

Making a real difference to children's lives

As well as working in the schools in our Diocese, we have, alongside Essex County Council been working on a worthwhile project with 11 schools, to help children who for various reasons present difficult and disruptive behaviours affecting their learning and those of their peers. Our social workers have worked with the school, the family and the child to promote more positive pupil behaviour, where family difficulties have impacted on a child's ability to cope in school. In total our social workers have worked closely with 74 children and their families with a range of problems.

The schools reported that overall there were significant differences in both pupil behaviour and in their relationships with parents. Some of the things they said were:

- they had a more open relationship with parents and better communication
- parents were more supportive towards what the school was trying to achieve
- there were far fewer incidents of aggression in the playground
- pupils had much better relationships with their peers
- the calmer behaviour of children was having a positive affect on the whole family.

The following case study is an example of the work undertaken with children who were referred (names have been changed to protect identities):

James aged 8 was referred with behaviour management problems. He had 'temper tantrums', shouted and screamed and was said to have very low self esteem. Work took place on building his self esteem as he said he was 'no good at anything' and 'had no talent' and feels invisible in class. He was unable to express how he felt without becoming distressed and angry. The worker undertook exercises on anger management and the class teacher reported significant improvement in James' behaviour. His parents used some of the techniques at home and also noted his temper tantrums were far less frequent.



The children and some of their parents were also asked how the project had helped them and some of their comments are captured below.

- *These sessions are helping me because it is hard to explain these things to my friends'. (Child).*
- *'M is engaging with the service positively in a way she has not done previously'. (Mother)*
- *'This is helping because it makes my problems seem smaller'. (Child)*
- *'I like to work things out in our sessions' (Child)*
- *'I couldn't ask for more as things have improved very quickly in our relationship' (Mother)*
- *I feel good at the end of our sessions' (Child)*

The final comment on the value of the project came from a school support worker who said:

'I work with children who have huge emotional problems which are affecting their home life, school work and often their social life as well. When I feel that a child/family needs expert advice I will call on Childcare. I cannot begin to tell you how much you have helped myself and my families. The children that Childcare work with look forward to the sessions and I see the weight lifting from their shoulders. My job would be so difficult without your help. I now have parents coming to me asking if their troubled child could see a counsellor, in fact I have a waiting list. I wish you could be at the school all day. I see your work as invaluable to our children and parents'.

Together we can make a difference