



Children Feedback

"If you're worried, you should come. It helps you calm down and stop worrying as much."

"It's helped everyone along the way. It's helped someone with their fear of escalators, someone with their fear of SATs and someone else with their worry of going to high school. It's helped me a bit with reading aloud."

'Now I've got the confidence to talk more.'

'I worry less. I used to worry quite a lot about silly things like going to church. I used to have a big melt down but now I just calm myself down.'

'It's been helpful in lots of different ways. It's stopped me worrying a little bit and now I can say my worries in front of other people.'

'It was fun and relaxing.'

"It helps you if you worry quite a bit. It helps you to relax if you get annoyed."

"It's really good and it really helps you."

No Worries Programme in Halton



Overview

No Worries is a group programme for reducing anxiety, based on **cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) principles**. There are both primary and secondary versions of the programme and it is designed to be delivered with groups of up to 8 children or young people. It uses an experiential learning model whereby activities are practical and fun. It teaches skills and strategies to help manage and reduce anxieties, including relaxation, cognitive reframing and courageous behaviour. It is an 8 week programme with sessions lasting approximately 1 hour. There are 2 follow up sessions after 3 months.

Previous Research

This programme was adapted from the Australian programmes FRIENDS for Life and contains many of the same key components. FRIENDS for Life is a **well-evidenced approach** that teaches skills to cope with anxiety, promote wellbeing, develop social and emotional skills and resilience. Extensive research supports the effectiveness of Friends for Life (Barrett 2006, Anticich 2013) and further research supports its effectiveness in England (Liddle, 2009). Thompson & Lonsdale (2008) delivered FRIENDS for Life to children with literacy difficulties and SEN in a mainstream school and found that ratings of anxiety and behavioural difficulties decreased.

No Worries was written by Kim Jeffries, Assistant Principal EP and Sheri Wright, Specialist Senior EP from Shropshire Educational Psychology Service, at the request of Targeting Mental Health in Schools (TaMHS).

Jeffries and Wright examined pre- and post-anxiety measures for a population of 126 pupils from across settings. Analysis demonstrated a significant decrease in anxiety scores after completion of the programme. These results were **statistically significant** at the 0.0001% level. In addition, Shropshire EP Service keep a database of the results of evaluation measures built into the programme to help ensure that the programme continues to be evaluated.

'The best bit is that you've taken away most of my worries.'

Halton's Pilot Programme

The No Worries Primary programme was piloted at Our Lady Mother of the Saviour Catholic Primary School over the Spring and Summer term of 2017/18.

Sessions were facilitated by 2 EPs and ran with a group of 6 children from across Years 5 and 6. A Teaching Assistant (TA) also attended the sessions. A second group was run with some of the children's parents, however only 1 parent attended the majority of the sessions.

The aims of the programme were to:

- Reduce anxiety and boost resilience in a group of identified children and their parents.
- Give pupils and parents strategies to manage their own worries/support their child.
- Capacity build by training a TA to redeliver the programme with subsequent groups of identified children.

All sessions lasted 1 hour and 10 sessions took place (2 additional sessions were required to cover all content).

Impact was measured independently by an Assistant EP with pre- and post- anxiety, happiness and wellbeing scales. Evaluations were also conducted independently.

'I used to worry about playing football – if I missed I'd think, "How do you miss that?!" But now if it misses, it misses, it doesn't matter, there's nothing you can do about it.'



Parent and Staff Feedback

'It's helped me to support my child. It's helped me to look at some things in a different way e.g. unhelpful thoughts – what can I do to change those thoughts into something more helpful?'

'I've noticed a difference in my son in how he processes when he's upset in thought and then what follows.'

'The way I deal with my child's feelings is better. If he's upset, I can use elements from the programme to help him.'

'Every child will benefit from this.'

'Seeing the children so relaxed was just amazing and talking about themselves, they just don't do that.'

'It's made me feel empowered.'

'I felt totally relaxed coming to the sessions and really looked forward to them. The programme was really good and I really enjoyed every session.'

Impact

'There are different things you can do to stop you worrying, calm you down and help you think, 'Is this my worry? Or is it someone else's?' E.g. if you're parents are divorcing.'

Anxiety and Wellbeing

In the pupil group, **anxiety scores decreased by an average of 7.34 points** on Spences Children's Anxiety Scale. On Zung's Self-rating Anxiety Scale, the parent's anxiety score decreased by 2 points. Pupils rated their perceived anxiety on a 10 point scale; in relation to school this decreased by an average of 1 point whilst in relation to being at home there was an average decrease of 1.5 points. The parent's perceived anxiety decreased by 1 point both in relation to being at home and in work.

There were no differences in the children's perceived happiness either in school or at home. The parent perceived no difference in happiness at home but a decrease of one point at work. Wellbeing scores for both groups decreased by 1 point. This could be attributed to the development of skills that are highly self-reflective, and as such, pupils and parents may have felt more able to accurately reflect on the statements used in the scale such as *'when things go wrong, it generally takes me a long time to feel okay again'*.

Outcomes

All pupils reported to worry less as a result of the programme and said that they found it helpful.

Other benefits reported by pupils included:

- **Feeling calmer and more relaxed**
- **Feeling more confident**
- **Feeling more able to share worries with others**

One parent reported to be **more able to support her children emotionally**, and felt that this had positively impacted upon her relationships with her children. She described a positive shift in her mindset and her own utilisation of some of the techniques from the programme. She reported her child to be **better able to manage his feelings** and felt strongly that this intervention should be offered to all children. Another parent, although only attending 2 sessions, felt it **helped her to recognise when her child was starting to become anxious**. She also reported that No Worries has helped her child to be able to **verbalise her feelings**.

How much did they enjoy the programme?

Pupil Group 9.5/10

Parent Group 10/10

How meaningful and useful did they find the programme?

Pupil Group 9.25/10

Parent Group 10/10

All pupils and parents would recommend No Worries.

Moving Forwards

Short Term

We are currently looking to pilot the No Worries Secondary Programme with a Halton high school. Again, we will assess impact and evaluate the programme independently.

We are also in the process of developing a Train the Trainers Programme in which we seek to capacity build on a larger scale by training a cohort of school staff to deliver the No Worries Programmes. This will be initially piloted, with impact being assessed and the programme being evaluated.

We will look to quality assure a sample of the subsequent programmes being delivered in

schools in an attempt to ensure and maintain fidelity to the intervention.

Longer Term

It is hoped that every school in Halton will have the opportunity to have staff trained in delivering the No Worries Intervention Programme. Seeking to capacity build in schools, this programme will give school staff the skills, tools and confidence to support children and young people with anxiety.