

Therapeutic Thinking

What is Therapeutic Thinking?

Therapeutic Thinking provides a set of principles and an approach that is designed to better understand and meet young people's needs. The underlying theory and a practical, graduated set of tools supports leaders with the development of policy, culture and practice in relation to young people's behaviour. It has had wide ranging impact in other Local Authorities, contributing to reducing exclusions, improving staff confidence, and developing relationships.

The training equips school leaders to become Therapeutic Thinking Tutors for their setting. Following the three day course, Tutors can deliver accredited training for staff in their setting.

Equally important is the role Therapeutic Thinking Tutors play in leading a whole school approach to young people's behaviour and attitudes. This has wide ranging implications in many areas, and Therapeutic Thinking includes coverage of all of the following;

- Whole school culture
- Effective policy
- Daily practice and interactions
- Graduated response
- Co-ordinating services

Leaders are supported to review the current practice in their settings and develop an implementation plan that builds on existing strengths and addresses causes for concern. Examples include attendance, persistent absence, suspensions and exclusions, physical intervention and handling, young people in crisis, and low level disruption.

Where has this been rolled out and what has the impact been?

Therapeutic Thinking leads Angela Wadham and Adam Hayes have worked in education and children's services for decades, using their years of expertise and research to develop this programme in conjunction with adopting local areas. The approach is now operating in 12 Local Authority Areas and large multi-academy trusts. Read more about the work and [testimonials](#).

As the approach embeds in a local area, there has been evidence of significant reductions in the need for suspensions or exclusions, eradicating the need for the use of restrictive physical intervention (sometimes known as positive handling) of children, or the need for more specialist services or provision. These outcomes are even greater if the headteacher attends the tutor training.

What are the aims of the training?

- To support settings to develop a therapeutic approach to behaviour.
- To ensure all children and young people, regardless of any SEND needs, their emotional wellbeing or identified behaviour needs receive their entitlement to full-time education, balanced curriculum, and extra-curricular activities.
- To enable schools and other settings create an inclusive ethos and an accessible learning environment in which children and young people can actively participate.
- To enhance the ability and capacity of school's other settings, and the local authority to work in partnership to secure measurable outcomes for all children and young people.
- To improve the consistency and effectiveness of partnership working between schools, education settings and other agencies, leading to sustained quality outcomes.
- To reduce and ultimately eliminate exclusions by considering more inclusive alternatives.
- To ensure that resources are deployed equitably and transparently.
- To focus on securing a cost-effective approach and long-term value for money.
- To create clear channels of accountability which enable the effective monitoring of outcomes.

Why have we adopted this approach in Ealing?

We are committed to tackling the systemic and persistent over-representation of Black Caribbean pupils and Somali pupils in Ealing's suspension and exclusion data across both primary and secondary phases, through our [Race Equality ambitions](#). Adopting Therapeutic Thinking is one strand of the response to this inequality, designed to ensure schools better understand young people's needs.

We are ambitious for all children and young people in Ealing. Each and every one is entitled to an appropriate, full time education, irrespective of their needs. In 2021 the [Social, emotional and mental health \(SEMH\) review](#) found inconsistent practice, incomplete services and a limited graduated response to young people's social and emotional needs. Therapeutic Thinking provides a response to these findings and is offered free to all Ealing schools from 2022 – 2024. In addition a dedicated Therapeutic Thinking Lead co-ordinates its roll out across the borough, ensuring a coherent Local Authority provision and providing high quality support to schools.

What is involved in the training?

- Two members of staff from each school are trained (either on the same course or different courses).
- Ideally, staff will include the Headteacher or Service Lead and another member of SLT.
- The Tutor Training runs for three consecutive days (day 1 at Ealing Education Centre and days 2/3 on MS Teams).
- There is a one day refresher course annually thereafter.
- We ask that you will support us with gathering data of impact and outcomes before and during your commitment to Therapeutic Thinking.
- We encourage trained Tutors to attend network events and additional deep-dive extended training on specific "hot topics" to strengthen practice.

When is the training and how can I sign up?

Annual refresher

23 March 2026 8:30am - 3:30pm

Available to existing or future tutors. [Book via CPD online](#)

3 day tutor training

- Day 1: 29 April 2026 | 8:30am - 3:30pm In-person, Ealing Education Centre, Greenford, UB6 9EH
- Day 2: 30 April 2026 | 8:30am - 3:30pm Microsoft Teams
- Day 3: 1 May 2026 | 8:30am - 3:30pm Microsoft Teams

[Book via CPD online](#)

How can I find out more?

Contact Dee Higgins

Check out the [Ealing Therapeutic Thinking padlet](#).

Related content

[Emotionally based school non attendance \(EBSNA\)](#)

Contact:

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