Parenting Coaching over the phone during Coronavirus – Top Tips

Aim: to offer parenting support and evidence-based parenting skills over the phone. To help families to stay calm, provide positive activities and pull together during this difficult time.

Assessment

- New families: use the Early Help Assessment to gather information and direct formulation
- Consider using an SDQ and other tools within your assessment

Sessions

- Post assessment: use 1:1 Session forms to guide the conversation
- Length of sessions: they could last 45mins to 1hr so ask parents to arrange a time when their children are busy if possible
- Ask parents to either stop talking or to let you know in some other way if their child/children are in the room
- Allow at least 10 – 15mins to offload; use empathy and validation to show understanding for the stresses the families are under and acknowledge strengths
- Allow 5mins input when introducing and outlining new skills. Initially this will focus on positive attention, activities to keep families busy, praise and strategies to promote self-regulation etc.
- Draw pre-existing skills and ideas from parents by using collaborative questioning techniques e.g. ‘what happens when . . .’, ‘what do children want from us more than anything else?’
- Consider with parents how they will apply the strategies with their families at this point
• Continue to validate what an extraordinary position we are all in and how they will pull together...might they keep a scrapbook or diary about how they survived the shutdown? What stories will they tell their children and grandchildren about the things they did to get through? Encourage thinking about the positives of being together as a family without all of the usual routines and preoccupations

• Summarise any learning, skills or ideas and set home practice

• Let parents know if they want to talk to you before the next call, they can do so, preferably by texting first.

• Let them know the days and hours you are available to take calls

• After the call, e-mail or post any handouts related to the topics discussed

Other considerations:

• If possible, depending on capacity, offer extra calls or suggest parents can call you if they are stressed. Do remind them that you will be turning your phone off out of work hours or if you become sick yourself.

• Suggest Family Lives, Young Minds or other avenues of support as appropriate

• Check if they have any immediate financial or food poverty issues if appropriate

Parenting coaching could become a parenting course over the phone if sufficient sessions, engagement and topics are covered. In line with services reducing regulations during this period, and in acknowledgement that we do not know how long the shutdown period will last, we could reduce our bar of fidelity.