

January 2017 – Issue No. 2

Happy New Year and welcome along to 2017! I hope you all had a lovely Christmas and New Year, though I'm sure this is now a dim and distant memory!

[illegible]

For now though, I want to pose the question, what more can we do to support the mental health of children and young people in Norfolk? I'm sure all of us have some ideas on this and I'm always keen to hear thoughts from our schools.

 **Norfolk** County Council

Since coming into post in September 2015, I have been party to a significant amount of anecdotal and case specific information relating to how significant a role the mental health of a young person plays on their attendance at school. I am really keen on getting a conversation going between all stakeholders on ways that potentially these young people's needs could be better met, specifically within a local context.

Based on the initial responses received from schools, I have put together some estimated countywide figures and they make for concerning reading and I feel give an indication of the scale of the problem. They are as follows:

Estimate for number of children in Norfolk secondary schools who are school refusers/unable to attend school (attendance of less than 20%) due to mental health concerns
– 126

I would be interested to hear from schools about specific cases as well as any wider feedback, particularly around how we might improve educational outcomes for this cohort.

Norfolk County Council commission the Short Stay School for Norfolk (SSSfN) to provide a service for children that are unable to attend school due to health needs – this includes those with mental health conditions. In fact, based on a



December 2016 audit of students receiving support from the Medical Needs Service at the SSSfN, 84% were being supported for mental health rather than physical health.

In order to access this service, the school needs to complete the SSSfN referral form and send along with a letter from the child's consultant, GP or CAMHS professional (i.e. mental health nurse/mental health practitioner) indicating that the child is medically unfit to attend school, to Nicky Butterworth, Medical Needs Coordinator at SSSfN (engagement@brooklands.norfolk.sch.uk). This service is able to provide home tuition to children and will work closely with schools, with a view to reintegrating children when they are able to return to school.

Know your guidance

The guidance for schools around mental health is called 'Mental health and behaviour in schools' and was last updated in March 2016. This is a non-statutory advisory document aiming to clarify the responsibilities of schools in this area. It can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-behaviour-in-schools--2>

The Key points put forward in guidance are:

- In order to help their pupils succeed, schools have a role to play in supporting them to be resilient and mentally healthy.
- Where severe problems occur schools should expect the child to get support elsewhere as well
- Schools should ensure that pupils and their families participate as fully as possible in decisions and are provided with information and support.
- Schools can use the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) to help them judge whether individual pupils might be suffering from a diagnosable mental health problem.
- There are resources available to help school staff support good mental health and emotional wellbeing.
- Schools should consider if their pupils would benefit from the offer of school counselling services.
- There are things that schools can do to intervene early and strengthen resilience, before serious mental health problems occur.
- Schools can influence the health services that are commissioned locally through their local Health and Wellbeing Board

- There are national organisations offering materials, help and advice.

Please have a read of the guidance for further detail. Pages 36 and 37 in particular offer useful links to some national support and information services offering assistance for child mental health issues.

Children's Mental Health Week 2017

Why not get your school involved in Place2Be's Children's Mental Health Week 2017 (6th to 12th February 2017)?

Visit www.childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk to find out more about this and Place2Be's work in primary and secondary schools across the UK. The website has some free downloadable resources and materials to use within school, so well worth a visit.

Mental Health in the news

A small selection of relevant news articles, with links to further information and advice that may be of interest, including a link to the speech by Theresa May:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-unveils-plans-to-transform-mental-health-support>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-37609575>

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/may/16/all-secondary-schools-on-site-mental-health-support-professional>

<http://schoolsweek.co.uk/inspect-pupil-well-being-and-appoint-mental-health-lead-in-schools-commission-demands/>

<http://www.cypnow.co.uk/cyp/news/2002647/ncb-launches-mental-health-toolkit-for-schools>

Feedback

I hope you have found this newsletter a useful resource. If you have any questions or queries relating to the content of this newsletter, or wish to bring to my attention any content that you would like included in a future edition then please contact me at:

sam.bartram@norfolk.gov.uk.

