



**BRIDGE THE GAP CHILD MENTAL HEALTH C.I.C**

# **THE IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT**

**CASE STUDIES FROM ACROSS THE SERVICE**



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## CASE STUDIES FROM ACROSS THE SERVICE

Bridge the Gap Child Mental Health C.I.C are a community interested company founded in 2017 by Early Years and Emotional Literacy specialist Jennifer Wyman; we are committed to improving the mental health of children and their families in Derby City and beyond.

Bridge the Gap are an early intervention and proactive service. For us, emotional education means educating children on all aspects of emotions, well-being, and mental health. At Bridge the Gap we specialise in nurturing Emotional Literacy skills, boosting self-esteem, and supporting a growth mindset by using a relationship focused approach.

We provide a range of services for children from birth and we also work with adults. Our team of practitioners can provide one-to-one and group sessions in a safe environment that suits individual needs and we also endeavour to support the network around the child. Our practitioners are a multi-disciplinary team meaning that we are able to work holistically with children and their families.

We also create FREE resources that help support schools, social care and parents in their interventions with children. Resources are developed to support children's emotional literacy skills as well as boosting self-esteem, helping them to understand that all emotions are normal. Resources are readily available to download via our website or to watch on our YouTube channel.

We subsidise the cost of our service to help make Bridge the Gap as accessible as possible, as the service has steadily grown then we have more children needing that subsidised support. As the team grows we have had to expand to help reduce wait times for interventions and support but we need help in order to continue. We access funding but we also rely on businesses who are willing to help support the vulnerable children in the city by sponsoring the work that we do.

The following pages contain real testimonies from some of our service users, although some names and details have been changed to protect their identities, please take the time to read their stories, hear their voices, and see the difference that Bridge the Gap has made on their lives.

Thank you.

*You matter, you are loved, you are not alone...*



# ESME'S STORY



## **Parent & Child Sessions/small groups**

### **Various days and topics covered**

### **From £10 per session**

### **Subsidised service**

Some people tell me, that Esme is six going on sixteen. She is a very grown up little girl, who takes life very seriously. Always pushing herself to be the best she can be. Wanting to please everyone she meets, and having extremely high expectations of herself. This can be both a blessing and a curse.

At the age of 4, Esme came home from school and said 'I couldn't eat my lunch today. The dinner lady said it was unhealthy, and if you eat unhealthy food you get fat' In my anger, I phoned school and explained that her lunch consisting of a whole meal sandwich, cucumber sticks, a banana and a small pack of mini animal biscuits was far from unhealthy. However the damage had already been done, a seed has been planted, and Esme started to question everything I gave her to eat, she would refuse anything that she saw as unhealthy.

We managed to get her to a point where she was eating 3 meals and 2 snacks a day. Things were a little better for a while. Fast forward to a year or so later and another discussion of 'healthy food' yet again at school, sparked panic and upset. This time things got really bad, Esme would cry at pretty much every meal time, not wanting to eat, she would stand staring at herself in the mirror, pinching her skin, as she was convinced she was 'fat'.

I would hear her lay in bed at night crying herself to sleep. I would lay with her, but no words could comfort her. The final straw came when I saw her hiding food. I couldn't believe my little six year old girl felt this way. I didn't know where to turn. There was some support around locally for older girls, but not for a child of Esme's age.

I decided to take her to the GP. We were in and out within ten minutes. They stood her on the scales, told her 'you are not fat' and 'you shouldn't feel like this' and 'you are being silly', all this did was make Esme's feelings feel invalid and in her words 'I am so stupid. That doctor thinks I'm so stupid' back to square one, and feeling like a failure of a mother, a friend of mine suggested Bridge The Gap.



***'Our parent and child sessions are designed to create a safe space whilst supporting children's and parents emotional education. Professionals are on hand to listen and offer support and validation, whilst creating at the same time offers a third place for children to go to and process their thoughts.'***

**Jennifer Wyman, Founder & Director**

# ESME'S STORY



I sent one email and got a fast response full of information about sessions, costs and useful websites. I felt hopeful, for the first time in 2 years I felt like I'd finally got someone to listen to me.

We went along to a parent and child craft session. Esme loved it! We sat together and we made glitter jars to shake that we can use when you need to feel calm. Jennifer came and sat with us, she spoke about some of the feelings that Esme had written down. I couldn't believe it when I heard Esme telling Jennifer about 'the voice in my head that tells me I'm fat' Jennifer listened and she told Esme that it's ok to feel sad and cross, and helped her with some coping techniques! After leaving the group I asked what Esme thought, she said 'I like that lady. I like the way she spoke to me. She has a kind face'.

Jennifer made Esme feel safe, she listened, she gave reassurance and thanked her for sharing her thoughts with her. She made Esme feel like she wasn't alone.

We are still on a journey, and have recently got some extra support from an eating disorder specialist, which is wonderful, however the clinical setting and doctor type lingo doesn't work as well for Esme. We will continue to use bridge the gap, and feel that the coping strategies taught to us by Jennifer have actually been the most useful tool we've been given out of everything. Esme will shake her glitter jar and I know how she's feeling, and I can sit with her, but the tears are less, the sleep is improving, and I feel hopeful for the first time in two years. Esme's self confidence is growing, she attended one of the bridge the gap self esteem sessions in the holidays, and she managed to go in without me! This was a huge step! She is also a keen dancer and this month managed to perform solo- winning herself 3 gold medals!

I cannot thank Jennifer and Bridge the Gap enough, and I feel so fortunate to be able to access this support. Children need bridge the gap- parents need bridge the gap. It is a safe haven and a very, very special place.

## SPONSORSHIP

*Parent and child sessions are an important part of the work we do at Bridge the Gap, they sell out quickly and often this means that people are disappointed to not find a space. We cover topics from sleep, self-esteem, anger, gratitude, thoughts, feelings, grounding and soothing strategies, anxiety, worry and many more. This is low cost support that is bonding, therapeutic, and informative and we strongly believe that all children would benefit from them. Esme's story demonstrates the positive impact these opportunities have on both parent and child.*

*We would love to add more of these sessions but in order for that to be viable we require sponsorship of £73 per session.*

# PAUL'S STORY



## **1:1 Emotional Literacy Support** **From £40 per session** **Subsidised service**

P is 11 years old and has just been taken into permanent foster care with his younger brother aged 8 years. Their other siblings (aged 14 years, 2 years and 8 months) have also been fostered but this is with a different family. There has been neglect and physical abuse as well as witness to domestic violence within the family history. P is struggling with friendships at school, is saying negative comments about himself very regularly at home, is struggling to sleep and becomes dysregulated following seeing his biological family every fortnight. He also recently disclosed that a peer touched him inappropriately at school and has become distressed and upset around this incident.

### **Support Delivered**

School referred P to us for support around emotional literacy and self-esteem. We delivered 24 sessions one to one within the school environment, making use of their forest school area outdoors too. We liaised closely with the foster carers, and offered them access to our free parent course as well as them attending our wellbeing days and events. We trained school as well during this period with supporting staff wellbeing.

### **Outcome:**

*Outcome measures show an improvement in understanding emotions: 4/10 to 10/10.*

*Outcome measures show an improvement in self-rated self-esteem: 2.5/10 to 9/10.*

### **Outcome measures feedback from child:**

I feel sad that my sessions with Nikki are ending because I am moving schools to be nearer my new family. I have really enjoyed seeing Nikki because I feel that I can talk to her about anything and we have had lots of fun like baking, doing grounding activities outside and learning about emotions in a fun way. I especially liked making emotion monopoly and putting on a bake sale for the school. I can't believe I did this by myself, it makes me feel proud. I will miss Nikki and I wish I could work with her at my new school but I feel better about starting new there when no body will no me. I really love Bridge the Gap and I want to work there when I am older.



# PAUL'S STORY



## **Outcome measures feedback from school:**

Thank you so much for firstly agreeing to work with P and secondly being there on a consistent basis all year. Too often support people just come and go. I knew you and Bridge the Gap were what he needed to begin to process all that has happened, and that will happen to him, to give him a chance of fulfilling the potential P undoubtedly has. You have proved me right - he has seen you as something for him, someone to confide in and share and begin to process. The young boy who leaves us now is dramatically different to the boy who came in for just a few days in July during the lockdown last year. Your role in that process cannot be underestimated.

Children only learn if they are happy. Over the last thirty years I have watched the lack of money mean that all those people and services who supported children in being happy when rubbish happens to them, or those around them, just gradually disappear. The work you and your colleagues do helps reverse that. It needs so much more but at least you are there to help the ever increasing numbers of children crying out for help.

I wish Bridge the Gap all the best in being that beacon of hope.

## **Outcome Measures feedback from foster carers:**

We cannot thank Bridge the Gap enough for the amazing support you have given P and us too. We value your input so much and are very proud of P and what he has achieved in the time since he has been with us. It's been such a hard story to hear of his background and we ourselves have struggled at times but we have always felt able to turn to you guys for support even if it is just a quick rant on an email!

We are in no doubt that P is a much better place to face difficulties moving forward, especially as he starts his new school, (we will definitely keep in touch with you to support us and P through this process) but we feel now P has a firm grounding and understanding to support him moving forward; especially in his emotional understanding and his self-esteem. So, a HUGE thank you for that. We hope you are able to access the funding you need to be able to make Bridge the Gap accessible to more foster families and vulnerable children. Thank you.

## **SPONSORSHIP**

*One to one support for children like P is vital and this can't be short-term support, being able to support both the child and their network is important for the best long-term outcomes possible. The work and journey continues afterwards but with good foundations we can make a positive impact. Working with a child like P takes a lot of resources. Regular conversations, with school and carers, telephone calls, liaising with other services, and information sharing all take a practitioners time. Teachers clinical supervision should also be provided to ensure that they are able to co-regulate with the child when needed.*

*We require sponsorship of £237 to enable us to work with a vulnerable child and the network around them a week (3 allocated hours for child and their network).*

# RACHEL'S STORY



## **1:1 Emotional Literacy Support**

## **1:1 Parent Support**

## **1:1 Creative Expressive**

## **Parent Course**

## **From £40 per session**

## **Subsidised service**

R is 9 years old; she has 3 siblings younger than her. R struggles with regulating her emotions, often shouting out at Mum and Dad and continually pushing boundaries, she reports that she doesn't feel liked by them or loved "like the other's". R attends a local gymnastics club; she is very good at gymnastics and enjoys this time. She likes to practice her gymnastics in break times at school, mum states there are often a lot of arguments within her friendship group and that she has struggled to fit in and feel close to friends. R's younger sister unfortunately has a heart condition that made her very unwell when she was younger and needed long term hospital admissions, mum assisted often during these admissions and stayed away from home for long periods. R is often unkind towards her sister, calling her names or pushing her. R struggles when demands are requested of her.

### **Support Delivered**

A series of 12 weeks of creative expressive sessions one to one, for R to be able to express her emotions without an agenda to communicate, followed by a series of 12 weeks of emotional literacy support sessions, one to one, delivered by a mental health practitioner in order to support R with a deeper understanding of what emotion is, how it feels, how to develop coping strategies to work through big and difficult emotions. Parent one to one support sessions throughout delivery of sessions with R held by mental health practitioner. Full parent course for parents to access a more thorough understanding of emotional literacy, sleep, self-esteem, screen time and the effects on mental health.

### **Outcome:**

*Outcome measures show an improvement in understanding emotions: 3/10 to 8/10.*

*Outcome measures show an improvement in self-rated self-esteem: 2/10 to 9/10.*

### **Outcome measures feedback from child:**

I have enjoyed my sessions at Bridge the Gap, I feel that I know more about emotions and can talk to mummy and daddy about my feelings more. I have learnt a lot about what to do if I am struggling with my emotions like stroke the cat, go for a walk, tear up paper, bounce and breathing exercises. I can go to sleep better at night-time now because I have less worries.

# RACHEL'S STORY

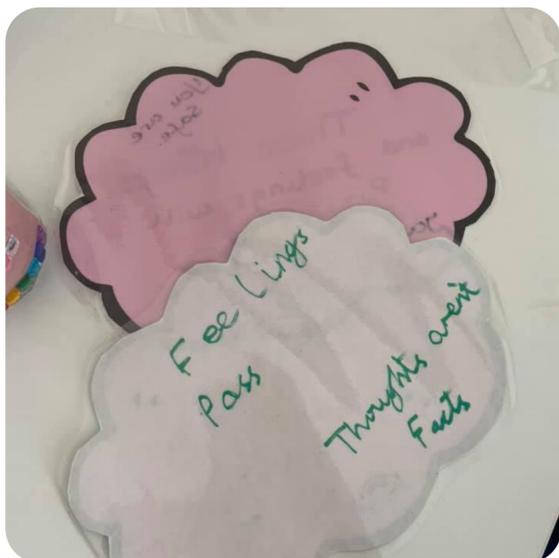


## Outcome Measures feedback from parents:

The course that Nikki and Jennifer delivered was hugely empowering and gave us such a great understanding around behaviour and what this is actually communicating in more depth. Through this we have reflected and changed a huge amount of our parenting which has been a massive change within our household. We will forever remember to 'Embrace the Chaos!' and 'Meet chaos with calm'.

R has developed a much deeper understanding around her emotions, and we have seen a huge change in how she manages her anger in particular following the sessions. We have really valued your input at Bridge the Gap in all ways, the biggest change for us in R has been the improvement in her self-esteem. She is much more settled and no longer says negative comments about herself every day. We appreciate that there will be some days where this will slip, but we cannot thank you enough for giving us our lovely, bright little girl back.

We would also like to thank Nikki in supporting us in liaising with school and outside professionals in the process of seeking an ASD and ADHD diagnosis for R. Thank you.



## SPONSORSHIP

*Parent empowerment courses offer valuable information to ensure that there is a cohesiveness to approach at home, school and Bridge the Gap; often this can make a huge difference to family life with some small changes and understanding. This takes time, we need to build relationships with parents so that they don't feel judged or under attack.*

*Identifying need is a huge part of the work we do at Bridge the Gap and we are in the privileged position to work over a longer period of time, which creates lots of time for observing a child. This can often help a parent and school to seek an appropriate diagnosis, helping to increase engagement in home and school, boosting self-esteem, and improving the child's long-term outcomes.*

*We currently subsidise our parent empowerment courses by approximately £86 per session depending on the session being delivered.*

# ISLA'S STORY



**1:1 Creative Sessions**

**1:1 Emotional Literacy Sessions**

**1:1 Parent Support sessions**

**Family Therapy**

**From £40 per session**

**Subsidised service**

Isla is 8 years old, she is a calm and quiet little girl with one younger brother aged 6 years. She is very intelligent and enjoys learning. Recently however she has not wanted to go into school and doesn't want to leave her mum and dad. She becomes tearful and clingy and consistently asks the question "will you be safe today?". She is struggling to sleep at night-time and often is not getting off to sleep until 11pm. She is also eating much less than usual and struggling to drink enough fluids. She feels sick often and states this is why she is struggling to eat. She has a close family and cares a lot about their safety, she has a large extended family with several aunty's who she also cares greatly for and has missed seeing throughout the pandemic.

## **Support Delivered**

A series of 12 weeks of creative expressive sessions one to one for Isla to be able to express her emotions without an agenda to communicate, followed by a series of 12 weeks of emotional literacy support sessions, one to one delivered by a mental health practitioner in order to support Isla with a deeper understanding of what emotion is, how it feels, how to develop coping strategies to work through big and difficult emotions.

Parent one to one support sessions throughout delivery of sessions with Isla held by parent lead.

Full parent course for parents to access a more thorough understanding of emotional literacy, sleep, self-esteem, screen time and the effects on mental health.

Systemic family practice delivered by systemic practitioner for 6 sessions face to face.

## **Outcome:**

*Outcome measures show an improvement in understanding emotions: 2/10 to 9/10.*

*Outcome measures show an improvement in self-rated self-esteem: 3/10 to 9/10.*

## **Outcome measures feedback from child:**

I really like Bridge the Gap I have had lots of fun and loved doing the self esteem tree with Marie. I don't want to stop coming to Bridge the Gap, I am going to be a young ambassador with them so that other children can come and I can tell them about it. I learnt a lot about my emotions. I know that all emotions are normal.

# ISLA'S STORY



## **Outcome Measures feedback from parents:**

Thank you so much for your support over the last few months, we can always rely on you to be at the end of the phone or email if we have a concern about our daughter. We did not know where to turn and what to do before we came across Bridge the Gap. We found the parent sessions one to one with Jennifer incredibly useful and we continue to use these whenever we feel we need a refresh around reflecting on our parenting, or particular reminders.

Isla continues to struggle with her sleep at times but we know that our approach around this has changed for the better and feel more able to support her when she needs it most. We know that the support at Bridge the Gap is not about 'fixing' anything, but we have felt that there has been a great improvement with regards to how Isla talks about her emotions – she is able to articulate to us when she feels annoyed for example and we can now 'nip this in the bud' earlier as a family by drawing on the coping strategies you have given us, before it escalates to a full melt down as it would have previously.

Thank you so much, we highly recommend Bridge the Gap.



## **SPONSORSHIP**

*One to one support for parents and children through Bridge the Gap can help both the child and parents to feel empowered. Parent support sessions help parents by giving them a combination of a safe, confidential and reflective space, alongside information on their child's development, parenting strategies, and ideas to support them through the stage of development they are at. One to one emotional literacy support, guided self-help and mentoring, provide the same space for the child.*

*We currently subsidise our one to one sessions by approximately £39 per session depending on the intervention being provided.*



# BRIDGE THE GAP CHILD MENTAL HEALTH C.I.C

## THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR WORK WITHIN THE CITY

Bridge the Gap access some funding through foundations and bodies like The National Lottery, other revenue comes from the training that our Directors Jennifer Wyman and Nikki Webster deliver in schools.

Post pandemic has meant that the demand for our service has increased so we are reaching out to local businesses who might be willing to subsidise work with a child, a particular service, or to sponsor one of our therapeutic rooms.

We do a lot of community work, both constant schemes of support and responding to needs identified within the city, we would very much like to increase this support alongside growing our team and premises to continue to offer support to families early, increasing positive outcomes for children.

Our dream is to grow our city hub so that the Bridge the Gap rainbow becomes a beacon of light within the city, an emotional health hub where children and their families can feel safe, seen, soothed, and secure.

Please visit our website to read more about our team, read our safeguarding declaration, explore our services, and see how we can support the children you work with.

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