

Curo Salus



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Head of Education and Psychology Sally Dolan leads Scotland-based Curo Salus, which provide safe, therapeutic and caring environments for children who have attachment problems as a result of adverse circumstances and emotional trauma in their early years. Their model of practice is based on attachment and trauma theory, and informed by the current research findings in developmental neuroscience and psychology. Sally tells the Review about the therapeutic aim of the service, and how they help children to regain appropriate trust in adults and develop integrated relationships with other people.

Our therapeutic model is deeply rooted in attachment theory and deeply emphasises trust and relationships. It creates opportunities for growth and development, something made possible by our comfortable environment, highly structured day, therapeutic programmes and staff expertise. At the point of entry, we assess each child before providing them with effective and tailored care, and therapeutic and educational plans.

The therapeutic approaches we use are determined by the needs of each child. We work with children to alleviate problem behaviours and help them to regain trust in adults. We recognise and acknowledge that this is often a painful process – children are likely to be resentful, chaotic, destructive and distrustful when the process begins.

Qualified staff are key

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FACTS ABOUT CURO SALUS

- » Head of Education and Psychology: Sally Dolan
- » Opened in 2005
- » Based in Kilbarchan, Scotland
- » Services: Specialist support for children who have experienced emotional trauma
- » No. of employees: INCOMPLETE
- » Curo Salus work on site with Northview House School in Kilbarchan
- » www.curosalus.org

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versed in consulting attachment and trauma models and also in the use of safe crisis management.

Being a carer, teacher or psychologist in our setting is challenging, yet influential. Our interactions are critical for the outcomes of the children we care for. We have to recognise that healing and development are fostered by positive relationships built on a foundation of trust.

We embrace the trauma-informed paradigm and approach our work with children with understanding, never judgment. On a day-to-day basis, Curo Salus staff are trained to offer a therapeutic attitude of playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy, better known as PACE. These four concepts form the basis of our working approach and help us to look beyond behaviour to root causes and underlying issues.

Supporting Northview House

We work on site with Northview House School, where our children attend full-time and follow the Scottish curriculum. At the senior phase of the curriculum, pupils are presented for national qualifications, including Advanced Highers, Highers

and National 5, 4, 3 and 2. We were delighted with this year's Scottish Qualifications Awards.

In school, we also offer a wide range of outdoor education programmes which provide us with many challenging and fun activities. These help the children to develop resilience, gain new skills and claim awards. They include, but are not limited to, mountain biking, swimming, horse riding, the John Muir Award and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

We provide in-school therapeutic support for all of our young people, or in-house for those who have left school. These overlap with the individual and small group sessions that our psychology and therapy team provide. Across all disciplines, we offer a variety of support tailored to the needs and age of each child.

For example, with younger children, we work using both directive and non-directive play therapy, mindfulness, anger management and emotional literacy. This provides each child with a coherent and accurate narrative of their early lives, which is followed by individual counselling to deal with grief and loss.

External influences

We aim to look outwards and foster links with all appropriate organisations in our field. We have great links with Who Cares? and always welcome their representatives. Similarly, we send our staff on training events run by the Centre of Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland, and our pupils have participated in a variety of extracurricular events.

When it comes to schooling, we have great partnerships with local colleges and Skills Development Scotland. Upon leaving Northview and Curo Salus, all of our young people have positive

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destinations and typically undertake further education.

We have excellent relationships with the professionals from the placing authorities, including social workers, educational psychologists and psychiatrists to name a few. We work with them to promote the “getting it right for every child” model, placing the child at the centre. In keeping with this, we organise events to include our wider community and the families of our students, such as our Christmas concert, Macmillan coffee mornings, portfolio day, annual summer fun days and an annual Halloween party.

Issues with research

Historically, leaving care teams from some local authorities across the country have not been exceptional. Without a support network that comes into play after care, a lot of work can quickly become undone. The teams we work with, however, are now great at listening to our young people. They involve the children in their processes and now offer choice on the type of placement and location. We must make certain that our young people receive continued support and counselling to ensure that their mental health issues are monitored.

There is minimal research on the outcomes of care leavers, which has proven to be a serious difficulty. We continually engage in rigorous self-evaluation to improve, but this is not always easy. It is our aim to undertake a study looking at the outcomes of the young people who have been residents with us over the last 15 years. This should allow us to gain insight into what really works and improve our service as a result.

Our older care leavers go to a variety of services, such as supported



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accommodation, and we pride ourselves on offering continued informal support; leaving care is a huge step for our young people. They need to feel supported and encouraged in order to cope with the major changes that they face.

Securing better futures

When our residents leave, we offer as much support as possible, and our older children who have left always come back to see us. We see them as part of the Curo Salus family, and that really works for our younger pupils.

Referrals for younger children are on the increase. This has resulted in pupils staying for shorter periods, sometimes of only two to three weeks. Over the last school session, we saw three pupils move on to foster care placements with specialist education support in their communities.

For now, we hope that the work that we have done, our pupils' achievements and their renewed trust in care and education teams will have broken cycles of abuse and neglect. This will allow our young people to realise their full potential and lead fulfilling lives beyond the world of care.

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