Planning ahead: your questions answered

This document was written on 17 March 2020 as internal guidance for VoiceAbility staff. We are now sharing it publicly in the hope that it might be of some assistance to others, especially advocacy organisations, and ultimately to people who rely on the support we all provide. It was written in good faith based on the best information available at a particular point in time. No liability is accepted for any adverse consequences of reliance upon it. We welcome feedback to CV19@voiceability.org

Key messages

• We are putting plans in place for if we have a major increase in our work, or a decrease in staff being available.
• If the opposite happens and we don’t have enough work, we will offer staff a range of options, and communicate openly.
• We are monitoring carefully for any changes in government guidance which may mean we need to update our guidance.
• We are in close contact with the Department of Health, particularly around DoLS. They are aware of our expertise and we have offered our assistance with this.

What if we don’t have enough work to do due to a large reduction in referrals?

We have set priorities to deal with an increase in work or a decrease in our staff being available, but what would happen if we have more staff than work?

For example, if there is a steep reduction in the support we can provide because we cannot visit many clients, due to delay and cancellation of assessments and care planning, or because we receive few referrals as professionals are too busy or off sick.

Should this arise, there are several options including offering time off, or banking of hours (e.g. I will only work 27.5 of my 37.5 hours this week – so I have 10 over to use in the following fortnight).

Staff may be asked to identify additional skill sets to support potential deployment to other organisations if willing.
These are only examples of what we might consider, not what we would definitely do. Should any of this become necessary, we will communicate openly with all staff.

**What if there are new rules preventing visits to care homes and other services?**

We know that colleagues are concerned about what further proposals and legislation (in addition to the coronavirus regulations) there might be to isolate social care and health services, and what these might mean for people who use them.

We will continue to respond to developments, and provide information and guidance to you.

**I’m worried that people’s care will break down during the pandemic. What can I do?**

With social care and health services due to come under unprecedented pressure, there is real concern that care, support and treatment arrangements will break down, failing people who are most at risk.

We will need to continue to advocate for people’s voice, rights and wellbeing. We need to remember that health and social care staff are demonstrating great commitment to their work. We must therefore challenge in the context of the realities of the situation.

**What are we doing to ensure that people’s concerns are heard by government?**

We are in contact with the Department of Health and Social Care to provide our support in helping to ensure that people are safe and that everything practicable is done to protect people’s rights and hear their voices even in this unprecedented situation.