**Minutes**

**Virtual MSC meeting – North Essex**

**Tuesday 30th June**

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This was a very different type of meeting for us but an important one to have. We held a virtual meeting via Microsoft teams which was our first chance to hold a meeting in this area due to the Covid-19 outbreak. We were joined by a handful of children from different schools and staff representatives who had collected their children’s views before attending the meeting.

We had 3 points on the agenda, and we started with discussing wellbeing. The group were asked what they felt was needed when more children start to return to school and what would support their mental health. Ideas included; having a range of school subjects and not just focusing on English and Maths, opportunities to socialise and to have some ownership over their social bubbles, to embrace technology more and to ensure that people are following social distancing rules as this can make some children feel uneasy when it’s not happening. The overriding feeling was that schools should prioritise school sport as that is key for wellbeing and to make sure they have plenty of opportunities to learn outside. These ideas will form part of our mental health report that will be published in the summer.

We then moved on to talking about our main topic for this term ‘Homelessness’. As we know, the children vote on 3 key areas they want to focus on for 2 academic years and this is one of them. The children want to support the homeless by setting up donations of clothes, food, sleeping bags and cosmetic items. Other ideas included setting up a charity via the MSC that could support shelters, when safe to do so to get homeless people into schools to talk to students about what this is like and to make videos of this to raise awareness. The children wanted to point out that although we are going through a global pandemic, foodbanks still need peoples support and this shouldn’t be forgotten. We will be using these ideas when contacting local homeless charities and discuss this in more detail with schools and our response to these ideas.

Finally, we spoke about early intervention and what the children would like to know about a diagnosis such as autism or ADHD. They would like health and educational professionals to consider the following things;

* As a friend, what can I do to help someone with a diagnosis?
* How will my diagnosis affect me?
* What affect will it have on my future, such as job opportunities?
* How did it happen?
* Will I pass it on to my children?
* Will I need to go to a special school?

Some deep thinking and some important questions to consider. We will use this feedback as part of our first response within a new CYP steering group set up by health.

It felt very strange holding a meeting in this way but the children that joined were very happy to see more faces beyond their bubbles and it may be something we repeat if the need is there. It also felt strange having no drinks and biscuits! We did however still finish with a star of the meeting and this went to Summer from Dedham primary school for some great ideas about supporting the homeless by thinking about their self-image and her thoughts about how a diagnosis may be passed on through family’s genes.

We are not setting any follow up points from this meeting as we know schools already have enough to think about right now, but we do hope to get our face to face meetings back in the new term, if things are safe to do so. The next meetings are planned for; **Monday 9th November, 10am – 11:30am, Holland Park (Tendring strand) & Tuesday 10th November, 10am – 11:30am, Doucecroft School.**