

Working during the corona pandemic: Electronic Monitoring coordinator Vera, Reclassering Nederland

Vera coordinates the execution of Electronic Monitoring sanctions (supervision of people wearing an ankle bracelet) and is supervisor on training processes of a cooperation project conducted together with the Dutch Custodial Institutions Agency. Besides this she is doing the master study 'Forensic Social Professional' and she is a mother of three young children. The corona period is quite a challenge for her – how does she manage to keep all these things going?

As Electronic Monitoring coordinator Vera is the point of contact for the so-called Electronic Monitoring specialists, colleagues who check if the people wearing an ankle bracelet comply with the conditions that are imposed on them. Vera optimizes the execution of the processes and often takes part in national meetings. Most of the coordinators are also supervising clients with ankle bracelets themselves. "Until last week I was responsible for two clients myself" says Vera. "But because of the double job I am doing now I handed them over to a colleague. It is good though to have your own clients as then you know and recognize what your colleagues are experiencing."

Because of the corona situation the supervision processes go in a different way than normally. "The specialists mostly work from home", explains Vera. "They are present when the ankle bracelet is connected, but then need to follow the rules and guidelines of the RIVM (Dutch National Institute for Health and Environment). At the beginning of a supervision process there are face-to-face contacts, but after that almost all the work is done electronically."

Additional ankle bracelets

To reduce the risk of infections in prisons, the Dutch Custodial Institutions Agency under the Ministry of Justice has decided to allow a group of prisoners who were already in their last phase of detention and therefore spending most of their time outside prison, a temporary leave. They do however need to wear an ankle bracelet in order to be supervised. "All these additional ankle bracelets are quite something for us", says Vera. "But fortunately our colleagues are willing to take up the extra work. Also supervisors and advisors who normally never work with Electronic Monitoring are now taking things over from us to help. It is extremely important to keep a good overview."

Role rotation with colleagues

The work processes are different than normally. "There is a schedule for who can work at the office and on which days", says Vera. "Always one of us has to stay at home for a week in order to minimize the chance of everyone falling ill at the same time." But it is definitely a hard time, especially since she has to combine her work, master study and children. Vera: "In the first week I was really happy and proud when I had my son doing his school work, but then his teacher called me saying that he was doing the wrong tasks... That was a bit of a disappointment", she adds laughing.

Contact with colleagues

Fortunately now and then she asks for help and also receives it. "When a colleague calls me to ask how I am doing that is really great. That is the beautiful thing in this period – the fact that everyone is

willing to help each other and that you can just ring the bell if necessary. I really feel appreciated by my colleagues and that gives me positive energy.” The same for her team – on a regular basis Vera calls her colleagues to ask how they are doing. “People need to stay motivated and I closely monitor that. But everyone is very much involved.”