Ability to understand and respond to the emotional content of sessions

Eliciting emotions that facilitate change

An ability to help a child or young person access, differentiate and experience their emotions in a manner that best facilitates change

Management of strong emotions which interfere with effective change

An ability to help a child or young person recognise and accurately label emotions
An ability to help a child or young person process emotions, by acknowledging and/or containing emotional levels that are too high (e.g. anger, fear, despair) or too low (e.g. apathy)
An ability to deal effectively with emotional issues that interfere with positive change (e.g. excessive levels of anxiety, anger or hostility, or avoidance of strong affect)
An ability to help a child or young person express their emotions while also monitoring their capacity to tolerate emotional expression and to deploy in-session strategies that help to manage any difficulties that emerge, for example by:
- ensuring that discussion moves at a child’s or young person’s pace (i.e. their readiness and capacity to discuss an issue)
- ‘pulling back’ if areas appear to be too difficult and returning to them at a later stage
- helping a child or young person to stay with the emotion without escalating it
An ability to introduce techniques designed to manage unhelpfully strong emotions (such as aggressive behaviour or extreme fear), for example:
- helping a child or young person to name emotions and the ‘messages’ that they convey
- indicating what behaviour is appropriate in the session (setting limits)

When families or carers are participants in the session, an ability to help them support the capacity of the child or young person to express emotion in an appropriate manner (in the session)

Ability to reflect on the expression of behaviours and emotions

An ability to understand that a child’s or young person’s emotional expression (including aggressive behaviour) is a form of communication
An ability to reflect on the meaning of the behaviour/emotional expression and its relation to the current and past context
An ability to describe the emotion/behaviour and elicit a child’s or young person’s interpretation of its meaning
- an ability to discuss any such interpretations with a child or young person
An ability for the practitioner to reflect on their own reaction to the emotional/behavioural expression and their influence on a child’s or young person’s behaviour
- an ability for the practitioner to make use of supervision to reflect (and if need be act) on these issues