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Once again, a huge thank you to the Neurodiversity Network members who attended the second meeting on Wednesday 29th September. The theme of the meeting was to focus on what we have learnt from the COVID 19 pandemic and how we can take what we have learnt to adapt our practice going forward.

Contact us
to register

Session two newsletter – COVID19 “The recovery curriculum: From reconnection to resilience.”

We were joined by Professor Barry Carpenter who facilitated a thought-provoking session on “The recovery curriculum: from reconnection to resilience.”

During his talk, Barry explored how we can learn and adapt the ways we support our Neurodivergent children and young people moving forward from the pandemic. A big thank you to Barry for his support of the network!



Some exciting local updates

Bracknell Forest Neurodiversity Project is underway, with focus groups being planned for this term. This is to inform a person-centred process through which a clear, individualised plan can be developed for a young person – celebrating their strengths, identifying areas of need and outlining what support is required or might help. Parents, carers and young people and professionals from schools, colleges, health, social care and early years settings will be invited to participate. The process will be piloted in the Spring and depending on evaluation, rolled out more widely next year.

Windsor and Maidenhead’s Educational Psychology service shared the successes they have had delivering training in schools, particularly in relation to neurodivergence in the form of Autism especially in girls.

Berkshire Healthcare Neurodiversity service (Autism Assessment Team and ADHD Team): Frimley CCG have provided significant additional investment to reduce the wait time.

This is being used both to expand the teams and to work with external providers (for autism and ADHD) to offer more appointments. Despite national recruitment challenges, the service has been successful in appointing to a number of new posts for the two teams - and the recruitment campaign continues. As always there is a strong emphasis on making sure needs-led support is in place as early as possible.

Much of the support available after a diagnosis is available before the assessment and this includes:

- A range of help, support, information, workshops and groups – no diagnosis needed [Home - Gems4health](#)
- Comprehensive online resource with help and advice on a wide range of developmental, emotional/ mental health concerns [Support and advice | Children Young People and Families Online Resource](#) (berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk)



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During the September meeting, members of the network took part in break out room discussions.

During these breakout room sessions, members explored what we have learnt from the pandemic and what we can take forward from this experience.

Here is what our members had to say.

If you are interested in taking part in the network meetings or would like to find out more, please visit the website:

www.adhdfoundation.org.uk/east-berkshire-neurodiversity-network/

What our network members are saying?

What have we learnt from the lockdown experience and from our children and young people's return to school?

- Learning in small bubbles was particularly helpful for some of our neurodivergent children and young people.
- The transition back to school has been hard as some children and young people found online learning better for them.
- A key regression observed has been the social skills of some of our children and young people. Particularly, communication with adults and larger groups.
- Children and young people who stayed at home for each lockdown found the lack of routine difficult and appeared to miss the structure that school gave them.
- Some children and young people have benefited from not having to go in to large crowded, shared spaces like the dinner hall at lunch times.
- The focus on positive approaches to supporting neurodivergent children and young people through activities that represent their strengths.
- There has been huge benefits for some children and young people when there has been transparent communication that is open and honest. The importance of being clear about what is happening rather than avoidance of topics due to fear of worrying children.

What could we implement going forward?

- Making sure that transitions work for all children and young people and that they are tailored to the individual e.g, key contacts during the day, safe spaces/sanctuaries etc
- Allow a child led conversation about the experiences of the pandemic.
- Facilitating positive/solution focused activities on a preventative level.
- Support for reconnecting and "relearning" social skills.
- Support for managing the social demands that were absent during home learning e.g, learning in a larger group context.
- Allow flexibility within the school routine that is needs led and tailored for the child/young person.
- Additional opportunities for outside learning.
- Linking ADHD/ASC and Mental Health services in a more joined up way.
- Additional opportunities to educate the professionals on neurodivergent learning styles.
- Opportunities for children and young people to understand their strengths and recognise, with confidence, what support they need to progress.