

Safeguarding Guidance for Remote Interactions with Young People

During this period of uncertainty, it's essential that we continue to maintain contact with young people to support them during important transition periods such as progression to Post 16 or Post 18 learning, training or employment. However, this work will take different forms that require additional thought to ensure that both young people and practitioners are appropriately safeguarded.

Any of your current organisation's safeguarding procedures need to be adhered to – such as ensuring any practitioners conducting one-to-one interactions are DBS checked, have undertaken safeguarding training and adhere to statutory safeguarding guidance. All practitioners should make themselves aware of who the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is in their organisation, how to contact them and how to make safeguarding referrals during this time.

Practitioners and management should discuss and agree:

- All aspects of planning for and scheduling of one-to-one virtual sessions.
- Methods of delivery that enable all young people to take part regardless of access to technology, disability and environment.
- An appropriate process in the event of a crisis arising during an online one-to-one session.
- Procedures to notify students of their appointment in advance including how to access the technology.
- Methods of informing parents of the remote support available and how this will work – this could also include signposting links to other trustworthy organisations.

[NSPCC example-consent-form](#)

Remote delivery can include:

Real time methods e.g.

Video (Skype, Zoom, WhatsApp, Microsoft Teams. Google Hangouts etc)

Telephone

Instant chat

Delayed response

E-mail, letter. Text

Contracting

Practitioners should ensure that the contracting part of the interaction takes place – even where the adviser has previously engaged with the young people – and that this is clear and understood. This should include the core areas such as Safeguarding, GDPR – as well as time of the interview and the ethics of a good interaction e.g. explore all options, the ability for the young person to leave if they wish, be honest, ask questions.

Good practice for virtual meetings

Disclosure: students sometimes disclose information and emotion very quickly online. Practitioners need to understand the dynamics underpinning this kind of response so that they can work effectively with students who exhibit this.

Risk Assessment: practitioners should assess each situation before the session and also pro-actively during the session to assess the risk to themselves and the young person and take action or change their approach accordingly.

- Most meetings should be held within an agreed timeframe (e.g normal school times) and not exceed the normal duration of a face to face interaction (e.g 45 minutes) except in expectational circumstances
- A record of each meeting should be kept. This should include the method of delivery and summary of the discussion and any actions that were agreed. All records must be kept secure in line with usual GDPR requirements.
- Where possible try to avoid 1:1 situations - a parent, teacher or other responsible adult can be invited to the meeting and drop in from time to time with the agreement of the young person.
- Make sure the platform you are using is suitable for their age group, agreed by school or college management. Also check the privacy settings so that it is secure as possible from outside hacking.
- All practitioners and young people must wear suitable clothing, including anyone else in the household.
- Any devices used should be in appropriate areas, for example, not in bedrooms. Consider the background that the young person will see on video.
- Language must be professional and appropriate, including that of any family members in the room.
- Webinars and live broadcast should be recorded where possible to maintain a record of the activity. You will need to store this in line with GDPR requirements.

CPD

Practitioners should be honest about their skills and knowledge regarding conducting remote interactions. This should include their ability to use technology effectively and an awareness of how electronic data and information are stored, along with the ethical and legal requirements of service delivery. They should ask line managers for advice and support if they are not confident in these areas.

References and other sources of information

The Department for Education have released the following safeguarding guidance for schools and colleges during the Covid-19 situation. It is useful for providers to be aware of the content and use to contextualise alternative services:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-safeguarding-in-schools-colleges-and-other-providers/coronavirus-covid-19-safeguarding-in-schools-colleges-and-other-providers>



The Careers and Enterprise Company– Guidelines for Providers (April 2020)

NCGE Ireland - Good Practice for 'Virtual' one-to-one sessions (April 2020)