

## **Leadership & Governance Working Group (Early Help) held 10/05/21 1-2pm**

Attended by Nikki & Louise plus Mary Diffey, Sam Best, Amanda Gridley, Claire Webb, Virtual School for Looked After Children headteacher Kelly Twitchen.

The meeting was aimed at covering the following:

LIP action: Identify needs early through the BCP Early Help offer, and provide the right support in response

Context: Good progress being made in different parts of the system, next 'phase' is to develop a more joined up approach across the system

Aim: Identify opportunities for developing a more joined up approach across the system; agree services leads to take away identified priorities to identify options

Myself and Louise fed in the issues around Early Help at present - lack of staff, SEND training, resources and funding to meet need. Gave some case examples - fed in parental concerns and experiences anonymously. Issues around exactly what Early Help does were apparent. Lack of support for lower level of need. We reiterated that early intervention, support and signposting is a cost benefit exercise as it would save money in the long term.

Lack of knowledge around SEND and impact of a disability on a child and wider family. Explained it's not okay to expect parents to be in crisis before help is offered. More joined up approach with a variety of early interventions, supports and signposting needed at an earlier stage, particularly for families who don't meet the LA's 'stringent' criteria.

Fed in that using IQ levels and asking if a child had another diagnosis aside from autism to 'qualify' for support from CHAD Team was discriminatory and that assessing social workers lacked SEND specific training and did not understand the child's need and families needs sufficiently well enough before making decisions.

Many families also caught up in a cycle of referrals to Early Help and were not progressed as staff did not think children were 'disabled enough' - particular issues with hidden disabilities and ND children not being able to access or qualify for any support - families falling through gaps.

Mary Diffey acknowledged this and agreed just because something isn't being provided it doesn't mean it shouldn't be... (which is correct re legislation)! hurrah!

Also mentioned carers' assessments and lack of support/signposting anything at the end of the assessment therefore what is the point?!

Explained re Local Offer Social Care page work with forum and we are working with BCP LA OT to try to produce information, support and signposting re meeting sensory needs and equipment etc for children & young people there needs to be support being offered especially with regard to mental health not only for children but parents too - if we go down the whole family struggles...

We explained there needs to be more peer mentors/support workers etc and they need to be trained in SEND esp areas such as PDA which require a different approach. We also highlighted work on inclusion and transitions which all link in together and important issues around exclusions and barriers to attending school which might mean YP on the

streets when not in school and highlighted drugs arrests in Poole at the weekend 13, 14 and 15 year olds sadly involved in County Lines.

Variety of issues too which may need Early Help support - poverty, hunger, drugs and drink (particularly to self medicate if no diagnosis or support and struggling in the system), mental health, problems with CAMHS not accepting referrals re autistic YP local & national, self harming, bullying etc.

Also gave feedback on behalf of foster carers saying they felt unsupported and had been "left" during Lockdown some with YP who were not in the correct placement to meet their needs but there was a lack of communication and engagement with social workers responding to requests for support and help with "sorry we are short of funds and staff..."

Headteacher of virtual school was present - we fed back many young people had struggled over lockdowns re accessing online learning as some pupils particularly ND/autistic have very black & white views on home and school and refused to engage. Foster carers had also reported issues and concerns with YP in their care not engaging online learning too.

Agreed that clear communication was needed and ensuring the content on the LO was correct before it was signed off. Forum also raised concerns about a local school - setting up a behaviour hub - possible knee jerk reaction to Government officer recommending clamp down on behaviour. One of the trial schools is in BCP - Glenmoor Academy. Starts in September.

<https://schoolsweek.co.uk/revealed-first-22-lead-schools-for-dfes-10m-behaviour-hubs-project/>

Also discussed was the possible use of volunteers re new BCP initiative to recruit volunteers who may be able to support with Early Help referrals.