

Dear ACC Members and Affiliates

We are contacting you with some thoughts about how you might manage the risks and uncertainty of the current situation with the spread of Coronavirus in the UK. We have included our pastoral care members in this email in case the advice is helpful for them.

As individuals, we may have a particular vulnerability to adverse effects of Coronavirus related to underlying health conditions or age or our home situation as part of families and close communities where vulnerability exists. It is perfectly okay to consider your own welfare and that of your family, as well as the welfare of your clients when determining the best course of action in relation to your practice.

The government's advice on preventing the spread of infection can be found here <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>. We have attached an information sheet with guidance for organisations from the NCVO.

We advise members to:

1. Keep up to date and fully comply with government guidance in relation to self-isolation and any subsequent restrictions on travel or movement, and with the government's hygiene strategy (frequent thorough hand washing and 'catch it, kill it, bin it' for coughs and sneezes).
2. Conduct a risk assessment related to your practice or organisation and introduce measures as needed and appropriate. Examples include asking new clients to confirm that they are not subject to self-isolation; asking clients arriving and leaving a session to use hand gel (or wash their hands if you have facilities).
3. For counsellors using creative interventions, eg soft toys, objects, play dough, sand tray, or art materials to take reasonable measures to help prevent the spread of infection from client to client.
4. Review the overall safety and hygiene of places of work (for example ensuring that there is soap in washing facilities together with clean or disposable hand towels, and that tissues are disposed of safely).
5. Discuss with their clients the impact on their counselling relationship if the government were to put in place measures that restrict travel or movement and explore whether there are ways to continue counselling: for example, by Skype, or telephone. [These alternatives may not be suitable for some counsellors or clients – do check with your supervisor].
6. Be open and honest with clients who are in a high risk group due to medical conditions or age about the risk you present to them (for example if you regularly commute, travel, attend large gatherings etc), so that they can make an informed choice about whether they want to carry on coming to counselling.
7. Counsellors who are particularly at risk if infected by the virus (or in consideration of their family members) can take a practice break if that is what they want to do. As with any change, please ensure that your supervisor is aware of your plans and together you put in place measures to support your vulnerable clients, for example through referral. Can you please also advise Head Office of your intentions as we can guide you through the process. Email: office@acc-uk.org.
8. For everyone to consider the impact of the virus in the wider population and possible impacts. The situation may lead to prolonged periods where a counselling practice or organisation has to close down or the availability and of supervision.

We are aware that many of our members are self-employed, and, whilst the government has issued a general promise to address concerns as to how people who are ill or self-isolating will be supported, no details other than the mention of Universal Credit have been published. You may

want to explore financial support options relating to Universal Credit so that you are prepared if this option becomes applicable to you. We will let you know if any further information relating to financial support is published by the government.

Useful links

Coronavirus Action Plan - 3rd March

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/869827/Coronavirus_action_plan_-_a_guide_to_what_you_can_expect_across_the_UK.pdf

Church of England have issued guidance for

Churches <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>

As have the Baptist Union

https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/566397/Coronavirus_advice_for.aspx

There are likely to be other organisations issuing advice and guidance.

Finally, if you have any information about measures to keep people safe from Coronavirus from trusted sources that may be of service to our members, please let us know.

Best wishes.

The ACC Team