

Statement on use of technology in work during COVID restrictions: October 2020



The change in the way we work, due to the current pandemic, has resulted in the increased use of technology, for the majority of professionals and organisations. The benefits to this have been significant, however members of the Making Recovery Real in Moray (strategic group for mental health strategy “Good Mental Health for all in Moray”) have noted the power imbalance which change in technology is creating between ‘professionals’ and ‘service users’, public bodies and the third sector, and the subsequent negative impact on mental health and wellbeing as a result.

We ask that a more measured approach is taken regarding selection of software for online meetings, allowing a freer choice of digital platforms, balancing risk regarding confidentiality with risk of disempowerment. Providing service users greater control over the security of their own data is a key part of a partnership approach to service provision and supported self-management.

Examples of this with suggested recommendations:

- **the insistence by most public bodies to use Microsoft Teams for partnership meetings, due to the higher levels of security offered.** Microsoft Teams is not available to all organisations due to cost and so prevents relevant partners from being able to attend and contribute effectively.
 - **Recommendation:** For meetings which are not confidential and whose minutes would be released under Freedom of Information, if requested, alternatives could be considered.
- **The use of V scene for childcare meetings which not all parents feel comfortable to use.** This format is not one in common usage and is not as robust in delivery as some other platforms. This has led to meetings where people drop in and out and discussions are disrupted. While professionals feel frustrated by this, parents feel unable to contribute to the planning for their child’s future and wellbeing.
 - **Recommendation:** Exploring use of other suitable software such as Attend Anywhere used by Health & Social Care Moray staff.
- **The insistence of some organisations to use Microsoft Teams for client groups who would not choose to do:** Young people especially associate Teams with school work and are therefore reticent to use this out with this setting.
 - **Recommendation:** Explore risk assessment to support clients to use the format they feel most comfortable on i.e Zoom