

Reading Families' Forum

A voice for families of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities

COFFEE MORNING 4th November 2021 VIA ZOOM

Deb Hunter, Principal Child & Educational Psychologist and Mental Health Lead, joined 8 parent carers, Reading Mencap.

Deb and a Reading Families' Forum representative, Claire Harrison, attend the Mental Health Transformation Board for Reading, West Berkshire and Wokingham. The Transformation Plan lists three groups of children and young people who are not accessing mental health support as much as other groups of children: LGBTQi (which includes many autistic children), BAME communities (Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities) and children with a learning disability (with or without autism) in special schools.

There is a support group for **LGBTQi children with additional needs**: ReachOut host weekly sessions for 13–19 year-olds, or up to 25 years for people with a learning difficulty or disability, who are LGBTQ+. This group currently meets virtually and provides a safe space for young people to chat with other young people and access advice and support. To find out more or to book on the next session email reachout@brighterfuturesforchildren.org or call 0118 937 6130, or Chris Page, Senior Youth Worker on 07568 130439.

The Transformation Board are inviting **local BAME communities** to apply for a small grant to improve mental health services for BAME children. It was noted that BAME communities are not all linked together as one group. There are many difference communities in Reading and some BAME families may not be part of a particular community. Parents advised that some BAME families are not aware of mental health as a separate entity and may lack knowledge about the subject.

- ✚ It would be helpful if BAME teachers and school staff could talk to BAME parents about the support that is available.

Parents advised that their **children with learning disabilities** often experience bullying and difficulties in communicating their feelings. Many also experience frequent medical procedures for associated health conditions and develop phobias around hospitals and medical procedures. There is very little support for these children.

Autistic children in mainstream schools are being supported by the Autism Growth Project, which combines Autism Education Trust training and trauma informed practice (recognising the impact of trauma on people's reactions and looking for ways to support rather than punish).

Brighter Futures for Children are putting on a series of workshops for parents to help support them with their children's mental health.

- ✚ Parents liked the idea of parent workshops but asked if the term trauma informed is not used as many parents won't know what that is and will worry about what trauma this means.

www.readingfamiliesforum.co.uk

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Kooth offers online counselling and advice and tips for young people 11 – 18 years experiencing mental health worries www.kooth.com The site is carefully moderated.

Parents advised that it can be difficult to work out how to navigate the various pathways for mental health support for your child. There is lots of information on the Reading Local Offer but it would be good to have a diagram to show how the various mental health supports work together or where to go for a particular problem. It would also be helpful if SENCOs and Family Workers at school could tell families how to get mental health support for their child. Several families have had difficulty knowing where to go to get support for their autistic children or children with ADHD or learning disability.

- ✚ Deb described the THRIVE model and agreed to work on a visual for the Local Offer and schools to explain to parents.

If families are wanting support with a short break, a primary mental health support worker or family worker, they can contact the children's social care via the Children's Single Point of Access team (CSPOA) on 0118 937 3641.

- ✚ Parent carers agreed that it would be good to have a parents' advisory group attached to the Mental Health Transformation Board. Reading Families' Forum and Deb will liaise

Next coffee morning to be confirmed

RB 28/11/21

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