

Behaviours and Child Development

Overview

The children that are part of the Project have all been referred to us by Social Services or via the Early Help system in schools. These children are referred to us for a reason. They are children who are in need due to: extended family that do not live nearby, disability in the family, siblings with special education needs, siblings that can be disruptive at home and affect other children's behaviour, schools noticing a change in behaviour or learning ability, difficult family situations, mental health issues in the family, etc. **Even if you think the children do not need your time and support, we can assure you, they do!**

Behaviour

Children are very good at hiding and not showing us what they really feel. Some may be holding their feelings inside; others may need to vent their feelings loudly, some may simply not know or understand 'how to feel or communicate'. We know that this can sometimes feel overwhelming when you are dealing with the sort of children that we have referred to us. These children need a stable influence in their lives, as they do not have one at home. Living in a nurturing environment is essential to the physical and mental development of children.

A child's behaviour is learnt from their environment. Therefore, if a child is surrounded by a chaotic or traumatic environment, their behaviour may follow the same path. Or, they may totally withdraw into themselves to be able to cope with their home life. Children learn from the day they are born. They adapt to their surroundings as they see fit and this will affect their thoughts, feelings and actions. For some children, being asked a question and expected to reply, may bring huge anxiety, for many reasons.

The children may not be getting the appropriate parenting at home. This maybe for many reasons: parents not being parented effectively themselves, they may have no experience of what a 'good parent' should be, mental health issues, illnesses, mobility issues, other siblings that need higher levels of care, siblings that have issues or siblings that are looked after by grandparents or other members of the family.

Unexpected Behaviours

Potential unexpected behaviours may include: Not saying thank you, not speaking when spoken to, not answering a question, being shy, being slightly disruptive, not doing as they are told, telling you that they go out on lots of outings to theme parks (things they would like to do, but do not), showing inappropriate behaviours and not 'opening up' to their OF. A friendship may be working well and then experience an unexplained 'blip'. There is always a reason for this change. Perhaps their family situation has changed, they may have moved schools or moved to high school; and changes in friendships can all affect a young person's behaviour. The Area Coordinators work closely with our Older Friends, the children's parents/carers, social and pastoral workers, so that we can manage these situations and help to find ways to resolve them.

We ask for as much information as possible about the children that are referred to us. We have an Assessment Criteria that our referrers need to complete on the application form. We carefully assess each child referred to us to ensure that they meet our criteria and if they do not, we will advise the referrer that we are unable to match them.

You are giving the children your total attention and letting them know that someone cares for them. Evidence of this is when one of our Younger Friend's said to his Older Friend: "You are just there (for me)". A child may not communicate verbally how they feel about being with you, this can be seen by their non-verbal signs: Eye contact, smiling, looking happy to see you and maybe waiting for you by the door before you arrive! A child may also look unhappy to see you, but have great fun out of their home with you.

This is where your job is so vital to their development. You are showing them how relationships should work. Communication, forgiveness, compromise, what is right and wrong, how to behave and much, much more. Once a trusting relationship has been achieved, and this may take time, positive behavioural changes may become evident.

Please note that our Area Coordinators are always available to support you with any concerns or questions, you are never on your own.