

# Tips for Remote Service Delivery

*How might we foster connection between our staff, clients and community in this time of increased physical distancing and isolation?*

Supporting those most vulnerable in our community is more important than ever at Mission Australia. Our ability to prioritise our vital services has become crucial in times like this, because we know that the most vulnerable in society with whom we work are often those most greatly impacted.

While much remains uncertain, there are many things we *can* do to stay connected and continue to deliver our work in these uncertain times.

This guidance is aimed at Service Delivery staff who work in services that are usually face-to-face but need to consider alternatives during this period of 'physical distancing'.

## What types of tips are included?

The following are some basic tips to help you deliver services during this period of 'physical distancing' including information about how to adapt your services and what methods and technology platforms you may choose. While the answer is increasingly lying in digital technology, we also know that these technologies need to be about people – helping people to connect, to listen to one another, and to reach out to others who may feel particularly vulnerable or isolated.

This guidance is intended as a starting point. These tips will be updated as we learn more about what's available, what our needs are and how workers inside and outside Mission Australia are developing new ways to support people in need at this time. We will continue to gather and share examples of good practice and learn together as we go.

These tips can be applied to a variety of activities and groups, such as:

Working one-on-one	Facilitating a group	Connecting your community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Case management or counselling sessions</li><li>• Staying in touch with clients who are most vulnerable or who you haven't heard from</li><li>• Sending information</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Running a meeting / support session with clients or community members</li><li>• Conducting meetings with partners or other organisations</li><li>• Delivering workshops</li><li>• Delivering an information session/Q&amp;A.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Playgroup or children's groups</li><li>• Parenting group sessions</li><li>• Community group sessions</li><li>• Client Advisory Groups</li><li>• Sharing information and resources</li><li>• Working with partners</li></ul>

We've created some steps to help you transition your service delivery from face-to-face to remote. Working through these steps and reflecting on these may be a good place to start.

### Step 1: Who is your target group and what are their needs?

When deciding how to continue to support your clients remotely, it's important to be clear on who you are supporting and what their needs are. Their needs may have shifted in the current context. Consider the following questions for each part of your service that you need to adapt to remote delivery:

- Who are you delivering support to?
- What do they need or want?
- What are their immediate needs, including safety?
- What do they rely on our service for?
- How will the current context have impacted on their needs?

#### CASE STUDY: Thinking through your clients' needs...

*I am delivering support to a playgroup of families.*

*Pre-COVID, they relied on our service for face-to-face social and peer connection such as with parents in similar situations. They came here for a supportive environment, information and resources to build their capacity as parents. We offered them fun and engaging activities and socialisation for their kids.*

*At this time, they are feeling overwhelmed and more isolated. Some of them struggle with mental health and that may be harder to manage right now. They are confused and unsure of the information that is in the media about the current situation. They may be struggling to keep their kids entertained now many of their regular activities are not available.*

## Step 2: What are the objectives of your support?

Reflecting on your clients' needs above, what are the primary objectives of your support for them in this period where you are working remotely? Consider the following:

- What outcomes are you hoping to achieve through your interaction with your clients? What support do you need to maintain or provide?
- What are the most important objectives in relation to their immediate, basic needs right now in the midst of the COVID response?
- What other objectives relate to supporting them in the current context for the medium term?

### CASE STUDY: Thinking through identifying your objectives...

*The objectives for my remote support to my clients right now are to:*

- *Support them to understand information about Covid-19, the current government restrictions and what they need to do.*
- *Help them maintain social connection with each other during a time of physical isolation.*
- *Continue to build their parenting capacity in this new context.*
- *Help them manage the stresses involved in the whole family being in the one place all the time.*

## Step 3: What are the best methods to help you achieve your objectives?

Once you're clear on your objectives, let's think about what the best methods might be to achieve your objectives – and what tools you can use to enable that.

Consider:

- What are the communication preferences of my clients?
- What tools and technology do they have available and are comfortable with?
- Do they have any language barriers or cultural requirements?

## CASE STUDY: Thinking through your clients' communication preferences...

*Generally, it's a well-established group, and they're comfortable with communicating in a group. However, there are one or two members who are new or quieter and often prefer one-on-one communication.*

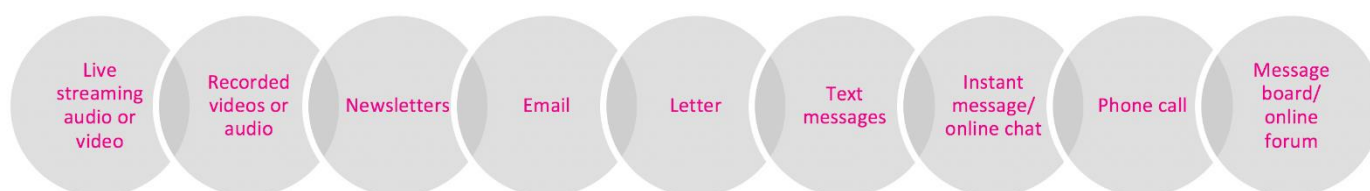
*They are quite comfortable with technology. However, it is hard for them to have long conversations when their kids are with them.*

*They are mostly comfortable connecting using their smart phones.*

You might also need to think about the following:

- Should my session be interactive or one way?
- Do I need live communication in real time or people communicating over time?
- Should it be one-on-one interactions, or a group?
- If a group, who should be included/participate? Is it a continuation of an existing group, or a new one? Is there a maximum number of people I should include?
- What support might my client need to use the chosen technology'?
- How do I support my client to feel safe and have the right level of privacy for the interaction?
- Do we need to engage an interpreter or translation service and do we have brokerage for this?

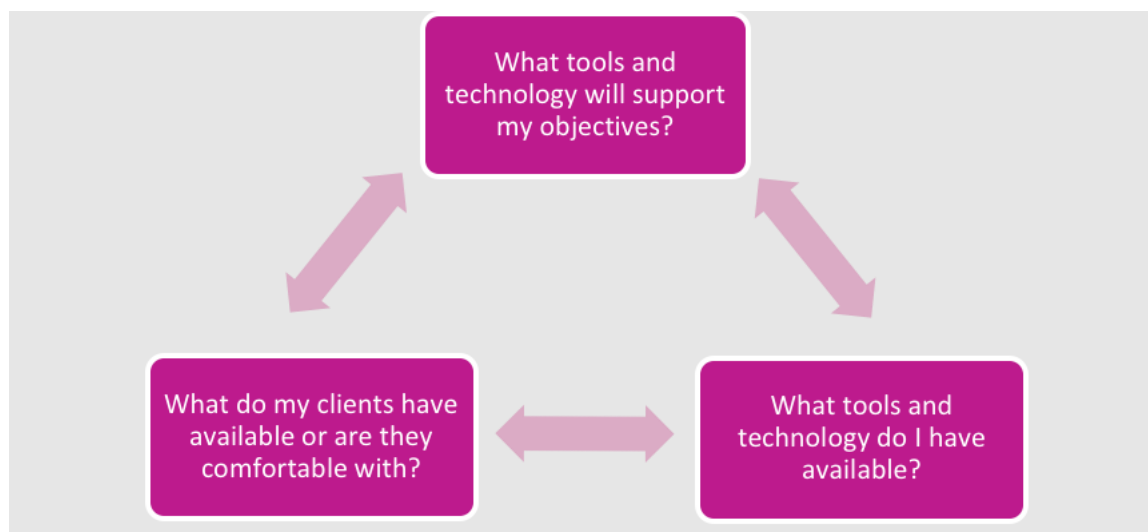
Here are some examples of different methods that can be used for remote service delivery:



We will discuss some of these in more detail later in the document.

## Step 4: What are your tools/technology?

When selecting appropriate tools, consider which tools will help you support your objectives, and reflect on the skills and access to technology of your clients and yourself.



Please also consider what technology is endorsed and supported by Mission Australia. Currently, **Mission Australia endorses the following platforms for connecting with clients:**

Type of interaction	Individual clients	Groups of clients
Providing information only (One-way flow)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Phone call</li><li>• FaceTime phone call</li><li>• Microsoft Teams</li><li>• Skype for Business</li><li>• Email</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Email using 'BCC'</li><li>• Closed private Facebook Group</li></ul>
Interactive (Two-way flow)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Phone call</li><li>• FaceTime phone call</li><li>• Microsoft Teams</li><li>• Skype for Business</li><li>• Email</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Microsoft Teams</li><li>• Skype for Business</li><li>• Group phone calls</li><li>• Closed private Facebook Group</li></ul>

Importantly, some technology tools are not endorsed because **they may risk our clients' privacy of data**. To ensure we keep our clients safe and that we are compliant with privacy and contractual obligations, it is important that you use tools endorsed by Mission Australia and follow guidelines for their use.

## Use of Facebook

A closed and private Facebook group is supported by Mission Australia for:

- communicating information to a group of clients one way (in this scenario comments from participants must be disabled) or
- facilitating interaction between a group of clients.

Importantly this is only endorsed currently where the group of clients are already part of an existing group, such as a supported playgroup or youth group. Clients must consent to join and agree to making sure that personally identifiable information will be not shared.

Members (clients) can see who else is a member of the group, so this will not be suitable for all services.

To protect clients' privacy and limit risks of inappropriate content being posted, such groups need to be carefully controlled, as set out in the time limited COVID-19 response Facebook guidelines here. You must get approval before setting up a group. A service staff member must be responsible for moderating the group, obtaining informed written consent from every member (client) and ensuring the guidelines are strictly followed.

## Case management and client related conversations

Phone calls, Microsoft Teams and Skype for Business are secure for client related conversations, as the IT team has adequate controls over these platforms.

Social media platforms such as Facebook, and instant messenger apps are **not endorsed for client related conversions because they do not adequately protect our clients' privacy**. As a last resort, it is OK to use those platforms briefly to arrange another form of contact (such as trying to reach a client via Facebook Messenger or WhatsApp and texting "Please call me on this phone number.")

For virtual case management sessions or one-on-one client related conversations, it is important to consider how you will support your client to be safe and have adequate privacy. For example, encourage them to go into a private room and/or use headphones, or go for a walk while talking with you. If there are concerns around domestic and family violence, talk with clients about online safety (for example, see [here](#)). Consider how concerns for client safety may be observed or communicated and how such concerns should they arise will be responded to and managed. As you would for any case management or support session, you must still record your case notes in your client management system (MACSIMS, MA Connect, etc) and you should also note in your case notes the digital platform you used to communicate.

**It is important that you do not record any client conversations unless you have a clear reason for doing this and have informed written consent from your client which is saved in your client management system. If you do record any sessions or conversations these must also be saved in your client management system.**

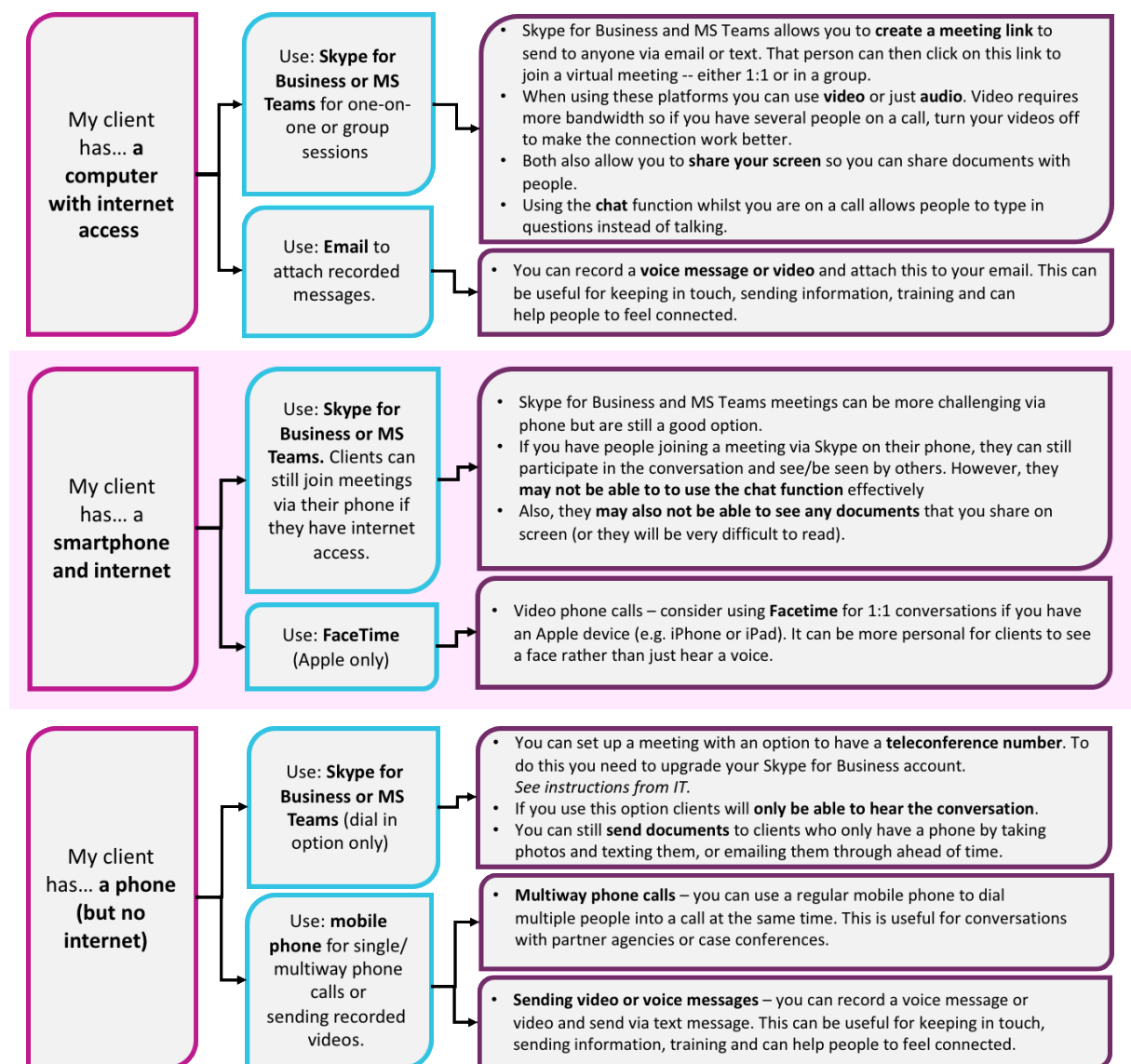
Mission Australia has also developed a working from home privacy tool which is available on [My Mission](#).

## Microsoft Teams and Skype for Business

Mission Australia's IT team has developed *Guidance for Setting Up Virtual Meetings* using Microsoft Teams and Skype for Business. This can be accessed on the Intranet on the IT Services Page in the IT 'Tech Tips' section [here](#).

We also have some Tips for Running Virtual Groups [here](#).

The following figure can help you decide how to use some of these existing resources to support your clients depending on their current access to technology. We'll be updating this in the future.



We know that some clients do not have access to a phone, phone credit or internet access and these clients will be particularly vulnerable at this time. Consider reaching out to other services who are engaging with this client such as health services and work together to establish access to technology tools. This may include using brokerage funds to purchase phone credit, identifying places in the community which are still open and where clients can use a computer, safely dropping off information and resources or using mail.

### *Step 5: How will you connect with other organisations to help strengthen your community?*

In this period of COVID-19 and social distancing, it is important to look at ways to keep the community strong for the clients you support. Focus on ways to maintain a connected and inclusive community during this time, in line with the [Stronger Community Domains](#) which are set out in our Strengthening Communities Framework.

We encourage you to focus on:

- **Maintaining connections with other organisations and groups** in your local area that can support your clients and other people in need. This includes organisations that:
  - you get referrals from (e.g. hospitals, other services, departments)
  - you refer clients to (e.g. specialist organisations, community housing providers)
  - have resources to support your clients' social and spiritual needs (e.g. libraries with online storytelling sessions, churches with livestream services, migrant resource centres, neighbourhood centres)
  - Provide concurrent supports to your client.

**You could start by:** Doing stakeholder mapping to identify key organisations and groups who are still operating locally.

- **Working in collaboration with other organisations and groups to minimise duplication of resources and initiatives for clients.** Identify opportunities to work together to maximise the impact of your support for clients and community, minimise barriers to remote engagement, and ensure everyone has access to information they need.

**You could start by:** Listing all the known resources and initiatives other organisations are doing currently, and compare them to any approaches you are planning for your service to avoid duplication and leverage existing resources.

- **Ensuring all supports and services available to clients are inclusive and that no one is left behind.** Consider ways to ensure all people have access to information, resources, and supports during this time.



**You could start by:** Identifying clients who may experience language barriers, visual and auditory limitations, literacy barriers, or be part of a cultural group or marginalised group. How does your support need to adapt for their specific needs?

We encourage you to re-read the [Strengthening Communities Framework](#) and the [Partnership Kit: Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships](#) to provide further ideas for supporting the community to be strong.

Mission Australia endorses the following technology tools for interacting with organisations externally:

- Emails
- Phone calls
- MS Teams
- Skype for Business.

If you are invited to use an alternative platform to communicate with an external organisation, such as Zoom or Google Hangouts, then you should encourage the use of Skype for Business or MS Teams as an alternative. These are the endorsed tools for Mission Australia as we have the right privacy controls in place. If you cannot avoid joining a call via an alternative platform, for example an interagency meeting, you should ensure that you do not have any client related conversations.

## Step 6: Putting it all together

Once you have thought it through, combine your ideas together into a Remote Service Delivery Plan. We have provided a template for this [here](#).

### CASE STUDY: Thinking through a plan for your clients...

<i>Planned activities</i>	<i>Delivery Method</i>	<i>Tools needed</i>
<i>Provide information and resources to the group to help them understand Covid-19 and what they need to do</i>	<i>Email newsletter</i>	<i>Email using blind CC, with attachment.</i>
<i>Provide resources and ideas to help them parent during this time</i>	<i>Email with embedded links</i>	<i>Email using blind CC</i>
	<i>Text messages</i>	<i>Phone</i>
<i>Provide an activity for the kids to do each week and ask parents to share photos of the finished activity</i>	<i>Private Facebook group – ensure no photos of children or children’s names are posted</i>	<i>Private Facebook group</i>
<i>Conduct a short regular interactive session including activities like story time, singing familiar songs or virtual show and tell.</i>	<i>Video conference</i>	<i>Skype for Business or Teams</i>
<i>Check in individually with group members who have not participated, or who are more reserved in the group session</i>	<i>Text messages</i>	<i>Phone</i>
	<i>Phone call using Facetime</i>	<i>Phone</i>

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