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Since the Covid-19 pandemic began, I have been doing a combination of working at home and working in the office. It has been a very strange experience and I have had the added challenge of home schooling my two children at times too. On top of this, we have been renovating a house throughout this whole time (which has been an interesting experience getting hold of trades people, plasterboard, plaster, wood, windows, etc etc). We have then moved into this house and I would like to announce that I would like to never move again in my whole life, and I am happy to be held to this!

Although I have enjoyed the opportunity to still come into the office and see my colleagues, I have also really enjoyed working at home and feel that I am well suited to this, as I am able to focus on my work at home and even when the kids are running around shouting I am able to shut out all this background commotion somehow! When I worked at the office in Beverley a few years ago which was open plan, I had a reputation for focusing closely on what I was doing and completely missing the chit chat around me! However, this is not always the case on the phone, and only last week I was on the phone with my line manager Alison Haynes and the kids ran into the room screaming, and I managed a quick and loud “KIDS!!!” while furiously pointing to my phone and giving them a stern look! As we had just moved in and building work was not complete, there were no doors in place to enable me to shut out the kids!

Home schooling was an interesting (if the dictionary definition of interesting is ‘awful’) experience as, although my kids are really well behaved at school, at home with the safety of their parents it’s a slightly different matter! I am sure my 8 year old boy doesn’t slump on the desk with his arms and head laid out, or lay down on the bench while he is supposed to be working at school! As my wife and I are keyworkers, our kids were going to school part time but not doing any school work. Instead, at school they were doing things like seeing how many marshmallows they could fit in their mouths, so on the days when they weren’t in school, the home schooling didn’t go down very well at all and it was really stressful! I would rather deal with the builders!

As with all our services, the IPED service has had to adapt, and although we already had a decent online presence for IPED users with text, phone, email and live chat being offered as online methods of contact for service users, we have seen an increase in the use of these services. We have also introduced the use of video calling for psychosocial interventions appointments which have worked really well. Video call sessions that have worked particularly well have been those where it was a three way conversation between myself, the service user and our IPED peer mentor. The service users really benefited from these sessions and this was probably something that would not have happened if it wasn’t for the pandemic. Due to the nature of the large geography of the East Riding and our IPED peer mentor’s long working hours, a three way face to face session would never have happened. As with the combination of working at home and in the office, I think there are pros



and cons to face to face contact and video calling, and I feel that going forward, the use of both could be utilised further as a way of breaking down barriers caused by, for example, people living a fair distance apart and enabling contacts to happen in different ways.

Although I don't have a photo of home schooling in lockdown (it was too traumatic!), this photo is a recreation of how I and the kids remember it!