

Abstract

The spring 2020 Covid-19 pandemic outbreak in the Czech Republic brought many challenges and new opportunities for (not only) social services. This also applies to services working with clients in prisons. The entry bans for external subjects onto prison premises made personal consultations with clients impossible. The staff of these services have connected with their clients remotely via video calls. This use of technology created a new tool for providing social and psychological counselling – video consultations.

The aim of this thesis is to document this experience and to evaluate the suitability of providing video consultations after the cancellation of anti-pandemic measures. This thesis also aims to evaluate the possibility of introducing video consultations as a standard service offered by social services and thus obtain a new tool for working with clients in prisons.

The focus of the research question lies on the possibility of establishing a trust-based relationship between the social service worker and the client during video consultations. The sub-questions focus on three bodies that have a direct influence on the video consultations: the social services of non-governmental, non-profit organisations; Prison Service of the Czech Republic; and the convicted person – the client and simultaneously the recipient of social and psychological counselling.

The selected research method was an analysis of the author's recordings of video consultations with clients of the social service. The analysis material was recorded at the author's workplace. In the consequent part of the research, individual interviews were conducted with the workers of the services that, at the time of the entry ban, offered this service to their clients. The data resulting from these interviews were used to design questions for the final part of the thesis – a focus group. The focus group consisted of staff with previous relevant experience with this form of work, all coming from the author's workplace was established.

The findings of the research are formulated as a set of recommendations that can help social service workers provide counselling through video calls aiming to build trustworthy relationship with the client and consequently obtain a decent tool for further work.

Keywords: video calls, video consultations, Skype consultations, counselling with clients in prisons, social work with people using addictive substances, NGOs and the Prison Service of the Czech Republic