

## **Croydon Educational Psychology Service (EPS) Remote Working Options**

During the first lock down and the partial closure of schools, and throughout the summer term of 2020, Croydon EPS developed successful ways of working remotely to support local families and school staff. Once schools fully reopened in September it created the opportunity to return to school-based work. Although the general guidance was that visits to schools should only be undertaken to carry out 'essential' activities, it was our view that direct work with pupils, staff and parents remained important to our practice. However, now that we are in a further period of lock down and partial school closure we believe that we need to follow government advice and return to remote working. Croydon Council advises that even essential workers should work at home if they can and we are also aware that many individual school risk assessments are advising against external visitors. As a result we will need to work with you to find the best way of meeting the needs of your school community.

We are aware that Educational Psychology time has been extensively purchased for this academic year and we are concerned that we will not be able to fulfil these commitments in the usual way, as the year progresses, if we are unable to visit our schools. This is why we need you to actively consider using our remote working offer.

We have identified a range of activities that can be undertaken collaboratively between the link EP and school staff in order to meet the presenting needs. These will require careful planning and a degree of flexibility on both sides to achieve a blended form of service delivery.

### **1. Parent Advice Line & Staff Support Line**

The EPS previously ran a successful parent advice line, offering a one-off booked call to any parent or carer in the borough, who felt they would benefit from a consultation with a psychologist to support themselves or their families during the pandemic. We found it was helpful, in some cases, to share the issues with the Link Psychologist for the school where the child or children attended. As a result we think it would now be better to offer this service via school, as part of our traded offer, so that any support for the family can be coordinated. Although, ideally we hope that the consultation itself will be helpful and not lead to further work.

- For this confidential service your Link EP will not need a Consultation Request form but an email address for the parent or carer and the name and date of birth of their child.

We would like to extend this offer to your staff as we are aware that many are experiencing high levels of anxiety or struggling to manage competing demands. Talk to your Link EP about the option for a confidential call.

### **2. Remote meetings via Microsoft Teams or other suitable platform**

The EPS can book or join both MS Teams or Zoom meeting with school staff and parents and these can be used for the following:

- Strategy and casework planning meetings for each term or the next financial year with the SENDCO and others.

- Consultation with staff and parents in relation to ongoing and new SEN support casework. The thresholds for statutory assessments have not changed and school staff are advised to involve their EP at SEN support as part of the usual graduated response.
- Attendance at SEN support pupil focussed multi-professional meetings such as school liaison meetings and Teams around the Child or Family.
- Staff supervision/work discussion for individuals and groups
- Staff drop-ins or surgeries to discuss individual pupils or class-based issues
- Staff training e.g. in relation to the psychological aspects of the pandemic including bereavement and loss, trauma and EBSA. Or in relation to specific aspects of SEN e.g. autism. This could include topic based drop-ins.

### **3. Pupil based remote work via MS Teams (agreed with staff and parents & not recorded)**

We realise that there is a significant demand for individual pupil work, specifically assessments. In advocating the Recovery Curriculum we are recognising that testing pupils who have missed considerable time in school and are readjusting to school life may still not be appropriate or justified at this time. We would like to be pupil-centred in our approach to finding the answers to the questions being asked. We want to move beyond individual one-off assessment to draw information from those who know the pupil the best. This process should start and may finish with: Consultation with parent, class teacher, teaching assistant and any other relevant adult to explore the pupil's approach to learning, their preferences and dislikes, their relationships and behaviour, their previous assessments and current functioning. This discussion should then define the next course of action which could include further information gathering by staff, class-based target-setting and intervention, activities for home, and further meetings to review. If direct EP work needs to take place this could include:

- Classroom observations using the white board, laptop screen or iPad. A MS Teams meeting would be agreed for a defined period with the EP entering muted and with their camera turned off. Staff members to try to ensure that the target pupil remains visible and engaging in activities that provide the best indication of their needs. The legal position in relation to this 'live streaming' is that it is the same as any other observation and does not require parental permission from all children in view. There would be a GDPR issue if the session was recorded but this would not be our intention.
- Remote pupil assessments (recognising that there are limitations to these and any results should be treated with caution). However the following could be undertaken:
  - a) General discussion and rapport building between EP and pupil.
  - b) Drawing activities directed by the EP and scanned to the EP by school staff.
  - c) A range of standardised questionnaires, provided before the assessment, administered by staff, observed and discussed by the EP on screen and originals scanned to the EP by staff.
  - d) Standardised literacy and numeracy assessments with word lists, passages and maths sheets provided in advance and completed on camera with work then being scanned to the EP by staff.
  - e) Aspects of cognitive assessments such as verbal comprehension subtests administered by the EP who records the responses. N.B. we are very cautious about undertaking cognitive assessments remotely due to the degree of error introduced in administering these tests in a non-standardised way. Any such assessments will be undertaken dynamically with the results reported in general terms, with suitable caveats.
  - f) Play based assessment with an agreed set of toys to explore: sorting, stacking, posting, inset puzzles, jigsaws, pre-reading, imaginative play, turn-taking, mark making etc.

- Individual and group therapeutic interventions using evidenced-based approaches, generally over a number of sessions. This can also involve working with parents.

#### **4. Statutory remote work by MS Teams**

This work is funded by the LA and is strictly defined (see associated guidance regarding what constitutes statutory work).

- The provision of advice for statutory assessments arising from ongoing cases and the local panel will be based on the above model of remote pupil work, including parent and staff consultations and appropriate pupil assessment.
- The provision of advice for cases commissioned by the SEN team, including tribunal casework will follow the same model.
- Attendance at and support for annual and interim EHCP reviews ideally planned in advance. Where a pupil is in transition or there is any concern about the placement consultation should take place as part of the review so that any follow-up work can be planned.

Finally the EPS produced a range of guidance leaflets and training resources early in the pandemic which remain available on the Octavo website, we are happy to develop further guidance to meet your needs, so please speak to your Link EP about this.

Resources link: <https://www.octavopartnership.org/resources/>

January 2021