

Hopefully, everyone will be aware that England is entering a month of further restrictions in a 'lockdown' from Thursday this week. The devolved administrations continue to have their own systems of restrictions and varying timeframes – but all seem to either already have in place or be moving towards tighter restrictions on activities that bring people into physical contact with one another.

As has been our consistent advice, you must continue to adhere to government guidance in the spirit as well as in the letter of the law. Although the finer details of exactly what we are allowed to do have yet to be worked out and published on www.gov.uk, as of today our understanding is that it will still be possible in England's lockdown to meet with one other person outside in a public place (not in a garden). This would suggest walk and talk therapy could continue for some. It is also still allowable to go to work if you can't work at home, but this needs to be weighed against the closure of higher risk workplaces, for example contact services such as hairdressers.

When significant restrictions to movement and interpersonal contact are in place, we advise our counselling members who have resumed in-person work in an indoor setting to consider whether it is ethical to continue to do so during any period of 'lockdown'. We appreciate that these are often very difficult decisions to make, as for some clients the loss of in-person support at this time may heighten the risk to them of self-harm or suicide. If in-person counselling has to end for a very vulnerable client, we encourage you to consider ways in which you can continue to offer some support during these challenging times. Feedback from our members confirms that telephone, video and 'walk and talk' therapies have proved to be effective for many people. Check with your supervisor and insurance company that you are covered for working in new ways, and avail yourself of the training that is on offer through your free subscription to on-line events as well as ACC's recent training on on-line and telephone counselling and supervision. Recording of both events are available for the training fee. Please contact the office for details office@acc-uk.org.

The news of a second wave and its impact on the NHS with the potential for many more people to go onto die because of the virus is distressing. The attendant risk to people's livelihoods and wellbeing in lockdown is concerning for all of us. The prospect of not being able to meet up with friends and family is personally unsettling for many of us. As winter draws in the next few months will be challenging. You may take some comfort from the words of a Taize chant: "within our darkest night you kindle a fire that never goes away". If you like to listen to it sung by the Taize community, there are several versions on YouTube.