



Support worker Jo continues to support her client's independence through Zoom cooking lessons

Staying connected and continuing care during lockdown

Pact is a national service that supports people of all ages with mental illness, physical and intellectual disability, and people overcoming addictions, to live fulfilling lives in the community.

The local branch supports more than 500 clients and Evelien Post, Pact Central Region Manager, says operating under lockdown has been challenging for a service that is mainly delivered face-to-face.

“When the lockdown was first announced, staff immediately bought mobile phones for clients who didn't have any devices, paying for their data and phone credit so they could stay in touch. Using the Messenger app has been a great way to communicate with clients, especially young people,” Evelien says.

Pact helps youth and young adults experiencing mental health issues or addiction to set good goals and work to achieve them. Instead of face-to-face meetings, it's now a weekly Zoom call to check in.

“Many of the young adults found it easy to transition to using technology to connect and some have actually said they prefer using technology,” says Evelien.

One of the clients had been learning to cook from a community support worker. Now, thanks to innovation with technology, the client decides on the meal, the support worker buys the ingredients, and they cook together over Zoom.

Support workers have also been buying groceries, collecting medication, and making weekly calls to check that people are managing and see if they need more help.

In crisis respite and accommodation-based services, staff have adapted how they provide care for clients.

One of the residential support houses is for five long-term residents and is staffed 24/7, but visitors haven't been allowed since lockdown and all day-to-day programmes had to stop.

Evelyn says staff have been busy thinking outside the box to help residents maintain a normal routine. Activities like gardening and cooking have been helpful, and Zoom calls with family have helped fill the social gap.

“For our staff, their clients have become part of their 'bubble', as well as their own families, so extra care has been taken to ensure everyone in their households stays safe.”