**School ‘drop in’ consultations protocol**

**What is consultation?**

Consultation involves focussed collaborative discussion in which people who share concerns work together to identify ways forward. Consultation is about joint investigation, joint solution-building, joint planning and intervention, and joint evaluation and review. A consultation meeting may sometimes provide a framework for assessment and intervention.

Consultation has a number of key features:

* Participants are seen as equal in status and in sharing expertise
* Consultees should be the people most concerned and should retain ownership of the problem
* The goals of consultation are to facilitate reflection upon potential ways forward in the current context and to develop future problem-solving skills.

Benefits of consultation are:

* The expertise of staff and parents is recognised
* School staff acquire skills that can be applied elsewhere
* The need for repeated work by the EP with individual children is avoided, saving time.
* Consultation promotes good practice across the whole educational setting and this leads to wider lasting improvements.

A consultation drop in session will be offered to each school once a term or once a half term for secondary schools. The Educational Psychologist linked to each school will book an afternoon or morning session to be available in school for consultation. Participants of consultation could be SENCos, teachers, teaching assistants, learning mentors or any other adult working in school. It is the responsibility of the school SENCo to arrange a timetable of appointments; around a 30 minute appointment will be necessary to discuss concerns in sufficient depth but consultations should not last longer than 1 hour.

Issues brought to consultation could be:

* Individual pupils presenting concern.
* Groups of pupils in school causing concern (e.g. children with social communication difficulties or poor fine motor skills).
* Whole class concerns (e.g. behaviour management).
* Whole school concerns (e.g. improving writing or implementing a new behaviour policy).
* Locality, school or individual training needs.
* Locality issues (e.g. transition, new arrivals)

Schools do not need to gain parental consent to discuss a pupil as long as the pupil discussed remains anonymous. If the school wish to gain parental consent to discuss a pupil then the pupil can be named during discussion. If a pupil is an open case to the educational psychology service then they can be discussed by name.

A consultation session may explore different issues depending on the nature of the

concern, but may include, for example:

* History of the pupil’s education
* Current attainments, achievements and learning style
* Support the pupil has received/is currently receiving
* Pupil’s perception of themselves as learners
* Triggers for the behaviour
* Strategies that are effective
* Exceptions to the behaviour

The outcome of consultation is an informed picture, which can lead to the development of effective interventions. At the end of each consultation, strategies and actions are agreed and documented. Any agreed strategies should be implemented by the teacher, teaching assistant, parent or educational psychologist before the next drop in consultation session. The primary aim of consultation is to help the teacher work out appropriate classroom based interventions and to review and evaluate them. However, consultation also aims to increase the repertoire of skills a teacher has in working with all children.

It is the schools responsibility to keep a written record of pupils or issues discussed and any actions/outcomes that are made as a result of consultation. The educational psychologist will provide an example proforma schools may wish to use. Records of consultation should be kept in the pupils or SENCo’s files as a record of intervention and should be used as part of the ‘plan-do-review’ process. The Educational psychologist may make file notes if appropriate for pupils open to the service. If a child has a ‘My Plan’ or EHCP any consultation discussions will contribute to this process of ‘plan-do-review’. The EP will keep a list of pupil initials discussed at each consultation in the school file to refer to at the time of review.

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