

Safe and ethical use of web videoconferencing for personal careers guidance

Web videoconferencing is becoming an increasingly common method for delivering personal and group career guidance and information. When advisers and clients are meeting remotely from home it is important to recognise how normal safeguarding and ethical practice might be impacted. This paper considers how Members should review their practice to ensure safe and ethical approaches are adopted.

Good practice for virtual meetings

Environment

- Be aware of your surroundings and background
- If using video, check lighting and quality of audio from your microphone
- Be aware of and limit noise in your environment – e.g. pets, kettles, domestic appliances etc
- For better audio quality, use a headset rather than the microphone built-in to your device
- Check what is visible on noticeboards, calendars, and family photos or ‘blur’ background
- If using a laptop, consider raising it so that you are looking directly into the screen
- Don’t conduct meetings from your or your client’s bedrooms
- Set expectations on appropriate dress for you and your client in meetings - no nightwear
- Consider who else might be able to hear what you are saying and see your broadcast

Security and Privacy

- Use a secure internet connection ensuring your wifi router is password protected
- Ensure your devices are protected with appropriate antivirus and security software
- Use a strong and unique password for your conferencing account and don’t share it
- Be mindful your client might not have or know whether they have a secure setup
- Consider displaying a disclaimer to this effect at the start of any online 1:1 interaction
- Be familiar with the application features, security and privacy settings
- Use meeting passwords and don’t share these on public sites or social media
- Use waiting room features before admitting verified participants to a meeting
- Regularly apply updates to ensure you are using the latest version of any application
- Use a headset rather than the loud-speaker, so others cannot overhear your client
- Mute yourself when not speaking or if someone enters the room in which you are working
- Avoid sharing files or links through less secure applications than you’d normally use
- With webinars and public meetings allow audio and video access only to presenters
- Be mindful of confidentiality, privacy and security when sharing recordings of meetings
- Be careful if screen sharing; only to share the required application
- Avoid sharing screens which might show your social media accounts, email or personalised search results, as these could constitute privacy breaches

Recording and documenting virtual meetings

- Don't record or capture meeting images without first obtaining agreement from participants
- Give people the opportunity to switch off video/audio sharing before you start recording
- Check meeting settings on who can save chat transcripts or other documents
- Explain what happens to any recorded information – such as video, chat or whiteboards - how it will be used and how long it will be kept
- Agree what notes are being taken and how they will be used or shared afterwards
- Consider whether or not it is appropriate to record using any mobile devices e.g. phones

Practicalities

- Check whether the client is happy to take part in an online/video session as some may be more comfortable with telephone or audio only
- Be respectful of how long your client is comfortable engaging for online, as this may be a shorter duration than in traditional face-to-face settings
- Offer and take breaks during virtual meetings
- When taking a short break disconnect audio and video, or leave and re-join
- Be aware that you or your client may be interrupted – for example by family members
- Consider whether to allow participants to chat publicly or just with hosts and presenters
- Have a back-up alternative approach in mind if there is a technology or application failure

Member ethical principles

These core principles are drawn from the CDI Code of Ethics. Members should ask themselves these questions in respect of their virtual practice:

- **Competence** – do I have the competencies, training and experience I need to provide an effective service using virtual tools and approaches?
- **Duty of Care** – can I act in the best interests of my clients, colleagues, organisations and myself?
- **Confidentiality** – can I respect the privacy of individuals, conducting interactions/interviews in a suitably private environment?
- **Autonomy** – can I encourage individual autonomy in making decisions, so I am always acting in my client's best interests?
- **Accessibility** – can I offer a range of methods for clients to interact to ensure inclusion?
- **Impartiality** - can I ensure my professional judgement is objective, and takes precedence over any external pressures and factors that may compromise the impartiality of career development activities and services?

Where there seems to be an ethical dilemma consult with other colleagues, think about fairness, whether you'd recommend the same course of action to another in the same situation, and if your actions were reported in the press how might others judge your fairness?

Safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults

In addition to your normal safeguarding and data protection (GDPR) procedures, some additional planning may be required to safeguard you and your clients when operating remotely.

- Consider the appropriateness of your and your client's attire in meetings
- Agree how you will interact with your client, use of language and confidentiality
- Obtain parent or carer agreement and ensure they are aware a session is taking place
- Encourage the client to decide on whether and how parents engage in meetings
- Consider offering the client choice of an independent adult to sit in on one-to-one guidance

You should refer to any guidance provided by your employer or organisations you contract with. There are also many sources of good practice provided by government departments and agencies, the Careers and Enterprise Company, and other relevant organisations.

Useful resources and references

CDI Code of Ethics <https://www.thecdi.net/Code-of-Ethics>

Careers & Enterprise Company Covid-19 Safeguarding Guidance for Delivery Partners - https://www.thecdi.net/write/Covid_19_Safeguarding_providers_.pdf

DfE Coronavirus (COVID-19): safeguarding in schools, colleges and other providers <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-safeguarding-in-schools-colleges-and-other-providers/coronavirus-covid-19-safeguarding-in-schools-colleges-and-other-providers>

Department of Education & Skills (Ireland) Continuity of Guidance Counselling Guidelines for schools providing online support for students <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Post-Primary-School-Policies/Policies/continuity-of-guidance-counselling-guidelines-for-schools-providing-online-support-for-students.pdf>

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