

# Team Around The Family



Our Service  
Response during  
COVID19



## July 2020



# TEAM AROUND THE FAMILY

## Introduction

Since March 2020 the world has been a very different place however here in halton the team around the family service have adapted creative ways of providing services to our halton families

Here are some examples of ways we have engaged successfully with children young people and families during these very difficult times!

## Early Intervention iCART

- Constant e-mail updates with regards to service changes – can we move to having a website / portal with up-to-date service information?
- More frequent meetings resulting in less time to do the job
- Higher staff sickness due to circumstances resulting in increased pressures upon other team members
- More flexible and modern working practices e.g. working from home, remote meetings
- Training and support to professionals via Skype / online
- More focused team meetings
- Clearer definition of job role – playing on people's strengths
- Additional support from Attendance & Behaviour service in terms of providing education information to support iCART screening process
- Swifter referrals to Children's Centres for rapid response with regards to food and finance issues
- Gathering the child's voice more directly over the telephone
- Referring to services who have continued to support children and families via different methods
- Feedback from discretionary payment follow-up very positive
- Families have been grateful for honesty around support still being offered but in a different way

## Locality Teams

### **Creative ways of working differently within the COVID restrictions**

- Direct work sessions in local parks/wellbeing walks
- Video calls with children to obtain wishes and feelings/complete CAF pack/direct work
- Video calls with parents to complete parenting work, observe home conditions and complete CAF pack
- CAF's held virtually; especially useful for parents with mental health issues as they feel more comfortable and may not feel able to attend in person under usual circumstances

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- Emailing resources, including links to useful websites to provide both educational resources and fun activities - Direct work completed via online platforms
- Encouraging families to explore the outdoors in a safe and fun way, in line with government guidelines
- Advice and guidance to support parents in managing the children at home in a positive environment
- Increased resourcefulness and encouraged creative thinking regarding engagement
- Offering emotional support on the phone and then been sending out the nurture resources to use at home and talk through with staff to implement measures
- Support parents and young people to access support for their mental health during lockdown including Voice recordings made of relaxation exercises and stress busters sent via WhatsApp
- Provided practical support for parents struggling financially through foodbanks and community shop and connecting them with local organisations providing food and other essentials and benefit issues
- Providing physical resources for those who struggle to access online activities.
- Staff have been out for walks with young people and parents with young children which enables them to talk more freely without worrying about neighbours overhearing.
- Provide information on how to stay safe, how to occupy their family, how to establish routines and deal with conflict
- Coordinate Multi Agency working remotely to ensure that plans of support are put in place and reviewed
- Social distanced meetings held on school premises use of desks to appropriately position attendees
- Support those with young families balancing lockdown life alongside the job and home schooling – particularly those of other key workers
- Some agencies (specifically CAMHS and young carers) are triaging and responding to referrals in a more efficient way
- Use of rag rating as regular team meeting agenda item enables the whole team to better understand individual worker & team pressures (amber/red cases) whilst can also offer opportunity to share good practice and service impact as cases progress from amber to green.

### Comments from Families

- 'So grateful for your support which pulled me through – couldn't have done it without you!'
- 'Thanks, you're the only person who has helped me to get emergency support for our relative who was struggling with their mental health'
- 'Thanks for all your support for my child to go back in to school, I couldn't have done it without you'
- 'Knowing that we have your support makes a real difference I couldn't thank you enough for your help.'
- 'Thank you so much you have helped me so much in the last few days'
- 'Thank god you're still here'
- 'Made up you're all still out there for us, couldn't have coped with this without you'

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- 'Knowing you're on the end of the phone at any time is helping my mental health'
- 'I couldn't have done this without you – you saved my sanity'
- 'thank you for all your help last week, I couldn't even think straight with everything going on – feel loads better I have had a bit of time to myself today, I needed it so thank you...'
- 'Thank you so much. Overwhelmed with the help and support I am receiving from yourself and school. We cannot thank you enough.'
- 'Please tell JB thanks and it was lovely to see and talk to her and I am so grateful to you both'
- 'Thank u, I didn't expect u to do this thought u might know a service I could use, but u are amazing, thanks so much.'
- 'The lengthy conversations I have had had with you during COVID have really helped me gain insight around what my daughters witness in relation to my relationship with my husband'.
- 'Thanks for your email and your kind words as well that meant a lot to read that and you've definitely made me feel better with your words and your offer of help as well I really do need it at the minute.'
- 'whilst speaking to you before about boundaries the penny dropped about the way that K[12yrs] has become the adult in the house, he was asking if friends could come in the house and I said no, he kicked off and put a hole in my living room door, so I did what you said and called 101, he broke down and started to cry and said he was sorry whilst I was on the phone'

### Halton Children Centre's (CC)

#### Early help and support

- Phone call support, families really benefitted from this as they reported feeling isolated. Increased the phone contact for single parent families in response to this. Families responded well to this and were very open to providing information about their issues & concerns.
- CAF/CiN meetings virtually
- One to One nurture via video/phone calls
- Play and positive interaction ideas and resources delivered to families
- Door step visits to families.
- Welcomm screenings completed via telephone calls/video calls where possible
- Supplied and delivered emergency food supplies.
- Play partners telephone support – this has been challenging as it would normally be delivered in the home and is about modelling good interactions. See more detailed report below on how we have developed it to be done virtually.
- HELPs service continuing and amended to fit in with covid regulations (see in detail below)
- Themed play bags to support child development and positive interactions – these have been planned in line with children's development and delivered to families homes.

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- Easter Egg donations delivered to families
- Social media posts to signpost families, interact with them and keep families engaged.
  - Online celebration of Book Trusts Pyjamarama
  - Staff 'Keeping in touch' video
  - Online Nursery Rhyme Competition
  - Sunflower competition supported by local garden centre
- Facilitating CSC contacts
- Support with equipment - FNP
- Support Asylum Families
- Staff Training via E Learning

### **Halton HELPS (Home Safety Equipment):**

- Free provision of equipment for vulnerable families
- Home safety checks by professionals done via telephone
- Range of home safety reminder posts on CC and HELPS Facebook pages – this was important as accidents in the home increased due to lockdown

#### **Service user comments**

- The HELPS equipment has helped to make two children safer in their home, Mum was very thankful for the equipment and says that having the stair gates allows her to feel more confident that baby is safe while carrying out necessary tasks in the kitchen.
- We obtained x 2 safety gates for a child removed from his mother's care under an interim order and placed with relatives, this assisted the family by them not incurring any additional expense
- Feedback from the family I referred was great. The mum in particular was amazed that she could access the safety items, as these were items that she could not afford – it also enabled me to have a discussion with her about home safety for her young children, which was instigated by the equipment your service offered. It has helped me build a relationship with her as she has seen the services that are available to her in the community, and I think she trusts the service and may take up some courses if / when they come up.
- Family are renovating their home during the covid-19 lockdown. The stairs are unsafe and mum is worried that the child will be hurt if she manages to access the hallway. The stair gates that free HELPS has provided for them will provide extra security so that the child cannot access the hallway so easily. Her risk of harm has now been reduced which will have a massive positive impact on the family during this time
- I referred a client who, when I did the assessment form with her, was in labour with her sixth child. My client also has a one year old, so safety gates were really needed, as well as harness reins. My client was so grateful at the prompt delivery of them all, once she was home from hospital.

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- I think from my perspective it has been great because we work with vulnerable families who probably would not have had the money to buy their own. Thank you for doing such a good job!
- I referred one of my CP families for safety equipment as they required stairgates and a fire guard. One of the children enjoys climbing and had cut her head after falling on to the fire place. Mum was extremely grateful for the equipment and told me she feels more relaxed now with the children as they are at less risk of hurting themselves.
- I referred a family who have recently moved to the area days before to lockdown and who are on CIN. The day before I delivered the gate, the fire service had attended and questioned her about safety gates. She was able to assure them it was in hand and the gates would be with her within the next 24 hours. For me it demonstrates how safety was at the forefront for all agencies in this example.

### Widnes Children Centre

#### Reviewed Play Partners for Covid 19

During the Covid19 outbreak the children centre play team wanted to be able to still reach parents that were requiring Play Partners. It was felt that it would be quite difficult to ask the parent to complete the activity whilst on the phone and keep the child/children engaged.

So we worked to come up with a new way of working

New format:

Initial telephone call – To introduce ourselves to the family. We would also explain here that Play Partners is going to be delivered over the phone due to the current situation and we would talk the parents through how this would work. Also complete the 'All about us' forms.

Week one – Talk parent through activity and info sheet, Play partners guidelines

Week two – Evaluate week 1 activity, discuss info sheet on the importance of Play and next activity.

Week 3 – Evaluate week 2 activity, discuss info sheet on Communication and Language in play and next week's activity.

Week 4 – Evaluate week 3, discuss info sheet developing fine motor skills and next week's activity.

Week 5 – Evaluate week 4, discuss info sheet Reading with your child.

Week 6 – Overall evaluation. Discuss with the parent how they think the sessions have gone and if they feel that they have been beneficial. Any likes, dislikes etc.

The information each week can be tailored to the activity. For example if the parents would like an activity for encouraging Physical development then we can include information on the importance of physical play.

#### Voice of the Child

As we cannot physically see the child we have asked parents to take some photos during the activity and email them to us along with some comments for e.g. Sammy really enjoyed playing with the dough and he made lots of different shapes, he said his favourite was the fish.



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At the end of the 6 weeks we will put the photos and comments together along with links to the Early Learning Goals and produce a certificate/collage of the families.

### Feedback

We currently have a number of our Play team doing play partners in this way. We don't have any final evaluations as the full 6 weeks haven't yet been completed but feedback from some parents so far has been positive.

- One mum is an Asylum seeker from Africa who moved here just before the lockdown. She has a 6 month old baby and has very little support as she doesn't know anybody. The play worker working with this mum has said that they have built up a very good relationship and mum is really engaging sending photos and videos of them doing the activity. There is a bit of a language barrier and the mum doesn't have access to email so the play worker has been able to get the info printed off and delivered to them. This has helped as they can read over it at their own time.
- Another mum with 5 children at home all under 6yrs was struggling to find activities for them to do together. She has been able to feed back what the children have enjoyed and not enjoyed and the Play Worker has been able to help her adjust the activities to the needs and ages of the children.

### Comments from Families

- "I feel like everything slowly falling into place after so long. Thank you so much for the help and support you've given me, you've been my hero through this and I really can't thank you enough."
- The washing machine has come, its helped me so much, thank you so much" "thank you so much. I am so excited. No more washing the clothes in the bath now"
- "Thank you so much Julie. I really appreciate all the help through this difficult time"
- The family I'm currently working with is a single parent and her child is in the process of being assessed by Woodveiw for possible ADHD, she is also a carer for her mum who has a lot of health issues. Lockdown had taken its toll and she was struggling to manage her child's behaviour, coupled with not having the usual regular break nursery would give her and in complete despair she went into the closest clinic and had a panic attack. I was allocated the family and quickly we arranged the first CAF meeting which was 2 days ago. At the end of the meeting the mum said she felt like a weight had been lifted, as she thought no support was available due to Lockdown and she couldn't see the light at the end of the tunnel.
- The children's centre have been fantastic, I didn't know where to turn so I went to the council for help. I got a call and everything was sorted, I know who to call now if I need advice, just fantastic, thank you so much!

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### Disabled Children's Service (DCS)

Halton's Disabled Children Service works across the Borough providing Short Breaks Services to families of disabled children. We commission a range of short breaks services, complete assessments, coordinate and review support packages and conduct parent carer needs assessments.

Since lockdown, the majority of our Short Breaks services have been suspended but our Providers have and our service have worked creatively to provide a service;

- Maintained weekly contact with families to provide advice and reassurance.
- We have developed a hub and spoke model where all of the families have had weekly contact via phone, text, email, Skype and Zoom from at least one agency
- DCS staff have provided advice and support on access to food, medication, behaviour management and activities etc.
- DCS have worked with the agencies to explore creative ways of alternative support including online activities and the purchase of toys and activities.
- Families who have access to support via a Personal Budget have been able to maintain a service if their Personal Assistant is available for work but if not we have supported them to use some funds in alternative ways as a temporary measure.
- We are currently working with Commissioners and commissioned services to establish a plan to phase in the return of services following appropriate risk assessments and discussions with families. During the next 3 months, whilst we anticipate that there will be more face to face delivery, this is still going to be significantly less than would usually be provided in the summer period. Providers are also planning how they might further extend their services in the autumn until Christmas. Further information will be provided on Halton's Local Offer website <https://localoffer.haltonchildrenstrust.co.uk/leisure/>

### Comments from Families

Feedback from parents whose son Kyle receives support from Halton's Disabled Children Service, Education and Inglefield.

- Education: "They did an amazing job finding and allocating my son a new better school. Despite being thrown into panic by Kyle's previous school expelling him just before lockdown and I can only respect them for their hard work and time taken. My son is a lot happier in his new school and it's thanks to the hard work of not just one but all of the special educational needs team in Halton."



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- Inglefield: Closed doors due to coronavirus epidemic but have kept in regular contact via phone and email. “I’m extremely grateful for the care and consideration they show not just to Kyle but my whole family. And yes even for the hugely helpful tips and links sent via email.
- Social worker/Early Help Worker: “A lot of this departments work is normally done via home visits, meetings and phone coronavirus changed all of that. I have kept in regular contact via email and phone. I know have a greater respect for not just Anita but all social workers. It's not an easy job and to have your normal ways of working changed completely is tough for anyone to handle. Having people like this to talk to and ask for help has made a huge difference. It is from the heart when I say social workers in general are overworked and deserve a pay raise. A lot of people underappreciate the work they do. My family hold great respect for Anita and the whole team of social workers. And would like to thank them for all there help and consideration during these tough times for everyone.’ (Mr and Mrs Roundtree June 2020)



Information from Lesley Merriman, Community Support Worker, Disabled Children Service:

- We have been able to support families to use their budget in a different way to give the young people access to more social and leisure activities that they use within the home or garden.
- Agencies have continued to support some of our most vulnerable young people. They have created “work bubbles” minimising the staff on Rota to restrict how many people go to the house.
- Places that have had to close to the public have offered there services to families i.e. CAFT
- Due to the volunteer sector we have been able to signpost our families to i.e. food and medical deliveries, personal support i.e. mental health support - someone to talk to.
- Although taking government advice and working from home we have been able to support our families who have anxiety, stress and mental health issues by garden gate visits to give them the 1 -1 adult company that gives them some reassurance that they are not alone.

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### Parents comments

- You are a star, Thank you, he is a very happy boy.'
- 'Thank you for enabling me to provide much needed sensory equipment for Genevieve and Alicia during lockdown, it has been an amazing help along with all the support yourself (Anita) and Jade have provided. I've felt so comfortable calling or texting either of you for support or advice- we couldn't have done it without you. I appreciate everything you all do for us and being there for me x'
- Hi Pam I would just like to say a huge thank you for the funding it's helped me and the girls keep busy making masks for our community. One of the biggest orders was for Halton Haven Hospice who needed 50 masks and 25 headbands. We had a call off them last week asking could they have another 50 so they have 2 each. Thank-you for the weekly phone calls as well it's kept me sane ha-ha.' (Leanne Hornby – June 2020)



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- Pre-CAF's completed via phone contact, found that parents were able to use this time to really discuss their child at length, this also helped them to give thought to the impact on them and their family as a whole
- Provided relevant advice and practical resources for families and young people. Emailing resources and useful links to appropriate websites to address the issues raised in referral from GP
- Advice and guidance offered over the phone to support parents and family through the corona lockdown enabling them to cope a little better at home
- Offering emotional support over the phone using listening skills to enable appropriate response to their situation and provide containment to families during this difficult time
- Regular contact with families to offer support and families also encouraged to contact Health Engagement Officer if they felt they needed support via phone, text, email ensuring communication was effective and appropriate for the family and their needs
- Liaising with other support agencies to ensure consistency for the family such as: CAMHS/Woodveiw/Chatterbug/Disability/school head teachers/ GP's and surgery support staff, this enable's linked up working and provides a better support system for the young person and family
- Developed a range of resources, books, useful websites and information on a variety of key themes to support children, young people and their families including self-help information. These resources were also shared with colleagues within Halton Borough Council to benefit a wider catchment of families to ensure information was disseminated and families have access to information and advice online.
- Sent out resource worksheets covering many different issues to help them with behaviour/emotions/routines/boundaries etc. which could be accessed at home by families during lockdown
- Liaising with GP practices to ensure they were aware of how the Health Engagement service has adapted to support families during COVID 19.
- Promoted using outdoor activities to improve wellbeing and have fun with family
- Arranged and delivered food parcels to parents who were struggling financially during this period
- Regular catch-up skype meetings with our manager and team to maintain staff support and ensure we are all fine with the cases we have open and ask any questions we would like help with and for Manager to update us with the latest HBC and Gov. Covid advice/guidance, we find this is extremely important
- Maintained contact and support with some teenagers via email or text.
- Kept some families open longer than usually would to allow time for them to try resources we suggested.
- Completed online training regarding physiological first aid to Covid.

### Feedback from Parents

- "The information and worksheets have worked with H and it has also made me look at things in a different way, which I would not of done without the information and work sheets , I am happy about this".
- Mum informed that they had been working with their daughter using the work sheets and said these have been really helpful and their daughter was now even telling them when she needed to do some more work with the resources.

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- “Thanks Carla, we’re trying the Hidden Chimp book and C is really enjoying it. I’m just worried about her starting school in September but for now she is doing well”
- “It was really helpful speaking to you earlier, I just feel so helpless because I can’t fix everything for R, and you’ve given me some hope that there is actually light at the end of the tunnel!”
- “Thank you for calling and speaking to A, I’ll keep encouraging her to do what you’ve suggested, thanks”
- ‘Thanks for helping, I always seek help and anything I can do best for the kids I always have. Thanks for understanding and being helpful, you’re a star.’
- ‘Many thanks for the emails, I am sure we will find some useful information and ideas to help.’
- ‘Hi Laura, everything is fine, K has improved a lot I’ve had no concerns and she hasn’t done any of the things since. All the information helped a lot. Thank you.’

### Daycare at Warrington Road and Ditton

Ditton Early years Centre and Warrington road Bambini nurseries are local authority day care, we provide a safe, happy, caring, secure and stimulating environment for children. To enable all children to develop their capabilities as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors to society, during lock down we have continued to provide a service for keyworker children, vulnerable children and now a phase reopening for the wider community.

### Warrington Road Daycare

Below are some of the responses we have had off parents from communications through email from the Managers and responses to parent questionnaires that were sent out, in which the parents were asked about how they felt about the activity packs and things on Facebook that have been provided during the pandemic and the keeping in touch calls that have taken place during this time.

- Kids loved being back in nursery yesterday (HR, RR-baby, pre-school)
- thank you so much for fitting him in he can't wait to come back and see the girls (MA-preschool)
- More stories read by the different members of staff, on Facebook, was made up to hear Claire’s voice the other day reading a book. ☺ (E.C-pre-school)
- Thanks for keeping in touch and checking on our family’s welfare. (RH-pre-school)
- It is nice to know that we aren’t alone. It makes me more at ease when I am in work knowing that my daughter is safe and with people who do anything to keep her smiling. (GW-toddler)
- The pack we collected has been good for him. She really likes completing the activities. (CL-toddler)
- More activity packs, she has really got stuck into these when we have picked them up. It’s as if she is receiving a gift! She gets really excited about them and these have provided much needed stimulation for her. (SB-pre-school)



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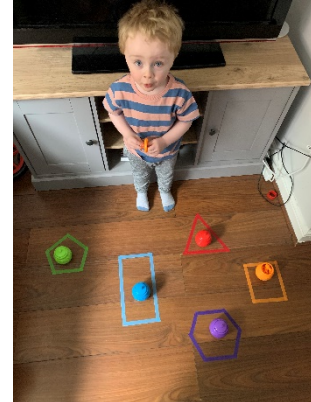
- I think it's been really nice that you have stayed in touch and have gone to the trouble of making the activity packs instead of just saying, well we're on Lockdown so that's that. It shows that all of the children's needs have not been forgotten about so thank you very much for this
- Thank you for remaining open and caring for her as a keyworker child. We understand this is an unusual time and she misses her friends and teachers at Nursery. We hope you and all your families are well. Thank you once again. (FA-toddler)
- it has been lovely to hear from you and we were very touched when you called to sing happy birthday to him, We are trying to talk about nursery to him to keep you in his mind to make the transition back a bit easier, but if he could perhaps talk to come of the girls a bit more then it may help him to remember more. (BM-baby/toddler)
- The story reading on Facebook has been a big hit. He loves hearing your voices. The activities that you have been putting together have been really good and we've enjoyed doing those. Thank you for continuing to while he has been at home, he can't wait to come back and see his friends. (LM-toddler)
- It's been really nice to receive the calls. It makes us feel that you really care and that my daughter is an important part of your nursery family. It's also nice to speak to another person outside of the house! (LM-toddler)
- Thank you so much for the email. The phone call has helped me to understand more about ways to talk to my daughter etc. Please can I have them printed out as I can only see half of the pages on my phone?
- Thank you again for being so understanding (GW-toddler)

### Ditton Early Years Daycare

- Engaged our children in learning opportunities to support them and emotional well-being.
- provided a safe, happy caring, stimulating and secure environment for our children where everyone feels valued, included and respected
- To create a nursery, which feels like home, and to ensure entrance and exit the settings is safe for our staff, children and parents.
- To work in partnership with other agencies and our communities to promote the welfare of our children
- To have confident, happy, independent learners who enjoy coming to nursery, and to promote well-being and respect
- To develop a culture of ambition and achievement
- To equip our children with skills for learning, life and work, ready to actively grasp and follow their dreams in the future
- To make provision for children with special educational needs in accordance with the SEND code of practice
- To have weekly contact with are venerable families who aren't attending
- To have two weekly phone calls to all parents to keep up dated on their learning and support to families if it's needed, through proving work, strategies' or just a conversation of reassurance.

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- Provide a welcoming service to families whose nursery has closed but still require care, opening as a hub.





DRAFT