

October 2024

Dear Schools,

Health engagement is an Early Help service that works under the wider Team around the Family within Halton. We work closely with GP practices to ensure Early help is provided to patients who require it. Part of our role is to also work closely with all other services to ensure effective communication. As a result of this, it has been recently brought to our attention that there has been a miscommunication across services which has resulted in parents using letters from their GP's to state anxiety or a mental health concern for their child which is resulting in non attendance.

Health engagement have liaised closely with Practices to try and understand why this has been happening. GP's have made us aware of that sometimes parents come into practice stating that schools have suggested they go to their GP for proof of anxiousness etc. Some Clinicians have made us aware that parents say they have asked for a reduced timetable to help their child and they have been advised that proof from the GP is required in order to do this.

GP's have in the past provided this letter as they are under the belief school require it and they have limited information, however they are now aware that it is best to take a Halton wide approach to these issues and it is best practice to stop providing these letters unless there is a physical condition or injury preventing the child from attending school. Unbeknownst to clinicians, this letter can cause difficulty for Education Welfare when it comes to following appropriate processes to try and reengage the child in education.

Discussing this concern with Education and Health professionals has highlighted a two way issue with communication and understanding of roles therefore we are raising this with both Practices and Education in the hope that we can work in partnership to ensure the best for children and young people without putting undue pressure on already busy teams.

We have agreed in Halton that a multi agency approach is needed to support formal diagnosis of a Mental Health concern and not just one professional can make this decision. Once a child is diagnosed with anxiety it is recorded formally in a medical letter by a specialist service, which is then usually shared by parents to schools as a reason for a child's non-attendance. These CYP are often already well known by school staff, educational psychology and other agencies as there are a lot of interventions and support that can be accessed within schools.

We would like to remind you to firstly consult with Educational psychology, MHST support and CAMHS before suggesting to parents that they take their children to the GP regarding mental health or neurodiversity concerns. The GP is often not best placed to support with these issues. CAMHS and Woodview referrals do not need to be completed by a GP and schools have a wealth of information that supports this process far more effectively. School health are also there to support with some drops ins in school. If in doubt, please reach out to these services for advice and support first.

Regards,

Halton Practices



Halton Local Offer

