



Referring a child to Dandelion Time

A professional's guide



**Dandelion
Time**

Our story

Over the last twenty-two years, Dandelion Time has provided support and assistance for more than 1,500 children struggling with challenging emotional difficulties, often resulting from trauma, loss, abuse or neglect.

Dandelion Time supports children aged 6-13 who have faced difficult experiences that affect their emotional wellbeing and mental health, often resulting from trauma, loss, abuse or neglect.

Every child's story is of course unique, but almost all the children that Dandelion Time works with, have experienced more than four adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

As a result, the child's emotional landscape is often bleak, their difficulties culminating in repeated exclusions from school and a breakdown in relationships at home. They often show aggressive or withdrawn behaviour and suffer from depression or anxiety. They may have struggled to form strong attachments within their family or maintain friendships at school.

Dandelion Time provides vital early intervention to children and their families to combat the immediate impact of the trauma they have experienced.

But our early intervention also has a long-lasting impact, helping to:

- Improve the long term physical and mental health
- Break the intergenerational cycle
- Reduce school absenteeism

Our service is for family members where the occurrence of trauma is past, rather than on-going as we support their healing and restore hope for their future.

"ACEs may be intergenerational BUT healing can occur and the cycle can be broken."

Nadia Butler

Public Health Institute, Liverpool John Moores University

When to refer a child to Dandelion Time

- The child has experienced **trauma, abuse, or neglect** that is impacting their wellbeing
- They show signs of being **anxious, withdrawn, or emotionally dysregulated**
- They display **challenging or aggressive behaviour** in any setting
- They are struggling to **form or maintain positive relationships**
- They have **experienced bereavement, family breakdown, or significant instability** at home
- The child or family has been affected by **domestic abuse, parental separation, or incarceration of a family member**
- They are **living with high levels of stress**, such as poverty, poor housing
- The child is a **young carer**, taking on responsibilities beyond their age
- A **parent or carer has mental health needs or substance misuse** issues impacting the family functioning
- The child has **low or irregular attendance** at school or activities, often linked to difficulties at home
- They are at **risk of exclusion from school** or other community settings, or have **already been excluded**

Dandelion Time offers multi-family sessions which means that we work with groups of 10-15 children and adults. We are not able to offer a 1:1 service and referred children need to be able to attend group sessions.

Funding and referral fees

Dandelion Time fundraises to meet a significant proportion of the costs of delivering interventions. If you are unsure which category might apply to you, please contact us to discuss.

- **An administration fee of £235 applies for referrals of Kent-based families** not covered by a Service Level Agreement (SLA). This is refundable if the referral is not accepted, but not once a placement is confirmed. Places at this reduced rate are limited by our fundraising income.
- **Referrals made under an SLA**, such as Virtual School Kent, NHS or the Adoption Support Fund, should be clearly identified on the referral form. **The SLA usually covers the referral fee, but approval must be obtained before placement is confirmed.**
- **Other referrals**, including those funded by out-of-county authorities or charities, **require a higher contribution**, typically between £1,000 and £3,000 depending on available match funding.

A Family Programme placement costs over £3,000, and Dandelion Time will offer match funding where possible and where our funders' criteria are met.

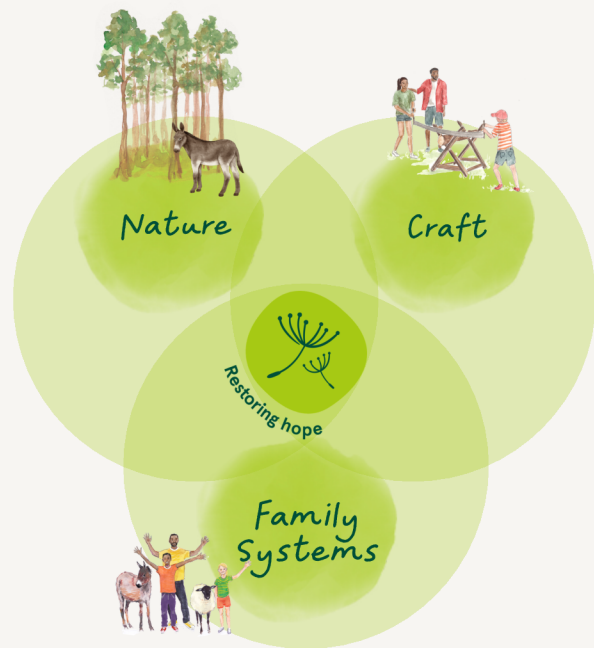
Our Approach

Nature, Craft and Family Systems are at the heart of Dandelion Time's therapeutic approach enabling children to grow in confidence and resilience and achieve remarkable and long-lasting changes in their lives.

We engage families in a range of natural craft, cooking, gardening and harvesting, animal care and outdoor activities that engage head, heart and hands. Our nurturing environment allows children to build self-belief, strengthen relationships and develop the skills and aspirations for a brighter future.

We also offer 1:1 support to parents/carers throughout the duration of their sessions.

Our aim is to promote sustainable change for vulnerable children and their families using the therapeutic and educational potential of the natural world. 🦋



Nature

Our **peaceful natural environment** absorbs children and families in calming hands-on activities. Therapists guide families to harness **the healing powers of the natural world**, taking time to marvel at the wonders around us, and run free in the open air, to caring for animals, and growing and eating healthy food.

We learn to **care for and nurture** the important things in our lives.

Craft

Our craft work brings benefits from a **sensory experience**, working with our hands to create something new from **natural materials** such as wood, wool and clay.

We use **traditional and rhythmic techniques** to help to soothe the busy mind.

We learn to **experiment and try something new**, and that sometimes things go wrong but we can adapt and go on to create something beautiful.

Family Systems

Working together with the child's carer or family member, providing moments of joy they can embrace together, and helping them to **discuss and explore the difficulties they are facing together**. They rebuild relationships and break the cycle so they can build hope for the future.

Our 9-week programme

Over the nine weeks, families attend a peaceful countryside setting for half a day each week. Together, they take part in calming, hands-on activities in nature, guided by our skilled therapeutic staff. It's not counselling in a room – it's healing through doing, together.

What families can expect

- In the first session, the parent or carer will spend time with their caseworker to talk about their child's challenges and what they would like to achieve during the programme. They will also have the chance to see the site to allay any anxieties
- The child and parent/carer will then attend one half-day session a week for 8 weeks
- A mix of creative activities, time in nature, crafts, cooking and animal care
- A chance to spend quality time together away from everyday stress
- Support from friendly, experienced staff who understand what you're going through
- Help with their child's emotions, behaviour and confidence – and support for the parent / carer too
- A gentle, supportive space

They'll enjoy:

- Growing food and gardening
- Cooking and eating together
- Animal care and time outdoors
- Crafts using natural materials like wood, clay and wool
- Quiet space for reflection, support and play

Our impact

Since 2003, Dandelion Time has achieved positive outcomes for deprived children with serious and complex difficulties and their carers.

As a result of attending Dandelion Time:

- Children have increased confidence, self-esteem & resilience.
- Children have improved social skills, are more able to form friendships and feel less isolated.
- Relationships between children and carers are improved, and family life is more positive.
- Children re-enter school or increase levels of engagement and achievement, with a stronger belief in their ability to succeed.
- Carers gain improved emotional wellbeing, often damaged by past domestic violence or trauma, resolve parenting challenges/conflict and gain insight into their child's issues.



% of children with positive outcomes, September 2024 to August 2025

Parents and Carers have also reported positive changes to their own mental wellbeing after attending the programme.

Dandelion Time uses the Warwick Edinburgh Scale, a widely adopted measurement tool used by mental health professionals. The data shows in the period from September 2023 to August 2024 71% of parents/carers have reported a positive change in their mental well-being.

Ready to refer?

Dandelion Time welcomes referrals for children and young people from a professional working with them and/or their family.

- Please complete our [referral form](#) as fully as possible.
- Please at this point submit any relevant reports or assessments.
- Once completed, please password protect the document and send it via email to our Admissions Coordinator using referrals@dandeliontime.org.uk

We will review the referral and may speak with you and other involved professionals to deepen our understanding and ensure we are the most appropriate service for the child and family at the time.

We will let you know whether your referral meets our criteria and if not recommend an alternative provision where possible.

What happens next

Once the referral has been accepted you and the family will be informed. We will then carry out an introductory session at one of our centres with the child parents or carers to discuss the child's challenges in more detail. The 9-week programme will then begin.

Any questions

If you have any questions about the referral process, funding or our programmes please get in touch:

Email: referrals@dandeliontime.org.uk

Tel: 01622 814001



www.dandeliontime.org.uk - 01622 814001

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