £20,000 dependent on the level of work required.

## Psychological Assessments

We now offer the option for parties to instruct us to carry out Psychological Assessments.

This assessment includes

- Interview with one of our Consultant Clinical Psychologists
- Review of available documentation.
- Report Completion

Costs for this assessment can be found on page 35.

## Cognitive Assessments

A Cognitive Assessment is an assessment of the intellectual ability of a person based upon the results gained from the administration of a standardised psychometric instrument. A cognitive assessment is undertaken by a Consultant Clinical Psychologist with Symbol, using the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale.

This assessment will provide the reader with details of a person's verbal intellectual quotient, performance skills (i.e. Non verbal IQ) and calculate an overall IQ score.

The narrative will place the scores within an overall banding of ability and will provide summary information as to the impact and implication of the assessed level of ability upon a person's functional abilities and acquisition of new skills.

Each Cognitive Assessment is accompanied by an interview with the psychological team to confirm that the person's functional performance is in line with the assessed level of ability.

Costs for the Cognitive Assessment can be found on page 35.

## Criteria for Admission for Further Full Assessment

During the Specialist Preliminary Assessment we consider the value of a further assessment at Symbol. We offer places to clients according to a strict appraisal of the following factors:

- The presence of a learning disability that has the potential to affect a person's ability to parent adequately
- Our appraisal of whether a person has already received specialist intervention
- Whether a person has undergone any other form of assessment which utilised full and accurate information concerning the person's learning style, ability and deficits
- We consider whether we feel we are able to offer anything over and above that which has been offered to date and whether a person would benefit from the assessment and teaching strategies that we have developed
- We appraise the presence of other factors which may reduce a person's potential to parent for example, additional disability, ill health, mental health need, the numbers of children to be cared for or the availability of appropriate housing
- We consider the evidence for a person's ability to work with the professional network
- The presence of disruptive personal networks upon a person's functioning
- We consider the individual's personal history and their own experiences of being parented
- Where a child would be returning to their parent's care from a period of foster care we consider the length of separation and the potential for delay for the child that might have a prejudicial affect upon any permanent placement
- Given the strong likelihood that a person with a learning disability will require support throughout a child's minority, we consider whether there is likely to be a supportive network at a local level or whether a person is able to relocate to an area where such support may be available.
- We consider whether a client has had access to a full and fair assessment of their parenting potential
- In the light of the above factors, we consider a person's potential to care for their child in the long term.

## The Residential Service

The primary aim of the service is to provide a skilled, multi-disciplinary assessment of families with special needs, where there is concern over their ability to parent their children. The service is delivered via a small staff team who each bring their own unique skills to this assessment process. By ensuring a small dedicated staff team, children are not exposed to multiple carers and the family is enabled to develop and maintain their primacy of care with their own child. Children attending our Residential Service do so in the care of their families, and the family at all times retain the care of their own child. The role of the support team is to facilitate this care, to assess its underlying nature and to examine the effect of skilled intervention upon their parenting abilities. In essence we are considering parenting potential.

The service acknowledges the evidence base that all parents with special needs will face a challenge in parenting their children. This challenge has the potential to lead to long-term neglect and we support the evidence base that such potential for unintentional neglect may be ameliorated by the successful intervention of services. Our role is to determine the nature of this long term intervention and to identify the potential for this intervention to enable children to safely, securely, and happily remain within their own families.

Where this is not possible, the aim of our work is to ensure that families understand the reasons why their children cannot remain with them. They may, of course, not agree with these reasons but our belief is that it is vitally important for their future well-being that they are enabled to plan their future family life. Where a vulnerable adult is unable to continue to care for their child, we see our assessment role to be to identify their own needs for future support to live successfully within the community alone without their children.

We offer the following types of Residential Assessments:

- Full Parenting Assessment (details from page 21)
- Accelerated Assessment Programme (details on page 26)
- Lone Parent Assessment Programme (details on page 27 )
- Teenage Parents with Complex Needs Assessment Programme (details on page 29 )

The Symbol Family Service core residential team is supported by the Assessment Team, the members of which are regularly and consistently working within the units. This team includes Specialist Consultant Clinical Psychologists, a Research Psychologist, Senior Social Workers, Specialist Speech and Language Therapists, psycho-drama therapist, a Specialist Health Visitor, Consultant Occupational Therapist and a Nurse Advisor. These personnel, in the main, undertake the primary assessment and prepare reports for court proceedings.

During their stay in our units, the members of the Family Support Service will work with clients in individual and group sessions and undertake structured and informal observations. In identifying key targets for change and monitoring the adult's response we are able to identify the changes that have been achieved. We identify the specific strategies required to support intervention and review any change we observe in parenting application.

We aim to provide a positive, warm and nurturing environment where families can experience the value of family life, mix alongside other families going through the same process and begin to understand their role in parenting their children. We aim to assess their ability to understand the needs of their children and to begin to meet those needs. Where families have to face difficult issues and choices within their own family life, our team are on hand to work through this process and to assist them in placing the needs of their children first.

Our specialist team has many years of experience in supporting parents with special needs and in working with parents who are vulnerable. In some instances we will be asked to support families where there are children who have special needs, rather than the parents with special needs. Our skills and abilities as a team and our experience of working with children with special needs enable us to meet this challenge in a unique manner.

Our service is based upon evidence. It is based upon the research data which informs us as to the parenting difficulties, styles of intervention and possible outcomes for parents with special needs. Our underlying philosophy is based on a behavioural approach which enables us to work alongside families to look at changing behaviour whilst creating deeper understanding.

Many of our families will have central cognitive impairments. They will need assistance with learning, and a clear understanding of their

learning needs and styles will enable us to ensure that the most effective learning takes place in the shortest possible time. Centrally, we consider their potential to maintain this new learning throughout the child's minority years and to adapt to the child's changing needs as they grow.

We aim to develop skills in the adult to enable them to live more successfully within the community; to care for themselves, to maintain their financial position, to budget, to cook, to maintain a healthy, happy environment both for themselves and their families as they grow. Many of our families will not have enjoyed good extended family support, and part of our role is to determine the support that may be required that may otherwise come from an available extended family.

Our support staff team includes individuals with child related qualifications and experience such as Child Care Awards, Nursery Nurses, and adult related skills such as Master's degrees in Analysis and Intervention for people with learning disabilities, psychology degrees and specialist care backgrounds in, for example, autism.

Staff from our community and assessment/head office services regularly work within the units on shift, alongside the core residential team. The aim of this is to create a full understanding of the centre's practice across Symbol and to ensure continuity.

During an average assessment stay of twelve weeks, three formal reviews will be held to which the families will be invited. Each week a set of targets are developed with the family members and these are reviewed the following week again with the family members. We utilise a style of teaching recording the literature as precision teaching, which is accompanied by a rating scale ranging from 1. - Behaviour not present to 5. - Always present. This system enables families to clearly understand the requirements upon them and for staff to understand the support mechanisms to be put in place to enable successful learning to occur.

Whether our service is provided within our units or in the community, we are able to build a supportive environment where children and parents are given the maximum opportunity to enable the Professional Team to make sound robust decisions for their future.

Costs for Residential Assessments can be found on page 37.

## **The Residential Assessment Process**

### **Pre-Admission:**

Full client information will have been received and read thoroughly by the Centre Manager and at least one Team Leader.

Where at all possible clients will have visited the Centre prior to the assessment commencing.

Information will have been gained concerning a child / or children's routines, likes, dislikes and personal care needs.

### **On Admission:**

Clients will be welcomed by a Team Leader.

Where a child is arriving from foster care, their parents will arrive 2/3 days prior to the child arriving. This enables them to settle in and prepare for their child's arrival.

Clients will be given a few days to settle in and assistance to unpack and arrange their room.

Within three days, a key worker is allocated and on arrival a meeting held.

Clients will be provided with a Residents Guide. This will be talked through with the client and clients given an opportunity to ask questions.

Clients will be supported to arrange their finances.

Clients will be shown around the local area and key venues e.g. GP and Clinic.

Clients will prepare a Placement Agreement with their key worker within 7 days.

### **Assessment:**

An initial assessment schedule is prepared within seven days of arrival.

Baseline results are shared at the Multi-Disciplinary Team meeting during week two.

Information from the baseline assessment is shared at the Assessment Team Meeting at the start of week three and a detailed assessment protocol prepared.

An initial target form is prepared at the start of week three.

Rotas, placement plans and parenting schedules are put in place by the end of week three.

Findings concerning the agreed assessment areas are reviewed weekly at the Multi-Disciplinary meeting.

All specialist assessments are scheduled at dates set and for appointments with clinical psychology, health visiting and our social worker at the Multi-Disciplinary Team meeting during week two.

As the assessment period proceeds the Multi-Disciplinary Team prepare an interim report halfway through and a final report at the end of the placement, unless otherwise directed by the Court.

The final assessments areas are dictated by the letter of instruction provided by the instructing party.

The interim and final reports are prepared by the Assessment Team.

### **Intervention:**

Upon completion of the baseline assessment, the team completes the initial target sheets detailing:

- a) Targets to be achieved
- b) Rating before intervention
- c) Strategy/support plan

Following Review:

- d) Rating following intervention
- e) Outcome/comments

The team will consult with the Assessment Team members in order to

identify teaching strategies and specific support mechanisms e.g. the use of visual aids.

Scheduled sessions will commence with members of the Assessment Team and group sessions started.

The progress of intervention will be recorded on the daily record sheets and in client files.

Intervention progress is reported at the weekly Multi-Disciplinary Team meetings.

Families will attend the local health clinic for fortnightly checks with the health visiting team.

#### **Review:**

Clients will be reviewed weekly and children's needs reviewed on a daily basis.

The welfare of the children is paramount at all times and will be reviewed daily by each team member. All concerns are to be reported to the key worker without delay. The Family key worker will review each family and prepare a noted report on each child in their care. If at any point the team are concerned as to the progress of the family or the occurrence of concerning incidents, the Multi-Disciplinary Team will be called to meet and concerns formulated and shared with the Assessment Team. An early discharge will be considered.

#### **Discharge:**

Prior to the point of transfer out of the service, the Multi-Disciplinary Team will begin to prepare a final report or transfer report and work closely with the local team in preparing a 'move-on' plan.

## Accelerated Assessment Programme

The Accelerated Assessment Programme is a new assessment protocol offered by Symbol as part of a review of our assessment processes.

Users of our service will be familiar with our typical assessment procedure where families enter our residential service for an average of 12 weeks. An audit of assessments completed between January 2010 and November 2011 suggests that our mean length of stay is 9 weeks.

A review of these same cases and others completed during the previous annual period (January 2009 - 2010) has also been undertaken and our recommendations at the midway stage compared with our findings at the final review stage. This review suggests that at week 6 of a 12 week assessment we set out findings which correlate closely with final recommendations.

We are increasingly being asked to assess families who have already been subject to some form of assessment and for whom there is already a large volume of information available. We appreciate that in some cases this information or analysis of that information is a matter of dispute by the parties or may not be considered to be sufficient for the purposes of final care planning.

We are also very aware of the need to make timely decisions in order that children can have their futures planned as soon as is practical and appropriate and certainly without undue delay. We do not wish to add to any avoidable delay.

It is our impression that in these cases it is evidentially appropriate to conduct an assessment which is accelerated as not all areas of assessment will require additional exploration and the existing information base can be used to inform the accelerated programme. At the initial planning meeting we will ask the parties to indicate their priorities for assessment and agreed areas of concern. During this 4 week period we will offer an intervention style of assessment and clients will be assessed by all relevant members of the assessment team.

The Accelerated programme allows us to conduct an assessment where the family resides with us for a period of 6 weeks. In that time the Symbol Team conducts a 4 week intensive assessment and a 2

week review period during which we prepare a final report and hold a final review meeting. This means that the family are ready to leave the Centre at the end of the 6 week period with firm, evidenced based recommendations detailed within the final report.

Should the Local Authority wish us to 'hold' families for longer than this period, then this service is available. The costs of this holding period are determined by the supervision requirements of the family.

Not all families will be considered by us to be suitable for this programme but we do expect that it will apply to a significant percentage of our referrals. Where a Preliminary assessment has been commissioned this will be a programme which will be closely considered.

We offer document reviews at no cost and again, this programme will be recommended where the Symbol Team consider it to be appropriate. This is also a matter of discussion for unplanned and emergency referrals.

## **Lone Parents Assessment Programme**

At Symbol's residential centres we assess children who attend with their families and children who are placed in alternative care whilst their parents attend one of our centres on a residential basis.

The majority of our referrals come to us prior to the separation of parents and children but there is a significant percentage of families (21%) who enter following the separation of parents and children. A review of the referrals that fall within this band that we have undertaken over the past two years suggests that there is evidence related to recorded outcomes to suggest that in the majority of cases there is no case to be made for the child or children to be disrupted from their foster care placement or extended family placement to join their parents at the Centre.

In some cases it may be appropriate for them to be admitted to the centre but at a later date following an initial assessment of their parents and that assessment indicating a likely positive outcome to the assessment as a whole. This is the case where the information that we seek to gain and the assessment we aim to undertake can be achieved through predominantly assessing the parent in terms of factors such as:

- Psychological functioning
- Personality assessment
- Social adaptation and adjustment
- Daily living skills
- Impact of personal history
- Networks and relationships
- Ability to access and accept long term support
- Attachment and bonding between parent and child
- An assessment of the children's needs and match with parental capacity

We have therefore designated a separate assessment programme, with separate accommodation within the Newington Manor site which is designated for parents coming into the centre alone without their children and where we undertake a detailed assessment using contact both in the usual contact centre and in our residential centre's contact centre.

Where it has been considered necessary to separate children from their parents this will have been as the result of safeguarding concerns. It is almost certainly the case that the concerns that exist pre-date the birth of any child or children and therefore careful assessment of the parents' needs in their own right is paramount. Many of the parents who are appropriately assessed within this programme will have faced challenges in managing their own lives and it is therefore prudent to assess these concerns prior to disrupting a child if a separation has already taken place. Individual circumstances may dictate that this is appropriate in that case those individuals will be able to access our core assessment programme.

Where families attending the centre without their children do not require 24 hour supervision or where we do not require assessment data over a 24 hour residential period, we have the availability of community based accommodation where we may undertake a community assessment of the adults with the accommodation element funded as a separate facility. The purpose of this accommodation being provided is to assist in the effective use of resources in terms of travel and on occasions in order to provide accommodation where that is necessary. In these cases families will attend our centres on a visiting basis and some assessment will be undertaken within their own provided accommodation.

## Teenage Parents with Complex Needs Assessment Programme

During the past 12 years Symbol has concentrated on delivering specialist assessments for parents who have learning needs or diagnosed learning disabilities. 40% of the adults who have entered our centres have been under the age of 21 and frequently have been under the age of 18 years.

Concerns have existed as to these young people's ability to learn and many have been unsuccessful within the education system leading to poor educational attainment and resulting low confidence. Many lack confidence in their ability to take part in any structured learning situation and are avoidant of such situations.

A percentage of these individuals have a diagnosed learning disability and others have borderline or low average abilities. Undertaking detailed cognitive assessments forms part of our assessment process where this has not been clarified prior to entry. As a result over the past 12 years, Symbol has developed a wealth of experience and expertise in assessing young parents who do not meet the threshold for a diagnosis of a learning disability.

The assessment of young parents, many of whom have a care background themselves presents specific challenges and the need for an intervention based assessment programme. Any assessment of these young people needs to be able to provide a multi faceted assessment which aims to gain evidenced based information based on a consideration of the needs of the children of young parents as matched against the ability of their parents to care for them. The immaturity of these young parents, coupled with their frequent lack of good quality parenting models makes for a specific set of skills required of the assessment process. Managing challenges of personality and behaviour and the need to assess the individual's social adaptation skills are core to the assessment process that we have developed for young people.

As a result of an increase in our physical space at Symbol and a re-organization of our learning disability team we are now able to offer Local Authorities and the Family Courts a self-contained unit for teen parents who may or may not have a learning disability. This Unit is called The Hebe Centre. Parents referred who do have learning needs may be assessed in this Unit or in the main learning disability Unit

within the Centre depending on their prevailing needs and their assessed level of vulnerability.

As an Outstanding Ofsted Provider, we are registered to take teenage parents of all ages including under 16's. Where the young person is under 18 they will be assessed within our Mentor Programme where they will be allocated a Case Mentor who will lead a dedicated team to support the young person in their own right and in their assessment as a parent. Such assessments will be subject to weekly review and a typical programme of 1:1 support throughout the first part of their assessment. Young parents may be admitted with or without their children who may visit for their part of the assessment rather than be resident.

A formal multi agency review meeting is convened at Week 4 of the assessment.

The Teenage Parent Programme is under the direct leadership of Ron Bloomfield Symbol's Director of Assessments and Francis Harvey Consultant Clinical Psychologist.

All of our Residential Assessments are charged at our weekly rates as outlined on page 37.

## **Working with Families**

All written information will be shared with families unless there exist exceptional reasons for not doing so, i.e. a child may be put at risk.

All copies of reports will be shared with families.

Families will be invited to attend monthly reviews and encouraged to seek feedback from their key worker and Centre Manager at any time.

Families will be assisted to enlist the support of their legal and citizen advocates as appropriate.

Information will be shared in the family's first language and in the style appropriate to the learning needs of the client.

## **Professional Framework**

The nature of families special needs will dictate the requirement for a number of professional services to be involved in their assessment and care plan. The exact nature of that team will be determined following an initial meeting and assessment with the family.

Services will be multi-disciplinary and all teams members will have identified roles and explicit joint working arrangements multi-disciplinary assessments will take place wherever appropriate to avoid duplication, maximise information and share knowledge.

Close multi-disciplinary team liaison will take place at all times and especially through the weekly multi-disciplinary team meeting and the fortnightly Assessment meetings with the wider team.

A multi-disciplinary assessment plan will be compiled and used as a basis for intervention and a further assessment.

Professionals within the team will seek further opinions and support from specialist agencies and centres as required to ensure the quality of their provision.

At the time of discharge from the centre, a family returning to the community will have a full transfer report prepared with clear liaison set up between the Symbol Family Support Service and local Social

Services agencies.

We aim to work within a style of interagency working that ensures that parents with special needs are able to cross-organisational barriers with ease and without undue bureaucratic intervention.

Our team will at all times respect the confidentiality of information they hold and disclose to the team only with the consent of the parents or where a justifiable breach may be assured.

## Costs of Assessments and Terms of Payment

### Costs of Assessments

Whilst this brochure outlines our typical costs of assessment, all of our costs are subject to change dependent on the specific instructions received.

Symbol reserves the right to increase the costs of our assessments on an annual basis.

### Payment

All Family Support Services are provided to the instructing authority or solicitor who has direct responsibility to arrange for payment within the terms set out below.

### Invoices

Payments of all invoices are strictly within 30 days from the date of our invoice unless an alternative is agreed and confirmed, by Symbol, in writing before the placement commences. Failure to pay within these timescales may result in Statutory Interest and Administration Charges being incurred.

We are mindful that the finance departments in some organisations may require Purchase Order numbers to be included on our invoices for ease of payment. Where this is applicable, we would ask that the parties provide this information to Symbol at the point of instruction. See page 28

### Invoices for Residential Assessments

Invoices will usually be raised on a monthly basis, in the last week of the/ each calendar month.

Where Placing Authorities terminate the assessment before the agreed period, Symbol reserves the right to charge for a maximum of 2 weeks period following the departure of the family.

### Invoices for Community Assessments

Where Community assessments are of a duration of more than 8 weeks Symbol may raise an invoice at the interim point. Where this is the case it will be clearly indicated on the Assessment Plan and associated costing.

## Schedule of Fees:

### Preliminary Assessments

|   |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| <b>Document Review</b>  | <b>Free of Charge</b>   |
| <b>Paper Based Assessment</b>   | <b>From £902</b>        |
| <b>Full Preliminary Assessment</b>  | <b>From £3,578</b>      |
| <b>Residential Preliminary Assessment</b><br>(please see page 37 for full costs regarding residential placements) | <b>From £3,276/week</b> |

All of the above fees are exclusive of travel costs by Symbol Assessment staff.

Mileage is charged at **45p per mile**.  
Travelling time is charged at **£26.00 per hour** and is chargeable from our base at Newington, in Kent.

A full estimate of fees will be produced on receipt of our pre-instruction questionnaire.

Please note that any significant changes occurring within the letter of instruction will be subject to a revision of costs. The instructing solicitor/Authority will be notified of these changes by return.

## Schedule of Fees:

### Community Assessments

The costs of a community based assessment can only be confirmed following the receipt of a letter of instruction and when the Assessment Team have finalised the Assessment Plan.

As guidance, assessments of this nature can range from £7,000 - £20,000 dependent on the level of work required.

All fees are exclusive of travel costs for Symbol assessment staff.

Mileage is charged at **45p per mile**.

Travelling time is charged at **£26.00 per hour** and is chargeable from our base at Newington, in Kent.

### Psychological Assessment (including Psychometric Testing)

Includes the following work:

½ day – Reading of Bundle

½ day – Assessment

½ day – Travelling

1½ days – Report Completion

Base line rates include travel costs within boundaries of outer London – additional cost of £100 for travel outside of those boundaries will be charged

Base line rate for 1 parent = £2500

Base line rate for 2 parents (if assessed together) = £4000

Base line rate for 2 parents (if assessed separately) = £4500

Additional adults to be quoted on request

### Psychometric Testing

For adults within Kent

£650 (includes travel)

£600 (if conducted at Symbol offices)

10% discount for 2<sup>nd</sup> adult  
Additional adults to be quoted on request

For adults within London boundaries  
£750 (includes travel)

For adults outside London boundaries  
£850 (includes travel)

### Capacity Assessments

For adults within Kent  
£250 (includes travel)  
£200 (if conducted at Symbol offices)

10% discount for 2<sup>nd</sup> adult  
Additional adults to be quoted on request

For adults within London boundaries  
£350 (includes travel)

For adults outside London boundaries  
£450 (includes travel)

## Schedule of Fees:

### Residential Assessments

Costs are based on a weekly basis, and include Final Report, Placement Planning and Review Meetings

|   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| Single Parent and Child                               | <b>£3,276</b>     |
| Two Parents and Child / Single Parent and 2 Children  | <b>£3,712</b>     |
| Per Extra child                                       | <b>£601</b>       |
| Supervised Contact for other Adults Visiting the Unit | <b>£35 / hour</b> |

### Attendance at Court and Professionals Meetings

#### Court Attendance

Charged per person, per day \* **£856**

#### Meeting Attendance

Charged per person **£327**

\* To enable us to confirm the attendance of our Assessment Team at Court, we require at least 14 days notice to be provided by the parties. Symbol reserve the right to charge for cancellations made within 48 hours of the confirmed date.

Where attendance is for a half day, a 50% charge is made. For morning attendance this is when the Symbol team member has been discharged from Court before 1pm. For afternoon attendance this is when the Symbol team member is asked to arrive after 1pm.

We do not attend court for Document Reviews or Paper Reports, as we do not meet with families for these short pieces of work; we are only reviewing the information provided by others and therefore have no new evidence.

## Summary of Fees:

|   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| <b>Document Review</b>                                  | <b>Free of charge</b>        |
| <b>Paper Based Assessment</b>                           | <b>From £902</b>             |
| <b>Full Preliminary Assessment</b>                      | <b>From £3,578</b>           |
| <b>Residential Preliminary Assessment</b>               | <b>From £3,276/week</b>      |
| <b>Community Assessment</b>                             | <b>TBC after Instruction</b> |
| <b>Residential Assessments</b>                          |                              |
| Single Parent and Child                                 | <b>£3,276 / week</b>         |
| Two Parents and Child / Single Parent and 2 Children    | <b>£3,712 / week</b>         |
| Per Extra child   | <b>£601/ week</b>            |
| Supervised contact for other adults visiting the centre | <b>£35 / hour</b>            |
| <b>Psychological Assessment</b>                         | <b>From £2,500</b>           |
| <b>Cognitive Assessment</b>                             | <b>From £600</b>             |
| <b>Capacity Assessment</b>                              | <b>From £200</b>             |
| <b>Court Attendance</b> per person                      | <b>£856 / day</b>            |
| <b>Meeting Attendance</b> per person                    | <b>£327</b>                  |
| <b>Professional Time</b>                                | <b>£109 / hour</b>           |
| <b>Support Worker Time</b>                              | <b>£38 / hour</b>            |
| <b>Travel Costs</b>                                     |                              |
| Per Mile  | <b>£0.45</b>                 |
| Travelling Time per hour                                | <b>£26</b>                   |

## SYMBOL FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES LTD REFERRAL FORM

Please complete this form as fully as possible and return to Symbol Head Office by post or via fax on 01795 844414.

**Please note the instructing authority/solicitor has direct responsibility to arrange payment with our terms of payment.**

### DETAILS OF INSTRUCTING BODY

Solicitor / Local Authority Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Tel No: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Fax No: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Purchase Order / Reference No: \_\_\_\_\_

### DETAILS OF FAMILY

Parent(s) Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent(s) D.o.B: \_\_\_\_\_

No of Children: \_\_\_\_\_ Ages of Children: \_\_\_\_\_

Status of Children:

Unborn Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_

With parent

With family member \* Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

In Local Authority care \* Placement Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\* Please indicate weekly contact schedule: \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate number of adults expected to be included in the assessment \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate number of children expected to be included in the assessment \_\_\_\_\_

## INFORMATION CONCERNING THE PARENTS

Has parent been diagnosed with a learning disability?

Yes / No

Please provide WAIS Scores

Verbal \_\_\_\_\_

Performance \_\_\_\_\_

Full Score \_\_\_\_\_

Has parent been diagnosed with mental health problems?

Yes / No

Please provide specific information

Does parent have any issues with alcohol or substance abuse?

Yes / No

Please provide specific information

Does parent have a criminal record (spent or unspent)?

Yes / No

Please provide specific information

Please outline the main concerns surrounding this family:

## ASSESSMENT SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Has parent had any previous assessments?

Yes / No

Please indicate what type and date of:

Please indicate the volume of Documents for this family: \_\_\_\_\_

At this time, what type of Assessment do you consider you require?  
(More than one may be indicated)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Document Review         | <input type="checkbox"/> Cognitive     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Preliminary             | <input type="checkbox"/> Psychological |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community               |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Residential Preliminary |  |

Please refer to our [Brochure for full details of our assessments.](#)

Please indicate the desired filing date: \* \_\_\_\_\_

\* Filing date will be 6-8 weeks from receipt of letter of instruction and will be confirmed at this time

Please advise dates of Court Hearings: \* \_\_\_\_\_

\* Members of the Assessment team are not available for Court attendance unless requested in writing

Please provide any additional information to help us process your referral