

SETS Community of Practice

Communique: COVID-19 Best Practice and Innovation Meeting (NT/WA)

Videoconference – 25 March 2020

The SETS Community of Practice (SETS CoP) held a special videoconference on 25 March for CoP members in NT and WA to share their emerging best practice and innovative service delivery through the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Managing service delivery

Attendees discussed the strategies they are currently employing to continue to provide services to SETS clients, while ensuring the safety of their staff and clients.

Strategies differed, with some providers continuing face-to-face support, while others are utilising phone and technology. Some providers highlighted the importance of a transitional period for clients by continuing to keep offices open with skeleton staff.

Further, there was a general consensus that as the COVID-19 situation develops, SETS providers will continue to adapt and alter their approach to service delivery.

Strategies included:

- flexible working arrangements for staff (i.e. working from home or limited office hours);
- limiting of face-to-face meetings;
- face-to-face contact only provided for most vulnerable clients and if required, ensuring social distancing and hand hygiene;
- use of information technology to communicate with and distribute information to clients;
- regular welfare check-in calls with clients;
- support number for clients to reach after hours.

Use of information technology

Attendees shared the different applications and programs they are currently using to provide SETS casework support and facilitate group sessions. Some attendees expressed challenges with this, as some tasks require face-to-face communication.

Technology included:

- Facebook to provide updates and distribute information;
- WhatsApp to communicate with clients through text, phone calls or videocalls;
- Zoom for videoconferencing with other services, staff and clients (<https://zoom.us>);
- SMSTech to send group text messages (<https://smstech.transmitsms.com/register>);
- Microsoft teams for maintaining communication between staff (<https://products.office.com/en-au/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software>).

Support to non-SETS clients

Attendees expressed concern about those on temporary visas who have experienced job losses and are seeking emergency assistance from SETS providers.

Strategies to manage include:

- localised settlement networks (AMEP, HSP and SETS) to discuss a collaborative approach;
- engaging Facebook groups for communities who are offering support;
- referring to charities and emergency support services.

Attendees shared that some external services are referring people to them for emergency assistance, due to a lack of understanding of client eligibility, services and supports under SETS.

Perceptions of COVID-19

There was a general consensus by attendees, that the perceptions of COVID-19 and perceived risk, varied among clients.

Some clients appear to be underestimating transmission risk, while others are expressing heightened anxiety towards the pandemic.

Attendees agreed that the majority of clients are experiencing confusion due to mixed messages from the media and wider community.