

IFJ COVID-19 Ongoing Updates

07/04/20-08/04/20

A variety of links to potentially useful documents have been shared over the last two days. Although not specifically focused on the intermediary role but are a useful source of information relevant to the role.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-social-distancing-in-education-and-childcare-settings>

<https://www.policestationrepuk.com/national-protocol>

<https://www.caseratio.co.uk/security/complaintform>

<http://www.transparencyproject.org.uk/remote-justice-a-judges-perspective/>

<https://www.lccsa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/KH-National-Protocol-02.04.20.pdf>

Issues and topics arising over the last few days include

Even after enquiring whether any family members were fit to attend an ABE interview one member arrived actually unwell.

Concerns raised as to standards of cleaning of venues prior to ABE interviews including toys available in waiting area.

CPS requiring assessments and reports to be completed even when there is not a particular urgency.

IfJ have written to both NCA and MOJ regarding concerns for intermediaries undertaking work at this time (see IfJ website for copy of letter)

NCA replied and noted MOJ is the lead organisation on such policy matters. And noted Kev Smith is working on guidance with the NPCC lead which is due to be published very soon. They recommended that RI's consider all cases on a case by case basis. The guidance will be available on RIO and will address interviews but not assessments.

The guidance notes interviews should be delayed whenever possible and if involving child, VP or a complaint of a sexual nature taking into account government guidance on social distancing etc.

Intermediaries have noted that those who are traumatised, certain MH conditions (and others who may require additional support during an interview) or dissociate, young children, those with LD may not make sense of being interviewed remotely. And in the case of traumatised individuals it could be very detrimental to their wellbeing.

A question was raised as to whether interviewing guidance is less stringent than that published for custody protocol.

The issue of whether it is appropriate to wear PPE was discussed and whether a witness can be filmed for ABE purposes wearing a face mask. There have been reports of assessments being undertaken with officers wearing PPE.

Copy of interview guidance could not be shared with Ifj but Kev Smith reported that a proportionate use of PPE should be considered if a risk assessment suggests it is appropriate. Which raised an issue on the type and nature of the police risk assessment.

Today (08/04/2020) Samantha Dine has responded to IFJ email and has requested to speak with IfJ. And that issues raised in the letter are helpful and being relayed.

NCA announced today that it had received a NPCC commission to draft guidance for RI's, Police, and CPS covering RI pre-ABE and pre-trial assessments with witnesses and victims during Covid -19 . .

There is a Zoom meeting for all IFJ members to discuss current issues on 09/04/2020 at 13.00hrs please see WhatsApp for further information.