Stormbreak Together: Evidence and Impact

Our specialist programme for parents and carers, providing them with knowledge, practical tools, skills and language to support the mental health of their children.



stormbreak®

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What is stormbreak Together?

Our organisation

Stormbreak is a registered charity in England and Wales dedicated to supporting children's mental health through movement. Stormbreak provides preventative training programmes for trusted adults helping them to embed mentally healthy movement for children they live with, work with or care for. These programmes help raise awareness and generate dialogue around mental health through movement, helping children to recognise, respond and regulate their thoughts and emotions to help them flourish now and in the future.

The Together approach

At stormbreak we are committed to working with and for children and families who experience challenge, disadvantage and inequality. Much of this work has seen us focus on building purposeful partnerships with foster carers, social workers and Children's Services to help them support children in their care.

Stormbreak Together is our approach for families, parents and carers, trusted adults and organisations that provide support for children in the community. It aims to provide parents and carers with support and strategies to help them and their children to develop their confidence to use movement to support their children's physical and mental wellbeing and cultivate happy, safe, valued environments for children to thrive.

Many of the children that come into foster care present with complex needs, have experienced trauma, childhood adversity and multiple losses. Support and intervention for this can be limited or significantly delayed due to placement stability and limited resources available. Children and foster care families need support and strategies to help them and the children they care for articulate and regulate their feelings.

Children in care are much more likely to experience mental health problems than young people in the general population (Kirby et al, 2025). Early life experiences, such as abuse, neglect, parental drug-use or violence are likely to play a major part in this. So too could the instability that children are necessarily at risk of experiencing. Supporting children's mental health is essential to help them learn to cope with some of these difficult experiences and build resilience, to promote their opportunities to bounce back from adverse experiences.

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Unaddressed mental health needs are seen as a key driver for the poorer outcomes we see in care-experienced adults, such as unemployment, homelessness and contact with the criminal justice system (Murray et al., 2020). Many young people in care have unstable lives.

Over a two-year period up to March 2024, 23% of children looked after experienced high placement instability (three or more placements).
(Department of Education, 2025)

Stormbreak Together is delivered as a 6-week trauma-informed programme for parents and carers, providing them with knowledge, practical tools, skills and language to support the mental health of their children. The approach builds skills of resilience, self-care, emotional literacy, and connection through structured sessions and practical movement activities, aligning with the principles of PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy) and Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) (Hughes & Baylin, 2012).

Carers are shown how to use the stormbreak approach, using movement alongside their child and creating opportunities to talk about emotional wellbeing. As well as giving children tools to use as they move through childhood generally, carers can use activities to prepare for challenging situations typical in a fostering setting, such as anticipating or returning from family time visits, meeting new professionals, or starting at a new school or club. Stormbreaks can also be carefully chosen by carers 'in the moment', when a child is heightened or withdrawn - to prevent emotional escalation or to connect when a child is reluctant to engage. The activities and associated language help children learn to recognise how they are feeling, to respond appropriately and to regulate their emotions.



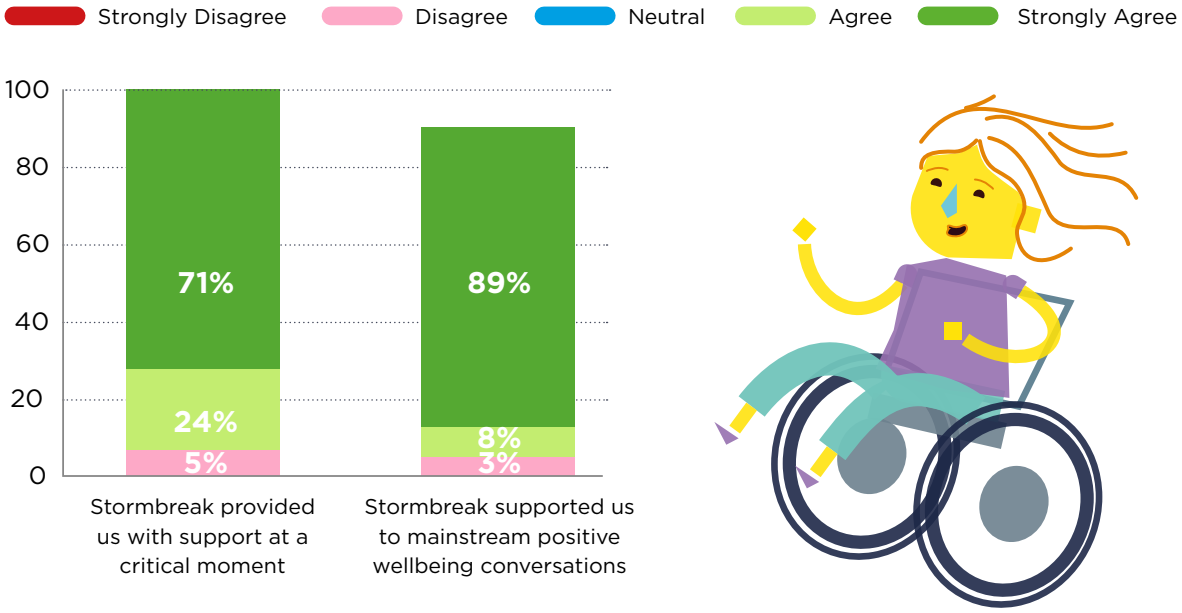
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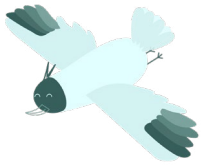
The Together approach provides carers with a practical tool to use in the home, when the social worker has left and the door is closed. Along with education around attachment, adverse childhood experiences and trauma, and a focus on the importance of relationships and connection between adult and child, the stormbreak approach is the hands on application of emotional wellbeing support, delivered through the vehicle of movement.

Together plays a crucial role in supporting children's emotional wellbeing, demonstrated through the meaningful change it has created for over 400 beneficiaries—children, carers and professionals—across 15 different counties. Below are the findings from this work, highlighting the important and positive emerging themes.

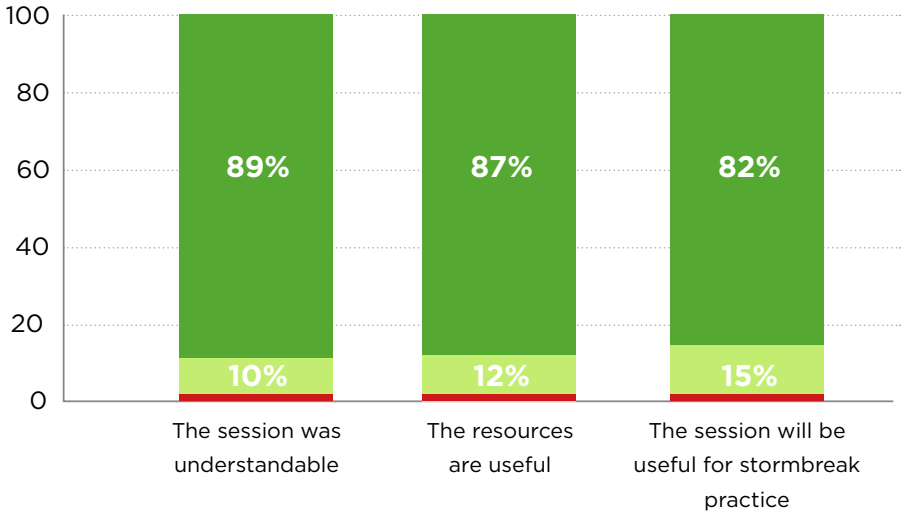
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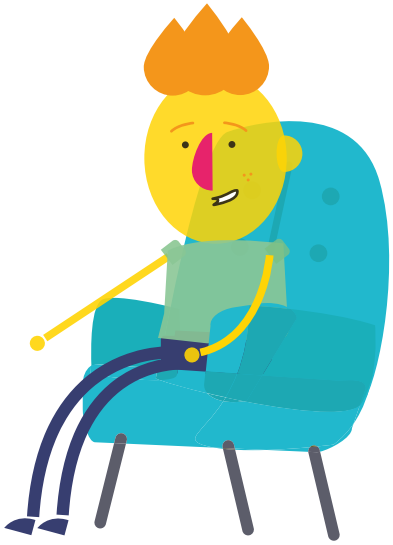
Evidence and impact



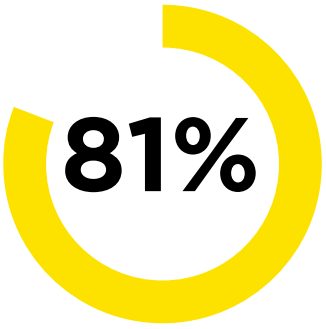


Trusted Adults' Perspectives about the Stormbreak Together Sessions (N=126 Responses)

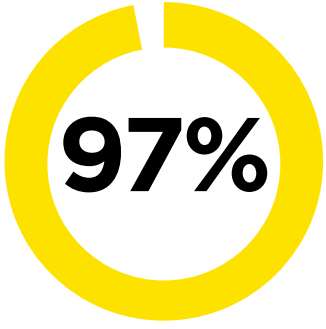




Across recent cohorts,



of carers reported improved relationships with their child.



said the resources helped them support mental health and emotional regulation at home.

Families consistently showed increases in emotional literacy, connection, and confidence in managing big feelings.

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Improvement in childrens' wellbeing

Increase in childrens' resilience

Improvement in carers' wellbeing

Improvement in carer/child relationship

By the end of the Together programme, over half of participants' children were now able to:

Manage their feelings more easily



Talk about their feelings more easily

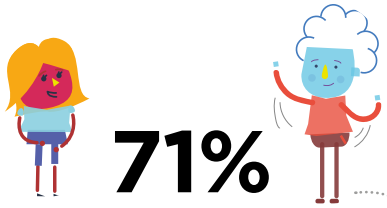


Bounce back more easily after challenges

Carer retention

To date, our evaluation has shown that carers who attend the Together sessions:

- Feel supported, experience improvements in their relationships with their child and 'feel benefit from receiving support, reporting lower stress and reinforced confidence to continue fostering.
- Indeed, research suggests that the variables most strongly associated with the success or failure of foster care are the characteristics of the foster child and the foster carer/child relationship (Bernedo, García-Martín, Salas & Fuentes, 2016).



71%

of carers said stormbreak improved the relationship with their child

71%

of carers said the stormbreak approach provided them with support at a critical moment in their family life



Carer Retention:
Research* shows that carers who feel supported, who experience better relationships with the child, and who receive training/ supervision report lower stress and greater intention to continue fostering.



87%

of carers said the sessions and ongoing support provided a key form of social support to their family





82%

of carers said the sessions would be useful for implementing stormbreak into practice

We asked carers to describe their dreams and aspirations for their children through their engagement with Together. The majority of parents' dreams and aspirations focused on supporting their children to manage their emotions.

73%

of parents had made steps towards achieving these goals by the end of the sessions.



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Placement Stability

Although placement stability is difficult to evidence due to inconsistent national data, research consistently shows that improving children's emotional wellbeing leads to more stable placements. The Together approach strengthens emotional wellbeing and facilitates an understanding of the importance of recognising, responding and regulating the management of feelings amongst children and carers. Therefore, the Together approach promotes placement stability by empowering families to develop the essential skills, confidence and capability, through movement, to support their children's physical and mental wellbeing.



89%

of carers said the stormbreak approach supported them with mainstreaming conversations about positive wellbeing



76%

of carers said stormbreak improved the wellbeing of their children

Placement Stability:
Studies* emphasise social-emotional competencies in carers and in children as protective factors associated with placement stability.



76%

of carers said stormbreak improved their own wellbeing

75%



of carers said stormbreak led to an increase in their child's resilience

"I'm feeling like I am able to change the path that a child is going on before it could be a problem."
Foster Carer in Wiltshire

"My child wanted to talk but didn't know how to express herself, with stormbreak she is free to move and talk"
Kinship Carer in Dorset





"I feel that I'm thinking about using stormbreak as I go through my daily life, not just with young people."
Foster Carer in Wiltshire



"I wish we had received this training sooner; I believe this would have prevented a placement breakdown".
Foster Carer in Hampshire

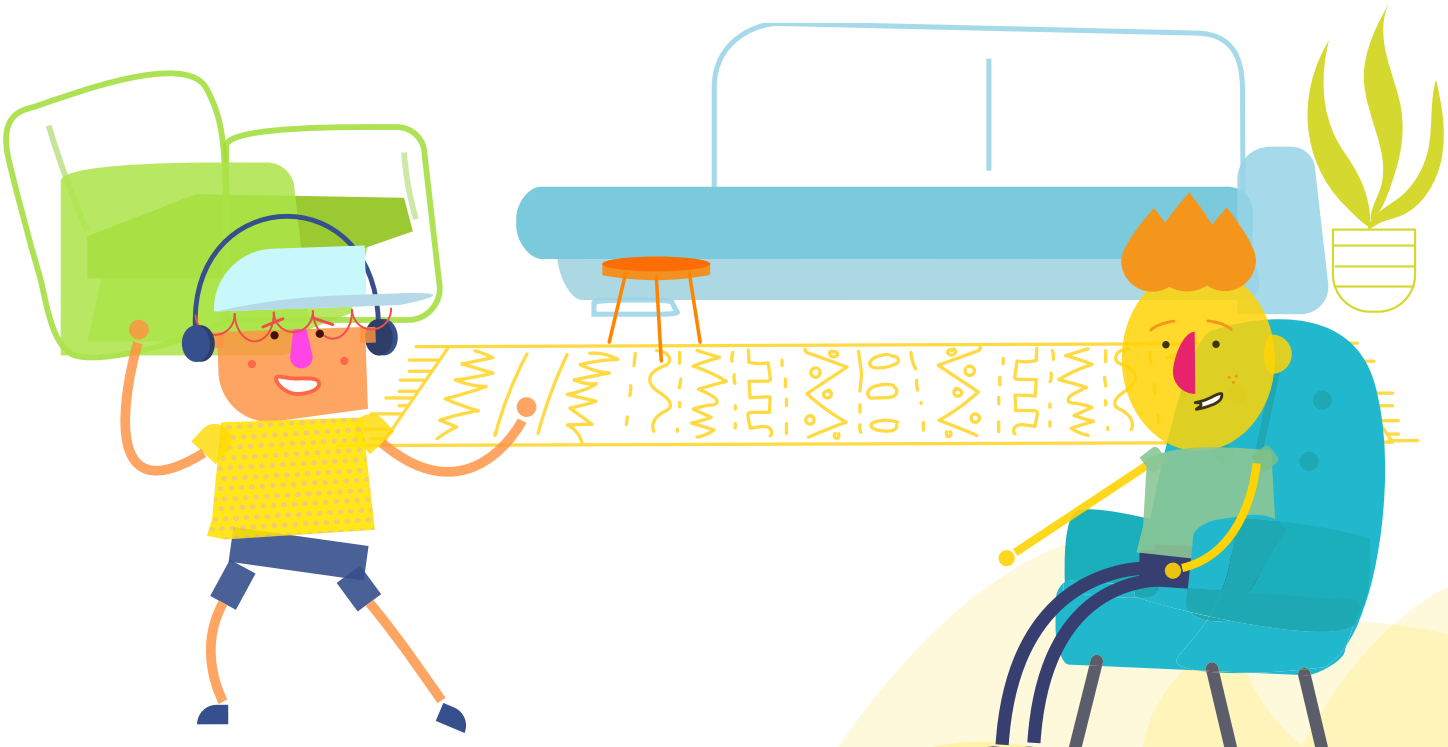
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Why this work is important

The Together programme addresses a critical need within the foster-care system: supporting the emotional wellbeing of children and the carers who look after them. Research shows that emotional wellbeing is strongly linked to placement stability, yet national data on placement stability remains inconsistent and difficult to track. What we do know is that instability significantly increases the likelihood of behavioural difficulties, mental-health challenges and poorer long-term outcomes for children. Strengthening emotional literacy, nurturing relationships, and trauma-informed responses therefore plays a vital role in reducing future disruption. Together provides this foundation by equipping children, carers and professionals with relational skills, regulation strategies and shared emotional language—factors repeatedly identified as protective for stability.

How the system can benefit

Together strengthens the system around the child through partnership working, whole-family approaches and carer-focused support. By engaging carers and professionals together, the approach helps build shared understanding and reinforces consistency across the home, school and services. Organisations benefit from improved engagement in other support offers, as participating carers frequently report feeling more confident, better connected, and more valued. This is essential in a context where foster-carer retention is declining nationally and many carers report burnout or lack of support. By enhancing emotional wellbeing and relational capacity, Together contributes to stronger placement foundations, better stability and a more sustainable network of carers.



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How organisations can work with stormbreak

The stormbreak Together approach is designed to be used in Place. The approach is flexible, enabling local authorities and fostering services to select a model that reflects the needs of their children, carers and locality. Multiple delivery routes are now available:

Stormbreak Together:

From Learning to Living – A six-week immersive programme building deep emotional-wellbeing skills.

Foundations – A one-day introductory workshop supported by a virtual mastery series for continued learning.

Focus Modules – One-day sessions exploring a single mental-health concept in depth (e.g., resilience, relationships, self-care).

Train the Trainer – A capacity-building programme enabling organisations to sustain the approach and embed mentally healthy movement long-term.

This flexible offer allows local authorities to scale, adapt and embed the approach meaningfully across teams, family networks and fostering communities.

Financial impact: Why stability matters

Placement breakdowns place significant emotional strain on children and carers—and they represent a major financial pressure for local authorities that has a significant deleterious impact on the public purse. To evidence this*:

*Source references at the end of the report.

A typical local authority with 500 children in care may experience around **50 placement breakdowns per year** (based on a 10% assumed breakdown rate*).

The **average cost per breakdown**—when accounting for the likelihood of moving to IFA or residential care—is approximately **£72,603** in the first year.

This equates to an estimated **£3.6–£4 million per year** in costs associated with placement disruptions.

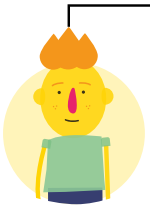
As the empirical literature shows, emotional wellbeing and the quality of the carer–child relationship are key determinants of stability.

Overall, the Together approach offers a cost-effective preventative intervention. By supporting carers to feel confident, supported and equipped, and by strengthening children's emotional regulation, trust and connection, Together has the potential to reduce breakdowns, retain more carers, and alleviate mounting financial pressures across fostering and social-care systems.

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Evaluation methods

Stakeholders who take part in the evaluation



Trusted adults - Parents and carers



Trusted adults - Health and Social Care



Professionals



The evaluation approaches we have used



Surveys and outcome measures



Informal group discussions



Short conversations



Website feedback

Outcome areas



Together resources and support and their utility for families



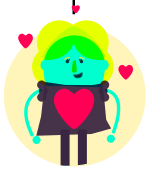
Parents and Carers' social networks



Children's wellbeing and resilience



Children's emotional development (Children are able to identify, talk about emotions and develop coping skills)



Parents and Carers' wellbeing

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Key sources: Authored by Local Authorities (2022–2024) Fostering sufficiency statements and market position reports, including published fostering allowance structures, IFA commissioning rates, and residential cost data. These were sourced by Hertfordshire County Council; Gloucestershire County Council; Birmingham City Council; Leeds City Council.

MacAlister, J. (2022). The independent review of children's social care: Final report. London: HM Government.

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Note: Financial impact and why it matters section

To arrive at the financial impact of placement breakdowns, we grouped annual placement costs into three recognised UK bands: "Low" - Mainstream local-authority foster care, usually £25k–£35k per child per year; "Medium" - Independent Fostering Agency placements, usually £45k–£65k per year; and "High" - Residential children's homes, usually £200k–£300k per year. These ranges reflect the most frequently cited figures in local authority sufficiency statements, commissioning reports, and national reviews as listed in the references section above. These figures include: a. the higher weekly placement cost going forward, b. one-off search/ placement/administration/transport costs, and c. extra social worker/therapeutic input.

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