

# Info sheet COVID 19



# Remote Child Protection Services: Ensuring Safety

Area of intervention General guidance

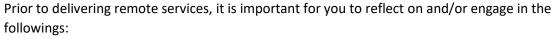
# **Key objectives**

To highlights key considerations when delivering CP remote services

# **Audience**

Frontline workers &
Supervisors

# **Key pre-requisites**



- Update your information on available services;
- Develop safety protocols and referral pathways;
- Adapt child safeguarding policies and apply do No harm principle;
- Ensure you and your colleagues are **equipped to work remotely**.

Note: Be sure to read beforehand the info sheet on Remote Child Protection Services modality.



# **Child safeguarding considerations**

General **safeguarding principles remain** and should be **strengthened**. However, whilst working in extraordinary circumstances, **specific risks and measures** can arise and should be taken into consideration.

# **Specific risks**

- Difficulty to get informed consent.
- One-to-one contact with a child (In most situations it's best practice to have at least two adults present when working with children and youth. Online one-to-one sessions should be risk assessed).
- Children are spending more time online, and most of the time unsupervised.
- Exchange of photos and messages.
- Some platforms also offer the option of collecting information through forms set up by the program.
- Children have limited/no privacy to share their concerns freely.

#### TIPS

- Make sure parents, carers and children understand the benefits and risks of remote services and get written consent for children to be involved.
- Use work phones, call from a block number. If possible – hold the calls from the office.
- Strengthen supervision.
- Attribute new cases to experienced staff.
- Sensitize children about online safety, about the benefits and risks of the online world and give them space to ask questions and talk about anything that worries them.
- Provide green lines, helplines number.
- Be careful in choosing the platform you will use (cf. Infosheet on CP remote services modality).

It is more challenging to manage risks remotely, so it is important to have developed **protocols for managing risks of harm** including child protection issues, self-harm, remote services.





# How do you ensure privacy and confidentiality?

- Call from a private room.
- Before conducting the session, **ask details about the room** the beneficiary is in to ensure it is private and **agree on a plan** for what to do if someone comes in or it is no longer comfortable or safe to talk (agree on a word for example).
- Check in repeatedly with the beneficiary to make sure that they **understand the process of working remotely**, that they are able to engage with it in a meaningful way, and that they feel safe and contained when working remotely.
- Ask about the beneficiary's comfort and privacy level when there seems to have been a change (such as hesitation or silence) or if there is an **increase in background noise.**



#### **Communication considerations**

Differences between communicating online and communicating face-to-face should be acknowledged.

Despite the lack of visual cues, expressing warmth, genuineness and empathy should continue to be the priority as it is in face-to face support.

#### **General advices**

- Pay extra attention to non-visual cues (contradictory answers, prolonged silences, frequent topic changes...).
- Think about how you will initiate contact, or respond to contact, in a way that helps build trust and rapport.
  - If new case (Explain who you are, Listen / Understand the situation, Confirm/Ask for needs, Show empathy, Reassure for continuing support).
  - Psychological first aid technics can support with managing a shorter and supportive discussion.
- **Minimize miscommunication** by checking in regularly with the beneficiary.
  - When communicating through text or chat, one should be aware of how their words may be misinterpreted (and avoid using emojis & Internet slang when chat).
- Utilize active listening skills to calm and orient people who may be overwhelmed Silence (hum hum...), Paraphrase, Validate, Anticipatory guidance, Recognize...

#### Questions you might ask

Determine what questions you might ask that are nonintrusive, nonleading, compassionate, and helpful to identify needs and concerns.

- I am so sorry to hear you lost your job. When you say the situation is 'very bad' can you tell me more about what you mean?
- I hear that you are worried about your job, it sounds like your biggest and most immediate worry right now is making sure you can take care of your family – pay your bills, make sure your children are fed. Is that true?
- I wish I could tell you when this would all be over and things will go back to normal. Unfortunately, I am not sure anyone knows for sure right now. What I can do though, is find out more about your immediate worries and see if there is anything we can do to get you help and support. Is it OK for me to ask a few questions?
  - You know, this situation is so hard and the feelings you are having are normal and they may go one for a while. Do you have anybody you can talk to about how you are feeling?
  - Is your family able to do anything to help manage the stress and pressure of the situation right now?



# **Dealing with high psychosocial distress**

#### When the person you are talking to:

- is very anxious and unable to calm him/herself
- expresses very low mood, extreme or unable to function as usual in their daily life
- is very agitated and unable to focus or maintain a conversation with you

#### You can:

- Give the space and time to cry/ to express their emotion.
- Healing statements and validating the child or adults' feelings. "It must be difficult'.
- Express empathy "I am sorry this happened to you".
- Try to understand the reason for the strong emotions (sadness, fear or worry).
- Propose to the individual to stop the call is they wish / take a break.
- Build trust and relationship "I believe you" "I'm glad that you told me"
- Non-blaming message "This is not your fault"
- Reassure without making promises "You are very brave to talk with me. We will try to help you"
  - Follow the safety protocol for any referral needed if you fee worry for the person's life.



### When the person you are talking to:

- is hesitant to answer or seems to lie about answers,
- says that they are scared to talk on the phone

#### You can:

- Try to understand the reason for the fear or worry
- Normalise and validate their feelings of fear and worry
- Reassure the child/ adult about the concept of privacy and confidentiality
- Check the beneficiary's surroundings are they in a private and safe space?
- If there's a protection issue :
  - o Get more information over the phone if it's safe to do so
  - If there might be a risk of harm, do not ask further questions over the phone
  - o Follow the locally developed safety protocol, including referral

# **Dealing with frustration/angriness**

# When the person you are talking to:

refuses to talk, stops responding or begins to accuse you.

## You can:

- Stay calm (calm voice) and don't take it personally!
- Reformulate and validate feelings "You are right. I can't get your job back for you,
  I can try and see if I can help in other ways."
- Don't pressure in answering/say things they don't want to answer/say
- Maintain the link and support "I am here to help you"



## **Useful links**

https://www.qmul.ac.uk/sbcs/media/sbcs/documents/QMUL\_Guidance-for-Delivering-Psychological-Treatment-to-Children-via-Pho....pdf

https://rescue.app.box.com/s/gyyamhkhznnhiqpe9g8w32yiw6ro0u34











