

Dear ACC Members and Affiliates

Every person in the UK is being asked by the Government to comply with their latest advice and guidance, and as you must be aware, we are in rapidly changing territory. This email is mainly addressed to counsellors, however we thought that all our members might benefit from knowing the advice relating to counselling. We are posting all emails and updates on the front page of our website under 'Latest News'. It may not always be possible to send out bulk emails, so please check this website regularly for further guidance.

Especially for Counsellors

As a membership body we want to help you make good decisions about what to do following the latest announcements from the government. Although as independent practitioners and organisations we cannot enforce our guidance, we recommend that you take it seriously. Face-to-face counselling carries a high risk of spreading the Coronavirus because people are in close proximity with one another for an extended period of time. Please discuss your practice decisions and their impact on clients with your supervisor, especially with regard to the points below.

Vulnerable Categories

- For counsellors and clients who fall within the categories set out by the government as particularly vulnerable, currently aged over 70, pregnant, having an underlying medical condition that would make them eligible for a flu jab, we strongly advise that you consider suspending all face-to-face counselling for the foreseeable future in-line with the relevant guidelines. Please keep informed about any changes to the definition of 'vulnerable'
- Here is the link <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults>

Self/household isolation

- Counsellors expected to self-isolate under the individual, now family/household 14 day rule should obviously comply with the government advice and cancel all face-to-face appointments. Again please keep up-to-date with changes in advice that effect you personally <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-advice/>
- You may wish to explicitly ask your clients to confirm that they are not subject to a self/household isolation rule before seeing them

New Clients

- For counsellors seeing new clients we strongly advise you determine if they are within one of the vulnerable categories and if so, that you do not commence a face-to-face counselling relationship with them.
- For other new clients not in a vulnerable category, you will need to assess the potential risk of seeing them face to face for both you and them and discuss this with them before any initial meeting. Also, you need to weigh up the risk of further urgent distancing measures being introduced which means that having just begun counselling, you are forced to suspend it or move to on-line or telephone counselling. Again, you need to discuss this prior to any meeting with the client, clearly outlining the risks their welfare. Finally, if you decide to go ahead, you will need to gain their explicit consent to meeting face-to-face.

On-going Clients

- For counsellors with on-going face-to-face clients you determine what 'social contact' means in the context of counselling. This may mean that face-to-face counselling ceases. If you do decide to carry on, please ensure that you have assessed the risks in doing so, discussed them with the client and have their explicit consent for continuing, with the full knowledge that you may be forced to stop face to face counselling in the very near future.

Telephone Counselling

Many of you are asking for guidance on telephone counselling. The principles behind the key steps outlined in our previous email about on-line counselling also apply to telephone

counselling. As promised, we are working at getting a digest of information and guidance on telephone counselling out to members as soon as possible.

Stand-by Supervision

Thank you to those accredited counsellors and supervisors who have volunteered to be our stand-by team - we will be in touch shortly with further details.

Details of how to access the stand-by supervision service will be emailed to all our counselling members and placed under latest news on the website in due course.

Financial Concerns

We are aware of a petition circulating that is asking the government to consider extending statutory sick pay to the self-employed. Here is a link if anyone wishes to support it. <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/300336>

Meanwhile we are initiating conversation with representatives of the accredited registers to see how best to raise the issue of support for the self-employed working in counselling and related fields with the government.

Holding Hope for the Future

We realise that this advice and guidance may have considerable impact on our counselling membership community and their clients. In any crisis situation, as well as anxiety and loss, there are resources, capabilities and strengths that endure, and opportunities to be creative and for new things to happen. We anticipate that many of you will over time be adding telephone or on-line counselling to your skill sets, for example. Others will be freed to pay attention to other aspects of their life or to spend time catching up on reading and on-line CPD training resources or making progress with an accreditation application.

When the worst is over, there are likely to be many people who will need our professional help and support in helping them come to terms with the effects of the pandemic on their lives. Let's be fit and ready to be able to serve them when that time comes.