



## Malta Psychology Profession Board

Ministry for Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity  
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### Statement Issued by the Malta Psychology Profession Board in light of the Covid-19 Situation

5<sup>th</sup> April, 2020

Psychologists will be key both in responding to the current crisis and in making sure that people who need access to psychological treatment receive it. This includes clients who suffer from mental health issues, front line health care professionals who are dealing with a new, stressful situation particularly those who are away from their loved ones as well as people who normally cope well but who in this time of crisis suffer some setbacks.

It is vital that services continue to provide essential and life-serving treatment, and this guidance covers the principles maintaining all possible services.

The MPPB recommends that psychological therapies and interventions should continue and may be delivered through digital platforms or telephone. The Malta Chamber of Psychologists has responded to this promptly by providing training for its members and presenting this to the Board for approval.

During this time, judgments about the best method of service delivery need to include consideration of risks of infection for all concerned. This means that work that previously would have indicated face-to-face delivery will need to be delivered through digital platforms or by telephone.

Research shows that effectiveness of such teleconsultations is slightly less optimal than face-to-face interventions, yet it often manages to obtain similar effects to conventional care (European Federation of Psychologists' Association, EMC 8/2020). Therefore, in order to safeguard, not only the health of professionals, but also those who are seeking assistance and society as a whole, this should be the preferred mode of intervention at this time.

Digital delivery should not be ruled out on the grounds of age (children and adults), disability, language, or type of difficulty. Reasonable adjustments should be made to enable all to engage in this as far as possible, recognising that it will not be possible for all. In fact, consideration should be given to issues around accessibility, safety, confidentiality and risk when exploring the potential for digital or telephone delivery with individual service users.

Consent to digital delivery is implied through a service user accepting the invitation or engaging in the communication through the requested channel, although practitioners should endeavour to discuss the implications of digital delivery with service users at the outset.

One should also note that certain platforms are more indicated for use than others in terms of security and GDPR compliance. It seems that the best online platforms in this case are Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Skype for Business. The Board would like to encourage all registered psychologists to undergo training in the use of such platforms for their sessions. Software which might not be as secure is not recommended. The board also emphasises the removal of any record functions on digital platforms prior to any online sessions.

Dr Katya De Giovanni  
Chair, Malta Psychology Profession Board