

Practical tips and resources to overcome challenges in delivering children's services during the COVID-19 pandemic

1 October 2020

Introduction

Following the closure of schools across the UK in March, many speech and language therapy services for children and young people were paused or delivered differently.

As schools re-open across the UK, and services move to a new normal, this guidance brings together examples of the different ways services are adapting to overcome the challenges in delivering children's services in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Members are encouraged to share their own resources via the RCSLT professional networks area [COVID-19 \(children's services\)](#).

Challenge	Tips and strategies	Government/RCSLT guidance
Differences in government policy for different sectors and settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to government guidance, RCSLT guidance, local guidance or that of the setting to determine what is required from you in delivering care (including personal protective equipment (PPE)). Work with local infection prevention and control teams, where possible, to agree local policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COVID-19: Guidance for the remobilisation of services within health and care settings - Infection prevention and control recommendations RCSLT guidance on reducing the risk of transmission and use of personal protective equipment in the context of COVID-19
Differences in policy between your service and the settings you work in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send information to schools and settings in your area explaining the way you will be working and the rationale. Contact head teachers and/or SENCOs to discuss concerns they may have and agree new ways of working. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Join the RCSLT professional network COVID-19 (children's services) group to share and find resources that other members have used.

<p>How to deliver services face-to-face while reducing the risk of transmission</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consult RCSLT guidance, including risk assessment tables. ● Consider use of additional protective items; for example portable perspex screens, perspex sheets to place on top of assessment books. ● Ensure all policies are approved by your employer (if applicable). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● RCSLT guidance on reducing the risk of transmission and use of personal protective equipment in the context of COVID-19 ● Join the RCSLT professional network COVID-19 (children's services) group to share and find suppliers that other members have used
<p>Responding to the relevant 'test/trace/protect' if a member of staff or child that has been seen face-to-face tests positive for COVID-19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure you are up-to-date with national and local guidance on procedures for test and trace/protect. ● If the same PPE is not used for every child, keep a record of PPE worn for each client. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● England: NHS Test and Trace: how it works ● Scotland: Test and Protect ● Wales: Test Trace Protect ● Northern Ireland: Testing and contact tracing
<p>How to tackle the waiting list targets / backlog that built up during lockdown</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use a risk matrix to support prioritisation of waiting list based on risk. ● Use restoration funding (if available) to bring in extra staff to re-assess children and clear waiting list. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Join the RCSLT professional network COVID-19 (children's services) group to share and find resources that other members have used.
<p>Pressure to meet targets around number of contacts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue to use blended approach, with support provided by telehealth where appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Join the RCSLT professional network COVID-19 (children's services) group to share and find resources that other members have used.
<p>Staff anxiety around returning to face-to-face work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure individual risk assessments have been carried out for all staff. ● Signpost staff to help and resources to support their wellbeing. ● Produce guidance which sets out clearly the measures that have been put in place to keep staff safe. ● Ensure staff have the opportunity to voice concerns or ask questions in an appropriate forum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Health and Safety Executive information on risk assessment ● NHS employers: Supporting staff health and safety ● Welsh Government: COVID-19 workforce risk assessment tool ● RCSLT website: Resilience and self-care

<p>How to find online therapy tools which can be used for telehealth / screen sharing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Visit the RCSLT website to find useful resources. ● Join the RCSLT telehealth professional network. ● Work in accordance with local information governance and IT guidelines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● RCSLT webinar: Telehealth in the COVID-19 context: Working with children ● Request to join the RCSLT telehealth professional network
<p>Working with interpreters and bilingual co-workers via telehealth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● See the RCSLT interpreters guidance. ● See the guidance developed by the London Bilingualism CEN on working with interpreters via video-conferencing software to deliver telehealth guidance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● RCSLT interpreters guidance ● Working with interpreters via video-conferencing software to deliver telehealth
<p>Children's SLCN not being prioritised by education staff and school leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Give education staff time to settle in and get used to new ways of working; i.e. give them a couple of weeks before contacting them. ● Share information about how children's speech and language may have been impacted during lockdown and how working on it could support catch-up across the curriculum. ● Consider the types of work/children that you might prioritise (e.g. those children who you have not been able to reach remotely or via clinics, such as families living in poverty) or approaches that will support schools to close the attainment/spoken language gap. ● Work with senior education leaders to provide reassurance and co-produce infection control procedures and guidance for visiting staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Join the RCSLT professional network COVID-19 (children's services) group to share and find resources that other members have used.