**Pinpoint Parent Carer Participation Session Autumn 24**

Alex Davies joined the meeting to talk about school attendance for children who have anxiety. He explained that his team are encouraging schools to consider the support that children who struggle to attend due to anxiety would need to be able to attend. He and his team are collaborating with schools on the universal offer of help (ordinarily available provision) and support for all children. The issue of schools accepting health needs as a reason for school absence was raised. Alex was clear that whilst health needs should be identified, the current attendance guidance from the Department for Education does not require health needs to be regularly evidenced - [Working\_together\_to\_improve\_school\_attendance\_-\_August\_2024.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf). He also set out that in most cases, adjustments can be made within ordinarily available provisions to help children attend school regularly. . . Alex referred to the EBSA Toolkit (Emotionally Based School Avoidance Toolkit), which is now available for schools and for parent carers, and we shared the link in the chat - [Emotionally Based School Avoidance Toolkit (cambslearntogether.co.uk)](https://www.cambslearntogether.co.uk/cambridgeshire-send/cambridgeshire-send-oap-toolkits/primary-and-secondary-send-oap-toolkit/social-emotional-and-mental-health-semh/resources/emotionally-based-school-avoidance-toolkit). Alex also discussed the offer available to support some children between school and home and spoke about the AV1 robots. Parent carers were quite keen to know more, and Alex offered to return to the group for a later session to tell us more about this project.

Philippa Waller from Pinpoint spoke briefly about the PINS project- [Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) - Pinpoint (pinpoint-cambs.org.uk)](https://pinpoint-cambs.org.uk/partnerships-for-inclusion-of-neurodiversity-in-schools-pins/)- This is an NHS-funded pilot project running in a small number of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough primary schools. She updated us that the pilot schools have been offered parent carer, Pinpoint facilitated, school-based sessions each term. The second visit was now taking place (with a final visit planned for each school in the spring term). The autumn sessions focused on the sensory needs of children and provided some practical tips and hints that parents and schools could to support children. Due to time pressures, Philippa ended her update early and has agreed to return next term to talk about this in more detail.

We moved to welcome Beth Colquhoun from the Early Help Team. She spoke about the Early Help Pathway, which supports children who have special needs or complex needs in their early years. [Early Years (pre-birth-4 years) - Pinpoint (pinpoint-cambs.org.uk)](https://www.pinpoint-cambs.org.uk/information-hub/education_school/early-years-0-4/) The Early Help team are producing new newsletters to help those on the Pathway access further help and support and has provided a new universal email address for parent carers to make accessing staff members easier. There were lots of comments in the session chat from Beth, who agreed that she would respond to those queries, and Pinpoint would circulate them to all participants.

The Passenger Transport Team joined the session and spoke about the impact of tendering transport services and how it can impact children and their families, recognising that when services have to change at short notice or providers have changed, you have to get to know a new taxi driver or a new company (sometimes at short notice and always over the school holidays). Whilst it's very early, the County Council is looking at a more extended service offer for some of its contracts so that families and their children experience less change. The comments in the chat indicated this might be most welcome. The team have also offered to come back and run a dedicated session. Pinpoint was credited with helping bring these changes about. The team would appreciate greater feedback from parent carers and Pinpoint has indicated it will support this. The team are also looking at practical support with children and families, including an ‘onboarding’ pack and process for its drivers. The pack might, for example, include photographs of who your driver and chaperone are to help children feel more comfortable when they meet the new team. The Team are also looking at their screening checks (DBS) and has introduced a requirement for applicants to attend in person so that suitability for the role and responsibility can be better assessed.

Layla Prince joined us from the Mental Health Support Team (MHST) and talked about the work going on in mainstream schools to support children's mental health. She gave some examples of the pilot projects they have been running, including the Brick (Lego) Club - a way to facilitate peer support - and Brain Buddies, a whole class support offer helping children recognise their emotions as early as possible. Linda raised the issue of whether a setting change can be explored as parents often report mental health improvement outside of a school setting. While this can make a difference, the service is aimed at children staying in their mainstream school setting. It was clarified that the MHST is specifically to support children and young people with low to moderate needs, and the offer extends from the Reception age to the year 13. The team will return to a Pinpoint session in January, where they will be keen to help us and then map what is available and when so that we can make that more transparent and accessible for parent carers to understand.

Linda closed the session by thanking the parent carers and professionals who took part. She encouraged those with long-standing experience to offer words of encouragement to those who were just starting their journey. She reminded the group that the meeting notes would appear on our website and that we could expect the follow-up from the meeting to be circulated to those who attended.