

What to expect when working with Carefree Kids

A contract between Carefree Kids and schools

Carefree Kids (Charity number 1111949)
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School Name:

Terms

Volunteer: a volunteer from Carefree Kids who will be working with the child as a Therapeutic Playworker. All volunteers have received training from Carefree Kids and are often therapy students on placement or have relevant life/work experience. All volunteers have been DBS-checked and receive weekly supervision where they discuss the ongoing therapeutic work. Some are qualified therapists who may offer counselling, drama, art or dance/movement therapy.

Therapeutic Play Session: the session is usually 45 minutes long, held once a week at a time agreed by the volunteer and the school. During the session, children are allowed to use the play/arts materials provided however they choose (within certain limits of safety). The volunteers reflect back what the children are doing and engage with the children in non-directive therapeutic play. This allows children to explore feelings and situations in their own time and method.

Link staff: often the SENCo, Head or Deputy Head Teacher, or a member of staff designated to be a key link.

Preparation

a) Permission from parents

The school needs to obtain written permission from parents/primary carers for the therapeutic sessions to go ahead, unless this has already been obtained at a previous school. We can provide a specimen letter and an information leaflet written specifically for parents. We also like to meet with parents/primary carers before starting work with the child, where possible and appropriate.

b) Observation of child

Once parental consent has been given, and before starting work with a child, our volunteer will need to observe the child in class and the playground, without the child knowing. This also gives the volunteer a chance to meet the teacher and LSA. They later (or on another occasion) introduce themselves to the child and invite the child to join them for weekly sessions (usually starting the following week). The wording of this introduction is important so we ask that school staff do not discuss the sessions beforehand with the child. We warmly encourage the child to attend sessions but ultimately give the child the choice.

c) Addressing teachers and other staff (LSAs etc)

We have found it very valuable to prepare staff, before starting at new schools, by giving a presentation about therapeutic work and the Carefree Kids approach. We can provide you with leaflets and information for display. It is a chance for staff to ask questions and express their concerns/interest. We can do this at an INSET day, a staff meeting or specially held meetings. In addition, all staff, including governors, are invited to attend our study days, conferences and other events.

d) Course for staff

We can offer an after-school course for school staff in 'Everyday Therapeutic Responses to Children', and invite you to offer the course at your school to all staff, in order to support our work and expand the extent of therapeutic interactions for all children in the school.

Information about the child

Please fill in the referral form carefully with as much information as possible. We would also appreciate the school letting us know any developments, e.g. a change in the child's family circumstances, school exclusion, new baby, change of class teacher etc – anything which could have an impact on the child's emotional state.

We like, if possible and appropriate, to meet with the child's parent(s)/carer(s) before we start work; to find out their experiences of the child, family history and to see whether they would like some support, parenting advice or counselling, or to learn about filial therapy (therapeutic work at home with their own child.) This meeting can be at Carefree Kids or at the school, or we can talk to them over the phone.

Please also fill out the monitoring form that is attached to the referral, we use this only for information gathering and to ensure equal opportunities.

We have introduced a simple evaluation tool to help us assess the impact of our work and there is a form for school staff, parents/carers and for our volunteers to complete at the start of the work, annually and at the end of the work.

Room used for therapeutic play - the play room

The ideal is to have a private, secure room that is used only for therapeutic play sessions. However, as we understand this is not usually possible, we have some requirements:

Consistency

We need to set out our toys and arts materials in the same way ***in the same room*** each week, as therapeutic work needs to be predictable for children to feel secure in the surroundings. It is not appropriate to be asked to use a different room.

We realise that schools are often short of space to store seasonal items, but we ask that bulky, extraneous goods are never left in the play room while our sessions take place: they distract the child, take up some of our usual space, and mean that the room is not the same as the week before and can have a negative impact on the therapeutic work that takes place in the space.

Storage

We need a safe space to store our wide range of materials, so that they are not used by other children or adults. This is preferably in the room which we use, or if not, in an adjacent space to enable our volunteers to put them out easily. The school is expected to replace any items that go missing in our absence. If necessary we can bring in furniture/free-standing shelves in which to store most of the toys (which can be covered up when not in use). Children then have easy access to toys during our sessions.

Children each have a box to store artwork made during the sessions. This can have a very strong meaning for children and the therapeutic work so; again, it is helpful if this can be stored in the play room. But if this is not possible, another safe place is needed, out of sight and reach of children. It is essential that this box is considered confidential – accessed only by the child and the Carefree Kids volunteer.

Privacy

What children do in the therapeutic play session is confidential to them. We close the door and put a notice on the door asking never to be disturbed. **We ask that no adult or child from the school interrupts, comes into the room or observes the therapeutic play during a session.** Please ensure that everyone in the school knows that this is to be respected and why, and to ensure that staff know the times when the room is not available, as it can be very disturbing to the therapeutic work and for both child and volunteer if there are interruptions.

In order to ensure that children and adults do not observe the work, we need to cover up glass windows. It is possible for us to leave a gap at the top of the door window, in order to conform to the school's child protection policy (if necessary) but regular observation through the glass should not take place, as this can compromise children's feelings of privacy.

Confidentiality

Children are told that what they do in the session is confidential. We say that we will not share what they do with anyone else, unless we are worried about their safety (in which case we would inform the Child Protection officer who would decide on next steps. We would also tell the child we had informed them).

Children should never be asked details about what they did in the session (although they may choose to share, of course) and some children do not like the sessions to be referred to at all. Please ensure that teachers and LSAs do not discuss the child with the volunteer within earshot of the child, as it can affect how they use the sessions.

Please also note that although Carefree Kids staff/volunteers are happy to attend meetings and talk about how the child is getting on in general terms, we will always maintain confidentiality of details of the session (unless there are safety concerns, in which case procedure is followed as above).

Regular attendance by the child

Consistent, regular sessions are essential, so we expect to attend to see the child every week, unless there is a very special occasion which the child would really hate to miss. In that case we ask that you please inform the volunteer in good time. If children are unexpectedly absent from school, we do not charge you for the session, provided you have contacted the therapist by 9.30am. Volunteers sometimes contact schools to check a child is present before they set off – please let office staff know they might be ringing.

The therapeutic session should not be seen as either a reward or a punishment for a child. Sessions must never be cancelled due to a child's difficult behaviour, and cancellation must never be used as a threat. We ask that teachers let the child come to sessions without any comment to the child or the volunteer.

Communication with volunteers & the CFK Co-ordinators

All CFK volunteers are asked to give their contact details to the school office and the link staff member, in case messages need to get to the volunteers at the last minute. If a child is unavailable for a session, the school should contact the volunteer directly in the first instance, as the Carefree Kids staff sometimes have to be away from the office. We ask however that the school contacts Carefree Kids staff at our office if there are any problems or issues needing discussion, so that these can be sorted out promptly.

Please contact the volunteers regarding only the child they are seeing for therapeutic play. New referrals and administrative issues should be sent directly to the Carefree Kids office.

Volunteer absence

Our volunteers are highly committed to this work, but occasionally have to be absent at the last minute. In this case, they will telephone the school office and ask for a specifically-worded message to be given to each child. *How we word things is hugely important in therapeutic work, so we are very careful to word our messages to have the maximum therapeutic impact.* We ask therefore that these messages are please given – with the wording as requested – in a confidential setting. *Volunteers also sometimes write a card to a child if there has been a break in sessions, and we ask the school to please give the card to the child as soon as it is received.*

If a volunteer has to end the work they have been doing with a child (this should hopefully never happen without minimum four weeks of warning), and the child still has a need for support, then we will endeavour to allocate a new volunteer.

Safeguarding

Volunteers are DBS checked and attend weekly supervision. They have received Child Protection training through Carefree Kids and will follow school procedure regarding disclosures. Link staff should make the Child Protection Officer details available to the volunteer. Any safeguarding issues or questions should be directed to staff at the Carefree Kids office.

When to stop? Negotiation about sessions ending

There is no guarantee that a child's behaviour will change as the school might wish in the short term, and it might even become more difficult to begin with. Because the children's problems are often long-established and deep-seated, we do not expect quick outward changes and do not carry out time-limited work, behaviour modification or 'anger management'. We sometimes work with a child for several years.

Therapeutic work must never be stopped abruptly, because of the significant attachment of the child to the volunteer. The decision when to finish a course of sessions for a child **needs to be taken jointly** with Carefree Kids and the school – and with the child. We hope that there will be agreement about when a child is ready to end. If the school or the parent decides that they want or need sessions to finish before Carefree Kids believes the right time has come, there needs to be:

- a) Full discussion between Carefree Kids & school (& parent where possible)*
- b) At least four to six weekly sessions with the child to prepare for ending. This is extremely important to help the child manage the transition.*

Link staff details

Please let us know whom we should contact at the school in the first instance.

Name: _____ Role: _____
Email contact: _____ Direct telephone number (if available): _____

Child Protection Officer at the school

Please let us know the details of the CPO and deputy.

Name/s: _____ Telephone number: _____

Payment

The charge for sessions is £45. For state maintained schools we have funding to offer **a subsidised rate of £18** (as of April 2017). Carefree Kids invoices the school after each term, but we are happy to discuss alternative arrangements that suit your school.

Agreement to the terms above

I have read the terms, and agree to the above conditions on behalf of the school.

School Name: _____

Signed.....for the school (Head Teacher)

Please print name..... Date.....

Signed.....for Carefree Kids Initials..... Date.....