

NEWS



This month, the focus of the groups were on the challenges for parents in supporting their children to go to school and/or engaging with online home learning.

In addition to our Parent Volunteers the sessions were supported by:

SENDIAAS – SEN & Disability Information Advice Service

One Eighty – An Oxfordshire Charity that provides intensive 1-1 interventions for young people whose behaviour causes them to be at risk of exclusion from both school and mainstream society.

Hospital School – Supporting young people to regain academic progress during a stay in hospital and during their recovery

Main themes discussed:

- EHCPs should specify what support your child needs to help them learn, including e.g. the use of visual aides. If the school are not providing them for any reason, it is OK to ask why and what alternatives they are able to provide.
- Home schooling is having a massive impact. Some young people are now finding it difficult to engage with activities outside their home or even outside of their bedroom, refusing to try anything and avoiding any demands – pathological demand avoidance.
- Some young people have not engaged with school since the first lockdown. Some young people log on to online lessons but are too anxious to have their camera's on and are really anxious about being involved. Some young people want to learn but find it difficult to engage with online learning at all. Knowing that they are getting behind causes further anxiety but it can be difficult to know how to engage and start to catch up.
- Anxiety can manifest itself as intolerance to uncertainty. Everything is so accessible to young people through social media they may not have built the tolerance for waiting and uncertainty.
- Being able to go to school can help young people deal with adversity. Taking school away means young people have to rethink how they manage that adversity and find other ways to cope.
- Parents need to know what they are entitled to. Schools get funding based on how many people are on the SEND Register. If young people aren't registered they don't get funding.
- It is important to use the term 'emotional based school avoidance' rather than school refusal.

Looking after parents

Parents' tips for looking after yourself in lockdown (youngminds.org.uk)

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-helpline>

Call 0808 802 5544

Resources

SENDIASS

<https://sendiass-oxfordshire.org.uk/>

There are resources on the SENDAAS Website to support parents raising concerns. SENDIASS are happy to work with parents to put together an email to the school asking for help.

One Eighty

<https://one-eighty.org.uk/interventions>

Hospital School

<https://www.ohs.oxon.sch.uk>

Oxfordshire Team Around the Family

[Oxfordshire-Team-Around-The-Family-7-min-guide.pdf](#)

Mental Well Being during the Corona Virus Crisis - Getselfhelp.co.uk

CBT self help and therapy resources

Specialist and Taylor made training for professionals, carers and parents.

www.safehandstheminds.co.uk

What is SEN?

A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions.

A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her (special educational provision is different from or additional to that normally available to pupils or students of the same age.

What is an Early Help Assessment?

This is an assessment carried out by the school or a professional on every aspect of the entire family including e.g. employment, finances, living situation, family dynamics. The aim of the assessment is to identify what the family needs and to put in place a team of appropriate people around the family to support them. This can be a powerful process if the right people are involved but it can also be quite intrusive. Before committing to an Early Help Assessment it is important to be clear about

- Why it is being suggested – it can be assumed that difficulties a child is experiencing is a parenting issue.
- What the end of goal of the assessment is for the child
- Who is being brought into the process – if it is just the school involved this can happen without going through the whole process.

Top Tips

- Children need to feel safe and have a sense of belonging. They may ask themselves ‘am I wanted?’ If a child does not feel safe they will not be able to learn. Without a sense of belonging it can be difficult to do anything else. (Maslows Hierarchy of Needs)
- It is important to be able build a good relationship with at least one person at school. Is there someone you can start to build links with?
- Rather than trying to catch up on all subjects talk to the school to agree some priorities – focus on one or two subjects first.
- Find out from young people what they feel they can manage and work from there.
- Find something that is the young persons strength and use that as a starting point.
- Acknowledge your child’s worries and anxieties.

- Education isn't just about the academic curriculum. It is also about emotional and skills development.
- Reintegration to school needs to happen in small steps.
- Joining online lessons may not be the most important things to focus on.
- Mainstream education may not be the best place for your child – explore the alternatives.
- It is important that parents know what they are entitled to legally. Check out your local SEN Policy to find out what schools should be providing and use that to check against what they are actually providing. If you feel that you are not getting the right support approach the school by being curious about you are / are not getting rather than quoting the law.
- If your child is struggling to get involved with anything, try to find a purpose for an activity. Young people may struggle to do something for themselves but may find it easier to do something for someone else e.g. raising money for charity, making a cake for a neighbour who is on their own, have a Scratch Poster that reveal daily challenges or recipes. <https://www.crumbsbycollette.co.uk/shop/100-bakes-scratch-off-poster/>
- Established a ritual of e.g. going out to feed the geese every day or going out for lunch too. It is a good way to have a reason to get showered and dressed each morning and it gets you out of the house. It can be really good bonding time too.
- Be mindful of how things that have been certain have been taken away and how we prepared for that.
- Try to find ways to reduce levels of anxiety. Once anxieties are manageable it is then possible to look at how they can build on their skills and an educational program can be gradually introduced.
- Finding activities to do at home can be difficult. Try to find things that are enjoyable but without pressure e.g. sitting somewhere to have something nice to eat.
- Pick your battles. Try to find ways around addressing an issue without speaking about it directly.
- Use 'Alexa' App to send prompts or reminders.
- If your child usually spends all of the time in their bedroom but ventures out to join the family, don't draw attention to it and acknowledge. Let them be there without any pressure.
- Try to reintroduce your child to simple, natural things away from the screen.
- Young people can get cross if they feel you are making assumptions. Be curious rather than direct – e.g. I'm worried.... I

