
Press release

Supporting families at the Think Family workshop

20 December 2013

The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) brought together statutory, community and voluntary organisations today at a 'Think Family' workshop in Antrim to share experiences and learning on supporting children and young people who care for family members with a mental health issue.

The Think Family model is a recovery orientated approach which encourages mental health professionals to involve the whole family when assessing and planning treatment for adults with a mental health issue. It also provides access to early intervention and family support for children, young people and their families.

Dr Adrian Falkov, author of The Family Model Handbook, delivered the workshop's keynote address. He shared his expertise in implementing an integrated approach to supporting mentally ill parents and their children.

Dr Falkov said: "The mental health of parents, carers and children is one of the cornerstones of family health. Mental ill health in parents or carers constitutes a major public health challenge internationally, with a growing number of initiatives and efforts, including local initiatives such as the Think Family approach here in Northern Ireland.

"Good cooperation between parents, professionals and services is essential to protect children and to support parents, their family, and carers experiencing mental health issues. The Think Family model helps staff appreciate the ways in which parental mental health problems can affect children, and how children and their needs can affect and influence parental mental health.

"Northern Ireland is continuing to embed this model into their practice within Adult Mental Health and Children's Services, They have developed a regional action plan with specific areas of work that I will help support. I am delighted that I have been invited to speak at this regional workshop as part of on-going collaboration to improve family focused practice in mental health and related services across Northern Ireland."

Speaking at the event, Hannah Roscoe from the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) explained how families can be helped to stay together and thrive if the right support is offered at the right time.

Amanda Edwards, Deputy Chief Executive from the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), said: “SCIE’s work shows that parents with mental health problems need support which takes a ‘Think Family’ approach – recognising how mental health issues affect family life, as well as individuals. SCIE fully supports the on-going commitment within Northern Ireland through the CYPSP to provide better, and more joined up support for parents with mental health problems and their children, and is pleased to see that one of the areas of work they will focus on within the Regional Think Family Action Plan is to pilot a Think Family approach within inpatient and community mental health services. We will share our knowledge to support the pilot and we look forward to learning from them.”

Fionnuala McAndrew, Director for Social Care and Children in the Health and Social Care Board commented: “We are delighted to welcome Dr Adrian Falkov to our conference. Dr Falkov is an international speaker and clinician who will support us to continue the work started here in Northern Ireland from 2009 - 2012 when we became involved in the national Think Family Pilot under the direction of SCIE. We have continued this work through CYPSP in 2013 and have developed a Regional Think Family sub group to continue to embed this approach into core practice within Adult Mental Health and Children’s Services. The action plan of the regional sub group will develop specific areas with a family focused approach, and we in Northern Ireland are very fortunate to have Dr Falkov’s continued support in this important work.”

For more information about the CYPSP and its work, visit www.cypsp.org

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Photo captions

Notes to editor

The Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) is a multi-agency partnership, led by the Health and Social Care Board. It includes the leadership of key statutory agencies and community and voluntary organisations that have a responsibility for improving the lives of children and young people in Northern Ireland.

Dr Adrian Falkov is a child and adolescent psychiatrist who trained and practised in London before moving to Sydney. He has extensive experience in the field, has authored a number of key texts and managed the development of the Crossing Bridges programme. He has worked in frontline clinical practice, research and policy development. He is currently the director of Redbank House Child, Adolescent and Family mental health service, Westmead Hospital, Sydney.

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) is an independent charity that works across the UK to improve care services by sharing knowledge about what works. SCIE:

- captures, analyses and disseminates innovative approaches to new challenges

- translates research into practical guides and learning materials
- improves the knowledge and skills of frontline social care and social work staff, managers, commissioners and trainers
- covers adults', families' and children's care services

The Think Family Project was funded by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety from 2009-2012 in partnership with the Social Care Institute of Excellence (SCIE). The Think Family Project is now part of the established structure of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, one of nine regional subgroups which carry out integrated planning and commissioning for specific groups of children and young people at a particular disadvantage.

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