

SETS Community of Practice

Communique: COVID-19 Best Practice and Innovation Meeting (VIC/SA)

Videoconference – 26 March 2020

The SETS Community of Practice (SETS CoP) held a special videoconference on 26 March for CoP members in VIC and SA to share their emerging best practice and innovative service delivery through the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Education

Attendees expressed concern for the home-schooling of some migrant and refugee children supported through SETS. Some providers are undertaking education risk assessments, so in the event of school closures, they can put targeted strategies and interventions in place to support the most vulnerable and advocate to schools and the Department of Education for support. Some noted that approximately 80% of concerns from their SETS clients were related to home-schooling and confusion around whether they should keep their children home.

Children deemed most vulnerable are those with:

- parents with limited or no English language skills;
- parents with limited or no education;
- multiple siblings requiring home-schooling;
- inaccessibility to technology devices or the internet.

SETS providers agreed to sharing of data, to support local advocacy efforts.

Staff Arrangements

Many attendees reported a roster for alternating staff, with one week in the office, and the other at home. This is to lessen the impact on the SETS workforce should there be an outbreak of COVID-19 in their organisation. Further, several attendees mentioned staff providing weekly workplans for management to track tasks undertaken while working from home. Others mentioned using the current situation as an opportunity for professional development for staff, particularly with IT literacy.

Use of Technology

Attendees discussed the technology being used to continue service delivery. This included WhatsApp and Zoom. Some are providing workshops online, and others have moved their groupwork onto Facebook groups, so that clients can continue to engage in group activities and supports, online.

Additionally, some attendees have upscaled their IT systems to better support staff with working from home arrangements.

Employment and Visas

There was a general consensus among attendees of their concern about those on temporary visas who have experienced job losses. Attendees expressed concern about those ineligible for income support

payments and the impact that this would have on their wellbeing and the pressure on SETS providers to support with emergency relief. Migration Council Australia will continue to advocate for extending supports to those in precarious visa situations.

Peer Mentoring

Many attendees expressed value in peer mentoring through the SETS CoP, recognising the importance of supporting one another through the current challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Attendee contact details will be shared to facilitate more regular and informal communication among CoP members