

THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SOUTH KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH TEAM (SK&C CMHT): A QUALITATIVE SURVEY

Dr Amrita Joottun, CT3

Dr Anna Morawski, CT2

Dr Stefania Chaikali, CT2

Dr Sanrika Naidoo, ST4

AIMS

As the country scrambles to keep up with the latest COVID-19 guidance, we take a moment to pause and reflect on the impact that the pandemic is having on SK&C CMHT.



The aim of this project is to **explore the perspectives of healthcare workers on how COVID-19 has affected the clinical care and working environment** at this outpatient team.

BACKGROUND

Various revisions have been made to mental health services worldwide. Telepsychiatry is now at the forefront of care delivery while the remote working is consolidating its place in our practice.

Measures have also been taken to minimise the risk of viral transmission such as social distancing, physical screening prior to in-person reviews and use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

METHODS

- ✓ Maximum variation sampling (N=10):
 - 2 nurses
 - 2 social workers
 - 2 doctors
 - 2 administrative staff members
 - 1 psychologist
 - 1 team manager
- ✓ Semi-structured interviews, conducted individually
- ✓ Interviews transcribed independently by 2 doctors
- ✓ Content analysis: to code and analyse data

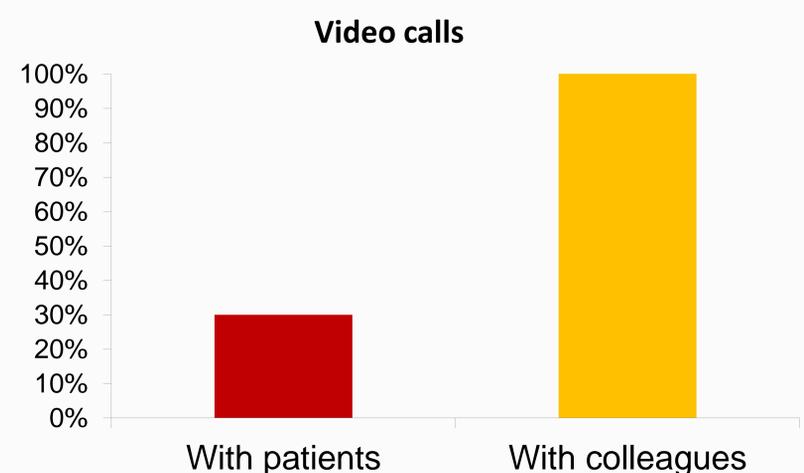
RESULTS

Four core themes emerged from the data:

1. The changes made to the service provided by the team
2. Using technology to minimise face-to-face contacts
3. The feeling of safety in the workplace
4. Increased feeling of bonding and team working

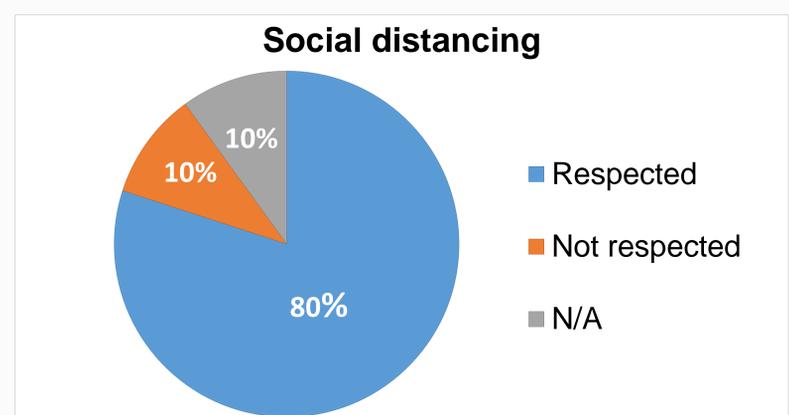
Working from home was praised for its flexible and time-saving attributes but was found to have induced feelings of stress and isolation.

While telephone contacts are efficient and helpful in providing support, the lack of visual cues to inform assessments is a prominent disadvantage. Although video consultations nullify this problem, only 30% of the participants had used video calls for clinical contacts with patients.



A notable reason for this was the worry of being recorded.

80% of the participants reported that social distancing measures were not strictly adhered to in the workplace. Nonetheless, all the participants, who had worked in the office, reported feeling safe at work.



The survey also reflected a positive working experience within the team and with external services during these challenging times.

CONCLUSIONS

With telepsychiatry becoming a key player, the need for **formal guidelines** and **accessible technology** has become increasingly pertinent to guide safe and ethical delivery of care to patients across all levels of functional abilities.