



# One minute guide

## Multi-Systemic Therapy

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### What is Multi-Systemic Therapy?

Multi systemic therapy (MST) is an internationally recognised and proven evidence based treatment programme aimed at supporting families to reduce the need for children and young people to become looked after. In the UK, MST (Standard) and MST CAN (Child Abuse and Neglect) are both recognised by [NICE](#) and the [EIF](#) as effective interventions.

MST teams work intensively with all the systems around a child/young person (e.g. families, carers, schools, other professionals and local communities) to develop and align intervention plans to achieve positive outcomes .

The standard MST model was developed specifically for anti-social behaviour in adolescents, but since its inception the model and principles have been applied to other presentations in young people, and a number of adaptations have been developed. In Leeds we currently have MST-CAN and MST-FIT (Family Integrated Transition) as well as standard MST.

### What is MST (standard)?

MST standard works with families and young people aged 11-17 who demonstrate severe antisocial behaviour that puts them at risk of entering care or custody. It uses pragmatic solution focused approaches such as parenting, family work and [Cognitive Behavioural Therapy](#) to empower families to no longer need services. Following a specific model and a set of principles that continuously inform the work, input lasts for no longer than 20 weeks.

Therapists have small caseloads, can offer 24-hour support to the families, and are committed to the MST approach of doing 'whatever it takes' to engage families and help them achieve the best outcomes that they can. This involves high commitment and adherence to [restorative practice](#). The MST therapist takes the lead practitioner role for the young person for the duration of the treatment, which provides consistency and reduces the number of practitioner and professional contacts for the family.

There are standard MST teams in Leeds covering all areas of the city.

### What is MST-CAN?

Multi Systemic Therapy Child Abuse and Neglect (MST-CAN) is aimed at helping families with severe and complex difficulties whose children are in receipt of child protection services, or are at risk of being taken into care due to neglect and/ or physical abuse. Whilst working in many similar ways to standard MST, the focus is on child protection concerns, and therapists are additionally trained to deliver specific evidence based treatments that address substance use and trauma in both children and adults. Treatment is intensive, lasting for 6-9 months, and can focus on several family members during the same treatment period. MST-CAN also offer 24-hour support.

Referrals can only be taken for families who have a child or children between 6 and 17 years old subject to a child protection plan under the specific categories of neglect and physical abuse. There is currently one city-wide team that receives referrals through area social work teams.

## What is MST FIT?

Multi Systemic Therapy Family Integrated Transition (MST-FIT) is a relatively new adaptation of MST, and is aimed at bringing young people home from extended periods of care.

Leeds has worked with the Department for Education and the National Implementation Service to evaluate how this new approach can be adapted within UK care settings. MST-FIT currently works with two children's homes where the focus is on helping children to return home.

Young people aged 11-17 years who are identified for the programme receive twelve weeks of intensive mental health support and skills training. This training uses elements of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) training called the Integrated Treatment Model (ITM) within the children's home, which helps young people to accept and deal with their emotions and make positive changes to their behaviour. At the same time, the MST FIT therapist works with the family and other systems to enable the young person to return home successfully. The MST-FIT therapist then continues working with the whole family and systems for a further 20 weeks after the young person has returned home.

Referrals for this service are considered on a case by case basis as places become available at each of the two children's homes, and are co-ordinated between the children's home manager, the MST-FIT Supervisor and the Children's Social Work Service.

## Key contacts and more information

The Programme Manager for MST in Leeds is Emma Ross [emma.ross@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:emma.ross@leeds.gov.uk). For general queries about the use of MST in Leeds, you can contact the service by emailing Emma. If you would like to make enquiries about a referral, please contact the relevant supervisor using the contact details below.

The MST Team Supervisors are:

MST-FIT and West North West - Lydia Burfield [Lydia.Burfield@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:Lydia.Burfield@leeds.gov.uk)

MST-CAN—Emmal Lemdani [emmal.lemdani@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:emmal.lemdani@leeds.gov.uk)

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For more information about the use of MST nationally see [MST UK](#), where you can also find further information about [adaptations](#) to the MST model including MST-CAN and MST-FIT.

Leeds was cited in the ['In Care, Out of Trouble'](#) (May 2016; p28) report by Lord Laming on behalf of the Prison Reform Trust, which explored the impact of involvement in the criminal justice system on the life chances of children and young people in care. MST-FIT was noted, within the context of Leeds's wider restorative approaches, as contributing to reductions in the proportion of young people known to the youth justice service in Leeds.