



SEND Family Support in Tameside

1) Background

In October 2021, the SEND Ofsted inspection raised concerns around the support for young people and families relating to health pathways, such as therapies and the CAMHS neurodevelopmental pathway. For example, there was a lot of parental dissatisfaction with waiting times which in their view was leading to an escalation of need for children and young people. In addition, it was felt that the local offer was not well publicised, and parents were not provided with the information they needed. In response to this there has been significant investment in health to improve capacity on the pathways, and the Health Navigator and Family Support roles were set up to help families and young people while waiting.

2) Was there a gap you were trying to address by introducing the SEND Health Navigator & SEND Family Support roles?

Prior to, but especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a significant increase in the number of referrals to CAMHS pathways, resulting in pressure on systems and increased numbers of families waiting for support. Therefore, introducing the SEND Health Navigator and Family Support roles aimed to address the gap in the support families received at first contact with CAMHS and subsequently once placed on the waiting list. The navigator role hoped to act as the single point of contact for families, to support them while they were waiting and to hopefully increase satisfaction with services. In addition, it was hoped that the role would provide information to families to aid mutual expectations of services and waiting times.

From SEND surveys which took place in October 2020 prior to SEND inspection, and then from the inspection itself, gaps and challenges were identified by families. These quotes give examples:

'I have to constantly chase for any updates. No one is doing enough for my son'

'Maybe having activities that are accessible for children of different levels to access'

'Make information more readily available. Most things I've learnt about support etc. has come from other parents.'

'The parents that have been on the journey longer are the ones who support other parents & pass the info. along to the next parents that are at the beginning of their journey'

It was hoped that the new service would address these concerns by promoting a culture of listening to and collaborating with families, improving the available communication methods for signposting, and maintaining regular and routine communication with parents about child's progress. Now that they are in place services have been able to directly address the challenge raised from the surveys and inspection which have required the system to facilitate a range of respite support options for families as well as extending the range of social activities for children with different disabilities.

3) What is the role of the SEND Health Navigator service?

The SEND Health Navigator service was designed as a single point of contact for young people and families to get timely and accurate advice and signposting at first contact to CAMHS and when placed on a waiting list. The navigator can provide real time information and reassurance as to where that young person is on the waiting list and help to signpost and connect the young person with services in their community, not just relying on one CAMHS offer. This aids mutual expectations and in turn improves satisfaction with services. The feedback from the service informs future continual development on behalf of families. OKE, our parent carer charity which runs the service is able to sign post and sign people up to other groups and courses they run. Furthermore, OKE and wider partners can use the information received from parents to inform the type of courses and workshops that will be beneficial to families, for example behaviour and sleep workshops.

4) What is the role of the SEND Family Support team?

SEND Family Support team actively supports many families while on waiting lists. The participation officers and family intervention workers can provide 1:1 tailored support along with connecting families in with community groups that are already up and running and using their specialist SEND knowledge to provide support. They have also created and facilitated training for professionals as well as providing direct support for families. In the first 6 months, 26 professionals have been trained.

They provide strategies on parenting support including managing behaviour, as well as direct work with young people themselves and can help them focus on their relationships with others. The support workers have been involved in EBSA (Emotionally Based School Avoidance) and other types of school avoidance to reduce the likelihood of long-term difficulties with school attendance. 'Stay and Play' is offered for under 5s, where families are encouraged to use these sessions as a first step before accessing mainstream short breaks. This enables families to allow their child to play freely knowing that they are supported in a safe environment. This environment can be used as a way of facilitating early help assessments to reduce the need for packages of care from ISCAN (inc what this stands for). In the first 6 months, 42 early help assessments have been facilitated.

5) What are the benefits of the SEND Family Support in Tameside?

Since introducing the Health Navigator service, families, school nurses, GPs and other professionals from the wider health system have reached out for advice from the Health Navigator service. This timely access to information has had a significant benefit as the number of duty calls to CAMHS has massively reduced. In the first week alone, there were approximately 40 fewer calls received, this trend has continued resulting in the number of CAMHS duty calls being more manageable, relieving the pressure and increasing capacity for CAMHS professionals.

The Family Support team has really helped families with strategies and resources to boost confidence in parenting. Due to the close support offered by the family intervention workers, the attendance rate for our Riding the Rapids groups has increased, so more families are receiving timely support which is very positive. The team can signpost and inform about short breaks, support groups and other interventions that may be available. The role is helping to prevent crisis by offering support earlier in the family's journey. Support being offered while families are

waiting, and not having to wait for a diagnosis before support can be provided have all addressed the concerns of families which were heard in the health survey.

The services have already had a large uptake:

[SEND Health Navigator](#)

Since July 2022, 335 families have been supported, and there have been 4121 separate contacts from families, with 809 contacts in January alone.

[SEND Family Support](#)

Since August 2022-January 2023 a total of 128 young people have received individual support from Send Participation workers, and a combined total of 90 families have been supported by the participation workers and family intervention workers.

6) How have these two new roles impacted professionals?

It has increased cross sector relationships and communication between professionals as there is now a single point of contact to access information and advice. For example, the health navigator has allowed GPs and school staff to be able to be kept updated in the process of a young person's referral and receive advice and support if necessary. Professionals now receive regular feedback from families from the role of the navigator service, which, as said, has impacted on service development. In this way staff morale is boosted as staff can see the impact of their work in a positive light.

In addition, it has positively impacted CAMHS professionals as it has relieved pressure on the system; families no longer need to access duty or repeatedly call reception to be able to be updated on the wait time or available support. As a result, CAMHS staff have increased capacity to focus on their current workload.

7) How have these two new roles impacted children & young people?

The reality of being placed on a waiting list can at times be challenging for young people and families, so the Health Navigator role has helped manage queries and expectations while they wait. This is particularly important given the length of waiting lists in the current climate. Young people and families feel listened to and understood as they are provided with a trusted source of support very early on. It has really helped young people and families feel reassured as they know that someone understands the reality of their situation. Following from feedback from the queries from families and points being raised to the Health Navigator, OKE have directly responded with activity sessions tailored for young people.

For many young people placed on CAMHS waiting lists, they can often be disconnected from resources and services within their community. The Family Support team helps young people tap into services in their local area and works to build their confidence, identity and self-esteem. It has provided young people and their families with lifelong connections and ways of accessing support outside of CAMHS; there has been some very positive feedback.

Quotes praising SEND Family Support

- *“Has been great to see that my personal situation has improved, that I'm using strategies that have been taught over the weeks and they're working at home.”*
- *“Thank you, helped me realise I am not alone and making me feel more confident with how to manage my daughter's behaviour.”*

Photos of young people attending activities arranged by the participation workers



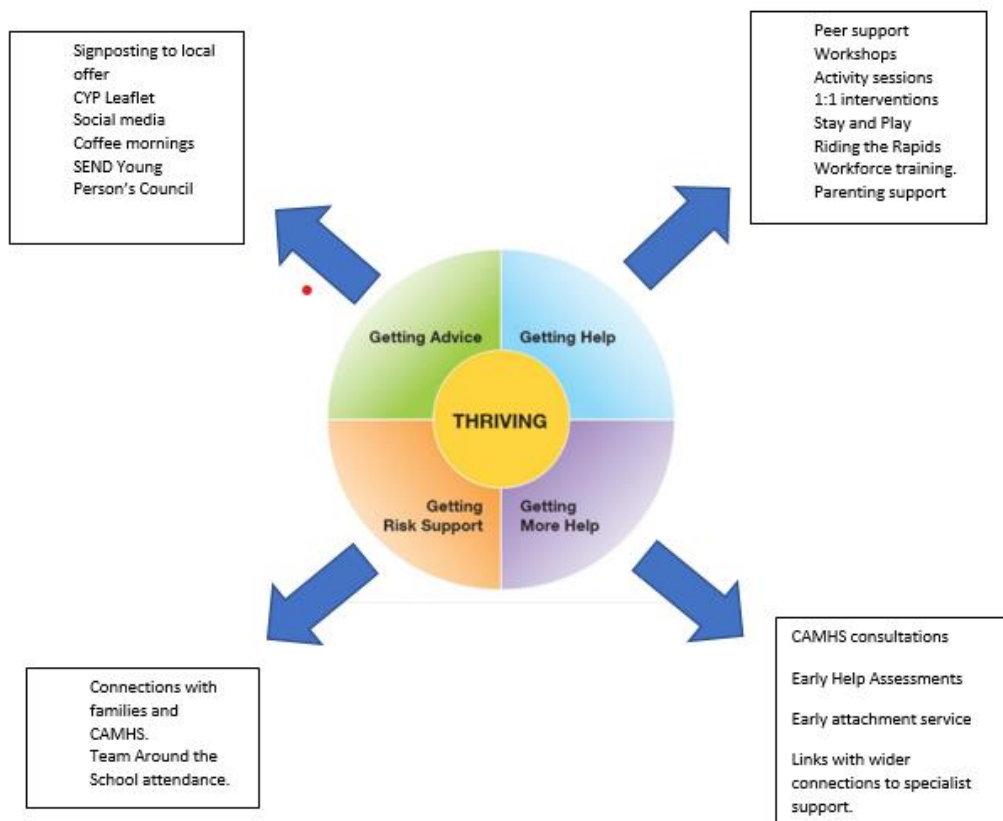
Quote praising Health Navigator

“thank you so much for your help, I wouldn't have known what to do if it hadn't been for you informing me...If I knew about it I'd love to do your job, very rewarding and making a difference. Thanks again.”

8) Did you face any challenges with implementing the SEND Health Navigator & SEND Family Support roles?

Fortunately, funding was available for these roles following the SEND inspection and the service was being developed in an environment where there was a shared appetite from stakeholders to make this successful as it addressed a gap and a challenge felt by the whole system. Ensuring the positions being recruited to had significant SEND experience was essential for the success of the services.

9) How do these two new roles align with the THRIVE framework?



10) How do these two new roles align with the THRIVE principles (common language, need-led, shared decision making, proactive prevention and promotion, partnership working, outcome-informed, reducing stigma & accessibility).

The SEND Family Support in Tameside is needs led, as families do not need a diagnosis. The support is there for them when they need it the most and is easily accessible to families. The teams work with families to identify what might work best for them when signposting and offering support highlighting the shared decision-making aspect of the role. As a service, the right information is offered very early on in a young person's journey through health pathways which creates timely and accessible support and helps to proactively prevent the young person's difficulties increasing.

Working with wider stakeholders and organisation across the borough, the SEND Family Support team can be creative in their approaches with what might support a family and young person. Types of approaches include increasing inclusive groups in communities which will encourage SEND participation, supporting these groups with knowledge and skills where required and therefore making a wider more accessible offer for our population. Groups that were never before confident to reach out to these families, for example fencing, angling, archery and gaming groups have been able to encourage young people with additional needs to take part.

11) What are the plans for future developments?

We are hoping to further align with the family hubs and expand into more neighbourhoods and communities as well as work to increase the number of courses and support available for families. Through looking at the trends in referrals, we can understand the needs of families, which means services can co-produce tailored family support sessions to meet those needs.

We will continue to expand the links and relationships that the navigator/family support officers have with healthcare professionals and across sectors, including the education and voluntary sector, building on the wealth of knowledge and connections that have been developed with this project.