



Supporting students to access remote therapy through the use of technology

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, we have had to be flexible as to how therapy is offered to children and young people. During periods of lockdown, there has been a greater emphasis on remote working via telephone or video conferencing software. In line with the Trust's guidelines and based on the most up to date government guidance, practitioners have been able to offer face to face appointments again for children and young people.

Where face to face appointments are not possible or feasible, whether in school or a clinical setting, some consideration should be given to the practicalities around how children and young people can be supported to access therapy sessions remotely from school to ensure their continued wellbeing.

Whilst remote therapy isn't the preferred way of doing things, there are some advantages to this way of working:

- Students will remain on school grounds, minimising the amount of teaching time missed
- Some students will be more comfortable with this set up as they are able to remain within a safe environment
- Negates practical/transport issues for students who may find it difficult to attend clinics in person
- Many children and young people are likely to be used to communicating using video technology
- Therapists are able to offer sessions in a 'Covid-friendly' manner, in line with government guidance
- Group-work will, in theory, be able to continue, although some thought should be given as to reducing the number of pupils involved in order to stay in line with social distancing guidelines. There is also the added complication of ensuring each student is able to access any equipment needed (for example, FRIENDS resilience groups will require each student to be able to access their digital workbook for each session), as well as ensuring school are able to commit appropriate numbers of staff to deal with any issues around safeguarding whilst still having staff available to support the remaining students with any technical issues.

Clearly there are certain factors to take into consideration in order to allow for this new way of working during the current climate. In order for this to be a smooth, seamless process, we ask that you consider the following 'best practice' guidelines for allowing students to access this support:



Staffing Considerations:

- There may be occasions where students may not be emotionally ready to return straight to class after their therapy appointments. Thought needs to be given as to how a member of staff can be available to support the transition from therapy session to class, particularly for those who may be in an emotional state at this time;
- Having a member of staff available close by also ensures someone is on hand to assist students with any technical issues that may arise when accessing remote therapy.
- It would be wise to ensure all staff are made aware that these sessions may be taking place in case they are approached by pupils in relation to their appointments.

Physical space considerations:

- Allow students use of a private room in which to meet with their therapist, where they will not be interrupted by students or staff;
- Ensure a thorough room-booking system is in place for the allocated room(s). Therapy sessions are medical appointments and should be treated as such, meaning it is important to ensure there are no double bookings or other hiccups resulting in students not being able to attend their appointments;

IT/Equipment considerations:

- Ensure students have use of a desktop or laptop computer, with camera, speakers and microphone access, since appointments will be offered via an NHS video link;
- Some students may wish to access telephone/voice only support. In order to do this they will need access either to their personal mobile or an allocated phone line on which their therapist can contact them;
- For video calls, practitioners will use an NHS platform called AccurX. When the practitioner opens the 'room', a link will be sent to the designated mobile phone number via SMS.
- From this point, the next step is dependent on what method the pupil is using to access this chat:
 1. If pupils are using a mobile phone to access the video call, they simply need to click on the link and follow the prompts;
 2. If they are using a computer, the link from the text message can be copied/pasted and emailed to themselves to open from the computer;
- From therapists' own experiences, Google Chrome is the most appropriate and stable web browser to use to open AccurX, although other browsers may work too. It would be worth testing this out well in advance as any technical issues may need to be directed to the school's IT link.



- If you know that a pupil in your school has appointments planned with mental health services and need to access this, it may be worth contacting the service first to ask someone to do a 'dry run' of this process with you for the first time. Remember you will need a mobile phone to receive the link and an email address you can access on the computer to forward it on to.
- In the event that the above is not possible in relation to providing pupils access to the appropriate equipment or safe space, school should consider circumstances where pupils may need to leave the school premises to use a parent's phone for the duration of their appointments.

Safeguarding Considerations:

- If a pupil makes a disclosure during a therapy session where we consider their safety may be at risk, then practitioners will refer to their NHS trust's policy and procedures for dealing with this, just as they would during face to face work. Our policy must be followed ahead of school's own policies.
- In the event of this happening, it is vital that there is a designated, contactable person within school who will be able to stay with the pupil to ensure their safety while processes are followed. As this person(s) will need to be available it would be wise to ensure that they are aware of any and all therapy sessions which have been arranged.
- Further details on our policies and procedures are available on request.

For further details or clarification, please contact:

Healthy Minds Team/Lifecycle - 0191 283 2937