

Adolescent Development Service (ADS)

The Adolescent Development Service (ADS) supports vulnerable children and young adults aged 8 – 18 years (up to 25 years with SEND).

The teams in this service manage cases that often have equality elements to them and will take these into account when providing support and developing our programme offer.

Below are some examples in how this is managed.

LGBTQI+

ADS delivers an LGBTQI+ drop-in session for children and young people who think they might be a part of the LGBTQI+ community, have questions about their gender identity or sexuality and would like to meet like-minded people of their own age. The service was originally running a group for 14–17 year olds.

As we began to receive referrals for children aged below this who are questioning or identify as LGBTQI+ we developed and added a second session for children aged 11-13 years.

Sessions are structured so that on arrival there are 'check in' activities, followed by enrichment activities, arts and crafts, cookery along with discussion topics on relevant issues.

Children and young people are involved in the development of the session content to ensure that the programme meets their needs and interests.

Trans*/non-binary inclusion and gender

ADS has received referrals for children that are transgender, they have been engaging with our LGBTQI+ group and one to one mentoring programme.

Gender identity and expression are central to the way we see ourselves and engage in the world around us.

Transgender youth are more likely to experience anxiety, depression, and be at greater risk of substance abuse and suicide, this is especially true when they lack a positive support network around them.

We identified a need to increase staff awareness and understanding so that they could work more effectively with children who identify as transgender / non-binary.

We commissioned Trans/non-binary inclusion and gender training for the whole service.

Undertaking this training as a service will enable open discussion and learning to develop a greater understanding, reduce stigma and ensure we effectively support children we work with.

Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)

Several children throughout the year who are referred to ADS have Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities.

An example is of a child referred to one-to-one mentoring support who has a diagnosis of ASD (autism spectrum disorder). For the child to engage fully with the mentoring programme, additional actions were needed to prepare them in advance.

A resource pack was produced including photos of the building they were to attend, photos of the meeting room, and of the mentor, a simple list of questions that the mentor will ask at the first meeting, and description of mentoring and what activities would be on offer.

This was shared with the parent and the school contact who made the referral, as they have an existing positive relationship with the child. This allowed the teaching staff and family members to discuss the upcoming session with the child and prepare them for what was to happen. This was important as activities outside of their normal routine caused them distress.

The child attended the first session and had a positive experience. They went on to successfully complete their block of mentoring support.