

WillisPalmer Covid-19 Action Plan

WillisPalmer is continuing to provide most services throughout the Covid-19 outbreak, including assessment services. This updated guidance refers to this work in particular. Home working contracts such as child abuse litigation reports are functioning as usual and we have significant capacity to assist.

Introduction

The Covid-19 outbreak has resulted in government providing instructions on all activity taking place outside the home. With regard to working practices, the advice is that work should be undertaken from home unless it is not possible to do so.

Current government advice is:

“If you cannot work from home then you can still travel for work purposes, provided you are not showing coronavirus symptoms and neither you nor any of your household are self-isolating. This is consistent with advice from the Chief Medical Officer.”

For detailed guidance see:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others#going-to-work>

Advice to local authority children’s services is clear, “local authorities will be expected to prioritise support to the most vulnerable children, including undertaking necessary visits while taking appropriate infection control measures”.

Independent Assessments

WillisPalmer is continuing to assist with independent assessments including expert social work, psychological and psychiatric reports.

Social Work Assessments

We are currently accepting new referrals for all social work assessments including parenting assessments, SGO reports, PAMS assessments etc.

- i) We will be quoting a timescale of 10-12 weeks on all new assessments.
- ii) WP professionals will make a start on the work using appropriate technology where possible. For example, interviews with parents/children/foster carers and other professionals.

- iii) Home visits/observations of contact and other 'out of home' requirements forming part of the assessment can be undertaken towards the latter part of the 12-week period once restrictions have been eased
- iv) During the 12-week period we would ask all WP professionals to continually risk assess the case and consider the option of undertaking domiciliary visits in circumstances only where it is considered safe to do so.
- v) In certain circumstances it will be possible to conduct an entire assessment remotely, especially in situations where there is no contact to observe. We have experience of this and have found that reports can be prepared successfully using this approach. This will not be appropriate in all situations.

Psychological and psychiatric assessments

- i) We are now accepting referrals for full psychological and psychiatric assessments and in most cases these can be done remotely using technology.
- ii) We are able to complete these assessments within 4-6 weeks in most instances.
- iii) Where home visits or observation of contact is required we will complete this where/when it is safe to do so following the undertaking of our risk assessment protocol.

Risk Assessment Matrix

Summary

We consider the work we are doing on behalf of local authority and legal colleagues to be essential work. Our role in supporting colleagues to complete assessments regarding whether a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm is critical to the welfare of children. However, in certain cases some delay to the completion of work will be justifiable and appropriate. We understand the courts are helpfully acknowledging this.

Typically most social work assessments will require a face-to-face element and this means our timescales for completing these types of assessments has been extended. Psychological and psychiatric assessments are being completed remotely using technology with considerable success.

As the country begins to emerge from the crisis and we see risk in the community reducing WillisPalmer will be available to offer all critical services in order to support colleagues who are very likely to see a significant increase in demand.

In the meantime we would like to thank you for your continued support.

Mark Willis
Chief Executive