

Coronavirus (Covid-19) Risk Assessment

Version: 4

Date last reviewed - 1st October 2021

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

CURRENT

1st October 2021 onwards - I am offering indoor, outdoor and telephone sessions to ensure people can access and choose counselling according to their preferences and needs. Infection control measures have relaxed in line with Government Guidance, with some aspects becoming optional for those having counselling.

PREVIOUS

1st October 2020 - 1st October 2021, with the ongoing impact of having limited access to face to face counselling, and the inaccessibility of working outdoors for some people, I have also been offering indoor counselling sessions with infection control measures in place. This is to ensure that vital counselling is accessible for everyone.

I offered these options for counselling, taking into consideration the risk factors both on a social and individual level, providing they do not contravene Government Guidance.

1st July - 1st October 2020, I began 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 continued 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.

18th March 2020 - 1st July 2020, I offered only telephone or video counselling for clients. This aimed 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 reduced the risk of contracting and transmitting the virus, but limited access to counselling for some people for whom telephone or online counselling is not appropriate, preferable or viable.

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 sessions, or other changes to the ways we can conduct sessions.

- Telephone 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)
 - Attempt to maintain at least 1 metre distance.
 - Minimise the use of shared materials - e.g. using stones or sticks for creative work.
 - Counsellor and client will bring and use their own water, tissues, hand sanitiser and will not share these.
- Indoor sessions are offered where the need outweighs the risks. 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 room I hire (at Apotheca) is cleaned regularly and is possible to air in between sessions. I have been involved in the risk assessment for the building and will comply with the rules for use of the shared space.
 - Wearing a face covering is optional and will be discussed with each client, taking into consideration personal preference, risk of transmission and potential inhibition of the therapeutic process when wearing one.
 - Letting one another know if we have Coronavirus symptoms, have tested positive or have
- The following precautions will be discussed and agreed to -
 - Therapist and client will wear a face covering when the client arrives and leaves and maintaining social distancing is not possible, if preferred by either therapist and client.
 - Both therapist and client will have access to sanitiser to sanitise hands on entering the building, and again on leaving.
 - When seated, we have 2 metres distance between chairs.
 - 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 regularly.
 - The room will be aired in between clients.
 - When using creative materials - e.g. using cards and art materials for creative work - both therapist and client will sanitise hands before and after use.