

Reading Families' Forum

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

COFFEE AFTERNOON 21st AUGUST 2020 VIA ZOOM

Claire Lewis, Service Manager for Children's Disability Service and Gabi Dawkins, Team Manager, Child and Young People's Disability Team (CYPDT) joined 5 parent carers and Mencap for the Forum's coffee afternoon.

Claire updated families on changes in the last 6 months. The Children's Disability Service has been up and running since January, bringing together CYPDT, Cressingham, Pinecroft and the short breaks budget. Communication has improved between these teams as well as with the Special Educational Needs Team and Adult Social Care.

The Resource and Short Breaks Panel has been relaunched. Once an assessment has been completed of the child and families' needs, this is taken to panel where they consider the best support. The panel includes the Family Information Service, the Direct Payments team and the SEND commissioner.

Covid has had a massive impact on the service's work. There have been few short breaks available and most visiting by Social Workers has been online rather than face to face. Government guidance for short breaks providers was very late, which impacted on what could be provided over the summer holidays. Reading Rep did a week's drama course for 2 age groups, which was full and had positive feedback. The Engine Shed also did some play support.

An advert has gone out for a short breaks co-ordinator, full-time until 31/03/2021. The hope that this will become a permanent post. This post holder will look at what gaps there are and commission short breaks.

The Children's Disability Service are looking at short breaks for October half-term, Christmas and Easter. CYPDT are also appointing 2 short breaks workers to be part of the team and work with families who just have short breaks or Direct Payments.

Criteria for CYPDT

One family applied for CYPDT but did not meet the threshold, despite the backing of CAMHS and their Social Worker. They urgently need a short break. Claire and Gabi advised that families can reapply if their circumstances change. Even if a disabled child (inc Autism) does not meet the criteria for CYPDT, the

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child is still eligible for support from the Assessment and Action team, Early Help team or the Family Intervention Team. A social worker from these teams can apply to the resource and short breaks panel for a short break if a child/family need this. Co-work is also possible. The Autism Advisor Jenna Redmond will be doing autism awareness training for the above Social Work teams, delayed due to Covid.

The decision about whether a child is accepted by CYPDT is made by the team or assistant manager. Threshold for CYPDT is on the Local Offer as follows <https://servicesguide.reading.gov.uk/kb5/reading/directory/service.page?id=tmGEtDCstSg>

CYPDT and all other teams can be accessed via the Children's Single Point of Access. Call CSPOA on 0118 937 3641 or email cspoa@brighterfuturesforchildren.org

Direct Payments – who can you buy a short break from?

Brighter Futures for Children are working on their direct payment guide, in co-production with RFF and will also look at recruiting Personal Assistants. Me2 now operate across Reading and have volunteers to support children and young people to take part in mainstream organised activities. Brighter Futures are also looking at the Direct Payment rate to make sure it is not lower than surrounding areas. Direct Payments can be used to buy additional short breaks activities.

Under 8s with Disabilities, especially medical needs

Brighter Futures are working with child minders and early years settings to support them in taking children with disabilities. They are also building on their short breaks foster carers (formally Family Link) who offer day care to disabled children, either in the foster carers' home or in the community. There is no age limit to this. Poor communication in the past led to them being under used and many carers stopping this work. They don't offer overnight stays – this would be offered by the fostering team.

Parent Carer Needs Assessments

The Carers' Hub have been commissioned to do these assessments on behalf of Brighter Futures. This pilot will be reviewed in December.

Call the Carers' Hub on 0118 324 7333 or email ask@berkshirecarershub.org

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Contact advise that a "carer's assessment focuses on you as a parent and your needs. Social services (*Carers' Hub in Reading*) should discuss issues like the help you need, and whether there is anyone else who helps or if you are your child's only carer. The carer's assessment should also consider your wellbeing, including health and safety issues, and important commitments like relationships and employment."

<https://contact.org.uk/advice-and-support/social-care/how-to-access-services/carers-assessments/>

Next meeting is the Forum AGM on 29th September 7 – 8:15 on Zoom

To book email fran.morgan.rff@gmail.com

RB 25/08/2020.

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