



## Remote Child Protection Services: Ensuring Safety

**Area of intervention**  
General guidance

**Key objectives**  
To highlight key considerations when delivering CP remote services

**Audience**  
Frontline workers  
&  
Supervisors

### Key pre-requisites

Prior to delivering remote services, it is important for you to reflect on and/or engage in the followings:

- 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 on 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 if 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 feel worry for the person's life.



## Dealing with fear

### 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 :**
  - 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
  - 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://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/gyyamhkhznnhique9g8w32yiw6ro0u34>