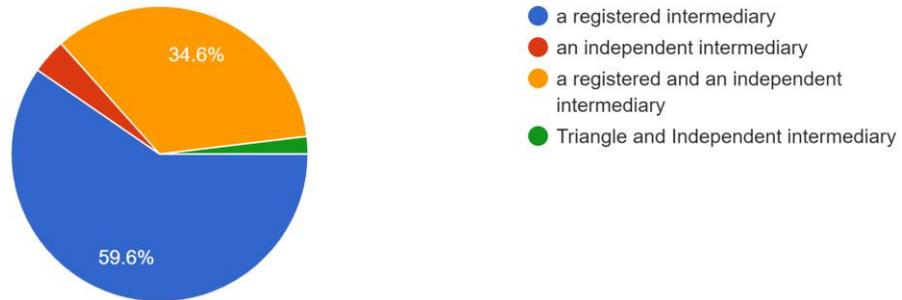


## Covid- 19 survey 4 of IFJ members and intermediaries 17.05.20

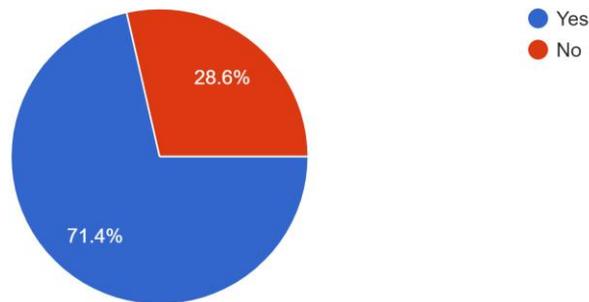
I work as....

52 responses



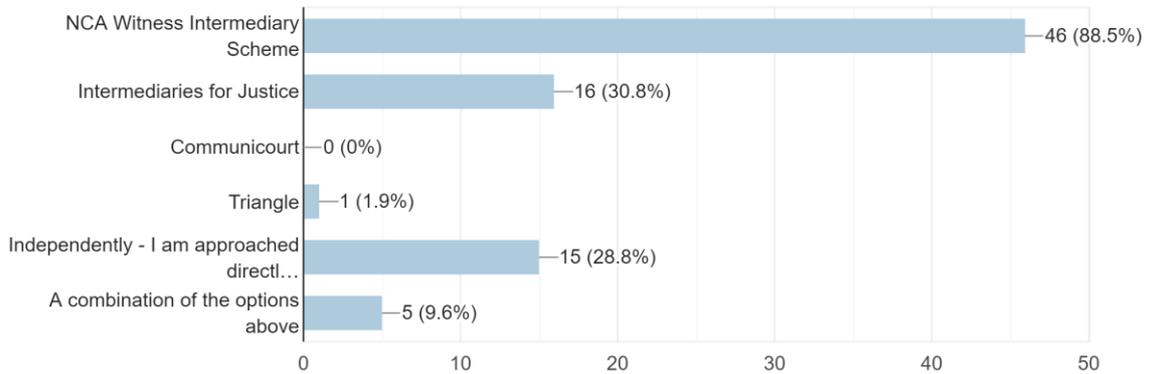
Are you a member of IFJ?

21 responses



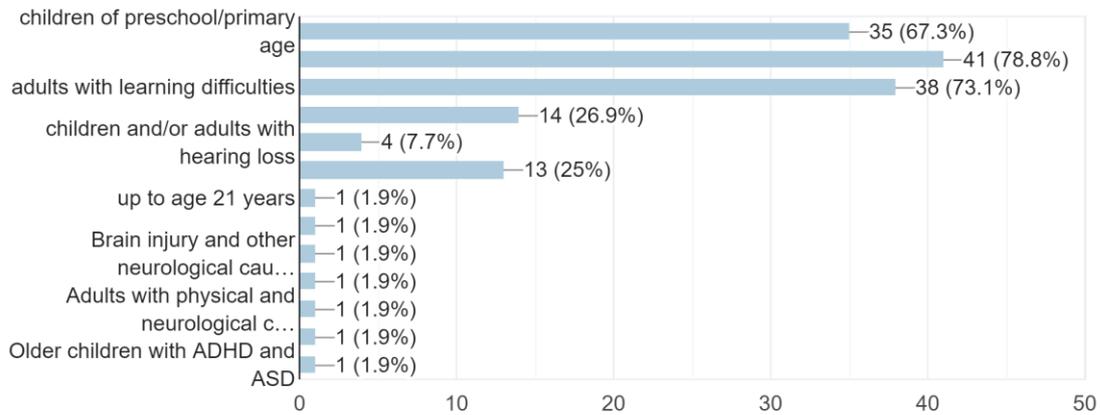
From which source(s) do you obtain work?

52 responses



I assist

52 responses



I assist

children of preschool/primary age

Teenagers

adults with learning difficulties

adults with mental health issues

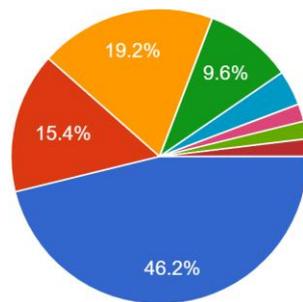
children and/or adults with hearing loss

older population

Other

I mainly assist (choose one)

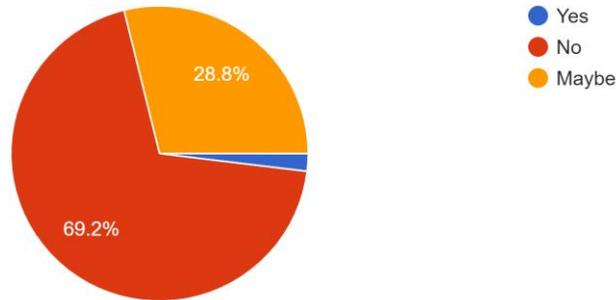
52 responses



- children of preschool/primary age
- teenagers
- adults with learning difficulties
- adults with mental health issues
- children and/or adults with hearing loss
- older population
- people with dual diagnosis of learning difficulties and mental health issues
- Split between adults and older childre...
- Adult physical (neurological)

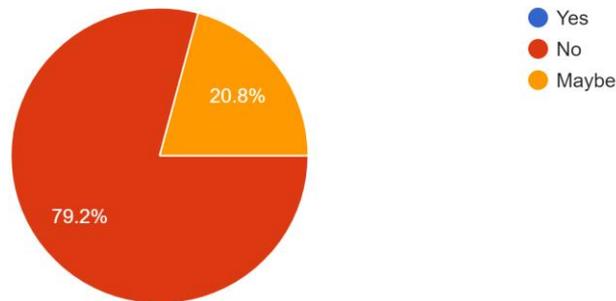
### Have you had the virus?

52 responses



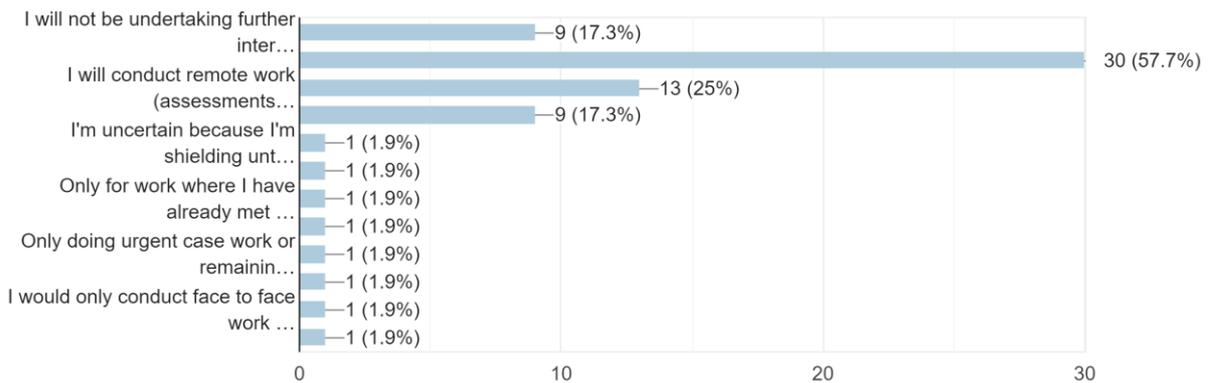
### If yes, do you think you contracted it when working as an intermediary?

24 responses



### My working practices now

52 responses



### My working practices now \*

I will not be undertaking further intermediary work at this time

I will conduct work face to face using social distancing

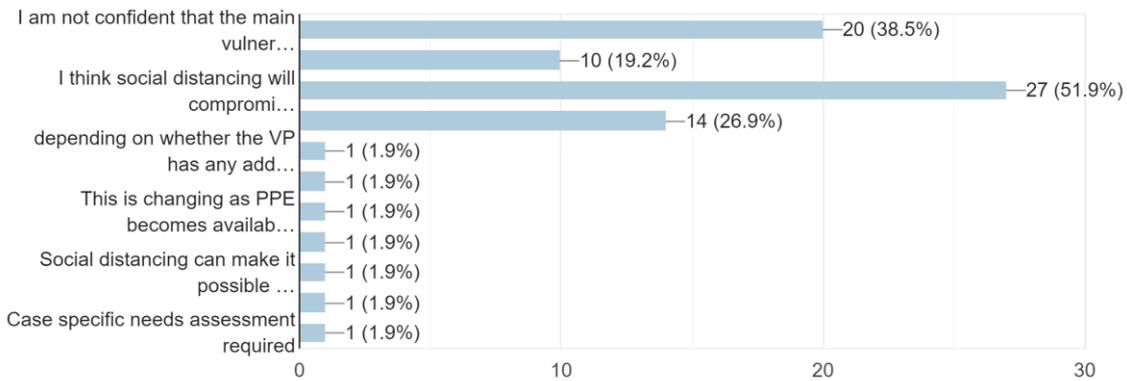
I will conduct remote work (assessments and where appropriate, assistance at remote hearings) with vulnerable people

I will only attend remote hearings to present information about vulnerable people

Other:

### Your views about social distancing now

52 responses



### Your views about social distancing now \*

I am not confident that the main vulnerable person (VP) group I work with can maintain a safe social distance.

I think communicating at a social distance with vulnerable people is safe and effective.

I think social distancing will compromise communication.

I do not consider that it is in everyone's best interests for me to be travelling and working in this way at the moment. My focus is on containing the pandemic.

Other:

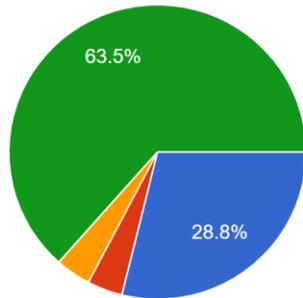
### Your views about guidelines issued in relation to remote working

52 responses



Perceptions of your own ability to work remotely. If remote working with a vulnerable person is required...Assessment

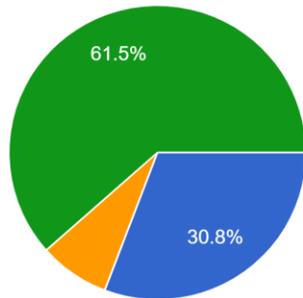
52 responses



- I would decline as I do not feel confident in my ability to assess communication via remote working.
- I would accept the request as I feel confident in my ability to assess communication via remote working.
- I feel my ability to assess communication may be compromised...
- I would accept the request on a case by case basis

Perceptions of your own ability to work remotely from the VP. If remote working with a vulnerable person was required....in court/ABE

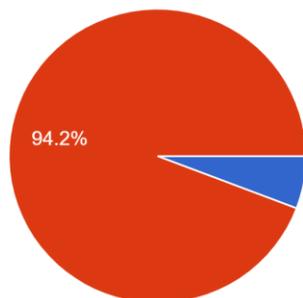
52 responses



- I would decline as I do not feel confident in my ability to facilitate communication via remote working.
- I would accept the request as I feel confident in my ability to facilitate communication via remote working.
- I feel my ability to facilitate communication may be compromised...
- I would accept the request on a case basis and consider whether I could...

Earlier in the survey you identified the main client group you work with - what are your perceptions of that client group's ability to work remotely?

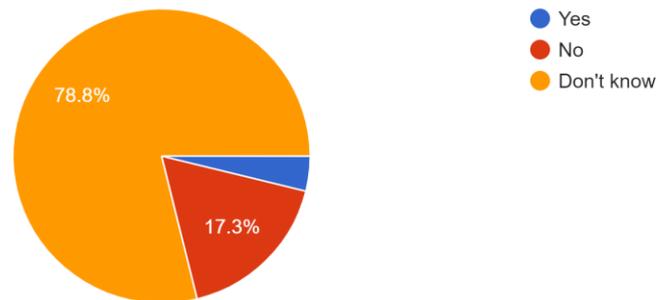
52 responses



- I feel confident that the main VP group I work with would be able to communicate effectively using remote means.
- I don't think the main VP group I work with would be able to communicate effectively using remote means.

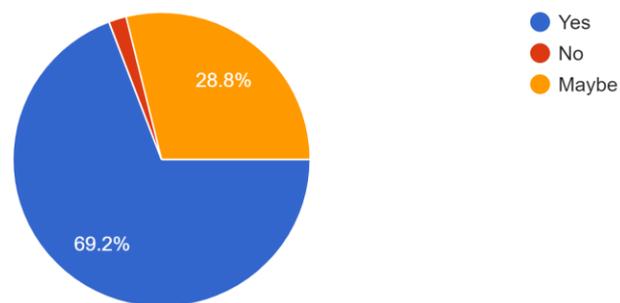
Are end-users involving the VP in decision making about which method (remote technology/social distancing) would facilitate their best evidence?

52 responses



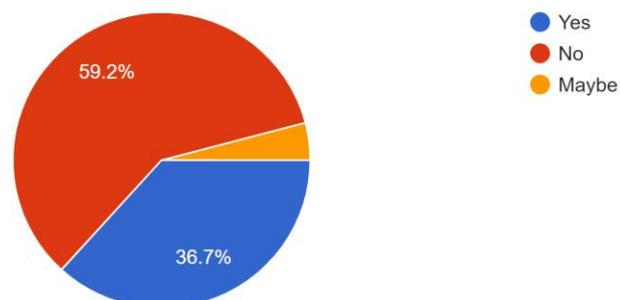
Do you think communication options (e.g. social distancing/remote technology/delaying ABE) should be explained to VP before an intermediary is involved?

52 responses



Have you explained and discussed communication options with VP?

49 responses



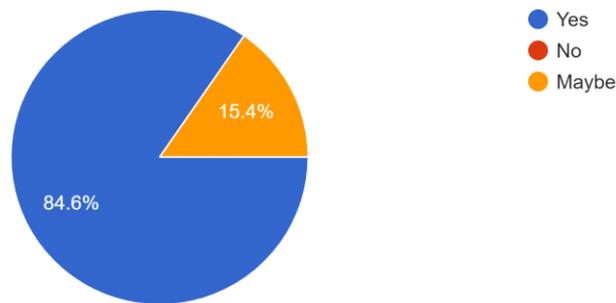
To your knowledge, is someone explaining the risks of face to face and social distancing to the VP's before they are being asked to work in this way with an intermediary?

52 responses



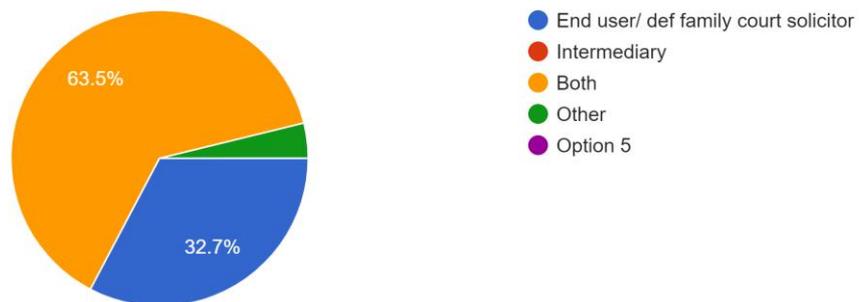
Do you think that someone should be giving VP's information about the risks?

52 responses



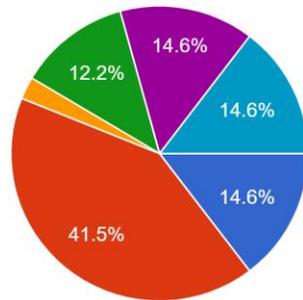
If you think that VP should be given information about infection risks who should be doing this?

52 responses



If you have taken on work was it because:

41 responses



- It was truly urgent (i.e. delay could have caused material harm/difficulties etc)
- The end users believed it was urgent for procedural or other reasons
- The VP wanted to proceed urgently
- It's not my concern to form a view on the urgency of the matter
- I need to generate an income
- other

**If you have conducted a remote assessment could you please tell us about it? Was it RI/ Defendant/Family court work or other? Who were you assessing and how was the experience for you/for the VP?**

**Defendant, Family over facetime, whatsapp video.**

Responders reported having worked with witnesses, defendants and those attending Family courts remotely. Others responded they were yet to undertake remote work. Several intermediaries noted that the remote assessment was an initial process that would require a face to face meeting at some point and the need for an addendum report.

**Positive outcomes:** With a teenage defendant an intermediary felt she had been able to build good rapport remotely and felt she had achieved more assessment data than in a face to face meeting. Assessment on phone went well but individual could only cope with speaking to one person at a time.

**Issues arising:** remote assessments take longer, require a follow up face to face and the production of an additional report.

Defendant lacked necessary IT equipment, phone batteries running out, illiteracy, increased anxiety by those being assessed, difficulties gauging emotional regulation and employing strategies remotely.

Difficulties arose remotely due to English being a second language which sufficed with face to face interactions but not remotely.

**If you have taken part in a telephone hearing could you tell us who you were assisting, whether the VP was also on the call and how the experience was for you/for the VP (Please say whether it was RI/Def/Family court work/Other?)**

**Postive outcomes:** Reports of positive outcomes but very dependent on clients ability to cope with technology. Judges have ruled that VP is unable to engage in remote process so

have adjourned. Taking part in remote process provides evidence that VP not able to engage in this method for future hearings.

VP being excused, intermediaries finding it easier to speak and being asked directly for their opinions rather than going through counsel.

**Issues arising:** Not being able to see the VP, it was impossible to assist the VP during the hearing, in family courts VP very often very keen to continue and not postpone even if a hearing remotely would be more challenging

Intermediaries being refused access to hearing having provided a report- informed of outcomes by solicitor.

VP refused to engage with 'Zoom' as expressed anxiety about security.

Difficulties hearing names of those involved over the phone,

VP finding it hard to be engaged in process,

VP gave un- requested detailed to questions they had failed to understand,

Poor experience as not being able to override mute button to gain judges attention, Wifi difficulties, not being able to see VP.

**If you have taken part in a court hearing could you please tell us about it? Was it RI/ Defendant/Family court work or other? Who were you assisting and how was the experience for you/for the VP**

Two responses that have taken part in GRH remotely and one with no VP present.

**Any comments on how the VP's you work with are managing the lockdown and their engagement in justice-related processes?**

Not all observing lockdown, many have as yet to work with VP's during lockdown, children using facetime with family members , children keen to engage in assessment process as something new and interesting, hard to judge as either very young or tend to do as requested and not voice their own opinions.

Everyone very stressed by lockdown, a significant impact on MH, increased anxiety and fear about the virus in particular it transmitting to children, missing normal activities, not being able to access normal services for assistance/support, refusal to engage in assessment process due to anxiety about current situation.

**Is there any one piece of information you would like us to share about intermediary work during the Covid 19 lockdown? Anything the courts, police, MOJ, or other stakeholders could be doing differently? What you think is going well? Or not so well?**

**Postive feedback:** pleased to have specific intermediary advise .

Feeling reassured that advise on preventing transmission has been observed, decisions to work remotely have been respected and accommodated.

**Information to be shared:**

There is a need for a more consistent approach,

An emphasis on handwashing before and after sessions as social distancing and using PPE is not practical in many cases.

A need for end users to identify suitable venues that facilitate social distancing and permitting the intermediary to be with the VP during remote hearings.

Concern as to definition of 'an essential case.'

Deterioration in communication with CPS

Court lack of awareness that not all VP have access to technology.

Poor communications with intermediaries re cases starting again

Poor adherence to social distancing and hygiene.

Lack of reference to needs and preferences of VP being addressed in guidance.

*"MoJ - their intermediary guidance was published on 17.4.20. On the gov.uk Registered Intermediary page it states, "We have published Guidance for intermediaries during the Covid-19 pandemic (PDF, 224KB, 9 pages). This will be updated as and when new advice and guidance becomes available." - a lot of new advice and guidance has been issued since 17.4.20 (including revised NPCC custody protocols) so why hasn't the guidance been reviewed and updated?"*

*"MoJ - who exactly was consulted and contributed to the intermediary covid-19 guidance? Why?"*

*"MoJ - how come Registered Intermediaries are having to rely upon IfJ for regular opportunities to communicate and collaborate?"*

*"The only positive I can offer at this point is that the MoJ have accepted that I do not feel their guidance is sufficient to ensure my safety and the safety of vulnerable people and they have accepted that I will therefore not be undertaking face to face work at this time. Additionally, they have not exerted any pressure upon me to undertake work."*

One intermediary noted that some PO are very 'reckless' in regard to precautions being taken as the officer noted they have to deal with the public without any precautions being taken.

Feeling conflicted about need for precautions and meeting needs of VP.

The needs/opinions of VPs with regards safety and practice need to be addressed and they're not having access to technology.

There is a need for literature outlining issues re Covid-19 that is accessible for VP's to make an informed decision (as suggestion was made that maybe IFJ could provide such information).

It is essential to have GRH at beginning of every hearing, to know that judge can see both VP and intermediary throughout hearing.

To recognise that remote hearings increase cognitive load and to respond accordingly slower pace, more breaks.

### **Anything else you would like to add?**

Guidance has been very general, difficulties for intermediaries to manage technologies if they don't have these skills, anxiety arising from conflict of wishing to continue to support VP but concerns for personal safety.

Concerns about declining income and anxieties about whether eligible for a government grant in June.

Are intermediaries seen as essential workers and therefore qualify to stay in hotels when working away?

Wider issues have been mentioned as to need to ensure an alleged abuser is tried, that the public are protected from potential harm, that safeguarding practices are maintained, the need to reduce prison populations at risk of the virus and not to detain people on remand for lengthy periods,

*“V.sad that this assessment was taken off RIO. Support that they should have been giving but thank goodness for IFJ who are covering and shouting for people who work in all court situations. Well done!!!”*

*“I have felt supported by IFJ and cannot thank you enough for taking responsibility for us!”*

*“I would like to say how impressed I am with the work of IfJ at this time. I find the zoom meetings, sharing and discussion through the WhatsApp groups invaluable. I hope that all your hard work and considered actions lead to all intermediaries working together to deliver best practice”*

One intermediary made the case for transparency and therefore to know who the survey results are shared with.

The organisations who receive the above anonymised results of the survey are as follows

MOJ

NCA

NSPCC

NAS

Prison Reform Trust

Magistrates Association

Keyring (Charity)

SCYJ

Appropriate Adult Association

RCSLT

Justice

Lexicon, Legal Aid Foundation

HMCTS