



Association for Agency-Based Counselling
& Psychotherapy in Ireland Ltd

AACPI Guidelines For The Provision Of Remote Counselling

This document is only to be used as a guideline to support our members in being able to transition to providing remote counselling during the COVID-19 health crisis.

Therapy being offered remotely by our members is only for the duration of the COVID-19 health crisis. Should a member organisation wish to integrate this way of working in to their organisation, more detailed policies and procedures would be required.

Should you require any further support or have any queries please contact Ger Matthews (AACPI National Director)

Telephone: 041-9820625 Mobile: 087-7391794 Email: ger@aacpi.ie

Methods of Communication for remote counselling ONLY to include:

1. **Telephone**: Verbal communication done in real time, ***suitable for providing counselling.***
2. **Video calls**: both verbal and visual communication done in real time and ***suitable for providing counselling.*** We recommend Zoom as it is secure, other secure video formats are acceptable, Skype is not suitable.
3. **FaceTime (Apple iPhone & iPad)**: Both verbal & visual chat application over WI-Fi and is ***suitable for providing counselling.***

Other methods of communication:

1. **Email**: Private written communicate where there is a delayed response. Can be used for assessments, contracts and setting up of appointments, ***not for providing counselling.***
2. **Texting**: Instant messaging with a delayed response. Suitable for arranging appointments, sending appointment reminders, ***not for providing counselling.***

Guidelines:

- Therapy not to be provided by email, text or through WhatsApp.
- Email can be used to organise appointments and/or carry out assessments & agree contracts.
- Texting can be used to confirm appointments or send reminders to clients.
- Student/trainee therapist's cannot provide therapy remotely
- Qualified pre-accredited & accredited therapist's can provide therapy remotely
- Supervision by accredited supervisor's can be provided remotely.

Organisational Requirements

- Board of Director's approval for remote counselling
- Indemnity Insurance cover (organisationally where applicable))
- Online counselling training completed by therapists providing therapy through this medium. (AACPI & Tusla looking at providing this)
- Maintain GDPR compliance
- Maintain Child Protection Guidelines
- Clinical Assessment carried out
- Clients informed about confidentiality, to include GDPR, Child Protection Guidelines
- How will organisation make appointments?
- Verification of therapists

- Contract for providing remote counselling
- State clearly that the therapist is working remotely on behalf of the organisation(not independently)
- Ensure all therapist's working remotely maintain a responsible online presence.
- Client files for this period of time will need to be stored in accordance to Data Protection Guidelines
- 'Clinical oversight' to be maintained of therapist's working remotely.

Organisations consider the following:

- What are the clinical limitations of working remotely? (Consider modalities that would best suit and depth of work done, is it counselling support?)
- What are the IT limitations of working remotely? (Some level of IT proficiency required by therapist and client.)
- Ethical & Legal requirement?
- How does organisation ensure it is not compromised?
- What changes need to be made to organisations complaints procedure?
- Will remote counselling be offered to minors? If so, what are the guidelines e.g. parental consent required? or parent/guardian informed?
- How will payments/donations be done?
- Will organisation be allowing therapist's to use their personal mobiles or providing them with mobiles?
- How does organisation want client notes to be kept and stored?
- How will referrals be made to third parties?
- What are the potential health & safety issues in working remotely for the organisation?
- Who in the organisation will be the contact 'clinical support' to therapists working remotely?

Guidelines;

- Therapy takes place in a boundaried setting & appropriate boundaries maintained by therapist.
- Therapy sessions are pre-booked, times, dates (online or telephone)
- Online assessment carried out to ensure client is suitable for therapy (equivalent to face to face assessment) This can be done by emailing your assessment questions to client to complete)
- Online contract to engage in remote counselling with organisation (easier to do this by email)
- Outline organisations guidelines of Confidentiality, Child Protection & GDPR (equivalent to that done face to face)
- Outline fees and payment options (before or after session?, Paypal, SumUp, EFT through website, through donation page on website, or suitable alternative.
- Any payments made as client fees or donations must be directed to the organisation, not the therapist.
- Organisation ensures technology they use is secure, has anti-virus & encryption software in place (client informed of this)
- Email accounts need to be password protected, do not send or receive emails in Wi-Fi hotspots
- Client made aware of any potential security difficulties where applicable
- Ensure referral details for at risk clients are available on your website or included in online contract
- When providing counselling remotely, **clarification** is essential so that the therapist understands the client at all times.
- Verification of therapist's details provided by the organisation (by email)

Therapist verification: (To be provided by the organisation)

To include the following:

- Therapist's name
- Therapist's qualifications
- Therapist's accreditation details (this allows the client to check credentials)
- State that therapist is working remotely on behalf of the organisation

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