



Northamptonshire Educational Psychology Service

Information for ELSA trained staff during the COVID-19 outbreak

We know there will be a lot of uncertainty around the current COVID-19 outbreak, particularly given that the situation is constantly developing and the information about the virus remains incomplete. As school staff, you have had to adapt very quickly to provide support and education during this unprecedented situation.

It is normal to feel anxious and worried during this time as we are experiencing a significant amount of change and disruption to our lives. As ELSAs, you may have additional concerns around the children and young people that you work with and how they will cope. Children and young people are likely to also feel anger and sadness in this situation. It may be helpful to reflect on the feelings associated with this period as relating to the process of grief as we are experiencing a loss of normality, fear of the future and loss of our usual way of connecting.

As ELSA trained staff you are well placed to support children and young people during this very challenging time. This document aims to provide guidance on what this support may look like and things to consider if working with students remotely.

Holding children and young people in mind

What children and young people are likely to find most difficult during this period is the loss of connection to relationships they have within school. As you know the relationships that you have with children and young people is the key to your work as an ELSA, therefore it is important to consider how the relationship can be maintained during this period.

Some ways that you can stay connected are:

- Send a postcard or letter
- Send an email
- Make a video to post on the school website

Working remotely

Your school may have already given guidance and policies on how to work remotely, in which case we hope that the following will add further reflection when considering ELSA work.

One of the key principles of ELSA practice is confidentiality and enabling children and young people a safe space to feel listened to and valued. Working remotely presents challenges to our ability to keep discussions confidential and safe, as we do not have control over the environment that we are working in.

Our recommendation is that ELSAs provide a 'light touch' approach to their work with students, rather than open and in-depth discussions that are more reliant on principles of confidentiality. This work may be alongside what is already being implemented by class teachers and other school staff. It may be beneficial to provide this weekly, if you can, as this would have been the routine within school.

'Light touch' ELSA work

Below are some suggestions on how to provide ELSA support during this period.

- Remind children and young people about their support networks
- Give strategies on how to support wellbeing
- Set daily or weekly wellbeing challenges
- Give worksheets or tasks related to strategies discussed within ELSA work
- Share online resources and support that they could access

Continue to check in with colleagues and your line manager within school when working remotely.

Working with Parents and Carers

As part of your ELSA role you may work closely with parents and carers to support children and young people. This period will of course be difficult for parents and carers and your school is likely to have a system in place to support them, which will be especially valuable during this time.

- This support could be regular phone calls, emails or messages to check how they are.
- Worksheets and challenges that are sent home could have an element that involves parents and carers.

Support from the Educational Psychology Service

The Educational Psychology Service is currently working remotely. All ELSA supervisors are available to support ELSAs through phone consultations, and email.

ELSA supervision can be offered remotely through video conferencing software. Individual supervision can also be provided if needed.

Please continue to check-in with your ELSA supervisor as we are mindful of our responsibility to support you with your wellbeing.

Considerations for remote ELSA supervision

Remote ELSA supervision is likely to feel strange initially as we are all trying to adapt to a new way of working. When accessing supervision remotely please consider the following:

- Find a quiet and private room to access remote supervision (if possible).
- Do not refer to student's names as we cannot ensure confidentiality.
- Use secure video conferencing software such as NCC Corporate Zoom.
- Be mindful to turn off your microphones when you are not talking.

How to contact us:

Main office: VLadmin@childrenfirstnorthamptonshire.co.uk

Please link with your ELSA supervisor:

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