

Facilitating Remote Non Violent Resistance (NVR) support for Parents/Carers during the COVID 19 crisis

The measures we are all taking in response to the threats posed by the COVID 19 virus have led to tremendous changes in the way we all work and live. Social interaction has been limited, many agencies have had to close completely or restrict their services and many other services have had to develop work through on-line and telephone networks. The Family Therapy Association of Ireland (FTAI) and the Irish Association of Social Workers (IASW) among other organisations, have provided information for practitioners about the ways in which practice can adapt to meet the challenges posed by people working with individual, couples and families who ordinarily seek our support.

Couples and families have been obliged to spend a lot more time in each other's company than we have been used to; for some couples and families, this has led to an increase in tensions and to abuse at home. There have been requests for protocols for NVR trained practitioners so that we can provide NVR support over the phone and/ or on line during this national health emergency. This has led to the development of some guidelines for using NVR over the phone/ on-line when working with families.

These guidelines have been developed in consultation with Parentline (www.parentline.ie) and with members of the steering committee of NVR Ireland. The guidelines compliment but do not replace any information provided by employers or professional/ registration bodies. These are interim guidelines focusing on some of the issues NVR trained practitioners can consider when providing remote/ on-line NVR support for parents during the COVID 19 crisis. They may be updated, are not a substitute for supervision/ further training and are not regarded as a substitute for face-to-face interaction in clinical spaces, offices or homes. The practitioner may also need to check that the insurance cover provided by her/ his employer or private practice insurance policies also covers practice conducted over the phone/ internet platforms.

Guidelines for facilitating NVR support in the time of the COVID 19 crisis

Telephone / on-line NVR related contact provide access to support for parents/ carers where there may be no other support available. It is advisable that the same practitioner works with a parent/ carer for the duration of the NVR on-line/ phone support.

Set Up Steps

If working from home and especially if the practitioner is using a video platform, the practitioner may want to pay attention to sound, lighting, and background and look at the space with the eye of a client (parent/ carer in this case) in advance of a session.

The practitioner can prompt the parent(s)/ carer(s) to find a safe secure space for contact, ensure the likelihood of interruption is reduced and that others cannot hear or see the screen or call.

The practitioner might also consider initiating a conversation about the use of headphones so others cannot hear either side of the conversation. The practitioner should also consider whether and how to have a conversation about the parent/ carer (not) recording a session.

It is useful to agree in advance who will make the first attempt to re-connect if there is an interruption or freeze in service. Agree a back-up plan if the technology fails – for example is there a (or another) phone number the practitioner can use to contact the parent/ carer if service is interrupted.

If sessions are taking place through an on-line platform, parents/ carers might find it useful for a prompt to clear their browsing history after a session to secure their privacy. There are additional tips for individuals on using on-line platforms from the Data Protection Commission at the end of this document; further tips for employers are available at www.dataprotection.ie

In advance of on-line/ telephone support, the practitioner should clarify that the practitioner is not in a position to provide close access to emergency services and that the parent/ carer knows how to access such support locally.

It is important that in advance of commencing NVR support over the phone/ internet, the practitioner considers how to address the following questions: how will I assess, monitor and respond to

- *Potential risk harm of parent/ carer harm to self or others?*
- *The potential to risk of harm to the parent/ carer from others?*
- *Access to personal support for the parent/ carer?*
- *The need for the practitioner to gather information about local information to respond to any potential risk?*
- *Access for the practitioner to peer/ line-manager support/ supervision?*

During the NVR phone/ on-line support sessions

Having to hand (in paper or e-form) an outline or summary of the NVR model and/ or a copy of the relevant slides from the NVR training can support the work of the practitioner.

*Although it will be difficult in a time of social-distancing and families confining themselves to home, encourage a parent/ carer to choose a time and a place for phone/ on-line sessions where it is **least likely they will be interrupted**. Perhaps in some cases, another member of the household can play a role in minimising interruptions.*

*It can be helpful to **agree a work contract using the NVR model** - agree goals (the traffic lights prioritising discussion can be helpful) and to a time and set-up (phone call/ on-line platform) in advance of the session. It is also useful to **agree in advance the likely duration of the session**.*

*Similar to the dynamics that we encounter in face to face work with parents/ carers, those who access NVR support over the phone/ through on-line contact may find the **strengths based and solution focused aspects of NVR** to be most helpful.*

Particularly when offering support over the phone and in the absence of the usual non-verbal and visual cues, it is advisable to **listen** very carefully, to **paraphrase what you think the person said** and ask her/ him to **tell you if you have mis-heard or mis-interpreted** something she/he has said.

Some **useful phrases could include**: ‘listening to you, it seems as if...?’; ‘there seem to be a few important things here, if I heard you right – first there is X, then there is Y, then there is Z; what seems to you to be most important?’; ‘it seems to me as if you’re saying....’

It can also be helpful to **reflect the feelings the parent/ carer may be expressing**; useful phrases could include something like ‘this seems to be really hard for you to talk about’; ‘this seems to bring up some strong emotions for you (and suggest what emotions you notice?’); ‘can I ask you how you’re feeling right now?’

Open questions can be a useful resource for the practitioner using NVR remotely with parents/ carers; **the following are some examples** – ‘could you say more about that?’; ‘what would you like to happen in this situation?’; ‘if you were in that situation again and with the benefit of hindsight, what would you like to do differently?’.

It seems that the useful first steps to take when offering NVR support are for the practitioner to **summarise, explain and re-build** (while avoiding overwhelming the parent/ carer with too much information). Be prepared to summarise the NVR approach very briefly. Explain the reasons for the practitioner’s suggestion of the NVR approach for this parent/ carer and to take an approach that focuses on re-building the parent/ carer’s competence and confidence.

Parents frequently begin with 2 questions uppermost in their minds: the expected length/ number of sessions for NVR work and the expected duration of the calls/ session; **between 4 to 6 sessions or weeks** of remote NVR support seem to work for many parents/ carers.

For some parents/ carers, their own progress with practicing **de-escalation skills, self-calming skills and increasing positive parental presence is sufficient progress** for them to feel that enough work has been done and positive progress has been made. At this point, a review contact point for the future can be agreed or the practitioner can suggest to the parent/carer that she/ he her/himself can make contact at any point in the future.

The structure of NVR support conversations over the phone/ on-line

When engaging with a parent in a series of NVR sessions over the phone/ internet, the practitioner can follow the same structure to the conversation as if in a face to face meeting;

1. **Review** of the period between sessions; what is different? What would be helpful for the client from this conversation?
2. **(Solution-focused) discussion** of the task (thinking or action task) that was agreed towards the end of the previous conversation.
3. **Discussion (1st session)/ Review of goals** – what worked, what did not seem to work; what happened/ what role did the parent play in any positive changes/ difference that took place?

4. Focus on the **relevant NVR theme/ skill for the present conversation**
5. **Review/ summarise** today's conversation and discuss a relevant thinking or action task (for example, if the early stages of work: 'between now and our next conversation, could you think about what you **like/ used to like about your son/ daughter** that you would like to see in her/ him in the future?' It might also be useful for a parent/ carer to focus thinking/ action on **one goal** (rather than two or more) in the interval between sessions.
6. In the case of NVR support over the phone/ internet, **agree a time and medium** (phone/ internet platform) for the next conversation.

Tips for individuals on using on-line platforms suggested by the Data Protection Commission include:

- Ensuring that the device you use has all the necessary updates and software/ antivirus updates;
- Using services you know and trust (bearing in mind that some employers explicitly forbid the use of certain services);
- Think twice about consenting to allowing access to your data – do you really need to share with the provider your location and your contacts?
- Ensure that your device is being used in safe location – keep an eye on what (or who) can be seen on screen and make sure to log out, mute or turn off video, as appropriate, when you leave or take a break;
- Consider the data protection rights of others before you share or post a picture or video of a video-call that contains the image, voice and/ or contact details of another person.

This is not an exhaustive list of points to consider when using on-line platforms; for more tips for individuals and for organisations, please see www.dataprotection.ie

See also information on effective parenting during the Corona Virus (COVID 19) published on the 28th of March 2020 from Haim Omer (founder of NVR and emeritus professor at the School of Psychological Science at Tel Aviv University) at <https://www.haimomer-nvr.com/post/effective-parenting-in-times-of-corona> There are also some helpful recourses available at www.cpvireland.ie and at www.parentsplus.ie Parentline can be contacted at 1890 927 277 (Monday-Thursday 10am-9pm and Friday 10am-4pm).

Further information about COVID 19 is available at <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/coronavirus.html>

Suggested citation: Coogan, D, Connolly, M, Dahms, I, Fox, R, Kelly, T, Lauster, E, Magee, M, Scanlan, C & Quinn, A (2020) Facilitating Remote Non Violent Resistance Support for Parents/ Carers during the COVID 19 Crisis – Some Guidelines NVR Ireland/ School of Political Science & Sociology, NUI Galway.