**Thoughts of a Reviewer as Covid 19 Lockdown eases**

**July 2020**

As a reviewer, many ongoing reviews post March 2020 either slowed down or went on hold as the country’s statutory and voluntary agencies as well as families responded to the pandemic and lived in a new but strange world.

As we move into a gradual ease of lockdown, many safeguarding partnerships and boards have started to pick up where they left off or moved to commissioning new reviews.

As reviewers we started thinking about how we manage reviews, maintaining the integrity of reviews as well as ensuring a collaborative process; something that reviewers are passionate about.

Questions that we have all needed to consider were discussed with colleagues and boards:

* + Can we manage virtual meetings for scooping etc?
  + What is the capacity of agencies to write agency reports/IMRs?
  + What is the capacity of practitioners to partake in workshops?
  + How can we maintain multi agency discussion throughout the process?

This list is by no means exhaustive.

As we are all now able to socialise more (at 2m or 1m+), go to the cinema, pub, restaurants the new normal life is very strange.

What is the new normal for carrying out reviews; what needs to be considered?

We need to be careful in talking to frontline staff and managers about the ease of lockdown and involving agencies in reviews for the following reasons:

* Redeployment of many staff has not eased.
* Front line staff and managers are exhausted emotionally and physically, now that holidays can take place, many organisations are encouraging staff to take well-earned holidays.
* Organisations have a lot of other important work to catch up on that went on hold during the highest peak of the pandemic
* Managing the emotional wellbeing of staff taking part in any workshops for reviews will need to consider not just the nature of the case itself that may upset and impact on staff, but the emotional impact of living and working on the frontline through a pandemic.
* All organisations are still planning to manage second and third waves of the virus and local lockdowns.
* Platforms for virtual meetings are dictated by organisations e.g. none that we have heard of will use ‘Zoom’ to discuss any organisation business due to data and privacy breaches. Microsoft Teams is the preferred platform.
* Many frontline staff do not have access to virtual meeting technology, particularly in a confidential space.
* And not least that families are left worried and frustrated by delays

When reviewers consider all of this, ask yourself what is the new normal for reviews?

How do we support agencies to come on board with us?

How do we respond when deadlines are approaching, and we have not had the required feedback?

This reviewer would therefore suggest that the new normal for reviews is as follows:

* Continuing to keep families updated on where the review is at.
* Very careful preparation of staff for reviews.
* Accepting that there needs to be plenty of time right from initial scoping through to final report to Boar/partnership- six months may well be too ambitions.
* Being flexible with methodologies.
* Accepting that even extended timescales may slip.
* Managing the technology and understanding how difficult this is for some.
* Sharing emerging learning as you go along.

Again, this list is not exhaustive, but gives reviewers elements to be considered.

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