



Online Contact with Families: Key Guidance for Noah's Ark Staff and Volunteers March 2020

This Policy and Practice document has been compiled to outline key guidelines and support best practice for delivering social and/or therapeutic interactions with families using video conferencing applications and webcams. Online Music Therapy has been developed by Suffolk Music Therapy Services (SMTS) in response to a growing number of clients self-isolating with schools and care homes in lockdown as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic in March 2020. They have been kind enough to share their work.

SMTS state:

“Due to limited access to individual and group Music Therapy sessions, we have developed an approach that will enable our Music Therapists to work remotely with a range of clients with different needs. The fundamental principles of Music Therapy remain the same and the aims and goals for each individual will continue to guide our therapeutic work. Online Music Therapy can only be delivered by a qualified and registered Music Therapist”.

The general principles highlighted by SMTS are clear can be applied to our work at Noah's Ark Children's Hospice whilst in lockdown, and they have been adapted accordingly

OVERVIEW

We recommend that all staff and volunteers carefully read this document and follow the guidelines.

We also recommend the use of the 'Zoom' application as this is a widely recognised, secure and approved tool for confidential video conferencing.

Zoom is GDPR compliant and is a very versatile app.

Set up Zoom App

The 'Zoom App' is a safe and secure way to deliver therapies and social interactions. However, when opening an account as a Noah's Ark Volunteer, please ensure that your account details maintain your confidentiality i.e. use 'Volunteer' or Noah's Ark in place of your surname.

In preparation, please download the Zoom app and test to see if it is all working correctly and that you know how to use it. Zoom can be downloaded onto a laptop, computer, phone or tablet.

Getting Started: click on link below

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362033-Getting-Started-on-Windows-and-Mac>

Download App: click on link below

https://zoom.us/download#client_4meeting

Setting Up

It is really important that you are aware of your surroundings when using the Zoom app, or any other webcam application. The space in which you are delivering the work becomes a 'work' room. There should not be pictures of family or friends, phone numbers or other sensitive information in the background. Consider the lighting. Generally, keep the lighting levels high and try not to have a window or light behind you as you may 'silhouette'. Are you close to the camera or far away? It is best that you are close to the camera but not too close. What room are you in? The room that you are using needs to be private without children, distractions, pets and partners. Confirm that no-one is likely to open the door in the room, perhaps by putting a reminder note on the door.

As a rule, we recommend that you position yourself with your head and shoulders visible on the screen. In your settings, ensure that the client is the larger image where possible and the staff member/volunteer, is the smaller image. Make sure you keep the image of yourself on the screen as this allows you to see what the client is seeing.

Background noise. Is the dishwasher or washing machine on in the room next door? Are there other sounds that may distract or interfere with the interaction. Try and keep the background noise to a minimum.

Are you using the microphone for speech or music? If you are using for music, then you may need a better quality microphone. Test to see if the levels are working well. The general rule is that you are close to the microphone so that it picks up your voice with clarity.

For best results, we highly recommend that there is a very good wi-fi signal present for both parties. If there is a poor signal, then the video may freeze and the audio cut in and out, making the experience very frustrating and non-productive. Please check you have a very good wi-fi signal in both places.

Role Play and Test

We highly recommend that you test and role-play making music when using the Zoom App before you contact families. It is crucial that you are familiar with the tool, so you can help the family set it up on their end and you can help to troubleshoot if they need any assistance. As a guide, we recommend that you trial the Online Approach 2 – 3 times with a Supervisor or colleague. Once you are confident, you are then good to go.

Headphones

For best results and clarity of sound, we recommend that therapists use wired headphones. Bluetooth headphones may create some delay and this is undesirable. We also recommend that you think about the type of headphones that you are using as this could be potentially distracting or 'different' for your client and may impede your relationship. Try and use headphones which are more subtle and try not to use a pair that looks like you are wearing something that's more suitable on an airport runway!

Using Microphones

Think about the microphone set up very carefully.

Most devices like iPads and laptops have mics and webcams built in. Think about how far the sound will be to the microphone. If you are playing an instrument, think about where the microphone is positioned so that it can be heard clearly. It is important that during the session you can see the microphone levels so that the client doesn't just hear a very distorted sound or at the other extreme, nothing at all. The level monitor on the Zoom app will help you work this out.

Testing audio levels: click on link below

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362283-Testing-computer-or-device-audio>

Optimise the sound level:

There is lots of technology behind the microphones and audio in Zoom. Therefore, we have found that it is best to keep quite still when you are speaking as this disrupts the levels. Try to position the mic near the sound source and closer to your voice.

Think about where you position the laptop (camera).

Make sure that it is safe and not too far away.

Safeguarding, Confidentiality and Data Protection

It is essential that a parent is present if you are working remotely with a child. When you are communicating with parents about setting up Zoom, please request that 'it is important that a parent is present during the Online sessions'. This is a safeguarding requirement and with the support of the parent present, this will also help aid the Therapy session. If during an online interaction, there is a safeguarding concern, the Safeguarding Lead/Team will be notified and normal safeguarding procedures will apply.

When checking to set up Online sessions/interactions with families and children, please request that there is consent given for this to be delivered. Ensure that the family and individual fully understand how their data will be used and stored.

Please go through with the family and send them The Guide for Parents document.

You should document that this has been completed by keeping a record. The Guide for Parents (Online Music Therapy) also includes **The NA Data Protection and Privacy Statement**. Explain the risks to using Webcams (see section below) and gain their consent before proceeding.

Document everything with date and time and signature as per Noah's Ark documentation guidelines.

When discussing setting up Online contact, please remind families that children should be suitably dressed for safeguarding reasons and it goes without saying that the staff and volunteers should do the same.

How to Prevent Webcam Hacking

We know that cameras can give snoopers a look into your private life. Ways to reduce this are:

1. Cover your Webcam, or disable it if you don't use it – it has been reported that even Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and former FBI director James Comey put tape over theirs.
2. Always use up to date antivirus software and make sure that your 'firewall' is enabled. Only use your camera over a secure internet connection. Keep your operating system, browser and software up to date. Don't click on suspicious links and don't chat with strangers online.
3. Be wary of fake emails which appear to be sent from trusted sources and ask you to download attachments, click on a link or disclose any personal details.

General Rules for several people using Zoom

For a group Zoom call, it is best to 'schedule' a meeting. We also recommend that there is a 'chair'. Everyone should mute themselves when they are not speaking. If someone would like to say something, then they should raise their hand to indicate that they wish to speak. The reason for this is to maximize the audio quality for the meeting and ensure that everyone has an opportunity to contribute.

Movement when using Webcams

The software built into the webcam applications is very sophisticated. It also tries to find ways of efficiently sending the video information while maintaining quality. For best video results, we have found that it is important to stay still and move and gesture slowly as the camera will pick this up much better and it will create a better viewing experience for the client. If you move quickly, your image will appear jerky and may drop in and out at points.

Overview of online contact

When planning an Online session in advance, think about including the following:

- A 'check-in' with the individual on how they are. Please be aware that what is being discussed with a parent should be suitable for the child to hear also. If the parent wishes to have a separate conversation away from the child, this may be more appropriate.

- Request that the client's device is positioned at the right height for them (ask client or carers to assist with this).
- If they have an additional speaker you could suggest they use this so that you come across as clearly as possible.
- A 'check-out' time is offered which enables the individual to talk about the session, review and think about the week ahead, etc.

TOP TIPS

How to Adjust Audio and Video Settings on Zoom

To adjust audio or video settings, click on the link below:

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362623-Changing-settings-in-the-desktop-client-or-mobile-app>

Is the Microphone Connected?

Check your zoom app is connected to your external microphone (if you have one). When on a video call, bottom left corner, by 'mute' there is a little arrow... click on that arrow and then under 'select a microphone' click on your external microphone.

How to Invite People to Zoom Sessions

When inviting people by zoom, sending them the personal ID number is simplest. On the zoom home page they click 'JOIN' and then enter the ID number when prompted. Another way to invite someone is by email. Click 'Meetings' at the top of Zoom home page then 'copy invitation'. Paste this into an email to the person you want to invite. However, it is best to get rid of all the blurb that's been copied – and just write, 'please copy and paste this link into your browser', and include the web link.

Don't Forget to Make Eye Contact!

Don't forget to look up to make eye contact with the client. Remember, to look at the camera to create eye contact (they are not actually behind the computer screen!).

Technical Problems

There are a number of weblinks and online tutorials to help with any troubleshooting with Zoom.

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/categories/200101697>

Safeguarding Concerns

If there are any safeguarding concerns that arise during any Online contact session, the usual Noah's Ark processes will apply – contact the Safeguarding Lead/Team (Catherine Toohey; Eleanor Frost; Charlotte Alldridge; Hayley Manley) or social services.

Credits:

Information adapted from the guidelines issued and shared by Suffolk Music Therapy Service 21st March 2020

Catherine Toohey
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