

## What is Play Therapy?

Play Therapy helps children understand muddled feelings and upsetting events that they haven't had the chance to sort out properly. Rather than having to explain what is troubling them, as adult therapy usually expects, children use play to communicate at their own level and at their own pace, without feeling interrogated or threatened.

## How can Play Therapy help my child?

Play is vital to every child's social, emotional, cognitive, physical, creative and language development. It helps make learning concrete for all children and young people including those for whom verbal communication may be difficult.

Play Therapy helps children in a variety of ways. Children receive emotional support and can learn to understand more about their own feelings and thoughts. Sometimes they may re-enact or play out traumatic or difficult life experiences in order to make sense of their past and cope better with their future. Children may also learn to manage relationships and conflicts in more appropriate ways.

The outcomes of Play Therapy may be general e.g. a reduction in anxiety and raised self-esteem, or more specific such as a change in behaviour and improved relations with family and friends.



## What will happen in my child's Play Therapy sessions?

Your child's Play Therapist will have a large selection of play materials from which your child may choose. These may include art and craft materials, dressing up props, sand and water, clay, small figures and animals, musical instruments, puppets and books. The Play Therapist will enable your child to use these resources to express him or herself without having to provide verbal explanations.



### **What does a Play Therapist do?**

Play Therapists receive extensive training in subjects such as child development and attachment (the bonding process). They are also trained to use play, a child's natural form of expression, as a means for understanding and communicating with children about feelings, thoughts and behaviour.

A Play Therapist will begin by carefully listening to your concerns about your child and family. They will review their history and find out about the stresses the family have been through so that they can help your child make sense of it. They may ask to seek information from school and other significant adults in their lives. An assessment is made of your child's strengths as well as their difficulties.