

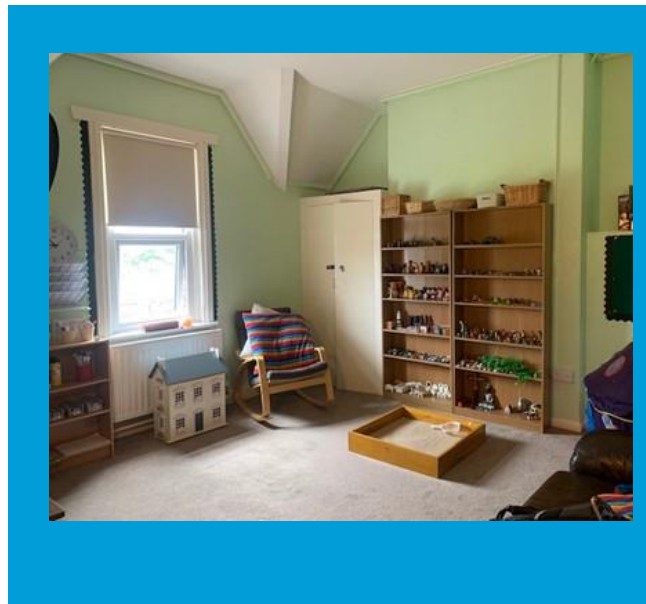
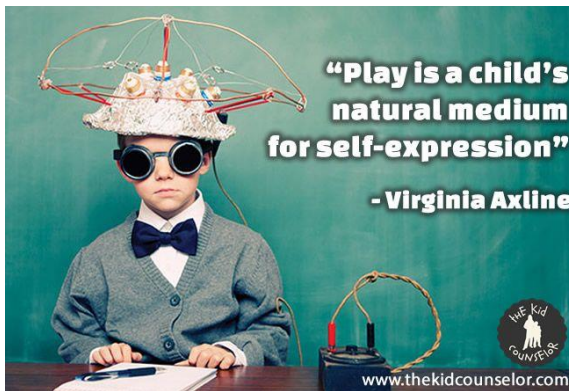
What is Play Therapy

Play Therapy is a type of therapy where play and art materials are used as the main way for children to express themselves.

Using play in therapy helps children to express themselves in their own way; especially if they are struggling to understand how they are feeling, or are finding it hard to put their experiences into words.

The therapeutic process allows children to help themselves as they play out their feelings and struggles in a safe, confidential and non-judgmental space.

The Play therapist is responsible for creating a safe, confidential space for the child to freely explore their inner thoughts and feelings. All equipment in the playroom is specifically chosen for the benefit of the child's therapeutic process.



Individual and group play therapy sessions

With Stephanie



Group play therapy sessions

The recommended number of children for group sessions with one play therapist is 4 and ideally this being two boys and two girls of a similar age.

Sessions will run for 8 weeks and will be led by the play therapist with the sessions being based around the reasons for referral. Preferably all the pupils that are referred for sessions will be being referred for a similar issue.

This could include;

- Bereavement/ loss
- struggling to make friends
- Anxiety

Rational for group play therapy sessions

Researchers and theorists agree that children must learn to socialize in an appropriate way if they are to develop in a healthy manner. According to (Dinkmeyer et al., 1987) we are all social beings primarily and our behavior can only be understood in our social context. Furthermore, Harris (1995) stated "Children learn how to behave outside of the home by becoming members of, and identifying with, a social group" (p.482)



Benefits of group work

Group work can have many benefits and can help a child to realise that there are others who too struggle with the same issues as them. This can help them to not feel as isolated.

The play therapist's main role in carrying out sessions is to ensure all group members feels safe, secure and included to develop a trusting relationship with their peers and me.



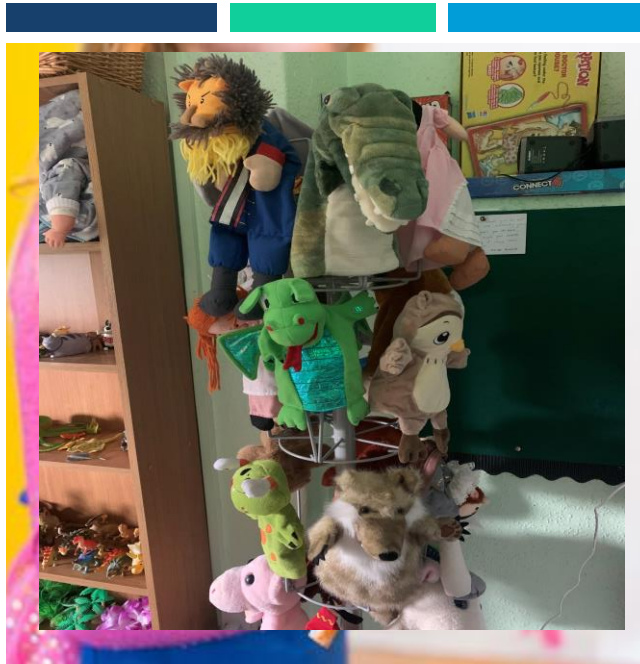
Talking about problems can be difficult for children

A child may not have the words to describe how they are feeling, or why they are behaving as they do. A child may not be able to recognize what they find difficult or explain it to someone if asked.

Play therapy provides the expertise and time to do this through play. Sessions aim to build a child's ability to develop healthy and resilient relationships, and to work through traumatic events.

Sessions

Each session is 40 minutes long. The sessions take place at the same day and time every week. It is important for the parent and child to commit to this as consistency is vital in the therapeutic process. As the child's own opinion and needs are an important part of the therapy process, it is ideal that the child presents at every session.



“Play is a child's natural medium for self-expression”

-Virginia Axline

How does play therapy work?

Children can play what they struggle to say, children can play to explain their way. Through play children can discover and rehearse different ways of understanding and coping with difficult feelings, leading to a healthier and happier way of being.

Equipment Used

The items that are used in the playroom include sand play, creative visual arts, clay, puppetry, movement, music, creative visualisation and therapeutic storytelling.



Teachers to avoid asking 'did they have fun'. Sessions are not always fun; some really big feelings can come up during sessions.

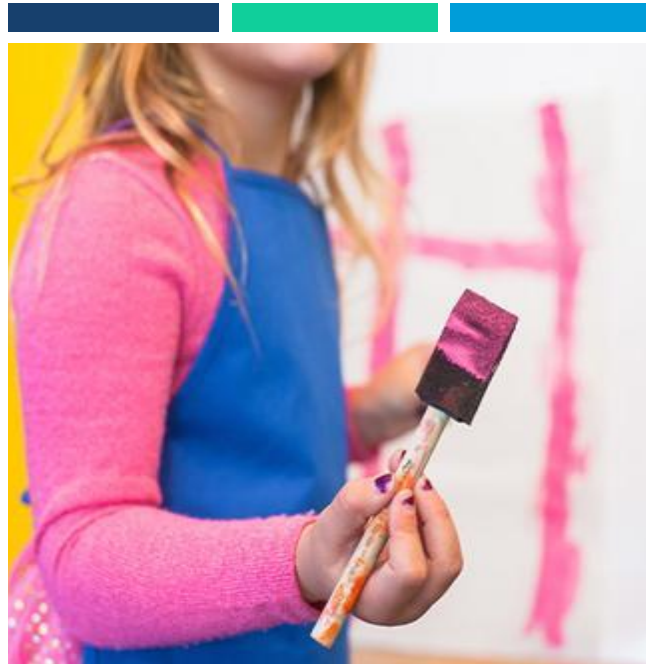
As adults we can without thinking tell children to 'behave' when they are going with another adult. As play therapist's we are trained to deal with whatever behaviour or feelings come up in sessions, there is no right way to be. Telling the child to be good can set an unrealistic expectation going into the session, of how they think they need to be. Although I understand this comes from a good place, please be mindful of this.

What is the role of the adult in this?

Your role is important in relation to the child attending sessions, and there is so much that you can do to support them during this time.

Some children may be a little delicate after a session, or even angry. It is important to support the child through these feelings by letting them know you are there. You may choose to take your child for an ice cream after a session, or a walk. Noticing the child's feelings if they are expressing anger or sadness, just saying something like 'I can see that you are angry' can really let them know that you are there. Furthermore, this can help them open up by themselves.

Just as we could feel sad after a therapy session, the same can apply for the child. I always encourage parents/carers and



Endings with the child

Endings are an important part of the therapy process with the child, and they are always well prepared for this having a visual countdown of sessions using pebbles.

Not all children have happy endings this could be due to someone passing away unexpectedly or leaving for an example. It is an important part of the process in play therapy for them to attend the final session.

If they choose to not want to continue with sessions the play therapist would try to meet with them to create some form of closure. This shows them that there can be positive endings and help the child to develop trust in the adult and later in life.