COVID and Working Face-to-Face

If you're thinking about working face to face, you need to first consider risks to clients on an individual basis – balance whether there are greater risks to working remotely or fact-to-face.

Then it is important to think about the space you would be working in:

- Does it allow for social distancing? Ideally this would be 2 metres but definitely at least 1 metre. Not just where you will meet, but also entrances, waiting areas and all other parts of the property that will be used.
- Are others using the space (if it is shared) applying appropriate measures properly?
- Does a landlord or other agent have any procedures or policies that you must follow in addition to your own?

Note you must also carry out and publish a risk assessment of your premises. You must create a procedure checklist to mitigate the risk of contamination before, between and after seeing service users.

And in terms of practice:

- You should confirm your insurance covers face-to-face work
- Confirm your supervisor supports your decision
- Make sure your client contract is suitable
- Discuss returning or starting face-to-face work with service users before making decisions that affect them

Face coverings

COSRT encourages the use of face coverings for service users and therapists working face-to-face. This is to protect personal safety. Face coverings are mandatory in most indoor settings, including in premises where personal services are provided to clients.

Government guidance is that where 2 metres social distancing can't be maintained, a face mask (type 2 surgical) should be worn plus a clear visor that covers the face.

Even if 2 metres social distancing can be maintained, without protection you and the service user are at increased risk during a therapy session. So please consider:

- Can you maintain social distance?
- If you can maintain social distancing, could face coverings still be used to reduce risks?
- Might it be safer to work online?

Instances where people are exempt from using face coverings should be considered and discussed with service users. They include:

- young children under the age of 11
- not being able to put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability
- if putting on, wearing or removing a face covering will cause severe distress
- if travelling with or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading to communicate

Face coverings may also be removed include if speaking with people who rely on lip reading, facial expressions and clear sound.

You should consider these exceptions before meeting with a client and agree if an exception should be applied.

If you have concerns about the effects of using face coverings on the therapeutic relationship, please consider working online instead.