



Email Newsletter

Four Oaks Cluster - Volume 1,
Number 1; Spring 2022



Looking after our Mental Health and Well-Being

The Four Oaks Cluster of schools have been working together for over 20 years. Together we recognise the importance of serving our collective community and are committed each year to working together to face shared challenges, local and national issues. Mental health is a recognised national priority but the need for meaningful support in the community has become even more relevant as we've all navigated the challenges of the pandemic. Figures suggest that one in four adults experience a mental health problem each year. That could be a family member, a friend, a colleague or it could be you. As a group of schools at the heart of our communities we want to create a supportive environment for our children and our families, helping them to connect, reconnect and talk openly about mental health if they want to. According to NHS digital, in 2021, one in six children aged six to sixteen were identified as having a probable mental health problem. Children and young people with a probable mental disorder were more likely to say that lockdown had made their life worse than those unlikely to have a mental disorder.

Book Recommendation

Boost Your Therapeutic Parenting through Ten Transformative Steps with Amber Elliott's Super Parenting (2021)

This book came highly recommended during a recent conference. Dr Amber Elliott explains why children who have experienced early trauma need something different - therapeutic parenting - a kind of everyday 'superparenting' which champions empathy over punishment. Parenting is hard work and it's even more challenging when trying to parent children who have trauma-triggered behaviours. Taking this as a starting point, Dr Elliott provides us with a ten-step process to transform our parenting. From developing self-acceptance and ideas for building motivation through to creative ways to think about structure and routine, the book

What is mental health stigma?

The Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families tells us that stigma and discrimination towards those with mental health issues is one of the key reasons for world inequalities. Almost 9 out of 10 people with mental health problems say that the stigma surrounding mental health has a negative impact on their education, work or personal lives. The stigma around mental health can make it much more difficult for those having difficulties to seek help.

When asking young people with personal experience of mental health problems about the impact of stigma on their lives

- 71% said it affected their confidence and self-esteem
- 43% said their grades in school suffered
- 41% said they lost friendships
- 18% dropped out of education altogether

The important thing seems to be creating time to talk to our young people about their mental health and well-being. We can all work together to reduce the stigma and discrimination.

<https://mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/resources/talking-mental-health/>

Cluster Schools include: Arthur Terry Secondary; Coppice Primary, Four Oaks Primary, Hill West Primary, Mere Green Primary, Langley Special School, Moor Hall Primary, Little Sutton Primary and Whitehouse Common Primary

Children's Mental Health (Mental Health Foundation)

Traumatic events can trigger mental health problems for children and young people who are already vulnerable. Changes often act as triggers: moving home, changing school or the birth of a new sibling, for example. Some children who start school feel excited about making new friends and doing new activities, but there may also be some who feel anxious. Teenagers often experience emotional turmoil as their minds and bodies develop. An important part of growing up is working out and accepting who you are. Some young people find it hard to make this transition to adulthood and may experiment with alcohol, drugs or other substances that can affect mental health. Certain risk factors can make some children and young people more likely to experience mental health problems than others. However, experiencing them doesn't mean a child will definitely – or even probably – go on to have mental health problems. These factors include:

- having a long-term physical illness
- a parent who has had mental health problems, problems with alcohol or has been in trouble with the police
- the death of someone close to them
- parents who separate or divorce
- experiencing severe bullying or physical or sexual abuse
- poverty or homelessness
- experiencing discrimination
- caring for a relative, taking on adult responsibilities
- having long-lasting difficulties at school.

What mental health problems commonly occur in children?

- Depression affects more children and young people today than in the last few decades. Teenagers are more likely to experience depression than young children.
- Self-harm is a very common problem among young people. Some people who experience intense emotional pain may try to deal with it by hurting themselves.
- Generalised anxiety disorder (GAD) can cause young people to become extremely worried. Very young children or children starting or moving school may have separation anxiety.
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can follow physical or sexual abuse, witnessing something extremely frightening or traumatising, being the victim of violence or severe bullying or surviving a disaster.
- Children who are consistently overactive, impulsive and have difficulty paying attention may have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).
- Eating disorders usually start in the teenage years and are more common in girls than boys. The number of young people who develop an eating disorder is small, but eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa can have serious consequences for their physical health and development.

I'm worried about my child – what can I do?

One of the most important ways parents can help is by listening to their children and taking their feelings seriously. They may want a hug, they may want you to help them change something or they may want practical help. Children and young people's negative feelings usually pass. However, it's a good idea to get help if your child is distressed for a long time, if their feelings are stopping them from getting on with their lives, if their distress is disrupting family life or if they are repeatedly behaving in ways you wouldn't expect at their age. If your child is having problems at school, a teacher, school nurse, the SENDCo or educational psychologist may be able to help. Otherwise, go to your GP or speak to a health visitor. They can refer a child to further help if necessary. Different professionals often work together in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

Most mental health support for children and young people is provided free by the NHS, your child's school or your local council's social services department.

Young Minds has a parents' helpline you can call if you're worried about a child up to the age of 25. They provide advice, emotional support and signposting to other services. You can **call them for free on 0808 802 5544 from 9:30am - 4pm, Monday - Friday.**

On behalf of all of our schools, thank you for taking the time to read.