

Summary of intermediary's discussions

22/03/20-30/03/20

Intermediaries have given positive feedback on the recently held Zoom 'group meeting when all members were invited to attend to discuss the Covid-19 crises and its impact on their role. Noting it was very helpful as well as reassuring to share and hear others views and information on the situation.

Other issues that arose during the week concerned the OIC role in ensuring whether witnesses and their families were asymptomatic and whether any persons involved had been in contact with suspected or confirmed Covid 19 cases. The developing discussions raised concerns about or lack of, the police forces guidance they were working to with regards to minimising risk to all involved in investigating processes. There have been more positive reports of ABE interviews being successful undertaken mindful of and incorporating government guidance.

Other areas discussed centred round what was best practice to continue to work as 'essential workers' or to withdraw at the current moment in line with Government guidance to reduce spread of Covid-19. Intermediaries have indicated that police forces are responding very differently from one another and some are being told to approaching work as 'business as usual'.

Debate has been had as to whether it is practical to work at a 'safe distance' when working with many vulnerable persons particularly children. It was noted how challenging it is to follow guidance issued and attend assessments with VP's particularly in their homes. It was highlighted that intermediaries should not undertake work they feel exposes them to unacceptable risk s. It is legitimate to refuse work even if you had previously accepted to undertake it.

It has been stressed how important supporting colleagues is at this time .

Discussions have included the issues c around virtual assessments and how this might be approached or not. Some intermediaries have already started undertaking remote assessments. Concern has been raised as to whether a virtual assessment will be considered as accurate or acceptable to the courts.

Compiled by Ann King