



Derbyshire County Council
Positive Play Support
Programme

Information Booklet

The Derbyshire County Council Positive Play Support Programme

What is the Positive Play Support Programme?

The Positive Play – Support Programme is a Derbyshire County Council

Early Intervention Strategy aiming:

“To raise the self-esteem of children and young people, helping them to access the curriculum and so achieve their potential.”

The programme is delivered in a sensory area, with a trained Positive Play Worker through a series of structured activities and play, as play is a natural medium which helps children and young people make sense of their world.

What are the aims and objectives of the programme?

The main objective of our programme is to help children and young people develop the skills necessary for them to achieve their potential in life. They need to be able to identify and manage their own feelings, empathise with others and their feelings and develop the appropriate personal and social skills which contribute to our emotional intelligence.

“Emotional intelligence refers to the capacity for recognising our feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships”

(Daniel Goleman: Working with Emotional Intelligence 1998)

As a result we aim:

To allow young people a space to express and communicate feelings and difficulties in their lives, through a variety of media in a constructive rather than aggressive ways and in a safe non-threatening environment.

To help young people feel good about themselves, and raise their self-esteem by providing activities that look at their strengths and by valuing what they do and making it special.

To provide a non-authoritarian, supportive, reliable, safe, unconditional relationship within the school and other settings.

To provide some of the early experiences that may have been missed but which are necessary for formal education and social interaction.

To help young people acquire the complex range of life skills needed to achieve their potential.

Young people with emotional and behavioural problems often have a negative view of school which can persist through their school career, but it is hoped that the positive experience offered through the Positive Play Support Programme will change that perception and improve their life chances.

Who do the Positive Play Support Team work with?

The team supports children and young people in Derbyshire who have emotional and behavioural difficulties, helping them to engage with their own feelings and emotions and raising their self-esteem.

The programme will be of benefit to a wide range of children and young people e.g.:

- Children and young people who do not respond to the normal behaviour policy of the school.
- Children and young people who seem to be negative about school.

- Immature children and young people who have difficulty settling in school.
- Children and young people with poor social skills.
- Children and young people with some developmental delay.
- Children and young people who present as sad, depressed, withdrawn or isolated.

The support is offered to nursery / infant / junior / primary and senior schools as the structure of the programme enables the activities to be differentiated and adapted for any age group.

Members of the team may work directly with some children and young people but mainly they are involved in training staff and maintaining a quality service by providing mentoring and support through a structured approach when delivering the programme.

Schools receive the ongoing mentoring and support from the Positive Play - Support Team in order to ensure the programme is delivered according to the guidelines detailed in the contract and confirmed by the Accreditation Certificate.

We also offer advice and ideas on Positive Playtimes thus ensuring that all children and young people in school have the opportunity to be involved in the programme.

The programme is now active in a range of settings supporting children and young people and has extended to schools out of county.

Why did we choose “play” as the tool to work with children and young people?

- We chose play and structured activities as our basic approach as it is seen as a safe and non-threatening activity.
- Working through play is less stressful and as a result there should be no disastrous consequences or perceived errors.
- Play enables the development of early concepts and non- verbal expression.

- Play encourages the use of language by providing a variety of first hand experiences which stimulate language, expression and communication.
- Play is a useful and constructive way to develop children and young people's emotions and helps to control aggression and frustration.
- Through structured play experiences, children and young people learn qualities that will benefit them throughout life. For example: self reliance, self control, patience, co-operation, judgement, leadership, determination and perseverance.

“Structured play has a goal, an outcome and play is the route.”

Where do the sessions take place?

It is often difficult to find space or a spare room in a school but it is essential that a

“special area” is designated where the programme can be delivered in privacy.

A room is ideal but not always necessary as a screened off space in a corridor will do as long as the area is not used for other activities that would diminish the effectiveness of the programme.

The identified space needs to be developed with sensory equipment and appropriate resources in order for the sessions to be most effective.

Ofsted commented that:

“Through the imaginative development of a classroom into the “Magic Room” the school has achieved considerable success in improving the standard of the pupils.”

How does the Positive Play Support Team work with the child or young person?

The Positive Play Support Programmes works as follows:

- Schools approach the team for training.
- Team members train and support schools in establishing the programme in their setting.

- In schools, pupils are identified by members of staff, Behaviour Support Service teachers, Education Psychologists, Social Services and other relevant agencies.
- On referral, pupils are assessed by trained workers in school using baseline assessments.
- The assessment is made by completing the Boxall Profile.
- The assessment outcomes inform the target setting and activities to be used to meet the needs of the pupil.
- Regular reviews are made in order to assess progress or identify areas to be addressed.
- One to one support is offered through activities and structured play according to their need.
- Parents are invited to share sessions when trust has been established between the worker and the pupil.
- School staff receive regular verbal and written feedback from the Positive Play Support Programme staff.
- Children and young people are supported until their needs have been addressed.
- Support can gradually be reduced when the child or young person is confident and their self-esteem has been restored.

There is no time limit for a child or young person to be on the programme as they all present with different issues and circumstances they need to address.

Some children lead such chaotic lives and have such significant needs that they may need the support of the programme for many years.

However, children and young people who become part of the programme because of a single issue or incident may progress more readily. As a result they will be weaned off the programme as soon as they demonstrate more settled behaviour and they have achieved their targets.

The more settled behaviour will be demonstrated through the child or young person:

- Displaying more on task behaviour
- Becoming more amenable and developing an improving attitude
- Being more responsive to normal sanctions
- Displaying less extreme reactions to problems
- Being able to show greater co-operation skills
- Responding to praise
- Being able to say sorry
- Being able to appreciate others' feelings
- Displaying an improved disposition to school and work

The programme gives children and young people the freedom to discuss their worries and problems outside the classroom and provides an opportunity for them to be addressed.

It is not a miracle cure and will not eliminate all negative behaviours but it will help to improve behaviour so the negative side is less intense and/or less frequent.

Evaluations

It is acknowledged that play is an enabler and supporter of the curriculum, allowing children to fulfil their potential by allowing time to resolve some of the emotional problems that prevent a child or young person from focussing on academic work.

Play helps to build positive and constructive relationships and experiences that can be taken into the classroom and playground.

Sheffield Hallam University evaluation:

An evaluation by Sheffield Hallam University found evidence for both the need for the Positive Play Support Programme and its effectiveness. It found that the majority of children and young people referred to the programme had the ability to learn, but their emotional and behavioural difficulties had a self-limiting effect on their progress in school, hindering the chances of them achieving their potential in life.

Ofsted:

Ofsted defined the Positive Play Support Programme as:

“As an early intervention tool, reducing disaffection and encouraging inclusive education.”

Finally:

The success of the programme depends on the creation of a “Special Area” where children and young people can foster a sense of safety and security, building up a trusting relationship with their “Special Worker” through openness and empathy enabling them to work together to achieve their targets through structured play and activities.

The Positive Play Support Programme is designed to hopefully change the lives and chances of the children and young people we are aiming to reach but we must always remember :

“We hear children speak, but we do not always listen to what they say.”

How to contact the Positive Play Support Team

Schools or agencies within Social Services or Health interested in establishing the Positive Play Support Programme in their setting should initially contact:

Mrs Sharon Urben (Positive Play Support Programme Manager)

The Positive Play Support Base
Pilsley Road
Danesmoor
Chesterfield
Derbyshire
S45 9BN

Phone: 01246 862854

The Positive Play Support Team is able to offer training and support to all Derbyshire Primary schools, Secondary schools and the range of DCC settings supporting children and young people.

All other schools and settings interested in developing the Programme, in or out of the county, may contact Sharon at the above address for further details on the cost of the programme, training available and assistance in establishing your own Magic Room.

The Training Package includes staff training using our latest training videos and advice on how to create your own “special place”. The support materials include a Primary Manual, a Secondary Manual and Manuals for the range of settings.

Thank you for showing an interest in our Positive Play Support Programme – we look forward to hearing from you in the future and hopefully we will be able to help you set up the programme in your own establishment.

Sharon Urben (Positive Play Support Programme Manager)