

Coronavirus (Covid-19) Risk Assessment

Version: 2

Date last reviewed - 1st October 2020

Date written - 14th July 2020

Identified risk

This risk assessment identifies the risks associated with Coronavirus (Covid-19) in my counselling setting, and the actions taken to minimise those risks. The risks include:

- Contracting Coronavirus (Covid-19) and becoming ill, or dying.
- Transmitting Coronavirus (Covid-19) and adding to the spread of the virus which may infect others who could become ill or die.
- Isolation and loneliness from disconnection to others, including at the point of illness and/or death.
- Anxiety, stress and depression linked to isolation, fear of illness, loss of income, loved ones becoming ill and dying, strain on family, pressures to work from home and/or look after children with less support.
- Trauma from the ongoing exposure to the above stressors.

Level of risk

Since 18th March 2020, I have offered only telephone or video counselling for clients. This has been to minimise non-essential travel and contact with others to prevent the spread of Coronavirus (Covid-19) when the [R rating](#) was high, in line with [Government Guidelines](#).

This has reduced the risk of contracting and transmitting the virus, but has limited access to counselling for some people for whom telephone or online counselling is not appropriate, preferable or viable.

From 1st July, I am offering walking and outdoor therapy again as an alternative to telephone or online counselling to increase access to vital mental, emotional and psychological support at this time. The R rating is lower, and so the need to manage the risk to physical health with the need for mental and emotional health support has changed.

I will continue to stay informed of the R level and associated Government Guidelines on keeping safe during Coronavirus (Covid-19). This risk assessment is a living document and will be updated accordingly.

With the ongoing impact of having limited access to face to face counselling, and the inclement weather as we move into Autumn and Winter, I am offering a limited number of indoor counselling sessions from 1st October 2020. This is to ensure that vital counselling is accessible for everyone.

Actions taken to minimise risk

I am putting the following steps in place to ensure that the risk of transmission and/or contracting the virus is minimised:

- To maintain expectations and trust in the therapeutic relationship, I will keep clients informed as to the changes of guidance and the potential implications for our work. This is in line with [Best Practice Guidance from the National Counselling Society](#) and includes:
 - If a client, or myself, are advised medically to self-isolate, or if one of us has any symptoms of a cough, change to taste or smell, respiratory issues or a raised temperature, we will postpone face to face sessions and, where well enough, will have a telephone or online session instead.
 - Government Guidance restricting outdoor/walking sessions again, or other changes to the ways we can conduct sessions.
- Telephone and video counselling will be available for those who are isolating, shielding, or prefer to work in this way.
- When conducting walking and outdoor therapy, the following precautions will be taken to minimise transmission of the virus:
 - No physical contact (e.g. shaking hands or hugs)
 - Maintain at least 1 metre distance and do not face one another (e.g. walk side by side or one in front of the other)
 - Minimise the use of shared materials - e.g. using stones or sticks for creative work - and sanitise hands before and after the session where shared materials have been used.
 - Counsellor and client will bring and use their own water, tissues, hand sanitiser and will not share these.
 - Walking and outdoor therapy routes will be checked a few days prior to the session. Routes and locations that are not conducive to social

distancing measures will be avoided, and alternative routes sought instead.

- Indoor sessions are only offered where the need outweighs the risks while social distancing measures are still in place. This will be discussed and assessed with the individual wanting counselling and will take into consideration the following factors and risk minimisation:
 - The suitability for outdoor or telephone counselling compared to indoor sessions.
 - The therapy rooms I hire (at Soul Solutions and Apotheca) are taking all precautions to ensure that the venues are sanitised and the risk of transmission is minimised. I have seen the risk assessment for the building and will comply with the rules for use of the shared space, should I arrange an indoor counselling session.
 - When deciding whether to use face masks or visors, the risks of transmission of not wearing a mask must be weighed up against the psychological and health risk factors and potential inhibition of the therapeutic process when wearing one.
 - Seeking written client consent to divulge their contact details to the NHS if I am diagnosed with Coronavirus as part of the [Track and Trace programme](#).

- The following precautions will be discussed and agreed to -
 - Therapist and client will sanitise hands on entering the building, and again on leaving.
 - We will sit at least 2 metres apart and maintain this distance within the building.
 - Washable throws will cover the chairs and will be changed for each client. These will be washed after sessions.
 - Door handles and table surfaces will be disinfected between clients.
 - The room will be aired in between clients.
 - Minimise the use of shared materials - e.g. using cards and art materials for creative work - and sanitise hands before and after the session where shared materials have been used.
 - Counsellor and client will bring and use their own water, tissues, hand sanitiser and will not share these.