Practice Framework for Video Assessments May 2020

This Practice Framework for Video Assessments is intended as a practical and professional guide to support practitioners in approaching video assessments.

It has been written as a comprehensive guide covering considerations that are relevant to a wide range of assessment types and settings.

It is appreciated that practitioners complete many different types of assessments and will need to use professional judgement to select the relevant aspects for different assessments, seeking line management advice whenever necessary.

Pre-assessment considerations

In the current working environment, we are challenged to work flexibly and problem solve collaboratively in order to assess and find solutions with our service users.

Phone contact and assessment can replace 'traditional' face to face contact in some cases.

Use of video contact can bring other benefits, i.e. we can observe some functional abilities, presentation of person/environment, and the visual aspect introduced by a video call can aid interpersonal communication. It can also aid group communication i.e. between SW/OT and service user/family/carer which can promote recognition of skills, and resources and support strengths-based approaches to assessment.

Don't underestimate your client's ability. A lot of residents already use the technology and if they don't, most of them can learn easily and quickly.

Note: Consult with your line manager before you make the decision of using video assessments. The decision needs to be made on a case by case level.

Practice considerations

- Consider every assessment based on the individual circumstances of the case and the individual needs of the service user. Is the video option appropriate for this specific assessment and for this individual person and their circumstances? Record (if appropriate) briefly in your case note your reasons for choosing this option.

- Is the service user able to understand the basic information you are providing for the video assessment and give relevant consent? Record how you obtain consent from the person and relevant date as a case note.

- If the person lacks mental capacity for this specific decision and is unable to provide consent but you consider the video assessment to be an essential

- part of the process, are you able to proceed to a best interests decision in a proportionate manner by consulting relevant others in a timely way? Record briefly how you arrive at this best interests decision as a case note.

- If you are progressing under best interests as the person lacks the mental capacity to make this decision, consider who is best placed to assist you with the practical arrangements of the video assessment, in the person's best interests

- Is it necessary for the video assessment to be recorded? Remember face-to-face assessments are not usually recorded and so recording should not be the default position. Record briefly your reasons for recording your assessment as a case note.

- Consult with Legal if necessary.

Practical considerations

Thinking about the service user

1. Does the service user have access to a device that can be used for a video assessment?
2. Does the person have some IT skills that would make a video call practical?
3. Can the person's communication needs / sensory impairment be accommodated for a video call?
4. Does the person have access to a private space/shared space with others who s/he considers is suitable for the video assessment?

If you answer 'yes' to the above questions, then considering a video call may be suitable. Some other questions to keep in mind are:

5. Has the person had previous experience of video calls? If yes, you can refer back to and build on this previous experience.
6. Can other people who are visiting or supporting the person help with information gathering or setting up a video call?

Preparation (Plan your own set up)

- Go through the meeting in your head and break it down in to the different steps that you would normally take.
- Could other tools be helpful, i.e. pictures / communication aids, which you can show to the person on the video call?
- Before your first attempt, arrange a time with a colleague to go through a trial run.
- Check your video call environment, i.e. aim for a well lit environment where your face is visible and the background is clear of distractions.

- Consider your backdrop as the person making the call, i.e. as blank as possible. This can help to reduce distractions for the service user and also ensure confidentiality and professionalism if you are working from home. Some platforms will allow you to blur the background.
- Make sure your device is charged, and make sure all your phones and computer notifications are on silent.

Plan over the phone with the person. Arrange a time to call the service user beforehand. Use this time to:

- check the chosen platform works;
- familiarise yourself and the person with the platform;
- re-assure the person;
- identify any potential difficulties that may be unique to that situation;
- ask them to make sure their devices are fully charged prior to the meeting;
- assure the person if they live with family members or have staff available in their supported environment, they can also participate on the video call if this is the person's wish;
- confirm a plan if there are any technical problems, i.e. you will call them back;
- ask them to ensure they don't sit with a window or bright light source immediately behind them;
- If relevant for an OT assessment you may ask if the person has access to a tape measure.
- Encourage the person to plug in headphones if they wish to.

Assessment tips during the video call

- Introduce yourself and show your staff ID so that everybody present can see.
- Test audio and video, i.e. 'can you hear me / see me ok?' and make adjustments if necessary.
- Check and record consent at the beginning of the assessment.
- Reassure the person that the assessment is very similar to a standard one and the call is private and confidential.
- Ask the person whether they have any questions or concerns before you start the formal assessment.
- Ask who else is present and record name/relationship to the person. If they are in a care home or a supported setting, you can ask a member of staff to confirm who is in the room.
- Provide an introduction to the call/video assessment, i.e. 'I will be asking you a range of questions about how you are managing at home at the moment'.
- Assure the person they can ask for the question to be repeated or asked in a different way at any point.
- Explain about the set up, i.e. 'I will be making notes or typing as we talk'.
- Regularly check in with the person their experience of the video call, i.e. 'is this call working for you?'

- Inform the person when you are otherwise occupied, e.g. taking notes or reading something on another screen.
- Record in your assessment write-up any observations that are relevant to the conversation as you would as part of a face-to-face assessment, i.e. clothing and appearance, eye contact, expression, tone of voice, body language.
- Look for signs of distraction that someone might be in the room and you need to be mindful of undue influence, e.g. the person regularly looking away from the screen or to the side.
- Keep updating the person on the progress of the assessment. 'We have got through approximately 50% of the questions so far'.
- Remember this medium may not work for everyone. If it is not working, then it's OK to acknowledge this and stop.
- Carefully summarise key points, as it is possible something could have been missed due to technical interference.
- Ask the person if they need anything clarified.
- Discuss and agree with the person the next steps you will take.
- Check with the person s/he is happy to use video call again and note in your record.
- Conclude the call by telling the person you are going to end the call before actually closing the connection.
- Call or video call other people involved in support, i.e. family/carer (with consent from the service user) to build on the picture of how the person is currently managing as required.

Post assessment

- Take time to reflect on what worked and what didn't. Use this to inform future practice.
- If permission was granted by the service user, ask a colleague to review your experience of the assessment, both the good and the bad, as good ones will give them confidence and ideas as to how the system works and not so good ones will help them trouble shoot in case a similar thing happens to them.

Other useful information: https://www.basw.co.uk/resources/publications-policies-and-reports/digital-capabilities-social-workers

The Digital Capabilities Statement is a practice framework that outlines the knowledge, skills and values that social workers should have in order to use digital technology in practice. Ethical considerations for social workers are based on existing Standards 3 and 5, *The Professional Standards* (Social Work England 2019), which state the ethical conduct that is expected of social workers in record keeping and technology use (including social media)https://www.digitalsocialcare.co.uk/latest-guidance/covid-19-information-governance-and-information-sharing-guidance/

You should be mindful of handling people's information securely. Use your common sense to do the best thing for your service users and people in your care. The important thing, as always, is to consider what type of information you are sharing and with whom. As much as possible limit the use of people's personal/confidential information. We encourage the use of video conferencing to carry out consultations with people in your care, or meetings with colleagues across social care and health services. This could help to reduce the spread of COVID-19. You should safeguard people's personal/confidential information in the same way you would with any other consultation.

Further information on Southwark Council use of Zoom is available at
http://thesource/the-council/smart-working/video-conferencing-online-meetings/