

## Our Background

Since 1999 Barnardo's has offered counselling services to schools in different parts of Northern Ireland. Time 4 Me is Barnardo's first dedicated school-based counselling and support service. We began in January 2008 and currently work in a range of primary and special schools, supporting over 100 children each week.

## What We Do

In our experience the best outcomes for children are the result of supporting both individual children and the team of adults around them. We therefore offer a menu of integrated services to support children's emotional well-being:

- **Time 4 Me** – individual counselling for children with a focus on reducing the personal and social barriers to learning by helping children cope better with life problems

## What We Can Help With

All sorts of tough things can happen to children and when they do there is often an impact on learning. Time 4 Me can help kids get through a difficult time or situation; children can learn to cope better and feel stronger about themselves and their ability to learn. We can also support parents find better ways of coping under pressure. Time 4 Me can help teachers understand their pupils better and respond more effectively to their learning needs.

The most common reasons children come to Time 4 Me include:

- bereavement
- family separation and divorce
- school worries
- friendship and bullying difficulties.

- **Time 4 Us** – therapeutic group work with a focus on increasing emotional and social literacy
- **Time 4 Parents** – support and guidance for parents to enhance the impact of individual counselling and to help them support their child more effectively
- **Time 4 Teachers** – consultation and training for schools, supporting staff to enhance the impact of individual counselling and helping staff teams better understand the connections between emotional well-being, learning needs and learning potential



## Our Team

Our practitioners are professionally trained counsellors from a variety of backgrounds, including teaching, social work and youth and community work. We are organisational members of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy and practitioners receive supervision within BACP guidelines. Team members have training in parent education and are skilled in working with teachers. Our work is guided by Barnardo's Basis and Values and all staff have received a police check.

## How we work with Children

Play is one of the most effective ways of working therapeutically with children. Children use play to communicate feelings, understand situations and solve problems. In addition to talking we therefore offer children opportunities to communicate with art, music, sand play and stories.

Time 4 Me counselling referrals come from either parents or teachers. We always seek parent consent before working with a child. Each referral receives a short assessment involving parents, teachers and child. If we decide counselling is not an appropriate support we give advice about other support services if we can.

When we start work with a child they usually come for weekly sessions. On average children attend 10 Time 4 Me sessions, though many attend for less and some for more. Regular Time 4 Parents and Time 4 Teachers sessions support the child's progress.

**Time 4 Us** group work helps prevent social and emotional problems from escalating. Groups build on curriculum work in Personal Development and Mutual Understanding. Practitioners often work alongside teachers to provide groups focusing on one of three key areas: (1) emotional literacy; (2) friendship or (3) bullying.

We regularly review our work to make sure we are on track with the changes wanted by children, families and schools. If at any time we believe a child is in danger or at risk of harm we always act to ensure their safety. We work with the school's child protection policy which may result in contacting child protection agencies.

## Making a Difference

We aim to increase children's emotional well-being to improve their learning potential. Research shows that emotional well-being and a capacity to learn are inextricably linked. We routinely gather standardised outcome information from parents, teachers and children to make sure we are achieving our aims in the most effective way.

An independent review of Time 4 Me outcomes showed that **84% of parents** and **72% of teachers**<sup>1</sup> saw an improvement for children following counselling, and that there was a statistically significant decrease in children's overall difficulties.

<sup>1</sup> The Colin Integrated Development Fund Project: Year 2 Interim Evaluation Report (BDO Stoy Hayward, 2009)

## Time 4 Me

Increasing Emotional Well-being to Improve Learning Potential

A menu of integrated services supporting children's emotional well-being

### Time 4 Me individual counselling for children

- helping children cope better with life problems such as bereavement, school worries, family separation and friendship difficulties
- reducing personal and social barriers to learning

### Time 4 Us therapeutic group-work

- helping children with emotional communication, friendship skills and responses to bullying
- increasing emotional and social literacy

### Time 4 Parents consultation and support for parents

- offering parents support and guidance to enhance the impact of individual counselling
- promoting better family communication to support a child's development

### Time 4 Teachers consultation and training for schools

- supporting staff to enhance the impact of individual counselling and promote more effective learning
- helping staff teams understand and respond to children's emotional well-being needs

## Declan's story

Nine year old Declan is a changed child since attending Time 4 Me Counselling sessions. 'Counselling helped me become more confident' he beams. Before the counselling Declan had been struggling to cope. He had always been a worrier, but in P4 his anxieties began to escalate.



Declan's mum, Siobhan, describes how he would cry on the way to school each day; teachers were also concerned about him getting upset in class. It was all affecting Declan's learning and friendships. Counselling proved to be the turning point. Siobhan says, 'The counselling gave Declan the skills to cope. I don't know where we would be without it. The best thing is to see him so happy and confident and doing well at school.'

Declan says, 'I always remembered the days I was having counselling. We talked about the Worry Monster and how to beat him. I learned how to relax by breathing deeply. We read stories about how to handle worries too. It all helped me feel better.'

With thanks to Declan and Siobhan for permission to use their story and photographs.

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## Time 4 Me Believe in children

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Northern Ireland

Increasing emotional  
well-being to improve  
learning potential

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