MEDICAL NEEDS NEWSLETTER

January 2017 – Issue No. 2

Medical Needs Coordinator blog

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!

Within this newsletter I was keen to have a particular focus on child and adolescent mental health, and more specifically on the role that we can play in supporting young people. The numbers of children and young people being treated for mental health conditions continues to rise



year on year and this trend shows no signs of abating. Whilst the reasons behind this continue to be discussed and debated, with various conclusions drawn in the media, there can be no doubt of the significant impact of suffering from a mental health condition on a young person's wellbeing, selfesteem, social life and ultimately on their education as well.

It just so happens that no sooner had I finished writing the bulk of this newsletter, there was a significant announcement by the Prime Minister Theresa May concerning the future of mental health provision in this country and specifically within schools and workplaces. This focuses initially on increased mental health training for education professionals and on improving the links between schools and mental health professionals. Whilst this is of course a welcome development, I'm sure most of you will also be wondering both how this will impact on the already significant workload placed on our schools and teachers, and also importantly how all of this will this be funded. I for one will be watching intently to see how this develops!

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.

Sam Bartram, Medical Needs Coordinator

What is the impact of Mental Health on school attendance?

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.

If you are a SENCo or senior leader at a Norfolk secondary school you may already have received an e-mail from me looking to gather some relevant data. Thank you to all those who have responded. If you have not yet responded, or feel

> you may have been left off the list, please get in contact as your involvement would be greatly appreciated.

> 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 have an attendance of below 90% due to mental health concerns – 1,039

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

This latter category are, I feel, of particular concern. Anecdotally we know that a number of young people in this latter category become almost chronically disengaged with education and by extension then become isolated from peers and other social opportunities that come with being part of the school community.

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.

What support is available for children and young people who are medically unable to attend school due to their mental health?

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 support for mental health rather than physical health.

In order to access this service, the school need 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 are 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/mentalhealth-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 <u>www.childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk</u> 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-ministerunveils-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-supportprofessional

http://schoolsweek.co.uk/inspect-pupil-well-being-andappoint-mental-health-lead-in-schools-commissiondemands/

http://www.cypnow.co.uk/cyp/news/2002647/ncblaunches-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.



