

Covid Update 22 October 2020

Some of you have been in touch asking for guidance in relation to the new tier system in operation in the U.K. as a response to the continuing threat of COVID-19. We have been monitoring developments, but like many others, we are struggling to formulate guidance that can be applied in any meaningful way to the U.K. as a whole, over and above what we have already issued and is available on our website.

There are three main factors that influence what a person is allowed to do. These are dependent on where you live and work in the UK as guidelines differ between

- devolved governments
- the general rules that apply to 'levels' and 'tiers' and what region is in what level/tier
- the variable local rules that apply to the 'very high' tier category

In all areas and tiers the advice is to work at home if you can, and if you can't, you must work in a way or in a setting that is 'Covid secure'.

Explicit guidance from the government of counselling and psychotherapy as 'work' or 'social care' is rare. The only instance we are aware of relates to support groups which are exempt from the rule of six:

support groups – formally organised groups to provide mutual aid, therapy or any other form of support. This includes support to victims of crime, recovering addicts, new parents, people with long-term illnesses, those facing issues relating to their sexuality or gender, and those who have suffered bereavement.

The current situation therefore demands of each counsellor and counselling organisation a process by which they continually monitor the local regulations that apply to where they live and work, and follow the guiding principle that they need to make good (i.e. ethically informed) decisions that follow the spirit as well as the letter of the law. It follows that in very high alert, tier 3 situation, especially where the decision has been made to close 'close contact services', that meeting face-to-face with clients in an indoor setting is probably not advisable.

We acknowledge that the situation is stressful and that members may come to different decisions as to whether they continue or resume working in person with clients.

You may also want to refer to the guidelines that we issued sometime ago, which remain broadly relevant and we hope may refresh your thinking on risk assessment and 'Covid secure' environments.

<https://www.acc-uk.org/news/news/corona-virus-considerations-copy-copy.html>

[https://www.acc-uk.org/public/docs/page-pdfs/Returning to In Person Face to Face Practice-2.pdf](https://www.acc-uk.org/public/docs/page-pdfs/Returning%20to%20In%20Person%20Face%20to%20Face%20Practice-2.pdf)

[https://www.acc-uk.org/public/docs/page-pdfs/Returning to face to face counselling.pdf](https://www.acc-uk.org/public/docs/page-pdfs/Returning%20to%20face%20to%20face%20counselling.pdf)

We appreciate that many of you may be feeling tired and depleted as the threat posed by the virus continues to impact our social as well as our working lives. We are hopeful that together we can help sustain each other through the various challenges.