

Delivering on Educational Psychology input virtually

#2 of the Responding to Covid-19 Series

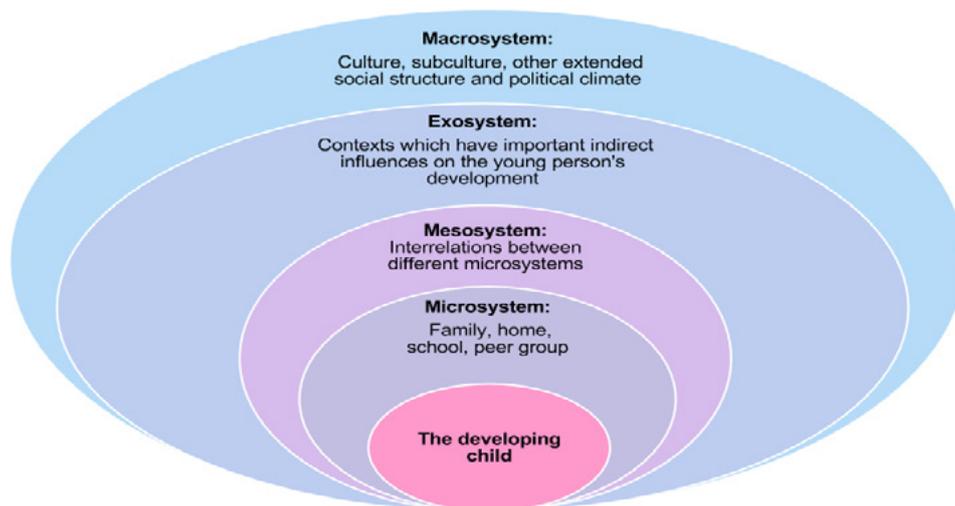
Based on a session delivered by Liz Robinson, Chair of the National Association of Principal Educational Psychologists

Educational Psychology key principles

Educational Psychologists (Eps) apply psychology to support good outcomes for children and young people, working predominantly in education as well as with health and social care partners to achieve this. EPs use evidence-based approaches and frameworks in their work. One model which exemplifies the importance of assessing the wider social and environmental context around a child's life is Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model. This can help us think through the impact of the pandemic and 'lockdown on children's emotional health and wellbeing.

Fig. 1: Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model, from Tudge et al (2009)

FIGURE 1: BRONFENBRENNER'S BIOECOLOGICAL MODEL (2005)⁶. LABELLING FROM TUDGE ET AL.,⁷ (2009).



COVID-19 context

Crises often provide the stimulus for innovation and for rapid advances in policy and practice, and that has been the case for many Educational Psychology Services across the country during this time. It is important to promote positive psychology, strength-based approaches and resilience-building during the pandemic, both for the EP workforce and in the approaches and services undertaken for children and young people.

Many Educational Psychology teams, including Liz's, ceased in-person work in the middle of March and have not yet returned, working remotely for the duration of the pandemic. Educational Psychologists work closely with people, their work is predominantly about listening, understanding and communicating well. The key question therefore was how to adapt well to continue delivering effective services whilst working from home.

Research by Hobfoll *et al.* (2007) identifies five key principles that support recovery following a disaster or serious incident:

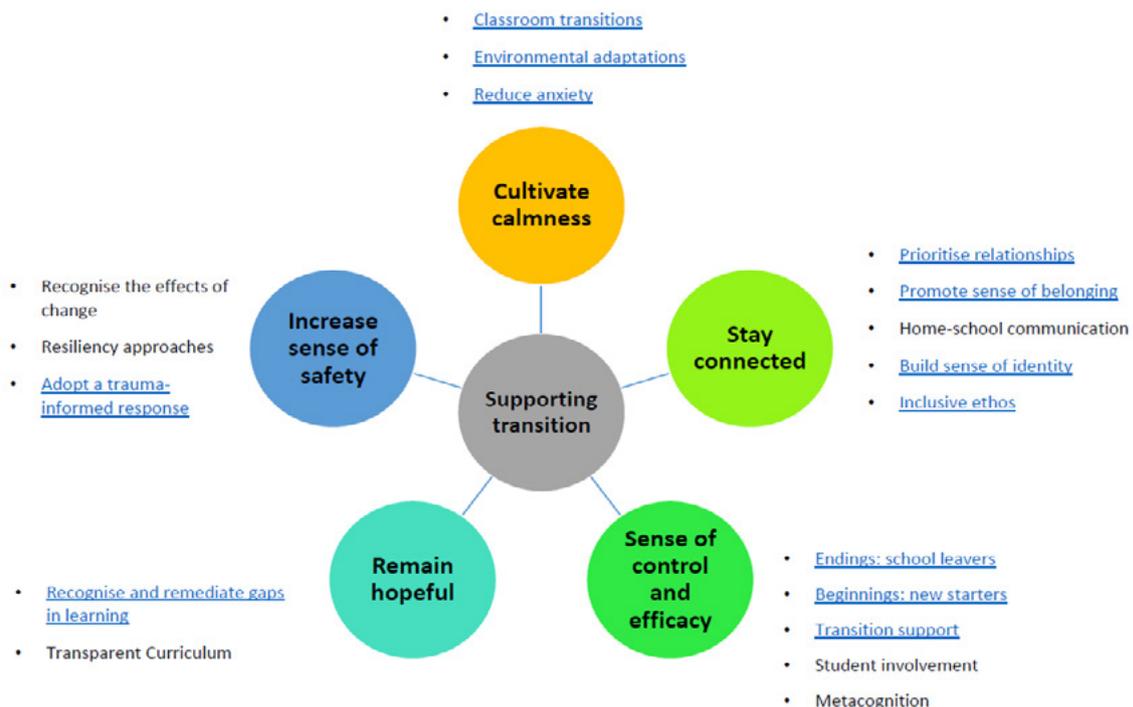
1. Cultivate calmness
2. Stay connected
3. Sense of control and efficacy
4. Remain hopeful
5. Increase sense of safety

With recent research from Oxford University finding that a fifth of primary aged children have felt scared to leave their home during COVID-19 (Weare, 2020), it is clear there is a need to focus on what emotional support children need during this time. Hobfoll *et al.*'s five principles can be used to shape the support given to members of staff and children and young people, particularly upon their return to school.

Many Educational Psychologist services have used these principles to inform how to support children and young people, their families and settings during this time and whilst working remotely. Good practice has emerged from EP services in Hertfordshire, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire, Doncaster, Harrow, Southend, Camden, Nottinghamshire, Hammersmith and Fulham, and Portsmouth.

Hertfordshire

Fig. 2: Hertfordshire Educational Psychology Service - ways of working



Hertfordshire County Council's Educational Psychology Service has built on the guiding principles of Hobfoll et al. to develop these ideas into ways of working in response to Covid-19, breaking down concrete actions under each of these headings (see fig. 2)

Northamptonshire

The principles highlighted by Hobfoll et al have also been applied by Northamptonshire's Educational Psychology Service which published new guidance *Promoting Positive Transitions during and after the COVID-19 crisis*, which is designed to support children and young people who are either starting or returning to school.

Warwickshire

Warwickshire's Education Psychology Service adopted a number of innovative forms of remote support during this time:

- *Telephone Support*: The team have delivered telephone-based support locally via 45-55 minute phone calls with young people and families. The focus of this support has primarily been around managing anxiety, difficulty engaging the child or young person in school-related activities, and social, emotional and mental health concerns. The feedback from this support has been exceptional.
- *Guidance documents*: A series of COVID-specific guidance documents to support children and young people have been produced, including documents on transition back to school, sleep, critical incidents, and bereavement and loss;
- *Webinars*: Warwickshire has run a series of webinars linked to the 'New normal', on topics including dealing with challenges for vulnerable groups, cultivating resilience, and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). Webinars have been aimed at different audiences including parents/carers, education staff and health and care professionals. There has been a real appetite for this, with sign-ups of over 500 people for some webinars;
- *Critical Incident Support*: Warwickshire has used its critical incident support function during this time to link schools together and facilitate group liaison around bereavement and loss, in addition to ongoing specific critical incidents (e.g. suicide);
- *Providing virtual Training*: Warwickshire has expanded a virtual Resilience and Emotion Coaching training programme for schools through the Attachment Aware and Trauma-Informed School cohorts. These have been delivered in 2 x 1.5 hour sessions, with an additional task or discussion delivered to a smaller group to allow sharing and use of the chat function in Microsoft Teams. Additionally, work was accelerated for a several schools in the fourth year of the programme who wanted support sooner due to staff flexibility and a recognition of the current trauma of the pandemic. Online delivery has also supported a number of larger group facilitated sessions with school staff, both in school and who were working remotely;
- *Developing Educational Psychology Service* - The service has also used this time to invest and upskill their practitioners through Professional Practice Seminars, virtual training groups, briefings and bringing in a 'pause point' to enable further consideration of key themes
- *Virtual Meetings*: virtual meetings have become business as usual for Warwickshire's service, particularly meetings with parents, children and young people at home, and also with schools and other professionals.

Doncaster

Doncaster's Educational Psychology service reported several positive developments from work during COVID-19, including:

- Working jointly with other agencies to develop an online CPD resource for Head teachers, teachers and school support staff;
- Facilitating a virtual 'Circle of Adults' with other agencies and teaching staff;
- Facilitating virtual consultation group meetings with local schools

Harrow

Harrow's Educational Psychology service has significantly increased their use of digital platforms, including by producing a series of webinars for school settings, with a specific focus on supporting the wellbeing of children and school staff.

In these webinars, the service outlined existing research and new strategies to support education settings with children returning to school, as well as outlining how local service delivery is being adapted during this period to support children and their families.

Southend

Southend's Educational Psychology Service used this time to focus on securing the views of children and young people rather than assuming they knew how they would be feeling. The service developed an online survey to capture children and young people's views on the pandemic and on the next steps, and this was sent to all children and young people in the area. There was a high level of engagement: 752 children and young people responded, and their feedback on the importance of safety, certainty, opportunities and relationships helped to shape the EP service offered during this period.

The service also ran a follow-up webinar 'What you told us' which shared these views with a wider audience, and has continued to work with young people to develop a next steps action plan.

Camden

The London Borough of Camden's Educational Psychology Service has provided a series of COVID-19 specific resources directly to support children and young people, titled 'Looking after ourselves'.

Looking after ourselves: for young people

There is a lot of uncertainty around the current Coronavirus outbreak, particularly given that the situation is constantly developing and there is still more to learn.

Understandably, this is causing a lot of worry and anxiety for everyone. For some, losing the routine of school and study might feel great in the short term, but as the situation continues and everyone has to stay at home it is important to look after both our physical and mental health; getting enough sleep, eating healthy meals and doing some physical activity either at home or once a day outside.

Making a schedule and keeping to a routine can help you to maintain a positive mood and feel productive. This document is designed to help you form or maintain a routine and support your physical and mental health during these difficult times.

This document covers strategies that can help you to support yourself and show you where to go for more information about:

Staying healthy: Looking after our mental and physical wellbeing is an important way to keep us feeling healthy

Keeping connected: Maintaining friendships and socialising with others can help us feel safe and supported.

Boosting skills: Keeping our minds working and taking this time to build on or learn new skills can be a great way to feel productive

We would really welcome your feedback if you have time

Camden Schools Services  Camden

Nottinghamshire

Nottinghamshire's Educational Psychology Service has adopted a therapeutic approach, producing therapeutic stories designed to help children explore and understand challenging feelings experienced during the pandemic. Based on narrative psychology, the stories support children to understand their emotions as a tool for adults to use in child-led conversations.

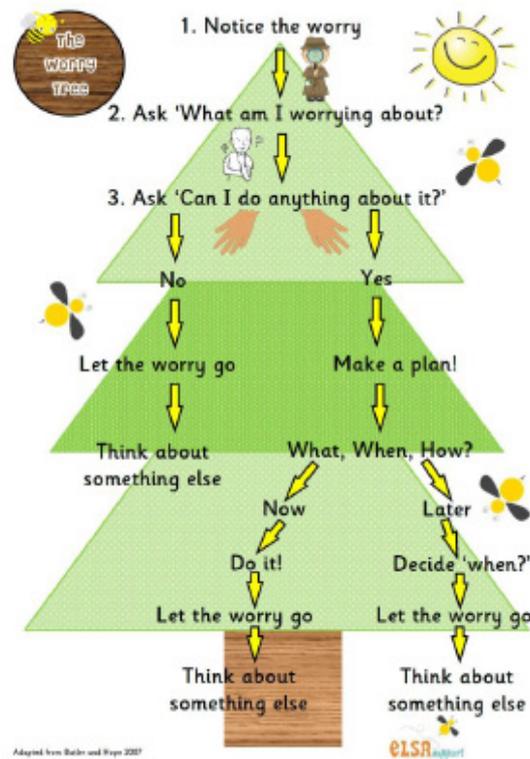
One example of this is 'The Little Elf who missed his Birthday Party', which is a story to support primary age children through a focus on resilience and hope, fostering a sense of belonging, and normalising a range of feelings specifically exploring 'resilience and hope', 'sense of belonging', and other feelings.



Hammersmith and Fulham

The Educational Psychology Service in Hammersmith and Fulham has also adopted a therapeutic approach, developing resources such as a 'Worry Tree' as a framework to help children talk through their concerns (see Fig 3).

Fig 3: Worry Tree



Portsmouth

Portsmouth’s Educational Psychology Service has worked in collaboration with other teams to adopt a strategic approach that ensures children and young people’s needs are met during the pandemic. This work has involved:

- *Vulnerable Pupil Tracking:* The Service has adopted a city-wide operational approach that has reached all schools, and which has involved Educational Psychologists engaging in city-wide support to all education settings.
- *EHC Risk Assessments:* Through the use of risk assessments, the service has worked to ensure that the needs of children and young people with EHC plans are being met, including through risk assessment work with settings to ensure necessary provision is in for pupils learning remotely.

Wider considerations

- *Virtual meetings:* In many EP Services across country virtual meetings and digitised services have become ‘business as usual’ functions. It is therefore a priority to ensure this virtual delivery works for young people. The Portsmouth Service has found ways to improve the remote assessment of children’s needs, including asking a trusted adult to carry out a task or assessment with the child, for the Educational Psychologist to observe on camera.
- *Zoom etiquette:* Video conference requires rapid learning of new skills and

Portsmouth's Safeguarding Children Partnership has produced guidance on Zoom etiquette. This includes recommendations for how to conduct virtual meetings with children and young people safely, and ensure effective communication at all times in the absence of being able to meet face-to-face. This guidance also recommends that adults with parental responsibility are present and in the home during any consultations between the Educational Psychologist and the child or young person.

- EHC Assessments - The Educational Psychology profession has recently revised its guidance document to support Educational Psychologists' contributing to EHC assessments, including how to carry out assessments remotely. The document, *Guidance for Educational Psychologists providing advice and information for EHC Needs Assessments*, is based around the principles of providing advice that is person-centred, holistic, fair, reflective of best practice, collaborative, transparent, accessible, and compliant.

Resources and links for further reading

Back to school: using psychological perspectives to support re-engagement and recovery – British Psychological Society bit.ly/2ZM995F

Guidance for Educational Psychologists providing advice and information for EHC Needs Assessments

Harrow schools' journey towards 'a new normal': a webinar on psychological wellbeing <https://youngharrowfoundation.org/covid-19-webinars-and-training-material-from-the-ypf-partnership>

The Little Elf who missed his Birthday Party: a therapeutic story to support primary age children in exploring strong emotions to the coronavirus pandemic <http://www.em-edsupport.org.uk/Page/7730>

What you told us webinar- Thoughts shared by children and young people about the current situation and next steps <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDajg8jLnok>

