

South & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust: Family and Couple Systemic Psychotherapy Team - Southwark & Lambeth Integrated psychological therapies team and Southwark Psychosis service



Due to Covid 19, The Southwark and Lambeth Integrated Psychological Therapies Team and Southwark Psychosis Service were unable to see clients and their families for therapy face to face.

The team piloted an offer of family therapy / social network meetings via digital platforms, allowing families to access support remotely in UK and abroad.

In order for therapy to be offered via a digital platform, guidelines were written for therapists prior to offering online therapy. Guidelines included asking the clients if they were in a safe space to talk and how to manage various numbers of people joining the meeting remotely. The therapists would send an Information Sheet to families prior to the therapy session on how to use Microsoft Teams and would ask for their feedback on using a digital platform to ensure the team can adapt and develop their offer.

Impacts:

Utilising a digital platform, family therapy was accessible in time of crisis and allowed for flexibility amongst families and staff members. Families also did not need to be on a waiting list for face-to-face work if they were able to use the digital platform.

Other impacts include expanding the session to include some family members who would not have been able to access face to face therapy. Using a digital platform for therapy enables the team to meet the needs of the clients.

Case Studies



One family member able to join from Nigeria to support son, understand psychosis and at a time convenient to them.

A young woman with autism was moving from CAMHS to adult mental health services. A sibling from school and her parents from work were able to join the therapy session virtually, which helped with transition to adult services and greater understanding of the problem and new ways forward at a time of crisis.



Couple with depression who were attending therapy face to face at the beginning of lockdown able to continue the therapy whilst also living separately due to work /social circumstances.

Next Steps

Develop a hybrid model of accessibility and acceptability for including families via digital platforms and face to face therapy work.

Continuing to offer other professional team members to join to promote learning and communication through a digital reflecting team model.

Further research on digital exclusion and poverty is required.