



The Birchall Trust

*Counselling Survivors of Rape and Sexual Abuse
in South Cumbria and North Lancashire*

Play Therapy and your Child at The Birchall Trust?

Finding out your child, relative or someone you care for has gone through sexual trauma can be a very overwhelming and painful experience. Knowing what to do, how best to support your child or young person and where to find help can be confusing.

Things to remember

- Believe your child and reassure them that they have done the right thing by telling someone what has happened and that you love them
- Gather your own support both practical and emotional if possible, in order to support your child. We can offer you support here at The Birchall Trust
- Trust your own instincts about what your child needs whether they need to talk or have space
- Try to keep your lives as normal as you can – routines and boundaries
- Remember your main job is to continue to parent your child, giving love, reassurance, guidance, boundaries and building self-esteem as best you can.

Play Therapy is therapy that helps children to explore their feelings, to express themselves and to make sense of their life experiences. Play is children's natural way of learning, communicating, and exploring their worlds.

At The Birchall Trust, we have a large selection of play materials including art and craft materials, dressing up props, sand and water, clay, small figures and animals, musical instruments, puppets, and books and through these our Play Therapists encourage children to express themselves without having to provide verbal explanations.

You are very important in supporting your child through the process

Here are some pointers to help you do this:

- Be consistent and encouraging to your child about attending sessions regularly. These will usually be on the same day at the same time with the



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same therapist as it is very important for developing a trusting relationship.

- Resist the urge to ask your child what they did, as this will put pressure on them to comment on something, they may have difficulty understanding themselves.
- Please don't ask your child to 'be good' or check they have been. Therapy is not about being 'good' or 'bad' and your child, must feel free to express 'bad' feelings in an uncensored way.
- Play can be messy, and it is helpful if your child can wear old clothes to minimise their anxiety about this.
- During any therapy, behaviour may appear to get worse before it gets better – please talk to your child's Play Therapist if you have any concerns.

Criminal Investigations

In some cases, there may be an ongoing criminal investigation which may lead to a trial. This can be a stressful experience for many families and seeking emotional support at this time may help.

Pre-trial therapy can be accessed where families feel this is needed. However, the consent of the lead police officer would first be required and the same confidentiality boundaries cannot be offered – if requested, the police are given access to your child's therapeutic notes before the trial – we would always talk to you about this first.

The nature of pre-trial work is also different because it is more about managing and holding than moving forward. Families need to consider carefully whether pretrial therapy is needed or whether a child can wait and have therapy once the trial has finished.

We are members of the following.



British Association for
Counselling & Psychotherapy