

"I came to our school as a 6 year old having lived for the previous two months in a women's refuge with her grandmother and older sister. She had been cared for by her grandmother since she was a baby and her home life was pretty chaotic. I spent a lot of time building a good relationship over the years with grandma and in September 2013 she came to see me to tell me she had terminal cancer and asked me to look out for her girls in the future. Sadly she died two months later and her son, J's uncle took over parental responsibility. J received counselling before grandma's death and 18 months on she still sees her counsellor but on a less frequent basis. J wrote the following to explain how she felt she has benefited from counselling". (Headteacher)

"Ellie started coming to see me when my nan was ill. She helps me to express my feelings and she listens to what I have to say. I am able to talk to Ellie because I know that all of our sessions are confidential. I trust Ellie and feel safe around her. Ellie is really helpful because she respects my feelings and she helps me understand why I'm feeling this way. She also helps me to understand what grief is.

We do lots of different activities, for example, every time we meet we do a scale from 1 to 10, it helps Ellie to understand how I feel. The blob tree is a family of blobs with different emotions on their faces and the sand tray which we tell stories in with lots of little figures.

Me and Ellie made a memory book and put special memories in. It has been a year since I started seeing Ellie and I feel like I have moved on a lot, but the feelings about my nan are still real."

(J aged 10)

Reflections from J as an adult

"I think that counselling as a child is an extremely important and helpful element of overcoming trauma and understanding grief, like it is at any age. My experience of counselling as a child helped me to not only communicate in a safe and confidential environment but helped me to furthermore understand the different emotions I was feeling and how to cope with them without feeling any pressure. Not only is counselling a fantastic way of expressing your feelings, but you learn to build trusting relationships, communicate your emotions, learn different techniques in coping strategies and make a start at being able to accept, learn, talk about and understand grief and trauma.

As a young child, I found my counselling sessions extremely positive and a real help in being able to get through a challenging time. It is so important to be able to openly talk about your worries, fears, feelings, traumas without any fears of this information being shared (unless it's on a need-to-know basis) and with the help of a trustworthy counsellor it makes it so much easier.

My counselling experience has had a great impact on my adult life as I am able to communicate my different feelings and emotions in a positive and effective manor with current relationships. I also have a better understanding of why I may be feeling a certain way and how to continue to cope with these different feelings. My first counselling session was around 10 years ago but still to this day I use the different techniques that I was shown. It is always important to remember that grief, trauma and pain never goes away; however, it does get easier and you learn how to deal with it every day. Some days are harder than others, but one thing for certain is that it is always easier when you have someone to talk to."