HOW TO MAXIMISE YOUR REFERRAL

This factsheet will provide you with some top tips to help maximise a referral to a mental health service or provide supporting information to a GP if they are making the referral.

You may be working with a young person who either doesn't want help or is unable to articulate the difficulties they are having. It may be that you have a parent who is feeling overwhelmed or has difficulty communicating the concerns they have about their child. As a teacher you are likely to know your student well and be able to provide a comprehensive summary of any problems they are experiencing.

You can increase the chance of a referral being accepted by preparing a letter to support the parent and pupil; you should write the letter with or on behalf of the parent. As well as containing important information, simply providing a letter on school letter headed paper will increase the quality of the referral and the seriousness of the situation; it could outline the following:

TOP TIPS :

Tip 1: **The concern and types of behaviour observed:** Clearly outline what the issue is and your observations. For example: - increased anxiety, anxiety attacks and any change in mood, self-harming behaviour or restriction of food intake.

Tip 2: **Note any physical health consequences:** If you've noticed any impact on the student's physical health then state your concerns. For example: - weight loss, weight gain, fatigue or dizziness.

Tip 3: Any changes in personality: Changes in personality and behavior can be a key indicator of mental health concerns, your letter should include any personality changes you or the child's parents have observed. For example: - that a bright and bubbly student has become withdrawn or angry.

Tip 4: **How long as the student been experiencing problems:** Include how long the student has been experiencing difficulties – talk to colleagues, the student and their parents. Often the student has been experiencing difficulties for some time before you became aware of it. Being able to explain that the issue has been ongoing for a period of weeks or months will evidence that things are unlikely to improve without some intervention or professional support.

Tip 5: **Is there a suspected trigger?** Include any circumstances that could have triggered the student's difficulties. For example: - bereavement, relationship difficulties or academic pressures.

Tip 6: Impact on the student: Outline the impact on the student. For example: - reduced school attendance, reduced social interaction, impact on learning, low self-esteem and confidence. Also include the level of distress you or the parent has observed.

Tip 7; Impact on the family: Outline the current impact on the family; is it significant. For example: - are there any siblings; are the students' difficulties impacting on their wellbeing.

Tip 8: **Any interventions already tried**: Outline any interventions that have already been put in place for the student at school and the effectiveness of any interventions. For example: - adjustment to timetable, opportunity to access support such as pastoral team or school counsellor. Include any attempts the student or their parents have made to address the concerns if you have that information. State how effective these interventions have been and how much progress you feel the student has made; this information may help in deciding what help from which service is required.

Tip 9: **What do you expect from the referral:** It is worth stating clearly what you expect from your referral or correspondence; if you think that the student would benefit from a referral to or assessment by CAMHS or another agency be sure to say so.

Tip 10: Access support to complete a referral: If a student needs support from an external service get advice from your designated safeguarding lead or SENCO and remember you can discuss making a referral with CAMHS, MYTIME or Educational Psychologist.

This is quite a simple strategy but one that you will find effective. You could develop a template letter so you can just drop the information relevant to the specific child into the letter as and when one is needed.