



Cheshire and Wirral Partnership



NHS Foundation Trust

# Kids' time





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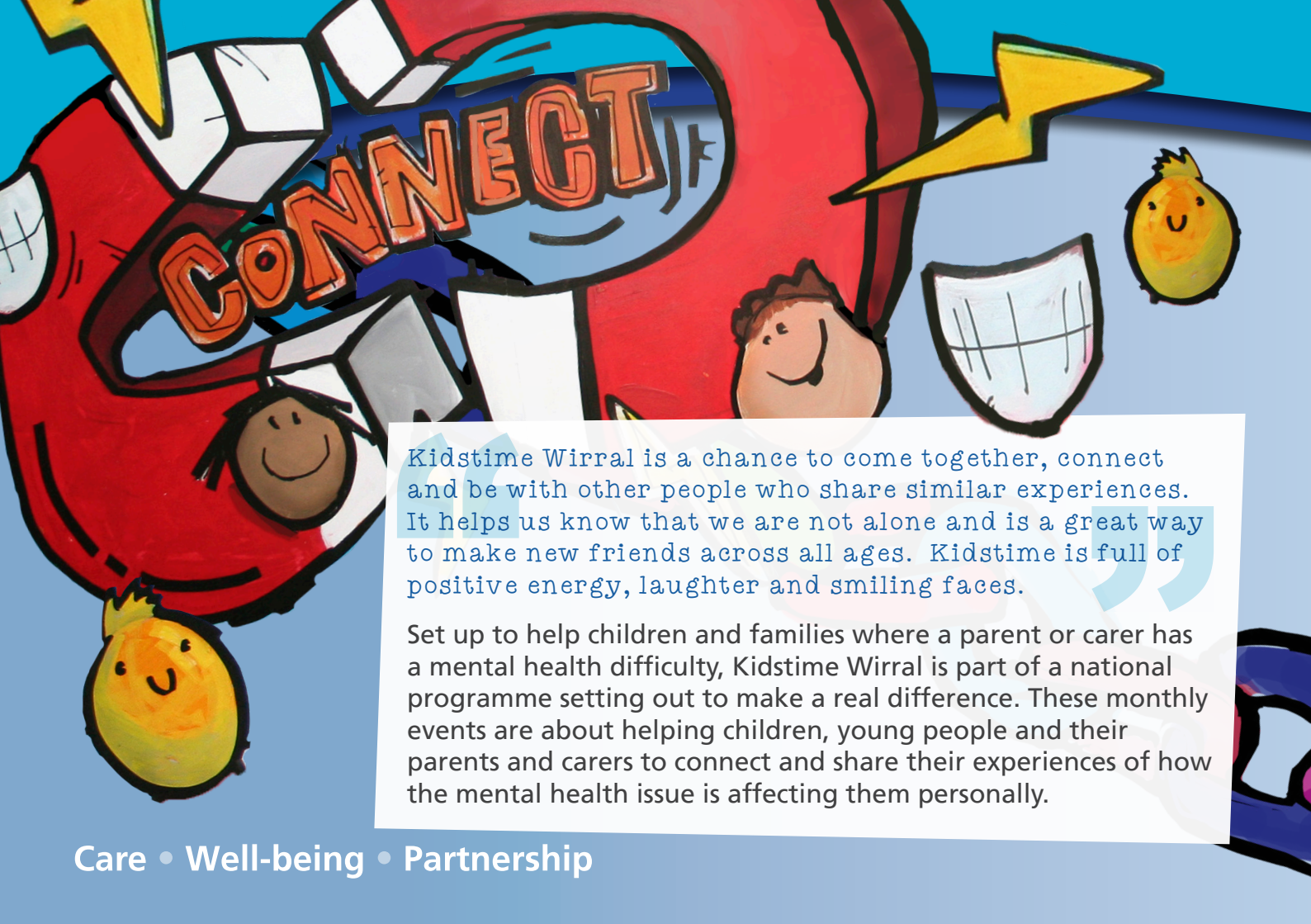


Kidstime Wirral is a monthly workshop for local families where there is a parental mental health difficulty; with an emphasis on helping children and young people affected by the issue to access information and support.

To create this booklet, children, young people and their families from across Wirral were invited to share their experiences of being part of the Kidstime programme. Working together, they defined their thoughts and feelings about the targeted support the programme provides, and represented these as a series of shared images. Starting with literally a blank canvas, everyone worked together to paint a collection of massive artworks illustrating what they felt was important about Kidstime.

**What follows is a short introduction to the programme using these images and their unique meanings.**





Kidstime Wirral is a chance to come together, connect and be with other people who share similar experiences. It helps us know that we are not alone and is a great way to make new friends across all ages. Kidstime is full of positive energy, laughter and smiling faces.

Set up to help children and families where a parent or carer has a mental health difficulty, Kidstime Wirral is part of a national programme setting out to make a real difference. These monthly events are about helping children, young people and their parents and carers to connect and share their experiences of how the mental health issue is affecting them personally.

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Kidstime Wirral is a collaborative programme hosted by Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (CWP) and Youth Support Wirral Borough Council. Kidstime Wirral works in conjunction with the registered mental health charity, the Kidstime Foundation.

**Kidstime Foundation core objectives:**

1. To support and develop methods to help children and young people who have parents with a mental illness/disorder.
2. To educate professional staff of different disciplines, as well as the general public, about the needs of the children of parents with a mental illness/disorder.
3. To develop educational tools and interventions to raise awareness of the needs of the children of parents with a mental illness/disorder, and to counteract stigma.

For more about the Kidstime Foundation visit:

**[kidstime.thedigitalacademy.com](http://kidstime.thedigitalacademy.com)**



The giant blue thought bubble with a sad face is about the fact that mental health is really big and affects absolutely everyone, but even though it is so big, it can be really hard to talk about. This can make it seem very frightening, especially for children and young people who might be unsure about what is happening.

## What is mental health

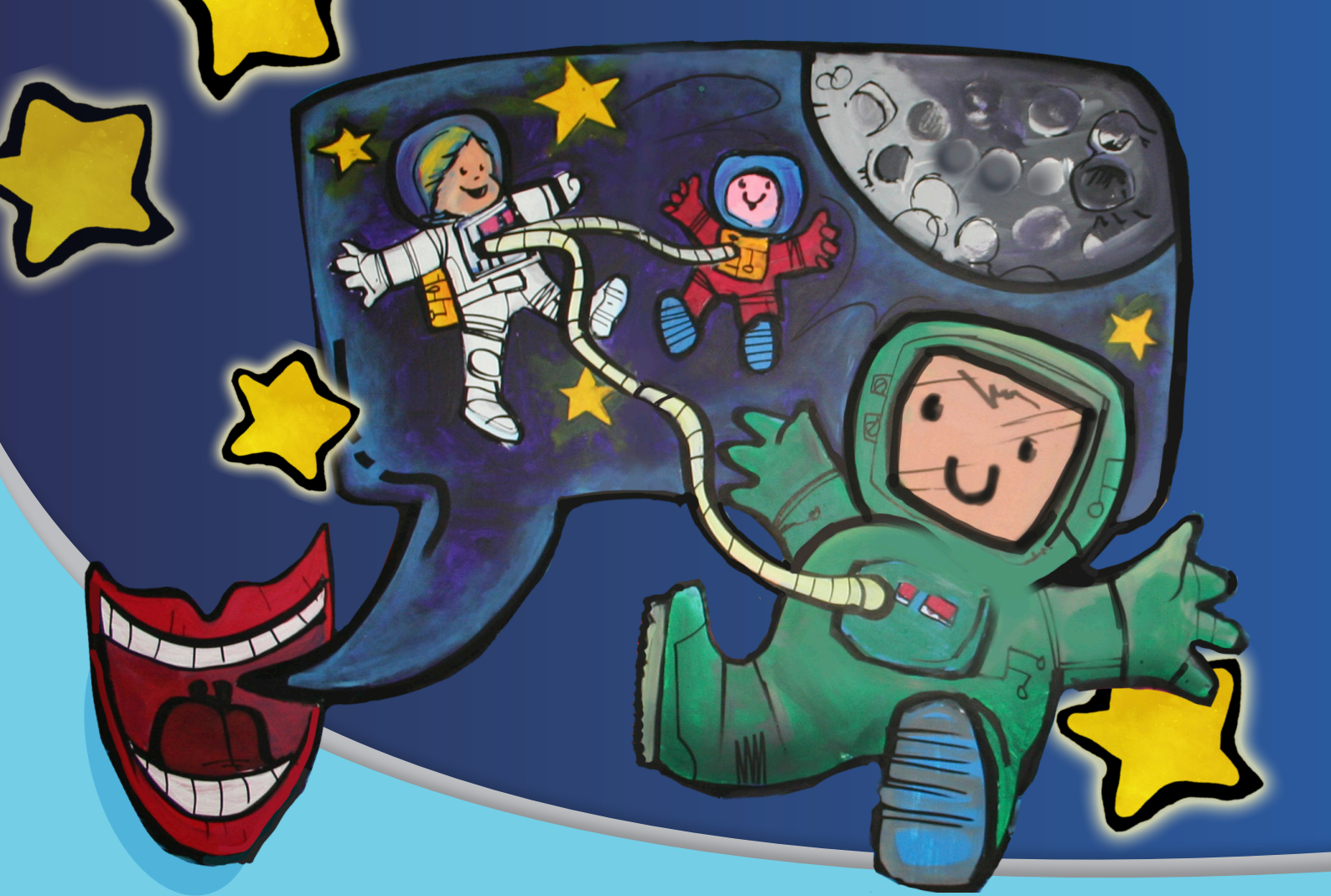
Kidstime is different; it gives everyone a chance to share their thoughts, helping us overcome any fears or concerns we have, helping to increase our knowledge and understanding. It helps everyone feel a little lighter.

In the same way that we all have physical health, we all have mental health. Mental health is about the way we think and feel, and how we manage with life's ups and downs. It's quite natural to feel a little sad and blue from time to time or to find ourselves worried, upset or angry by the things that happen around us.

However, when negative or confused thoughts and feelings start to get too big for us to handle, they can get in the way of daily life, impacting on those close to us. Getting help to better understand what is happening with a parent or carer's mental health difficulty can really shine a light on the topic, helping everyone get out from beneath the shadow of uncertainty, so that they can see things in a new light.







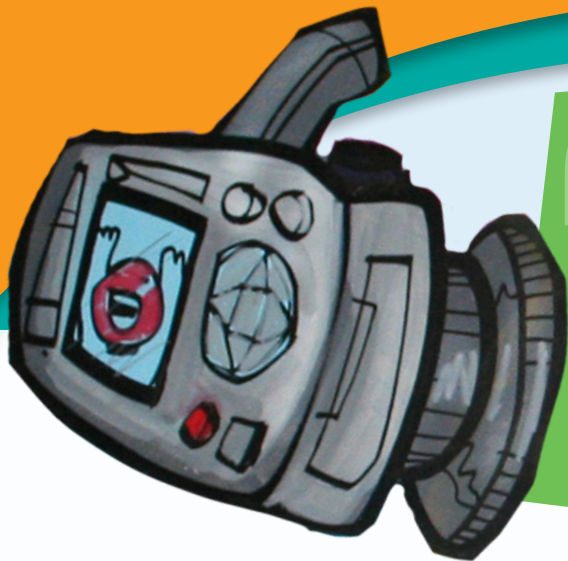


## Why is Kidstime important?

Kidstime is uplifting, it has created the space and freedom that we needed as a family to really talk about what I have been going through. It's also been really useful to listen to other people's experiences, to exchange ideas and get a whole new outlook on how we can all change and improve the future by choosing to be more open.

If left unchecked, it can be easy for a child or young person to have the wrong idea about an adult's mental health difficulty. This can range from the child feeling responsible, wrongly blaming themselves for causing the condition, to a young person worrying about 'catching' a mental illness.

By helping to open up conversations, sharing factual information and working through resources and activities, the Kidstime programme supports children, young people and their families to find ways of talking about mental health difficulties that can be acceptable to all of them. This can help to reduce anxiety and avoid uncertainty and half-truths, allowing fears and concerns to be named and addressed.



We chose the digital camera to show the creative ways that we have looked at the different issues we tackle each month.

The picture of the photograph shows the child at the centre, focusing most importantly on their needs first.

### Is it all just talking?

No, Kidstime is about so much more than just talking. Whilst communication is at the heart of Kidstime, the Kidstime approach uses a vast range of techniques to help make the monthly meetings engaging, enjoyable and empowering.

It's about helping people to share their perspective on the subject in ways that provide revealing insights and help to develop bigger picture understanding.

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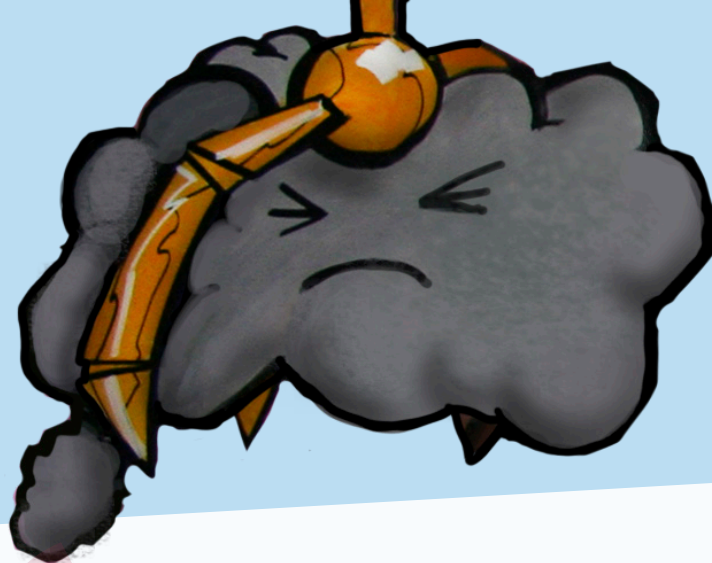
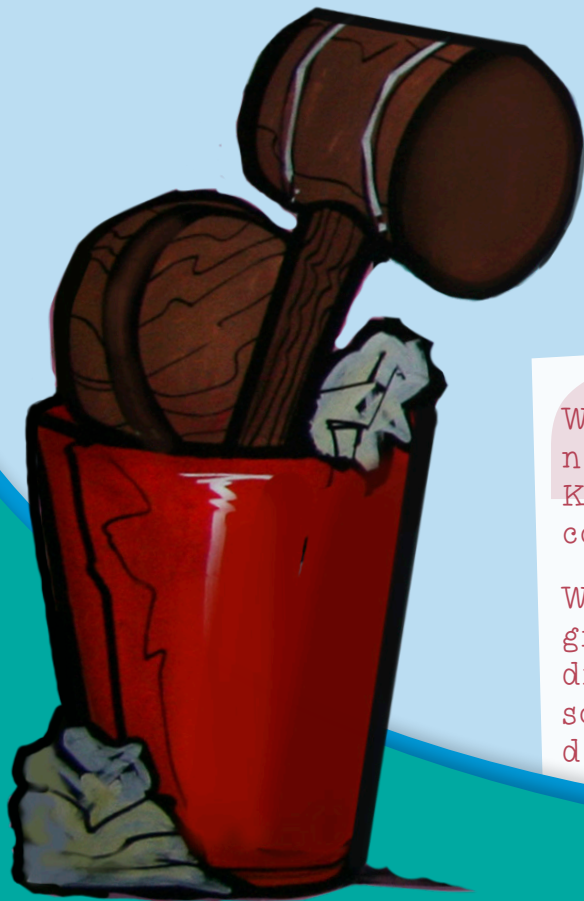


## It's all about:

- A safe place to talk openly and share experiences.
- Creative activities to help kids learn more about mental health.
- Reducing feelings of isolation.
- Increasing confidence.
- 'Time out' to meet others and have some fun!



I'm worried about what people  
will think about me?



We put the judge's hammer in the bin to show nobody judges you or the things you say at Kidstime. Everyone has their own reason for coming and everyone respects that.

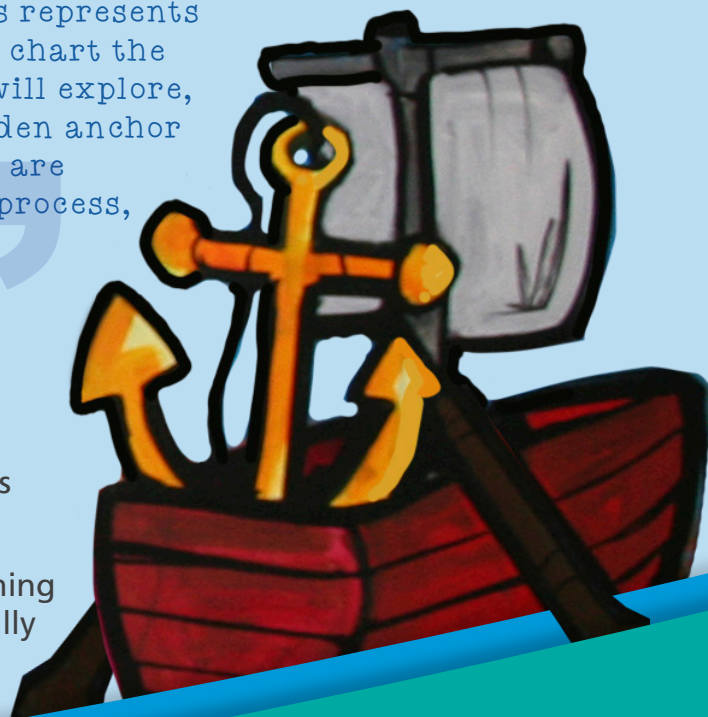
We also added a mechanical fairground grabber, picking up negative thinking and dropping it into the bin. The group deals with some emotional topics, but it always works on doing it in a positive and rewarding way.

## Will it be relevant to me?

The rowing boat with both its sail and oars represents that we all have opportunity to direct and chart the course Kidstime takes; deciding what we will explore, at what speed and by which route. The golden anchor represents the value and respect the staff are awarded. The staff help anchor the whole process, keeping everyone safe and on board.

Whilst the Kidstime programme has therapeutic benefits for all ages, the process is not 'therapy' and is very much in the hands of those that attend and take part. The approach is about allowing things to move forward in a way that is natural for the whole group.

Group sizes fluctuate and we are always welcoming new people on board, but on average we typically have about ten families involved at any one meeting.







**1<sup>st</sup> Thursday  
of each month**



**4:45-7:15<sup>PM</sup>**



**Youth Support -  
Wirral Creative Development Team  
Pilgrim Street Arts Centre  
1 Pilgrim Street  
Birkenhead  
CH41 5EH**



**0151 647 3160**

We normally open each session with a short introduction to help set the mental health topic. This might have come from a discussion at the previous session, suggested by one of the workers or requested by a member of the group on the evening.

**Separate workshops follow this, one for the children and another for the parents/carers.**

Everyone gathers to share a meal.

**Return to separate workshops to finish.**

Final feedback - everyone comes back together to watch the young people's contributions, followed by a closing discussion on the themes that have emerged.

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## What if I find it hard to take part?

Kidstime acknowledges that everyone needs to take part at their own pace. There is no set start or finish to the rolling programme of monthly meetings and everyone is at a different point in the process. How much or how little you join in is also entirely up to you and there is never any pressure to participate. Just being part of this rotating circle of support, listening and learning from others, makes it easier to join in, letting you get more involved when you feel the time is right for you.

On the clock face, each person's face is a different emotion, showing how being part of the group changes the way you feel, making you more confident and happier each time you come. We also added lots of different hands to the clock because we have learnt about the ways someone's mood can suddenly change when they have a mental health difficulty. Knowing this has made it easier for me.

For me, the clock is about giving them time to be themselves, to just be kids and have fun. There are lots of times that, even though I'm the parent, they are the carer looking after me. Kidstime is just that, it's time for my children to be kids, have fun and make new friends.



## Will I be lectured?

Whether young or old, the L-plate shows that there are no experts at Kidstime and that everyone is on a learning journey together to better understand mental health difficulties.

This statement also applies to the trained staff that support and enable Kidstime. The Kidstime team respect and acknowledge that the attendees know much more about their own experiences, thoughts and feelings than anyone else might. The permanent L-plate is a lovely reminder that we are all listening and learning.

The open book is about how Kidstime is open to everyone's ideas and suggestions, making it easy for you to share and learn new things. It brings together all of the knowledge and values everyone's opinion.



The food is great, it makes it much easier to attend knowing I don't have to worry about feeding the kids.

Kidstime sets out to be very informal and gives over a large part of the evening to sitting down together and sharing a meal.

This stage is seen as being just as important as any of the more structured activities; allowing people to relax, chat and make new friends. Some choose to carry on conversations that they feel strongly about, whilst others pick up their own personal topics or simply use the time to catch up. It doesn't matter which approach someone might take, it always adds to the vitality of the group, strengthening connections and building rapport.



It gets really noisy when we all eat together, everyone chatting and laughing; it's great. I always look forward to seeing everyone again and I love the pizza with pineapple on!



## How is kidstime different?

Kidstime takes action on helping us learn about mental health in really fun ways. We use a lot of drama to help us figure out our own thoughts and feelings about our parent's difficulty. This makes it easier for us to express things in a way that is interesting and easy to understand. Kidstime is never boring!

We normally start our group activity with lots of fun games and warm-up exercises. We then make up stories together that describe all our different experiences. We act these out and film some of them so that we can show our parents how we feel about the topic we have been working on.

Supported by trained youth support workers from Wirral Creative Development Team (formerly known as Wirral Youth Theatre), these appealing workshops provide a creative outlet for young people's enthusiasm and energy. Bringing together children and young people of all ages so that they can share and support one another, the drama activities help them to work through any questions they may have in a safe way, giving a voice to any concerns they have whilst also helping to build confidence.

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## Something for everyone!

We always do something interesting, I like doing the art and crafts and being creative. We work together on our ideas and it's been great being around other children who understand what it is like having a parent with a mental health difficulty. I can't talk about it in school, but I have lots of new friends at Kidstime who are really supportive.

The Kidstime team are always introducing new ways of helping young people reflect and think about their own needs. When a mum, dad, or other important adult that is relied on, has a mental health difficulty, a child or young person can find that they have been missing out on the opportunities and experiences that other children typically have. This can cause them to feel different from their peers, with the potential to lead to them becoming isolated or socially excluded. Kidstime aims to provide a broad menu of activities so that they can find something that they enjoy and can be part of.

By combining team and confidence building activities with a broad range of different creative techniques, young people quickly become part of a strong and supportive social group. In fact, with the support of the team, many of the young people that take part progress into other creative activities run by Wirral Youth Service. This opens up new opportunities for them and helps build their own long-term resilience.



## What are the benefits?

I know I can be a bit of a monster at times to my kids, but Kidstime has helped us to manage these times a lot better. We have gained new insights that let us think and act differently when my condition is causing us problems.

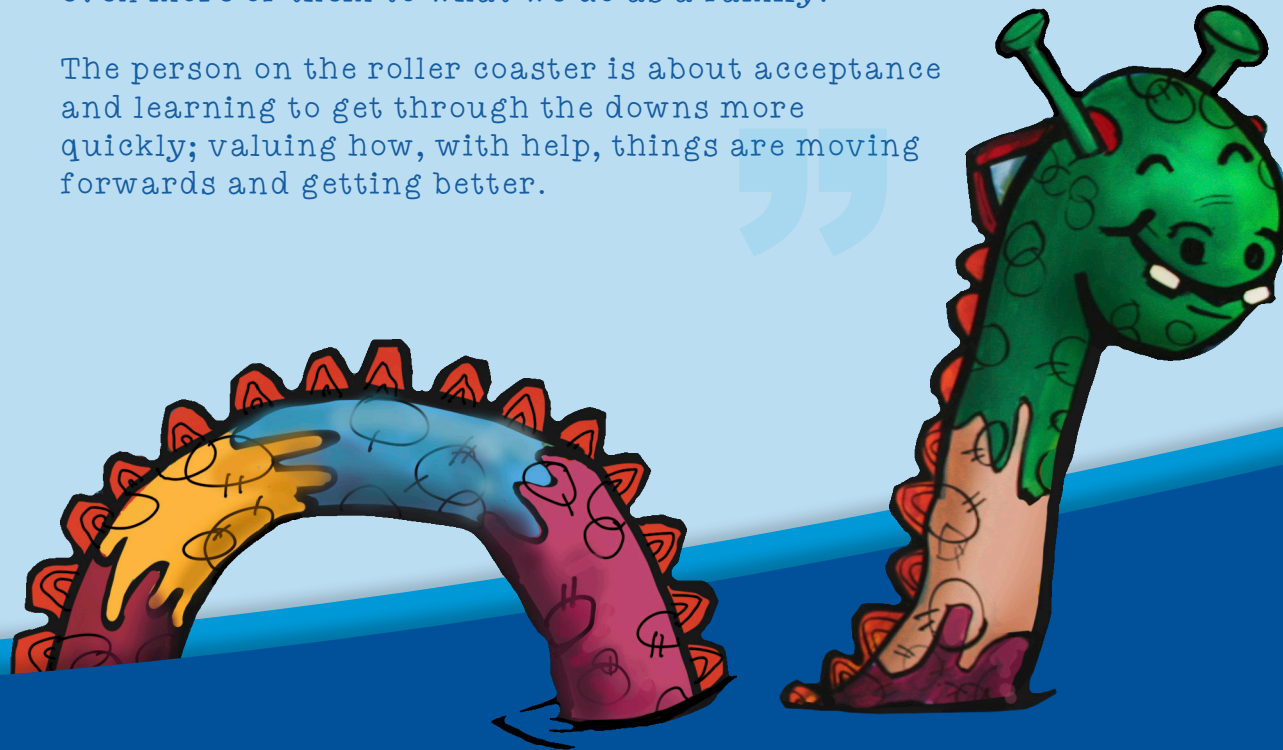
Even though mental health issues are common, affecting thousands of people in the UK each year, there are still a lot of misunderstandings around the topic, resulting in unjustified social stigma and discrimination. This can cause people to hide their thoughts and feelings below the surface, often just making their situation worse.





You can be very up and down when you have a mental health difficulty. Kidstime has helped me bring things out into the open and not to see it as something that is scary or needs avoiding. Things are still up and down, but I'm learning to enjoy the ups more and find ways of adding even more of them to what we do as a family.

The person on the roller coaster is about acceptance and learning to get through the downs more quickly; valuing how, with help, things are moving forwards and getting better.





Kidstime gives us all a voice, it makes sure everyone gets heard.

The final stage of the evening workshop brings the whole group back together and gives parents and carers chance to see the children and young people's creative interpretation of the workshop's topic and how it has affected them. Parents and carers are invited to give feedback as well as discuss the issues raised from within their own group activity.

Using an 'open mic' metaphor, everyone is welcome to contribute should they want to and all contributions are given the same level of importance, acknowledging their effort and involvement.

We wanted a colourful chain to run right through this document, to show how even though we are all different, we have all come together and that by being together we are so much stronger.



If you would like your family to be involved in Kidstime, simply ask a worker that is currently supporting your family to refer you to our project.

We accept referrals from: CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services), AMHS (Adult Mental Health Services), school nurses, voluntary agencies, social workers and GP's.

Organisations wanting to refer a family to our project, can do so by contacting:

0151 647 3160



For further Information about  
Kidstime Wirral please contact: 0151 647 3160  
[www.mymind.org.uk](http://www.mymind.org.uk)