

## Healthwatch Enfield and Enfield's Children and Young people's social and emotional Mental Health & Well-being

### Online Question and Answer session

17<sup>th</sup> August 2020

#### Presenters:

- **Peter Nathan** - Director of Education for the London Borough of Enfield (LBE)
- **Emma Gore- Langton** - Senior Specialist Educational Psychologist for the London Borough of Enfield (LBE)
- **Clive Blackwood** - Senior Service Lead for Enfield Children Adolescents Mental Health Service (CAMHS) & for Enfield Community Children's services for Barnet, Enfield & Haringey Mental Health Trust
- **Nicholas Clarke** - Consultant Clinical Psychologist & Clinical Lead for Enfield Children Adolescents Mental Health Service (CAMHS) for Barnet, Enfield & Haringey Mental Health Trust

#### **Q1 - What plans are being put in place, if by September, children/ young people are not able to return to school/college due to either a rise in coronavirus or a localised lockdown?**

**A - LBE** -For those children who are not in school, the expectation is the school will use its online learning processes they have in place, so children won't miss out. Schools have been developing and improving their processes which is a big focus in education. We have developed a course for schools on digital technology. We are one of the few local authorities that are working with the DfE on this to improve the online experience for young people because what we found was some schools were brilliant, no issues at all, others schools not as good. The government has made it clear children should be in school, however, as a local authority we realise, particularly with the messaging from the government on staying at home, that some people will have genuine concerns. Our education welfare service and variety of staff such as our educational psychologists and the schools themselves won't be taking a hard-line on this but working with people to reassure parents and students. The data on young people and the advice from Public Health is that children very rarely contract the virus and/or spread it. It's about talking through the measures that have been put in place, such as staggered start time to avoid crowding at the beginning and end of the school day and about the processes schools will be using such as their risk assessments. School improvement advisors will be following this up with their visits with the schools to make sure the right things are in place. Schools will be responsible for keeping a register of those children not attending school. Head teachers have also been meeting weekly to discuss how to make improvements in the event of subsequent local or national lockdowns; the two focus areas have been how to improve the online learning offer and learning from what children and parents have said about the type and volume of communication which has made a big difference to families.

**A - CAMHS** - If children and young people weren't able to return to school or college due to a second wave or a localised lockdown, we would be continuing to provide services in the way we have done in recent months through lockdown and school closures, including via phone and video for routine appointments, or face-to-face for essential appointments. We would still continue to link with schools and other school-facing services as best as we can and continue with the roll out of mental health support teams in schools. We would continue to work closely to try and support schools with their pandemic response and help to develop resources for teachers and parents. We would also continue to reach out to schools so parents and carers can access support from [CAMHS](#) via their schools and also ensure we are publicising information on our website, and signposting to online services such as Kooth.

**Q2 - How will you support children in their learning if there is no digital access?**

**A - LBE** - This is a real issue. We know there is a socio- economic divide in the borough. We know that some children do not have access to online learning but we also know that even if there is a device in their home, they don't necessarily have access to it. The borough received 900 devices from the government, but it wasn't enough as there are over 50,000 students in our schools and the local authority cannot afford to buy devices for all the disadvantaged children who need them in years 10 and 12. Schools have been providing their own devices and sending them home with young people. This is why we want children in school. With regards to bubbles, the guidance is to try to follow the bubbles guidance but if you can't, you do the best you can. Schools will be approaching this in different ways, some will have year group bubbles, for a special school the whole setting could be in a bubble. It's about making the best judgement on a school by school basis.

**Q3 - My job role is a community outreach worker for the primary and secondary school of our CHAT trust. What support can we give our parents/carers and children in returning back to school after such a long break away. What can we do and offer them?**

**A -LBE** - Cuckoo Hall Academy Trust Academy Trust will develop their own resources and own way of dealing with this pandemic, but we are in contact with the chief executive of that trust on a regular basis. The advice would be to look at your transition plans for September and beyond and think strategically about how you are supporting a sense of safety, calm, connectedness, control and hope. We have a wide range of materials structured under these principles which are all available on the Enfield Thrives Together traded services hub here: <https://traded.enfield.gov.uk/thehub/enfield-thrives-together/resources>. We know that September is an important time for transition with new pupils joining schools, so it is important for children and parents to know what to expect to alleviate some of that anxiety. We are offering a professional learning programme to all schools in the autumn and spring terms, supporting them to think about how to support the resilience and recovery of pupils, parents and staff, and we hope that this will help you to develop your ongoing provision.

**Q4 - I'm wondering if the panel have any feedback on which methods of support they feel have been most helpful and had the most impact throughout lockdown for children and young people with Social and Emotional Mental Health issues?**

**A - LBE-** Enfield Thrives Together has had a huge impact because we have been able to get so many partners together to quickly co-ordinate our response and ensure that what we are offering is complimenting and not overlapping other services. Our Educational Psychology Service has been able to offer direct access to parents during the summer term, so that parents can speak to an EP about any concerns regarding their children's wellbeing or learning, and we know from Our Voice and other parents that this has been very helpful.

**A - CAMHS-** just being able to keep our services open and running in a modified form has been really important for us. The fact that we have been able to provide a flexible offer via the telephone, video and face to face where it's needed has been important and has enabled us to keep in touch with our young people in a flexible way. Also, the partnerships and collaborations at a multi-agency level has and will continue to be really important.

**Q5 - Is there any extra money or resources being invested in the mental health & wellbeing of children and young people? If so what are the priorities?**

**A - CAMHS-** There has been a lot of national focus on investment for CAMHS. There have been several papers over the course of the government's tenure, including the green paper that led to some of the developments around mental health support teams in schools. There has also been an expectation that there needs to be a much stronger collaboration across systems e.g. looking across the patch of North Central London. There have been changes to commissioning in which involves moving towards a more integrated and harmonised services across the patch. We might find in Enfield that we are a bit of an outlier in terms of equity, whereas Camden and Islington are slightly well more resourced. The new way of working will be looking at how we reflect and balance that inequity that exists across the patch e.g. looking at services in other boroughs that do not exist in Enfield and to look at producing a standardised baseline that we don't have in Enfield. We are working with our commissioners to look at areas that we want to support to be able to increase the offer to children, young people and their families around emotional wellbeing and support.

In terms of waiting time, it varies as we have different teams operating their own intake procedures and response times, depending on their remit. If a young person is in crisis they can be seen within a day. Lower risk referrals to the adolescent team are seen within 2 weeks. The Looked After Children's service routinely sees new referrals within 6 weeks, SCAN (for CYP with learning disabilities), the Generic Team (common mental health problems) and Child Development Team (jointly with paediatrics) more commonly have longer waits, but all teams will prioritise high-risk cases and respond urgently where necessary. In order to manage the high volume of referrals, Generic Team operates a daily Access rota, in order to provide phone consultation, triage, advice and signposting to new referrals

The overall service target for waiting times is for a first contact within 13 weeks of referral. This is met in most cases, and we are working to address the areas where not.

We know we have some internal challenges as to how responsive we are. We have as many young people waiting to come into the service as we have to discharge. However, there is some potential new investment that is linked to the [NHS long term plan](#) which is part of the work being carried out across Barnet, Enfield, Islington, Haringey and Camden. The key priority for any future investment that comes in as part of the long term plan, is the levelling up of service provision across those five boroughs. This is so the resources are proportionate to the population and needs of each borough.

**A - LBE:** The Department for Education has recently announced that a small grant will be given to every local authority to allow them to support the recovery and return to school of pupils and their families. In Enfield, we plan to use this grant to provide a resilience and recovery professional learning programme to all schools, and we hope to be able to extend our offer of the telephone support lines for parents and school staff.

**Q6 - My child has not "been in the system" before but their mental health has suffered terribly during lockdown. As a parent it's so hard as you don't want a "label" for your child yet, you want to get them the support they need. Waiting times are a concern, as if I do convince them to be referred for help, any delay could unpick this. What are the current waiting times to get assessed? Is there a stigma around mental health with children and how can we all support our young people during this difficult time as I don't want to say the wrong thing and make them feel worse.**

**A - CAMHS:** There are a range of support options available in the borough, of which CAMHS is one part but there are other options too. Accessing support could involve exploring support available via schools.

We have also launched an online platform called [“Kooth”](#) which offers online support for 11 to 18 year olds. From our perspective, in all children and young people’s services, the emphasis is one where we focus on understanding the needs of the young person and their family instead of a diagnosis led approach, or labelling children.

Stigma is something young people raise a lot with the team. Our participation group frequently talk about wanting to have more open conversations about mental health in their school setting and communities. It is really important that we talk about mental health to promote a broader conversation about it. I feel it is always better to try and have the conversation about feelings and emotional wellbeing than not at all. Part of it is about what you say but more importantly how you say it. It’s important to talk to children from the perspective of curiosity and interest, going at your child’s pace. Listening is really important and connecting back to those core principles previously mentioned. It’s also important to create space for children to talk but not necessarily force the issue, recognising the strengths that your child has and offering them a sense of hope. There are also a lot of resources out there giving advice to Parents and CYP, such as the [Anna Freud centre and Young Minds](#).

**A - LBE:** - Increasingly there is a wide-spread agreement that mental health is everyone’s business and schools are on board with this. The educational system is needs-led not diagnosis-led. Please do speak to your child’s school about how they can support your child and you. It’s so understandable to worry about saying the wrong thing, but the message from children and young people experiencing mental health difficulties is that the wrong thing to say is nothing; it’s always better to have the conversation, even if we do it imperfectly at first.

**Q7 - I am seeing signs of anxiety about germs and cleanliness in my child. The constant "wash your hands" messages have been deeply absorbed and now there is a real fear of Coronavirus and getting ill. What can I do or suggest?**

**A - LBE:** We are in these strange times where previously these worries would have been called ‘health anxiety’, but now are a response which we have tried to actively instil in our children to keep them safe. We want our children to be afraid of catching coronavirus, but for some of our children this has really taken hold. The effect of lockdown is that our lives have shrunk. This is similar to the impact of anxiety: when we have anxiety then our lives become very narrow. It’s helpful to think about our young person’s sense of safety, calm, connectedness, control and hope, and encouraging them gently to choose that bigger life, even as they experience these worries.

**A - CAMHS:** for many of us the issue of heightened anxiety, infection and germs has become more normal. We are all more conscious of our behaviour around hand hygiene and social distancing. It’s important to recognise that anxiety in our children and, sensitively- with curiosity, explore and understand some of your child’s worries. This in itself plays a really important part and can lead to a calming of that anxiety. It is also important to help children to develop a more balanced view of the danger and risks that we face. It’s very difficult in this situation when we are all being told to be so vigilant, but this needs to be in kept in a realistic perspective as to the risks, which may also help to bring more of a sense of control and hope. This might include things like paying attention to sources of age appropriate information around coronavirus and being aware of the sources of information that your child is accessing and having conversations about that. Referring to sources of reliable news information (e.g. BBC Newsround) and resources for parents to support children through the pandemic from the Anna Freud centre and [young minds](#) might also help.

**Q8 - My son has noticed that his friend has become withdrawn and disinterested in the online games they used to do together. I do not know the child's parents very well and feel I should say something. Is it best to get my son to ask him how he is feeling?**

**A- LBE:** This child may have hit their saturation point with online gaming. Perhaps this is a young person engaging more with the outside world as lockdown is easing. It's worth wondering about, instead of assuming something is terribly wrong. If you are concerned, and your own child feels able to do so, we do want to develop a culture of young people asking each other how they are, and genuinely listening to the answers. At the same time, as a parent, you don't want your child to feel overly responsible for the mental health and wellbeing of their friend, so make sure they know they have your support.

**A - CAMHS:** having a conversation with a trusted adult that you or your son may be able to speak to is another option. We want our young people to have these conversations and be good supportive friends, but at the same time we don't want them to feel that they are carrying all the responsibility.

**Q9 - My child used to like going out to play in the park and loved going to school to see her friends. Now she says she is happy to stay at home and doesn't want to go back to school and is not interested in going out to play. What can I do?**

**A -CAMHS:** It may be helpful to explore and try to support a child's possible fears about going out and returning to school. As previously discussed, it's about trying to gently have that conversation, to listen and understand those fears. It may also help to try to find ways to keep structure and linked into broader activities, to gradually broaden their world. Finding ways of gradually testing the water and extending activities or contact with friends. Families are facing big changes coming out of lockdown, try to involve your child in the planning of some of these changes may be helpful too. This may give the young person a bit more certainty or sense of control about what is on the horizon.

**Q10 - Will the Educational Psychologist helpline still be open and available post September when schools open? Some parents, who've come through Our Voice, have found this helpline hugely beneficial.**

**A LBE:** As part of our coronavirus response, the schools which buy into our service collectively agreed that we could put some of their purchased EP time into a community pot. This meant that we could provide some services which have been freely available to all, including the telephone support lines for parents and for school staff. If you are worried about anything to do with your child e.g. their emotional wellbeing, their learning the educational psychologist has offered a helpline through the holidays where you can book a call to talk things through. We are hoping this service will still be available in the autumn term, via the DfE's recovery grant, but this is subject to local agreement.

Parents can book a telephone call via this link:

[https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=HbkYzLIbm02sdnpER0iNSS42\\_h6tBTJDseFVmtT9SWpUOFpaTlBNMTUxUTAyMUhXTDRFVFFQTBMOc4u](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=HbkYzLIbm02sdnpER0iNSS42_h6tBTJDseFVmtT9SWpUOFpaTlBNMTUxUTAyMUhXTDRFVFFQTBMOc4u)

School staff can book a telephone call via this link

[https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=HbkYzLIbm02sdnpER0iNSS42\\_h6tBTJDseFVmtT9SWpURFZZNE5FNUZPUk85QTKyNTg4Vv1YMFLEOS4u](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=HbkYzLIbm02sdnpER0iNSS42_h6tBTJDseFVmtT9SWpURFZZNE5FNUZPUk85QTKyNTg4Vv1YMFLEOS4u)



**Q11 - I suffer from anxiety and think as my children have spent so much time recently with me, that they have become more anxious themselves. I also struggle to help them with school work and getting them in a routine. If there is a new local lockdown it will affect all of us. Should I be worried, or can I ask the school for help?**

**A - CAMHS:** I think as a parent, it is always important to look after yourself and to consider your own support systems, and part of that can involve asking for help too. Looking after our own well-being puts us in a better position to support our children. I would suggest it would be good to speak to school, especially if you're struggling with helping with school work. There are also some good resources for parents to help support children with anxiety. This example is provided in conjunction with Anna Freud Centre: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/z6ksy9q>

**A - LBE:** Yes, do try to be kind to yourself. Parents have been under unprecedented pressure during the last few months as we try to home-school, work, and parent our children around the clock without our usual access to community support. In collaboration with Our Voice, the Educational Psychology Service and Mental Health Support Team have produced some videos for parents which might be helpful to you. The video about creating a sense of safety has specific advice about establishing a workable routine, and there is a video designated to self-care for parents, with strategies to try whenever you have 30 seconds, three minutes, or 30 minutes to yourself: <https://www.ourvoiceenfield.org.uk/news/show/107>

**Q12 - Are online assessments or online therapies being offered now, or it all still face to face? And are the therapies for groups of children or individuals, or are both types available?**

**A - CAMHS:** Yes, in CAMHS we have a flexible offer of phone consultation, video, and face-to-face appointments. We agree an approach with families based on needs, preferences and individual circumstances. We have been trialling some groups online, but most of the work we offer is individual and family based. As part of the wider borough online offer we also have KOOTH. This is a moderated online community, including self-help resources, message boards and chat-based counselling. Our commissioners and providers in the borough work closely with the Kooth team, and the service is free, safe and confidential, for all 11-18 year olds in the borough.

**A - LBE:** The Educational Psychology Service was working remotely during the summer term. As we ease into the autumn term, we will continue to offer consultations for parents and school staff by telephone. There is the possibility that we will be able to carry out some essential face-to-face assessment and observation, but as our work is delivered in schools, we must be guided by schools' own risk assessments and decisions about external visitors. Our therapeutic service, the Schools Emotional Wellbeing Service, has been delivering therapy online throughout the pandemic, and our Children's Wellbeing Practitioners are also delivering therapeutic support via video calls.

**Q13 - Does the NHS services and schools share information on children so they can work together to support a child?**

**A - CAMHS:** We often do, but there are some established guidelines around how and what we share:

- The first principle is that the material we discuss in clinical sessions is confidential
- However, in many circumstances it is good practice to work in partnership with schools and other involved agencies. Therefore, we ask clients if they consent to us sharing info with schools or other involved agencies. In routine situations we would only share such information with your consent

- We are obliged to share information with other professionals where there are concerns about risk and safeguarding, in order to ensure children’s safety. In these situations, the need to ensure the child’s safety would over-ride the right to confidentiality. However, we would still strive to share information with a young person/parent’s awareness and agreement if possible
- We regularly work with schools and other agencies to support a broader package of care. This would often include having regular Team Around the Family Meetings (TAF) including the child and family

**Q14 - Is there a designated mental health lead in each school?**

**A - LBE:** Increasingly, schools do have a designated lead for mental health, and this is particularly encouraged for those schools involved in our Mental Health Support Teams in Schools trailblazer. Even if your child’s school does not have a role by this name, ‘social, emotional and mental health’ needs are a specific category of special educational need according to the 2014 SEN Code of Practice, so you can always approach the SENCO. In secondary schools, the pastoral team may be your best point of contact for mental health and wellbeing concerns, but each school can guide you to the right person.

**Q15 - How do you notify the school if your child is showing signs of anxiety before they return to school?**

**A - LBE:** Please either contact the school office or get in touch with a member of staff who you have previously been in touch with about your child. Office and teaching staff tend to return to school shortly before it opens to pupils, to prepare for the term, so do give them a call. As schools prepare to open, we expect that they will be sharing information about what pupils and parents can expect during the autumn term, and this in itself may help your child’s anxiety.

**Q16 - Will children and parents have clear guidance, information and reassurance on the new rules and processes at their school, before they return to school in September? Will that be by letter, online, in assemblies or another way?**

**A - LBE:** Some schools have already posted video tours and information on their websites. Others will do so as they gear up for the new term. The decision about what information to share, and how to share it, will be made by each school. If there is information you would like, or you don’t have what you need, please do get in touch with your child’s school.