

# Supporting Our Professionals

## Remote Appraising...

### ... Some Guidelines and Top Tips from our Deputy Service Lead, Dr Steph

It is really exciting to hear that appraisals will be re-starting soon, and no doubt you will be looking forward to engaging with your doctors again in providing their supportive, developmental, and confidential appraisal discussions. I know I am! One of the things I have had to get used to in 2020 (among oh-so-many others....) is to be comfortable with talking via a computer instead of face-to-face. As most appraisals will be performed remotely (at least for now), I thought you might appreciate some **Top Tips** on how to "do" an effective remote appraisal.

**Protect and respect the remote appraisal time:** A "real life" one-to-one Appraisal is uninterrupted and held in a quiet, private, confidential space. Virtual meetings are no different. Mute all phones, and ensure kids and pets are occupied elsewhere. Ask any workmen to be quiet and don't schedule any deliveries/visitors.



**Make the room you appraise in a properly usable space:** Close windows and doors to limit noise. Ensure your computer is properly set up for you to be able to look at it comfortably for several hours. Check your surroundings and minimise distraction – avoid sitting in front of a window (you may be back-lit and difficult to see), and remove any private/personal items, ie family photographs.



**Dress professionally:** ...including your lower half! Pre-COVID, you wouldn't have turned up to an Appraisal in your PJ bottoms, and now is not the time to start. You're a professional at work – look like it. (Plus, you never know when you may need to stand up!)



**Look directly at the camera:** This is where you should be looking, rather than at the Appraisee's face, without having to look up or down. Tilt your screen accordingly. Your Appraisee will find it unnerving to be talking to your nostrils or chin. Try to avoid looking at your own image.



**Have a dummy run with the technology:** Ensure your internet is working well, and that you and your Appraisee are both familiar with the platform you are using. Have a plan for what to do if the connection fails; if the internet connection is lost, switch to 4G or, if all else fails, use the phone. At Appraisal time, the Appraiser in the house 'gets the WiFi'.



**Schedule regular breaks:** Screen time is harder time than face-to-face time. For a 2-3 hour appraisal discussion, suggest to your Appraisee that you take a 10-minute break each hour, or when it seems natural to. It doesn't matter what you do, as long as you leave your screen and seat, and give yourself a rest. Resist the temptation to check emails or engage with other work. Your focus should remain on your Appraisee.

**Be properly prepared:** Have a plugged-in/fully-charged computer and all requisite paperwork at your disposal. Have a pen and paper to make notes, a clear mind, an empty bladder. Make sure your microphone and camera are working. Some people find it easier to converse remotely using headphones, so you might want to try this out.

**Watch your posture:** Stretch. Don't slump. Consider a standing desk, or at least ensure that any chair/table combination you're using, wherever you are working, would be considered appropriately ergonomic. Your back will be your back long after the vaccine has arrived – you could say that "your back has your back", so look after it!

**Be mindful of establishing rapport:** As an Appraiser, you know how important this is in the Appraisal discussion. It's harder to do this via a screen than in person. Little 'cues' can be missed - be aware of this. **"If in doubt, ask"**. Give your Appraisee permission to be explicit about how they feel, and acknowledge the newness/artificial feel of the remoteness. It's quite okay to ask exactly what's going through their minds.

**Consider an ice-breaker question:** In researching this, I found that top salespeople begin by finding out a bit about the client/their situation. I hesitate to include this, as it can seem a bit "forced", but it might be an extra "tool" in the box to think about.

..... **GOOD LUCK!**