



Universities Psychotherapy & Counselling Association

COVID-19: UTC/UPCA guidance for supervisors, psychotherapists, psychotherapeutic counsellors and trainees working remotely during the Coronavirus crisis

We recognise there is a crisis and this calls for practical action. At the Universities Training College (UTC)/Universities Psychotherapy and Counselling Association (UPCA) we consider that it is important for our clinical members and students to continue to serve their existing clients/patients and be able to work remotely with new clients/patients.

UTC and UPCA therefore consider these as temporary measures:

- Whilst for UKCP supervision has to take place face-to-face, we will take Skype, Zoom etc as face to face
- Psychotherapists and psychotherapeutic counsellors, as well as trainees who can count them as hours if their specific programme allows, can carry out telephone and online therapy hours when continuing with existing clients/ patients but need to undergo more extensive training (see below) regarding telephone and online work before commencing with new clients
- With regards to new clients and new supervision, first training on using the internet and telephone should be undertaken (see below). This can be provided by supervisors, self study and programme/ college resources whilst UKCP develops materials and standards.

UKCP have asked to ensure trainees have reviewed the guidance in relation to remote working but accept that you may well need to work remotely and have not stipulated any additional training guidelines at present, other than to emphasise that the Code of Ethics and Professional Practice must be adhered to irrespective of whether clients are seen in person, online or otherwise.

The parts of the Code that apply most here are those which relate to changes in the contract and competence of student practitioners:

- Confirm each client's consent to the specifics of the service you will offer, through a clear contract at the outset of therapy (and at this change)
- Ensure that your professional work is adequately covered by appropriate indemnity insurance or by your employer's indemnity arrangements
- Respect, protect and preserve clients' confidentiality
- Understand the limits of your competence and stay within them in all your professional activity.

Guidance for online working

This guidance is intended to support you if you need to work remotely for a period, particularly in the current situation, where therapists or clients/patients need to self-isolate because of coronavirus measures.

It has been written assuming that you may need to work with existing clients for a period when face to face is not possible and that you are not experienced at this. It is not a replacement for more extensive training in working online. It does not cover text-based therapy.

If you are working in a placement you will need to also follow their requirements.

Before agreeing to work online we suggest you also include considering

- Discussing your plans with your supervisor
- Checking that your insurance will cover you for remote working
- Checking what options you can realistically offer. Do you or they have the necessary equipment, a suitable space to work from, reliable telephone and internet access?
- Discussing with your clients their preferences and competences in terms of the type of technology to be used. There may be issues of difference and diversity including disability
- Some clients may prefer to wait until face to face work can be resumed
- Clients should not be charged for missed sessions if they decline

alternative arrangements that you offer.

- Lowering the fee if a client has lost job or has reduced income
- If you are planning to use technology (the most common audio-visual options are Zoom, V See, and Skype), consider first practicing with the technology, refine where you will sit, lighting, sound, etc. Also consider a backup, such as telephone, readily available in case the system fails
- If working on the telephone also consider using a landline or a headset
- In the first session, online or phone, consider what may of the 'contract' and 'frame' need to be renegotiated, including that remote working can result in significant changes to the extent that a safe therapeutic space is possible
- Be prepared to discuss any concerns regarding confidentiality with regards to the new technology and the spaces the client and you are speaking from
- Consider risk factors that would be increased through working remotely.

Training Requirements

For trainees, programmes will offer support and resources on online and telephone working. There are also resources made freely available to all - see resources at the end of this document (as with other aspects this will be updated as new materials become available.)

Whilst for trainees, different programmes will have their own approach and trainees will need to meet the requirements of individual courses both in terms of current clients and the process required to undertake online work with new clients, **it is suggested that for all therapists:**

- You discuss your plans and preparations for on-line working with your supervisor
- Supervisors can help you assess your competence to work online and on the telephone
- Consider supervision taking place with the same medium as your client/patient work that is being supervised so that the experience is parallel
- Placements to be encouraged, where possible to also provide training which relates to the specific client group they are working with.

Acknowledgements

This guidance gratefully draws upon the work done by the HIPC Training Standards Committee and Lissie Wright for the Minster Centre. They in turn drew on the [BACP and UKCP guidance](#) particularly the [BACP competencies and curricula for telephone and e counselling](#), the UKCP guidance issued on Psychotherapeutic practice and working in isolation and the contributions of Minster Centre staff experienced at working remotely. It has been further refined in dialogue with Tree Staunton of Bath Centre for Psychotherapy and Counselling (BCPC).

Further Resources

Online webinars:

www.onlineevents.co.uk/behind-the-screen-event-series-video-replays

Association for Counselling and Therapy Online

acto-org.uk

BACP Good Practice in Action 047 Fact Sheet: Working Online in the Counselling Professions

BACP – Competences for telephone e-counselling

www.bacp.co.uk/media/2045/bacp-competences-for-telephone-ecounseling.pdf

BACP – Telephone e-counselling training curriculum

www.bacp.co.uk/media/2046/bacp-telephone-ecounseling-training-curriculum.pdf

BACP – Telephone e-counselling training trainers curriculum

www.bacp.co.uk/media/2047/bacp-telephone-ecounseling-training-trainers-curriculum.pdf

BACP – Working online: supplementary guidance

www.bacp.co.uk/media/2162/bacp-working-online-supplementary-guidance-gpia047.pdf

kateanthony.net/shortcoursementalhealth/

www.psychotherapy.org.uk/ukcp-members/standards-guidance-and-policies/coronavirus/

Anthony, K. & Nagel, D.A. (2009). *Therapy Online: A Practical Guide*. Sage.

Lemma, A (2017) *The Digital Age on the Couch*. Routledge

UKCP – Psychotherapeutic practice and working in isolation 2020
www.psychotherapy.org.uk/media/5igfsaig/psychotherapeutic-practice-and-working-in-isolation-26-03-20.pdf

Weinberg, H, & Rolnick. A. (2019). Theory and Practice of Online Therapy. Routledge.

Weitz, P. (2014). Psychotherapy 2.0. Where psychotherapy and technology meet.

V2.0 Updated 27.01.2022