PLAY INCLUDED

NHS
East of England
Community Health and Care
NHS Trust

Building confidence Brick-by-Brick: NHS Trust working with Play Included to support neurodivergent children

The East of England Community Health and Care NHS Trust has become the first Trust of its kind to formally adopt Play Included's Brick-by-Brick programme

The challenge

Primary schools across Cambridgeshire were consistently asking the Trust for extra support to help children's social development, confidence and peer relationships, particularly for neurodivergent pupils. While Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) provided evidence-based interventions, there was a gap in early, preventative and strengths-focused support for children experiencing mild to moderate difficulties.

Support provided

In autumn 2022, the Trust decided to pilot Play Included's Brick-by-Brick programme. Implementation involved working closely with the Trust's Information Governance colleagues and clinical systems teams while developing infection prevention and control procedures for the bricks used. Following staff training, pilot sessions began, with Play Included providing exceptional support throughout.

Impact

A year-long pilot saw 32 Brick Clubs delivered across 25 primary schools in Peterborough, Fenland and Huntingdon. Today, the programme continues. More than 200 youngsters now regularly attend Brick Clubs via the Trust, based on Play Included's approach. Children have developed increased confidence, stronger communication skills and a greater sense of belonging. Positive impacts have also been observed beyond the sessions. Children with attendance difficulties now look forward to days when there is Brick Club. Creativity and collaboration has also improved, with sessions fostering genuine belonging and celebrating each child's unique talents.



"We are proud to be the first Trust of our kind in the UK to formally adopt Play Included's Brick-by-Brick programme. Brick Clubs provide a fun, inclusive and strengths-based environment where children can develop confidence, communication skills, friendships and a sense of belonging that can be used in the sessions and beyond."

- Dr. Sara Katsukunya, EHWS Clinical Lead & Consultant Clinical Psychologist, East of England Community Health and Care NHS Trust

"Play Included's Brick Clubs facilitate a unique way of collaborating and scope for creativity which I had not seen before in a school setting. I was surprised by how child-led the programme is and how quickly participants' confidence grows; they value being recognised and celebrating others' achievements too. "

- MHST Practitioner

What this means for other NHS trusts

As NHS services continue to focus on delivering care closer to home and strengthening community-based support, Brick Clubs – like those enabled by Play Included – represent an excellent example of how innovative, strengths-based approaches can make a meaningful difference to children and families.