## **Croydon Educational Psychology Service Guidelines for Consultation**

## Consultation - a Definition

The aim of the Croydon Educational Psychology Service (EPS) is to use psychological principles to promote the development and well-being of children and young people within their learning environment. Educational Psychologists (EPs) bring psychological skills and knowledge to situations where changes are perceived to be required. School staff, parents and pupils bring issues for discussion, seeking solutions. In order to best meet the needs of our clients, Croydon EPS uses ‘consultation’ as a framework for working with schools, in early years settings and with multi-professional teams.

The goal of consultation is to help the person seeking help to explore possibilities and create a range of actions from which they can select those that are most appropriate for them. Through consultation, the person seeking help is enabled to develop alternative perspectives of the expressed concern as well as skills to help manage similar concerns in future. We believe that school staff are the main agents of change in schools. A major role of the EP is therefore to help them notice the difference they make and support them in enabling change to occur.

### Core Principles of Consultation

Consultation is a collaborative problem solving process. In the school context, consultation involves a process in which concerns are raised and a purposeful conversation takes place between the EP, school staff, parent/carer, child/young person and/or other professionals using a range of techniques including listening, hypothesising, clarifying, questioning and reflecting. The subject of consultation can be at any one of three levels:

1. individual pupils
2. class/group
3. organization/whole school

The focus can shift as the expressed concern is explored. Everyone involved in consultation brings into the process their own perspectives, unique set of skills, knowledge and expertise. Everyone’s contribution is equally valued in the process.

We believe that consultation is most effective when the meeting is with the people most concerned as they will be most motivated for changes to take place. Those involved in the consultation process own the concern jointly and share the responsibility for negotiating and evaluating actions and outcomes.

The ideas and theory underpinning consultation permeate all aspects of the work of the EP. Consultation is not an item on a menu. All interactions with others are consultations, whether that interaction is with school staff, parent/carer(s), pupils and/or other professionals. Sometimes EPs may undertake tasks in order to contribute relevant information in further consultation meetings. For example, classroom observation, individual assessment and interventions are carried out with the intention that the collected data will inform the consultation process and enable those involved to have a shared understanding of the concerns and possibilities.

## Psychological Models that are appropriate to Consultation

Consultation provides a framework for using different psychological models and theories which may include solution focused brief therapy, personal construct psychology and systems thinking derived from family therapy, amongst others.

The Consultation process

Our consultation approach is described on the attached flow diagram which details how and by whom the outcomes will be recorded.

## Ongoing Benefits of the Consultation Approach

## School

1. opportunities for work at an organisational level in school
2. a focus on early intervention and preventative work
3. more opportunities for one-off consultations and quick feedback

## School Staff

1. the members of staff most concerned can access support
2. staff engage in collaborative problem-solving.
3. staff feel more confident about their ability to manage concerns

## Parent/Carer

1. the parent/carer engages in collaborative problem-solving
2. the parent/carer receives quicker feedback
3. the parent/carer feels more confident about their ability to manage concerns

Pupil

1. learning improves because the strategies are more likely to be both implemented and appropriate

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