



REPORT ON ACTIVITIES 2019



INTRODUCTION

Dandelion Time offers help to children with very challenging emotional issues, often resulting from trauma, violence or serious health difficulties in the family. Many children have fallen out of education or are in foster care, or in some cases have become involved in anti-social behaviour. Their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties are often a result of difficult and complex home lives.

Our approach is family based and creates opportunities for new beginnings and improved relationships. The service recognises the importance of being in a peaceful natural environment, absorbing children in calming hands on activities. Therapists guide families to harness the healing powers of the natural world using materials such as wood, wool and clay, to care for animals and to grow and eat healthy food thus laying down new positive memories. This helps them to discuss and explore the difficulties they are facing and enables the wider family to come together to build stronger bonds. Children grow in confidence and resilience and have achieved remarkable and long lasting changes in their lives as a result of coming to Dandelion Time.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS

114 children aged 4-15 and their families have attended Dandelion's therapeutic programmes in the last year. Typically, the referred children have come from families with multiple and complex difficulties, including abuse, neglect or domestic violence. Each family has attended half-day sessions weekly for up to 15 weeks.

In the last 12 months, Dandelion Time has delivered:

- **61 initial home assessment visits** for children and families

- **330 half-day sessions** were delivered, encompassing ongoing therapeutic support and activities (farming, animal care, woodwork, pottery and cooking).
- **One-to-one (individual/family) sessions** for each child.
- **One to one case meetings** for each child with schools, social services & other referrers.
- **Individual counselling** –provided for parents of referred children.
- **Work experience and volunteering opportunities** were provided for young people not in education or training.
- **Professional CPD & Certificate Training** has been provided for professionals working with vulnerable children and families. In 2018-19, 61 professionals completed Dandelion Time’s 2-day CPD training course; ‘Enabling Learning in Children with Poor Attachment/Trauma’, and 15 professionals completed the 1-year Certificate programme in *Nature, Craft & Family Systems*.
- **Family and volunteer events** including a family boat trip, picnic and craft workshops have helped past families remain connected and supported by the charity.

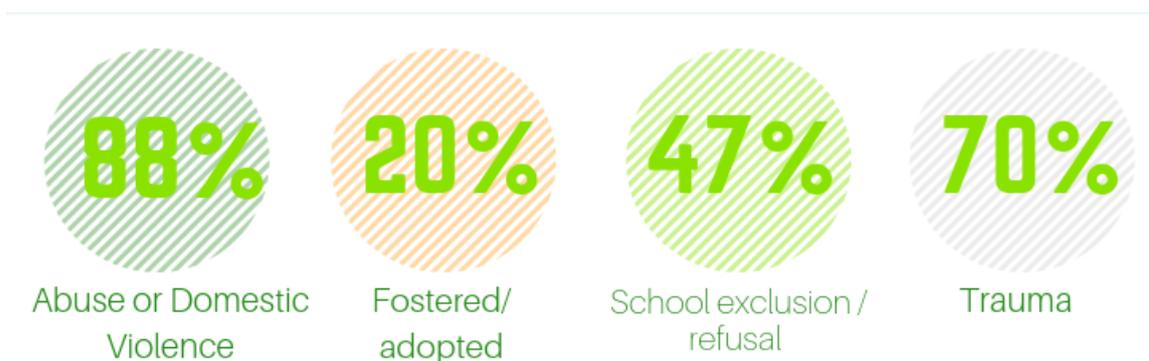
Families attending programmes have taken part in:

- **Animal care, farming & cooking:** Feeding and caring for the donkeys, sheep, chickens and ducks helps children to develop a sense of responsibility and empathy. Growing and harvesting fruit and vegetables, caring for the sensory garden, and preparing and eating meals together offer opportunities for cooperation and shared experience.
- **Natural crafts & creative activities:** Creative hands-on craft activities in the pottery, green woodworking and wool work areas help children develop perseverance, as they learn new skills and build confidence. Working with others on activities helps young people express their feelings in non-destructive ways, shifting negative behavioural patterns and nurturing positive communication.

To ensure the best outcomes for children and families, we have continued to work in collaboration with referral and other agencies involved in the care of each child, including schools, Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), Child Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Social Services.

Referral Difficulties

Referrals in the last 12 months have continued to be for children with multiple and complex needs. Many are impacted by several of these issues:

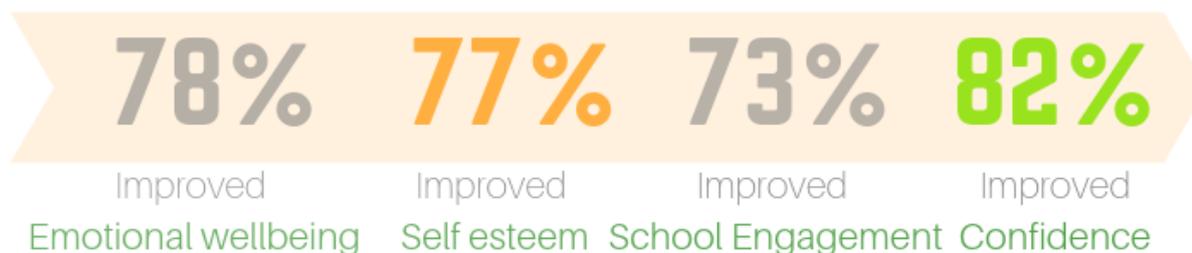


Many children are referred to the charity due to **difficulties at school, exclusion, truancy, or an inability to engage with education**, due to complex emotional difficulties. Some children are registered as being ‘home-schooled’ due to withdrawal from schooling. For all children, we aim to help them overcome emotional and behavioural issues, so they can engage fully with mainstream or specialist education provision. Preventing permanent exclusion is a key

aim to ensure children can have a more hopeful future with greater aspirations and opportunities.

Outcomes

As well as personal emotional, behavioural and relationship 'Goals' which are set individually with families and scored at the start and end of the programme, we also monitor and score a range of general outcomes for each child, assessed through child/family feedback, staff observations, and feedback from professionals. The project has continued to bring about positive changes in emotional and behavioural wellbeing:



Dandelion Time's programmes have continued to bring significant benefits to children with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties, many of whom have lost hope following unsuccessful interventions. Evaluation has shown the programme's positive effect on psychological wellbeing, self-esteem, confidence and resilience. Most children re-enter or engage better with school, become less isolated and have reduced anxiety, fear, and other emotional symptoms.

The service has expanded to reach 114 children in the period, and the number of families supported has almost doubled in 5 years. We continue to receive unprecedented demand for all our programmes. Up to 20 enquires for referrals are received each month, and currently have a list of approximately 20 children awaiting placement.

PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

Dandelion Time is facing substantial demand across Kent for its services and is committed to expanding its therapeutic work with children affected by trauma. We aim to reach more children in Kent whose complex needs remain unmet, and advance understanding and practice of how children affected by emotional difficulties are supported in schools and other settings.

A new 5-year strategy has been launched for 2019-24. To respond to increasing demand, the charity will be re-locating to a new long-term base (remaining in the mid-Kent area) and launching new services in other parts of the county where we know there is great demand.

By 2024, Dandelion Time aims to offer a Kent-wide service for children with complex emotional & behavioural needs, operating from 3+ locations and accessible to families from all parts of the county. Our aim is that every child in Kent who could benefit from Dandelion Time's therapeutic approach will be able to reach a service from wherever they live in Kent. The first new service will began to operate in November 2019 serving families from East Kent, and further services will follow.