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Corona Virus (COVID-19) Policy Statement

In the light of the latest government guidance regarding the Corona virus pandemic and relaxation of some restrictions and having considered my ethical commitments and responsibilities, this statement sets out my current policy regarding availability of face-to-face counselling.

I am now able to offer face-to-face counselling sessions that are compatible with current public health advice in situations where remote working is not an effective alternative to face-to-face counselling and where counselling is an essential form of contact to support mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Adjustments I am making include:

- Maintaining a social distance of 2 metres in the counselling room and for entry / departure.
- Avoiding all hand-shaking or other physical contact.
- Washing my hands thoroughly before and after each session and providing facilities for you to do the same immediately on arrival.
- Providing tissues in individual batches to cover your mouth and nose if you cough or sneeze so you can "catch it, bin it, kill it".
- Providing a bin to dispose of tissues which is emptied between sessions with appropriate hygiene measures if you do not take your tissues home to dispose of them yourself.
- Providing clean sealed bottled water.
- Airing out the counselling room where possible by opening windows.
- Cleaning down between counselling sessions including disinfecting door handles and other contact services, any resources and equipment used and changing coverings on seating.

As there is a two-metre distance between seats, it is not mandatory that we wear masks. However, if you feel more comfortable wearing a form of face-covering, I am also willing to do this although this may affect the quality of our communication.

I will not be providing masks for you so please provide your own if you wish to wear one.

If you are clinically vulnerable and in a high-risk group or caring for somebody who is sheltering, please consider carefully the risks of attending counselling including walking, driving or using public transport to get here, before making a decision to attend in person. Online and phone counselling is also available. If you do decide to attend, please take all necessary precautions.

In the event that I need to self-isolate, I will inform you via our normal agreed method of communication. I request that you also inform me if you need to self-isolate because

you believe you may have been exposed to the virus or because you have symptoms and if so to cancel counselling sessions.

If I were to be exposed to the Corona virus, due to the need to comply with the government Test and Trace tracking system, I would have to break confidentiality relating to the balance of public interest in limiting infection, by providing your contact details so that you could be approached and tested. Under these circumstances I would provide the minimum information for health professionals to be able to contact you and I would use best endeavours not to disclose details of our professional relationship. More information about Test and Trace is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-how-it-works>.

If you need to cancel a session within my normal notice period of 48 hours due to Coronavirus concerns, I will review this sympathetically within my cancellation policy.

If you need to self-isolate as a precaution rather than due to illness, I can offer telephone, text, email, or online support depending on your circumstances when face to face meetings are not possible. However, if either you or I are unwell and experiencing symptoms of coronavirus, in line with health guidance, the best option would be to take a break from therapy until fully recovered.

I will continue to review public health and government directives and adjust my working practice accordingly. This might include discontinuing face-to-face work in the event of a second wave or a local spike in infection rates.

Further information:

NHS information

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>)

Government Guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do>

BACP (professional body) guidance for counsellors

<https://www.bacp.co.uk/news/news-from-bacp/coronavirus/faqs-about-coronavirus/>

For more counselling information and resources please visit my website at www.life-chance.co.uk

Sue Seager July 2020