



Remote Counselling Guidelines April 2020

All counsellors offering remote counselling sessions for CCC must be approved by the Counselling Coordinator before sessions take place and have the appropriate insurance to carry out this work.

Procedure

1. The receptionist informs the counsellor of the client details in the usual way. The counsellor then contacts the client to arrange the assessment appointment.
2. The counsellor then sends the client the contract forms, the complaints procedure and the initial monitoring questionnaire for the client to review prior to the assessment via email. Now follow the email guidance document that goes along side this procedure.
3. Counsellors need to have supervision in place with a supervisor who has experience of telephone counselling. Supervision may be remote also.

Top Tips

1. Remote counselling is not right for every client & this needs to be carefully considered at assessment. As part of assessment, check the client's support network. Who can they contact after session if there is a social need for comfort or support? Clients should be handed signposting contact numbers during the session as appropriate Samaritans/GP etc.
2. Counsellors need to ensure that boundaries are clear and agreed at the start of the process by notifying clients that your contact details must only be used for appointments or arranging/cancelling appointments
3. Remote sessions are charged at the same fee as face to face sessions.
4. Any internet-based communication is not guaranteed to be secure/confidential. Use password protection where appropriate and ensure you close the app after the session rather than just ending the call/video link.
5. Counsellors must ensure privacy with no possibility of interruptions or background noise from their own counselling space. Use your usual counselling room, and ensure the door is closed and you will not be disturbed by other people or animals in the property by establishing where in the property they are located and who else in present in the property.
6. Make the same commitment to your remote counselling session that you would to a face-to-face appointment. Be on time and mentally prepared for the session, turn off mobile phones and avoid 'split screens.'

7. Only drink water if you would normally do so during a session. There must be no eating or multi-tasking.
8. If a counsellor wishes to make notes during a session, this must be made explicit with the client so that they know you are doing this.
9. Presence of third parties and recordings are strictly prohibited for counsellor and client. If you accidentally press the recording button, delete the recording immediately after the session.
10. Make sure your batteries are charged. If your equipment fails then you will need to arrange another session, you will have to cover the cost of this. It is your responsibility to ensure adequate connection speed/sufficient signal. If the client's equipment fails then the session must end. Should any technical difficulties be experienced during the session, the session will still end at the planned time and be payable in full.
11. Counsellors have the right to terminate calls if the client becomes abusive or inappropriate or if noise disruption from either side impacts the quality of the session. Clear explanation of this reason should be given and a further session booked.
12. For video counselling keep the screen at least two feet away from you and ask your client to do the same so that you can see a clear view of each other's head and shoulders which gives a better observation of body language for both you and your client.
13. If you are not working in a private space or external noise is an issue, use headphones. Ask your client to do so too if necessary to maintain confidentiality.
14. Have your computer on a firm surface and sit on a sofa/chair or at a desk if possible.
15. Remote counselling is a different experience to face to face. There is more need to use reflective listening skills, summarising & paraphrasing. It can be more tiring when you have not been used to it.
16. Pauses need to be shorter and more minimal encouragements may be helpful.
17. Telephone counselling can cause the pace of work to be accelerated, so the pace needs to be carefully managed.
18. You might need to be more aware of your tone and volume of voice when using a mobile device.
19. Concentration may need to be greater as some clients' accents & dialects can be more difficult to follow on the telephone and there are more distractions in video calls.
20. There may be greater emotional intensity & more powerful transference, counter-transference & projections.
21. There is perhaps more need to be aware of time keeping & keeping boundaries. More time may be required for winding down.

Please seek advice from your supervisor or CCC's clinical lead if you need additional support with remote counselling.