

PATHS[®] Plus

Key findings from the PATHS[®]
Plus programme delivered by
Barnardo's in the UK

Believe in
children



Barnardo's
Northern Ireland

May 2016

In partnership with

PATHS[™] **PATHS[®]Plus⁺**
The PATHS[™] Programme for Schools (UK Version)
Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies

The
ATLANTIC
Philanthropies



**realising
ambition**



Introduction

This short briefing paper highlights the key findings from the PATHS® Plus programme. Delivered by Barnardo's in UK schools PATHS® Plus seeks to empower children to develop the fundamental social emotional learning skills to make positive choices throughout life.

It is funded by Realising Ambition which is a UK wide initiative designed to help young people fulfil their potential and avoid pathways into offending. The aim of Realising Ambition is to enhance the evidence base of 'what works' by supporting the replication of effective programmes in new geographic areas. Backed by an investment of £25 million from The Big Lottery Fund the Realising Ambition programme has supported 25 projects across the UK since April 2012.

The programme has been supported by a Consortium led by Catch 22 and involving Substance, The Social Research Unit and the Young Foundation to enhance delivery and share the evidence and lessons. PATHS® in Northern Ireland also has support from The Atlantic Philanthropies.

Social Emotional Learning

Social emotional learning (SEL) is defined by CASEL (www.casel.org) as:

“the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships and make responsible decisions.”

SEL is essential for all children and young people – to interact effectively with others and to develop personally with positive well-being. SEL skills are also preventative. They can be taught to children from a young age and later, risky behaviours can be prevented or reduced through effective SEL teaching.

Research (Blueprints, 2014) highlights that SEL skills can be effectively embedded in classroom instruction, thus reaching a wide range of individuals and helping prevent mental health problems in later life.

What is PATHS® Plus?

Since 2013 Barnardo's NI has been replicating an innovative approach called PATHS® Plus to promote social emotional learning and well-being in primary school children. PATHS® Plus is the combination of two highly acclaimed evidence-based programmes:

1. PATHS® (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) Programme for Schools (UK Version) is an evidence-based social and emotional learning programme for primary schools. It is taught by classroom teachers as a regular part of the school day and programme content focuses on five domains of social and emotional development:

- » Self-control
- » Emotional understanding
- » Positive self-esteem
- » Relationships
- » Interpersonal problem-solving skills

As a universal whole-school programme PATHS® seeks to change/build upon a school's ethos and culture, through working with the school leadership and teaching staff.

2. Friendship Group is an evidence-based programme for children who are having social problems in the classroom, e.g. conflict with their peers, isolation from peers or feelings of insecurity. Friendship Group builds on the skills taught through PATHS® and offers children the opportunity to learn and practice social skills in a small, supportive peer group with adult guidance.

By combining the two programmes PATHS® Plus provides a universal whole-school prevention programme with a more targeted programme for children displaying emotional, behavioural or social problems.

Evidence for PATHS®

- » Level 4 (highest rating) from the Early Intervention Foundation
- » 'Model' Blueprints Programme status.
- » PATHS® has been rigorously evaluated internationally and shown to be effective.
- » An independent random controlled trial of the PATHS® programme in Northern Ireland (2010) found significant advantages for PATHS® pupils (www.pathseducation.co.uk/pdfs/public/barnardos-paths-executive-summary).
- » Two recent, random controlled trials in England which Barnardo's were not part of, have found less positive results (Berry et al, 2015; EEF 2015). These new studies are a welcome addition to helping us understand the implementation challenges in replicating an evidence based programme from the US in new geographic areas.

How does PATHS® Plus work?

The PATHS® Curriculum consists of a series of age-appropriate lessons with supplementary materials such as puppets, classroom posters and story books. The programme curriculum was previously adapted for UK classrooms by Barnardo's NI through the support of The Atlantic Philanthropies.

Teachers and other key staff receive specialist training to deliver PATHS® and with support from a PATHS® coach aim to deliver lessons twice a week in their classroom. The role of the PATHS® coach is to support high quality delivery and to encourage the whole-school generalisation of PATHS® concepts through a range of support to schools, including:

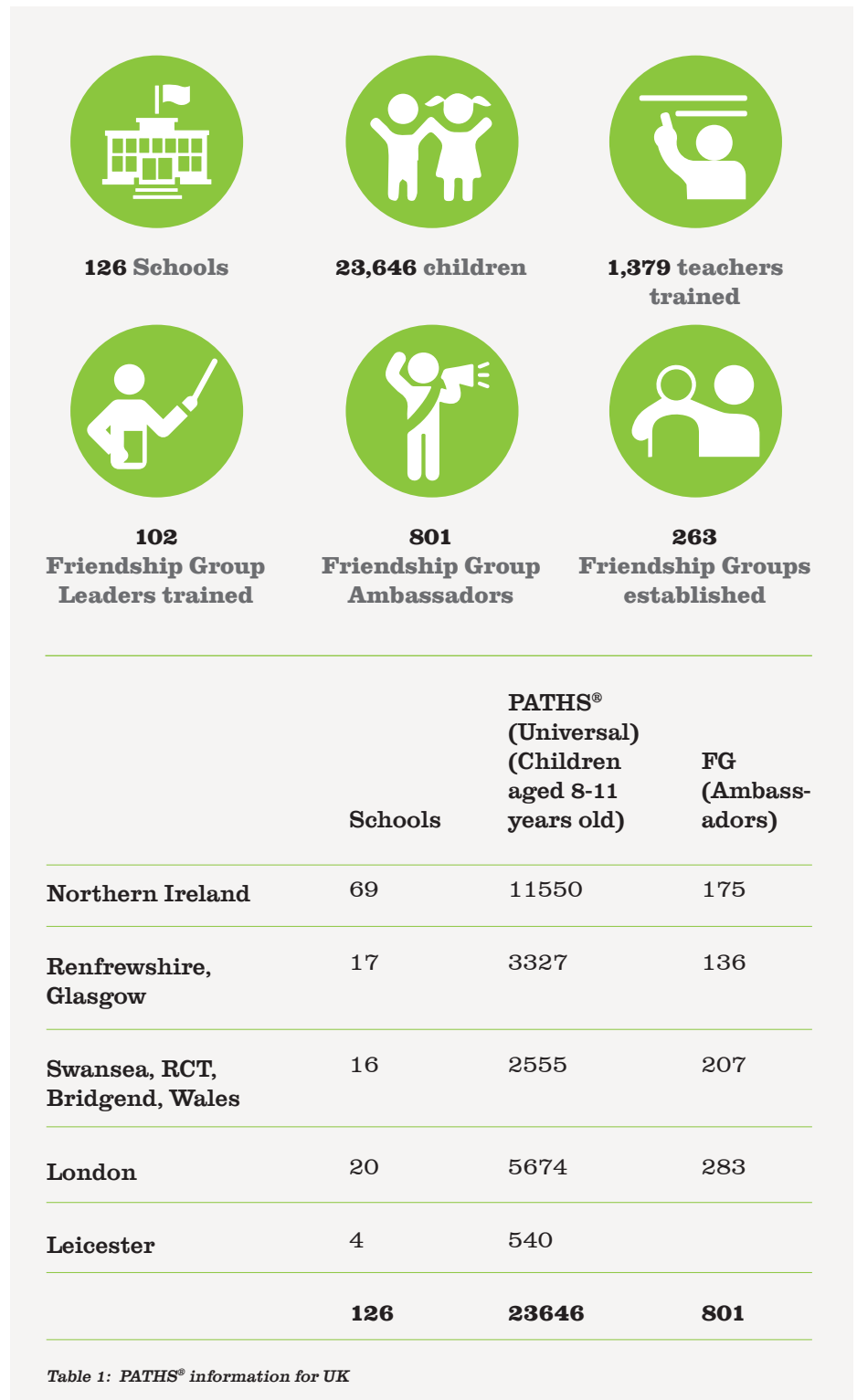
- » Parent sessions
- » PATHS® training for non-teaching staff
- » Training for playground supervisors on PATHS® playground games and activities
- » Training older children to be PATHS® Pals to assist playground supervisors
- » Assemblies for whole-school delivery on PATHS® themes and issues
- » Advising on delivering PATHS® messages through other areas of the curriculum.

Friendship Group is delivered by a trained FG leader from Barnardo's (supported by a Co-Leader from the school staff). FG is for children aged 8 – 11 years and focuses on teamwork, co-operation, communication skills and effective conflict management. FG consists of one 45 minute session every week for 14 weeks. Three children, identified as most likely to benefit from FG, are selected by Teachers to be 'Friendship Group

Ambassadors'. FG Ambassadors attend every session on a weekly basis and each week 3 of their peers also join the session. These peers change every week and ensures that all children in the class have the opportunity

to attend FG at least once. Involving the wider peer group as 'peer mentors' allows every child in the class to experience FG, practice their own skills and help reinforce positive peer norms.

PATHS® Plus Achievements across the UK



Impact

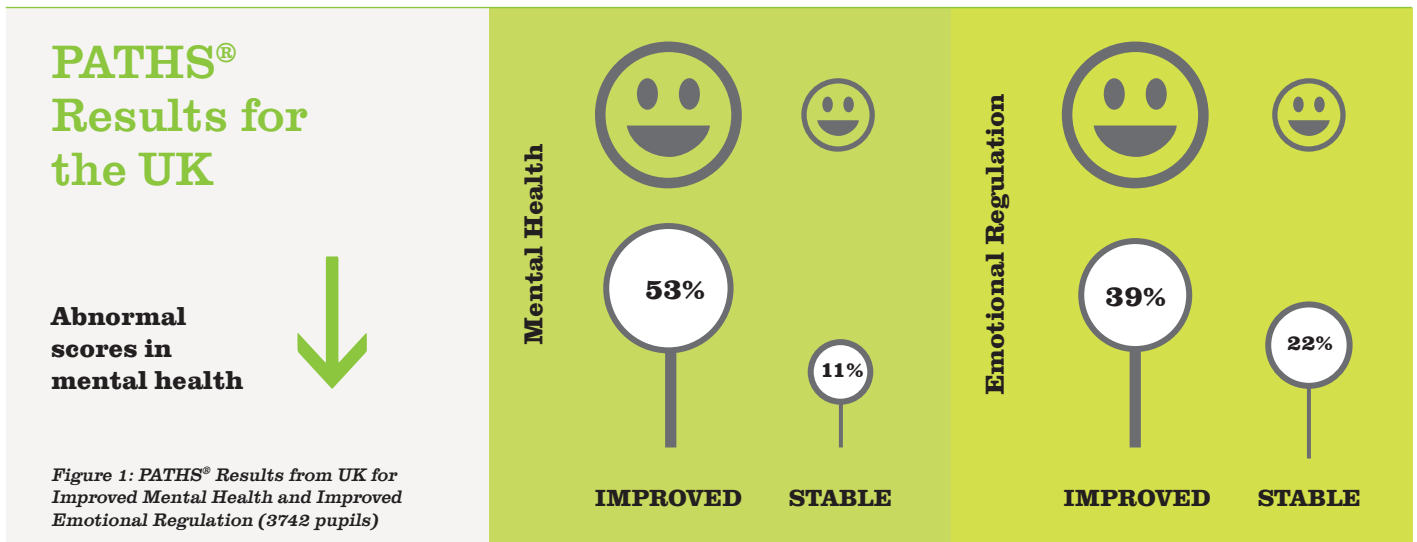
The impact of PATHS® Plus has been tested using a variety of data collection methods including a number of different pre and post Realising Ambition surveys with 4139 children, pre and post PATHS® surveys with 730 children, pupil voice surveys with 564 children, senior leadership team surveys and feedback from training sessions.

Key findings include:

- » **Improved mental health**, improved or stable score of 64% for PATHS® and 59% for FG.
- » **Reduced abnormal scores in mental health.**

- » **Improved Emotional Regulation**, improved or stable score of 61% for PATHS® and 66% for FG.
- » **Improved self-management**, 85% of pupils reported improved ability to manage their emotions.
- » **Reduced aggression**, improved or stable score of 71% for PATHS® and 67% for FG.
- » **Reduced hyperactivity**, combined improved or stable score of 67% for PATHS® and 62% for FG.
- » **Improved Social Awareness**, 67% of children reported that PATHS® had helped them either 'very much' or a 'great deal' to understand other people's emotions.

- » **Improved Relationship Skills**, improved or stable score of 70% PATHS® and 69% for FG.
- » 85% of pupils stated that PATHS® Plus had **helped their problem solving skills** moderately, very much or a great deal.
- » A total of 91% of senior leaders reported that PATHS® Plus has had either some, good or a profound impact on **reducing the amount of time spent resolving conflict.**
- » **High fidelity delivery**, 91% of teachers reported they followed the PATHS® lessons closely
- » 100% of Senior Leadership Teams surveyed reported that PATHS® Plus had a positive impact on **'children's ability to stop and clam down'**.



Improved Mental Health

% respondents progress by location

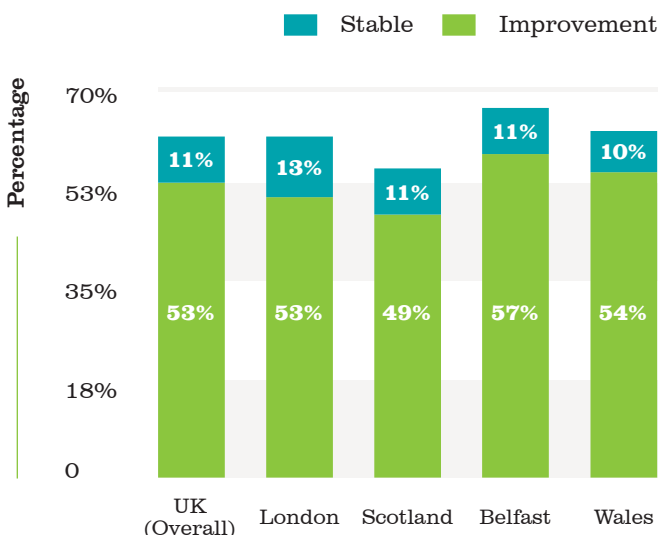


Chart 1: PATHS® Results from UK for Improved Mental Health (3742 pupils)

Improved Emotional Regulation

% respondents progress by location

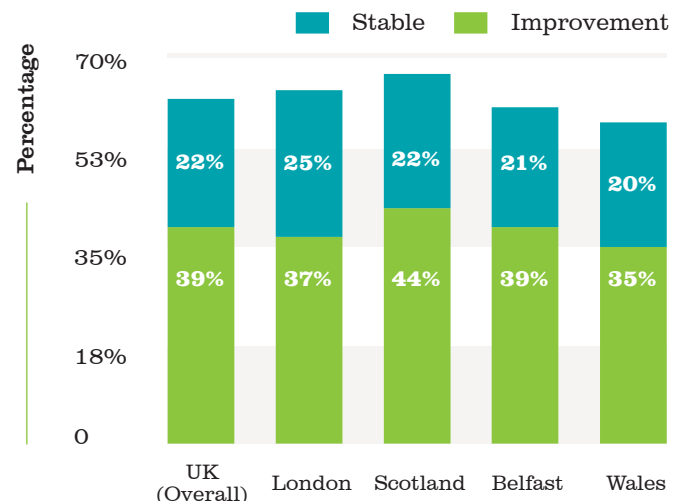


Chart 2: PATHS® Results for UK data for Improved Emotional Regulation (3742 pupils)

Friendship Group Results for UK

Abnormal scores in mental health



Figure 2: Friendship Group Results from UK for Improved Mental Health and Improved Emotional Regulation (397 pupils)

Mental Health



48%

IMPROVED



11%

STABLE

Emotional Regulation



47%

IMPROVED



19%

STABLE

Improved Mental Health

% respondents progress by location

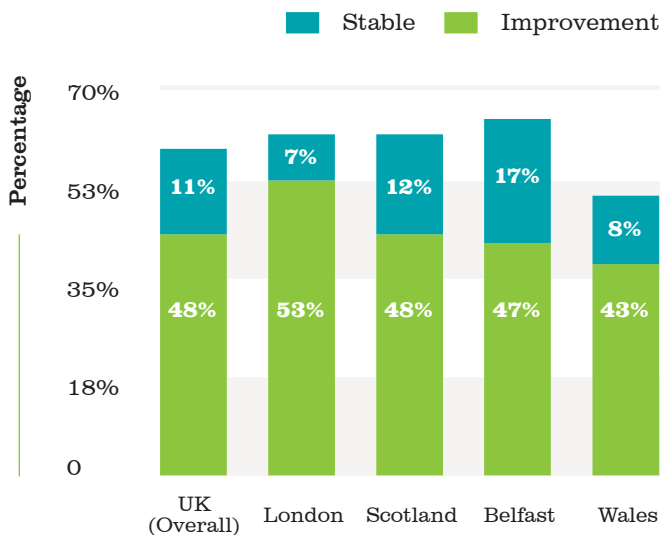


Chart 3: Friendship Group Results from UK for Improved Mental Health (397 pupils)

Improved Emotional Regulation

% respondents progress by location

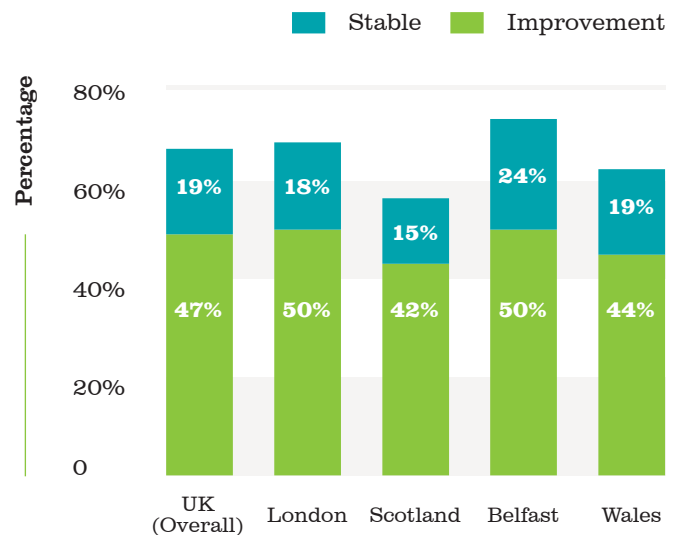


Chart 4: Friendship Group Results from UK for Improved Emotional Regulation (397 pupils)

Self-Management

“One child in particular had extreme difficulties managing his behaviour and PATHS® has made a real difference. He is now able to remind not only himself but his peers, to calm down if they have a problem and is good at implementing these strategies throughout the day, particularly the control signals and calming down strategies.” (P5 teacher, Belfast)

“I can calm down a lot easier. When I’m angry sometimes I can think before I act, and if I think it’s a good idea I do it. If I don’t think it’s a good idea, I don’t.” (FG Ambassador, Scotland)

Social Awareness

“I’ve noticed that Friendship Group has helped children to become more aware of other people’s feelings and also notice the impact that their behaviour has on others. One of our FG Ambassadors has really benefitted from FG. Her whole demeanour has changed [...] now she is more aware in situations and able to see other people’s perspectives.” (Teacher, Scotland)

Relationship Skills

“Today [friend’s name] and I were out on the playground and some Yr. 3s were having a problem they wanted us to help with. We didn’t know what to do so we went and got our Friendship folders and we used the traffic light steps to help them clam down.”

(Young person, London)

“I learned what to do in different situations and how to figure out what the best thing to do is.”

(P6 pupil, Scotland)

What do participating schools tell us about PATHS® PLUS?

“Children are able to discuss their feelings with a lot more confidence and understanding. Within the playground children feel empowered to try and sort out minor issues with each other rather than always seeking adult supervision. The children are also demonstrating using more mature vocabulary around feelings in other subjects such as literacy and guided reading sessions.”

(In School PATHS® Co-ordinator and Yr 4 Teacher, London)

“Training was very thorough and I was given really useful strategies. I refer back to the posters and use whole-class strategies all the time in class.”

(Year 3 teacher, London)

“Friendship Group is extremely beneficial in supporting children’s emotional, social and their well-being, especially with children who struggle in this area.”

(In School FG Co-Leader, Wales)

What do children tell us about PATHS® PLUS?

“When I first came to Friendship Group, I was suffering from mild depression, but that stopped. I feel much happier now. That’s because of the teamwork, working together, discussions and the games. It was good to be around people I don’t normally talk to and bring my good friend.”

(FG Ambassador, Scotland)

“I need to use it [Traffic Light Steps Poster] when I have my panic attacks. It helps.”

(Year 3 Pupil, London)

“I used the traffic light steps when I had an argument with my sister. They helped me to tell her how I was feeling and we sorted out the problem.”

(P5 Pupil, NI)

“PATHS® has taught me that all feelings are OK but the way I react is sometimes not OK.”

(Year 5 pupil, London)

Conclusion

The results are reasonably consistent across the UK indicating that, with Coaching support, PATHS® can be delivered effectively and with fidelity across various locations.

With the absence of a control group we cannot say that PATHS® Plus is solely responsible for any improvements and clearly there are a variety of factors present in a child’s life which can impact these scores. However the results do indicate a positive trend and suggest that PATHS® Plus is having a positive impact on several specific areas relating to social and emotional outcomes.

References

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Believe in children
 **Barnardo's**
Northern Ireland

www.barnardos.org.uk

542-544 Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast BT4 3HE, Tel 028 9067 2366

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