Staying connected

Key Points

- It is important to reach out and stay connected with others, especially during stressful experiences, isolation, or if practicing social distancing.
- Ensuring that children and young people can still connect to their families and friends will help to ease the strain of this time period and reassure them that this will pass. Continuing relationships with birth families, where possible, will help support reunification down the line.
- Technology can offer some great opportunities for staying connected, but it's important to supervise children and young people online.

Why this is important

If you need to social distance or self-isolate, you may be experiencing a lifestyle that is new to you. Whilst doing this, it is important to look after your mental health and well-being, as well as that of your households.

During a crisis.

Talk to people you trust.

Think about reaching out to friends and family or your community.

Experiencing so much uncertainty and change will naturally bring anxieties with it. Emotions may run high for yourself, your loved ones, and your community.

We know that loneliness is detrimental to well-being and it can be combatted via social connection. Maintaining a regular routine, making time for yourself, and socialising safely with others provides comfort and supports our overall health.

Using technology to stay connected

There are many free apps and websites to stay connected online – see what may work best for you.

You can connect to your local community through Facebook groups or apps that connect neighbours such as NextDoor, which requires neighbours to verify their location to connect with their community: https://au.nextdoor.com/

If you feel you need support outside of your network consider accessing professional support via telephone or online counselling. Many foster agencies and many employers provide EAP as a free service. Consider speaking to your case manager about how to access this.

If you are looking for long-term professional support contact your General Practitioner (GP) to seek a referral to see a specialist and to acquire a mental health plan.

For foster care specific support contact FCAV.

If you want to support others during this period consider volunteering with a service that may be provide telephone peer support to individuals in need.

Check out the Remote Working Resource Guide on page 5 of this document.

Apps to get you started

There are a host of messaging and social media apps available for free that can be used to stay in touch. Most of these allow users to send messages and exchange photos, do video calls, send videos, audio, and files.

They include:
- WhatsApp – a messaging and calling app
  - https://www.whatsapp.com/download/
- Facebook messenger – a messaging app and platform
  - https://www.messenger.com/
- Skype – provides video chat and voice calls and instant messaging services.
  - https://www.skype.com/en/get-skype/
- Zoom – a remote conferencing service that combines video conferencing, online meetings, chat, and mobile collaboration.
  - https://zoom.us/download
- Gmail – a free email account
  - https://www.google.com/gmail/about/

Helping others get online

If you are trying to get a family member or friend online, consider becoming a digital mentor to support people through their first steps to using computers and the internet, and improve their digital skills.

You'll learn about the language and techniques needed to support someone, and the possible barriers that people who are new to the internet can experience.
Visit Be Connected to learn more: https://beconnected.esafety.gov.au/digital-mentor

If you don't use technology regularly

Many people now use the internet for work, social engagement, and communication on a daily basis. If you don't use it regularly, this can seem daunting.

Here are 5 things to consider if you're not sure where to start:
1. Visit **Be Connected**, a government initiative to increase the confidence, skills and online safety for Australians https://beconnected.esafety.gov.au/
2. Don't be embarrassed – many people are not comfortable with technology and have not had a need to develop these skills.
3. Reach out – ask a family member or friend whether they can assist you by walking you through accessing the internet through a computer or smart phone.
4. Work with what you have – you don't need expensive new equipment to get online. If you have a smartphone or a computer, you're well on your way.
5. Use what works for you – technology can be a wonderful way to stay connected, but there's nothing wrong with a phone call!

Keeping young people safe online

The internet is an incredible tool, but children and young people require support and monitoring as they engage with the online world.

The best place to source this is from the eSafety Commission, who help to safeguard Australians at risk from online harms and to promote safer, more positive online experiences. They provide information specially designed for kids, young people, and seniors to improve their skills and learn more.

For carers, we recommend visiting the parents and carers page, which has a host of tips to help keep children and young people safe online. You can find them here: https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents

The eSafety Commission also provides guidance on online safety issues including:
- cyberbullying
- adult cyber abuse
- image-based abuse
- technology-related concerns for people at risk of family or domestic violence

Visit the eSafety Commission website to learn more: https://www.esafety.gov.au/

Tips and suggestions

- If you are working remotely to social distance or isolate, make a plan and stick to it. It is easy to let a routine escape you due to all the changes around you. Set boundaries and follow through with them around your commitments. This is great modelling for the children/young people in your care.
- Aim for quality face-to-face time with your loved ones who are with you – whether that is a morning check in for the day, or a dinner as a household.
- Schedule calls with friends and loved ones who you cannot see whether it be over the phone or online via video calls. Have a coffee over the phone together and create a safe space to support one another.

Further resources

- FCAV (Foster Care Association Victoria) - https://www.fcav.org.au/
- Facebook is a social media platform to connect with friends, chat via messenger or calls, and join groups - https://www.facebook.com/

Working Remote Resource Guide

Work Suites

Microsoft (MS) Office Suite –

If your organisation runs on Microsoft products to do work, you have a variety of resources to leverage if work needs to be done remote. All your MS Office desktop services are available online in Office 365 for Business.

Office 365 provides you with online versions of Word, Excel, SharePoint, PowerPoint, OneNote, OneDrive, etc. It includes other online services we don't use on our desktop that are very useful, such as Teams. These online services are used exactly like those on your desktop except they are saved in your OneDrive (cloud storage) and can be accessed whenever you're logged into Office 365.

In order to get access to the wide breath of services MS Office provides, go to Office 365 to see all the services available (see below image). Please note that the services outlined below are ones we believe may be helpful for working remote.
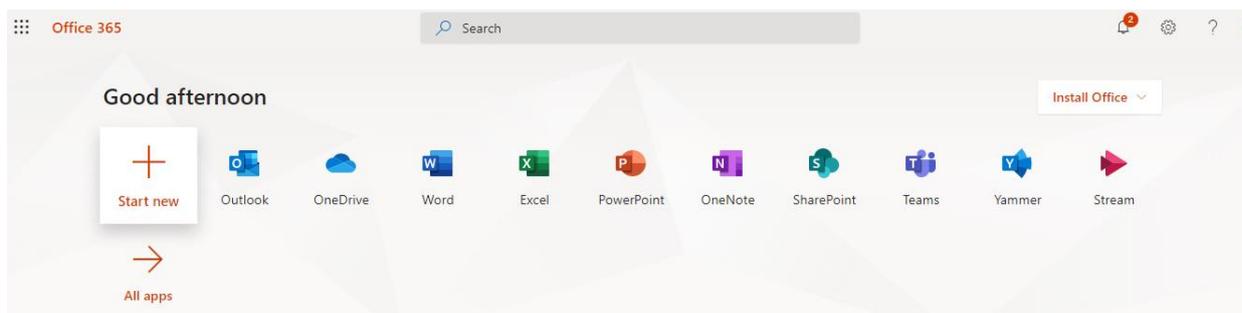
Just use your internet browser to head to Office 365 and you'll be able to create documents that will automatically be stored in your OneDrive. The bonus is because it's online and in the cloud, these documents automatically save!

- Creating Documents:
  - Word
  - Excel
  - PowerPoint
  - OneNote
  - Etc. - There are many other services and only the most popular have been listed here, feel free to check out the other apps and see what may be useful for you!
- Emails:
  - Outlook – Access your emails online if your desktop Outlook is not loading properly. Both are interchangeable and one is updated when the other is.
- Communication:
  - Teams – Many are not aware of this service. It is connected to Microsoft 365, and enables entire teams, as well as individuals to communicate online via instant message, phone and video calls. This

can be the place where you 'meet' with your teammates to keep in constant communication.

- Online Team Document Repository:
    - SharePoint – Enables teams to share dynamic documents and access them without having to be logged into internal VPN or Share Drive. Some teams have opted to move all documents to SharePoint for easy access to shared documents.
- Storage Cloud:
    - OneDrive – Your own personal cloud document storage system. Create/save documents and organise them in folders as you see fit.

Helpful Links

MS 365 Video Training: https://support.office.com/en-us/article/what-is-office-365-for-business-56e60c2b-1929-4a04-bd9b-ff5b844364f3

https://support.office.com/en-us/article/office-365-basics-video-training-396b8d9e-e118-42d0-8a0d-87d1f2f055fb?wt.mc_id=otc_home

Outlook Training: https://support.office.com/en-us/article/add-an-email-account-to-outlook-e9da47c4-9b89-4b49-b945-a204aeea6726

Teams Training: https://support.office.com/en-us/article/video-what-is-microsoft-teams-422bf3aa-9ae8-46f1-83a2-e65720e1a34d

SharePoint Introduction: https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/sharepoint/introduction

Google (G) Suite

If your workplace does not use Microsoft Office suites, it is likely that your email address and work services are powered by Google. Please check with your designated IT point of contact to confirm this. G Suite offers online and cloud services to help enable you to get work done anywhere.

In order to access your G Suite, log into Gmail and head to the upper right navigation next to the icon for your profile picture, click on the grid (see image). It will expand and the best way to enter into your G Suite is through Drive (circled in yellow). There you can create/save and manage your documents.
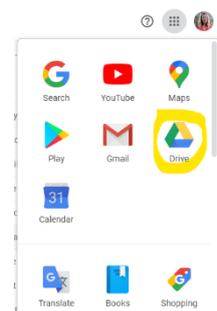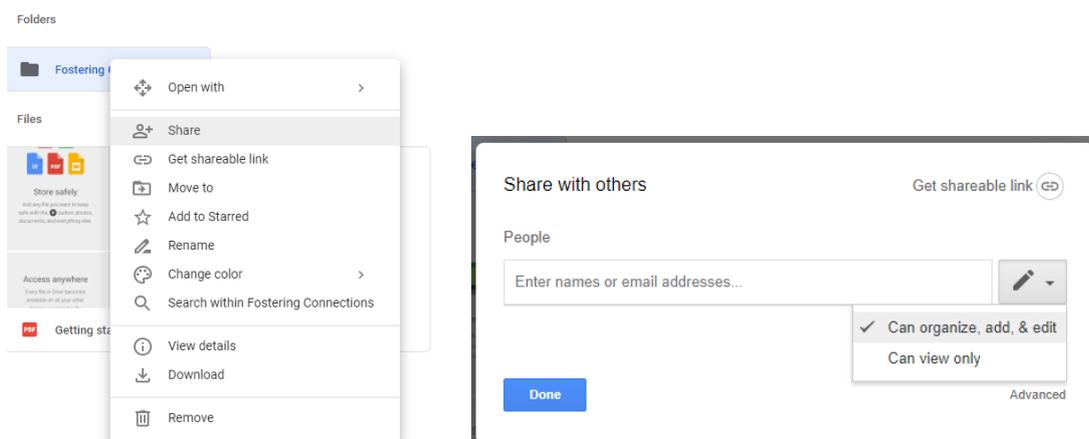
- Creating Documents
    - Docs (Word equivalent)
    - Slides (PowerPoint equivalent)
    - Spreadsheet (Excel equivalent)
    - Etc. - There are many other services and only the most popular have been listed here, feel free to check out the other apps and see what may be useful for you!

*Please note if you are converting MS Office documents over to Google, there may be slight formatting difference as they work to reconcile their differences!

- Emails
  - [Gmail](#) – Logging into Gmail with your work's email address should provide you access to received and send emails.
  - [Calendar](#) – Send meeting invitations/events through Google Calendar. If it's a phone or video conference call, you can [add a hangout link into the meeting location](#). This will automate a link for all parties to join the conference call.
- Communication
  - [Hangouts](#) – You can chat to your individual or whole team via instant message, phone, and video calls. Max 50 people to a meeting.
- Online Document Repository
  - [Google Drive](#) – This is the online cloud storage for documents.
  - If you want to create a team repository of dynamic documents, have the leader in your team create a folder in their G drive and share it with the team. Everyone will be able to access this folder only in their drive. All other folders and the documents in them will remain private unless those settings are changed by the drive owner.
    1. Create a folder (team or organisation name) in Drive
    2. Share with team members (see below image). Make sure they have access to edit and add into this folder (see below image).
    3. Click Done and team members should be added to this folder.

  *Note an entire organisation can create an official G Drive but would require understanding the business licensing agreement and technical assistance. The above option is quick and free. It can be done with any level access of a Google account.

Helpful Links

Getting Started with G Drive:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/18EsW11eYwqrYu1sRlyFcn9VEFoI49i3oF3HaKs
V-Y3s/edit?usp=sharing

Sharing Documents:
https://support.google.com/drive/answer/2494822co=GENIE.Platform%3DAndroid&h
l=en

G Drive Support: https://support.google.com/drive/?hl=en#topic=14940

Hangout Support:
https://support.google.com/hangouts/answer/2944865?co=GENIE.Platform%3DDesk
top&hl=en

Gmail Support: https://support.google.com/mail/?hl=en

Free Communications Software

If your organisation does not have the above suite of working services, below are
some free options as ways to communicate amongst your team(s) for free.

Facebook (FB)
- Workplace – An online team collaboration tool using Facebook features for
  work. Here you can chat individually with team members or share group
  team posts. Multiple groups can be created in Workplace so you can use it
  for an entire organisation, or just for your direct team.
- Private FB Group – You can create a private FB group for your team and
  invite members to chat and share updates.
- FB Messenger – It may be un-ideal for team members to communicate
  through Facebook, but the benefits include not having to download a new
  application and everyone knows how to use it! In FB Messenger, you can 1:1
  or group instant message and phone and video call. In addition, supposedly
  FB Messenger has the best connectivity for international calls or individuals
  with not-so-good connectivity.

Helpful Links

Create FB Workplace Group: http://bit.ly/38SVrPC

Create FB Group: https://www.facebook.com/help/167970719931213

FB Group Privacy: https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2017/06/understanding-public-
closed-and-secret-facebook-groups

How to use Messenger: https://www.wikihow.com/Use-Facebook-Messenger

Google Hangouts

[Hangouts](#) is a service provided by Google for communication between individuals or among members in a group. You can chat 1:1 or as an entire team via instant message, phone, and video calls. Just log into your Google account through Gmail and head to Hangouts once you're logged in.

Helpful Links

Hangout Support:
https://support.google.com/hangouts/answer/2944865?co=GENIE.Platform%3DDesktop&hl=en

Skype

[Skype for Busines](#) – If your company has a Microsoft Office license, they will likely have Skype for Business. Skype for Business is a communication service the enables 1:1 or group members to instant message, conduct phone and video calls.

[Free Skype](#) – Skype is a is a telecommunications application that specializes in providing video chat and voice calls between computers, tablets, mobile devices. If your company doesn't have a Microsoft Office license, Skype can be downloaded and used for free. You can instant message, conduct phone and video calls just like Skype for Business. You will have to pay for phone calls, but not direct calls to other Skype users.

Helpful Links

Set up Skype for Business: https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/skypeforbusiness/set-up-skype-for-business-online/set-up-skype-for-business-online

Set up free Skype: https://support.skype.com/en/faq/FA11098/how-do-i-get-started-with-skype

WhatsApp

A communication [application](#) that can be used on a mobile phone or [downloaded to your desktop](#) to send text and voice messages, make voice and video calls, and share images and documents.

Helpful Links

How to use Whatsapp: https://www.wikihow.com/Use-WhatsApp

FAQ: https://faq.whatsapp.com/

Zoom Video Communications

[Zoom](#) is a remote conferencing service. It has a [free option.](#) This option enables you to host calls up to 100 participants, limits 40 minutes per meeting, have an unlimited number of meetings, and online support.

Helpful Links

Getting started with Zoom: https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362033-Getting-Started-on-Windows-and-Mac

Help Centre: https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us

Slack

Slack is a collaboration software. It is essentially a chat room for your whole company, designed to replace email as your primary method of communication and sharing. It allows you to organize communications by channels for group discussions and allows for private messages to share information, files, and more all in one place.

Free option includes access to 10,000 messages, integration with Google Suite or Office 365, and 1:1 voice calls.

Helpful Links

Getting Started with Slack: https://slack.com/intl/en-au/help/articles/218080037-Getting-started-for-new-members

Help Centre: https://slack.com/intl/en-au/help

Tracking Work Software

Trello (free)

Trello is a web-based Kanban-style list-making application. You can create individual board and team boards to track projects and tasks.

Free option includes unlimited personal project boards, unlimited task cards and lists, 10MB per file attachment, and 10 team boards.

Helpful Links

Getting started with Trello: https://trello.com/guide/trello-101

Help Centre: https://trello.com/en-AU/guide

Asana (free, limited)

Asana is a web and mobile application designed to help teams organize, track, and manage their work.

Free option includes access for up to 15 team members to create project boards, track tasks, and integrate with other services such as Google Suite or Microsoft 365.

Helpful Links

Getting started with Asana: https://asana.com/guide/get-started/begin/quick-start

Help Centre: https://asana.com/guide