

Psychotherapeutic practice and working in isolation

This guidance is for UKCP members who may not be able to see clients face-to-face or have clients who may not be able to attend sessions for health reasons.

Please note that the UKCP Code of Ethics and Professional Practice must be adhered to irrespective of whether clients are seen in person, online or otherwise.

If you are unable to provide therapy in person to a client because you are in isolation and/or unwell consider the following:

- Explore this situation with your clients before it happens and discuss what arrangements you are likely to put in place if therapy is disrupted due to events beyond yours and your client's control.
- Consider as part of this arrangement what information you will provide to your clients and how that information is to be conveyed. For example, a simple text message from you to the client about your unavailability may be enough for them. Others may require more information/ reassurance so that they are aware that this is a temporary departure from usual therapy arrangements. Ask yourself: 'How will my client react if I am unable to give face-to-face therapy and what do I feel is the best way to tell them this information?'
- Consider sharing with them the likely duration until 'normal' therapeutic arrangements will resume or when you will be able to give them an update so that they are not left feeling in the dark and anxious about your wellbeing. Even if the update is to notify your clients that you don't know when normal therapy will resume, this is better than not providing any updates.
- If you are able to provide psychotherapeutic support to clients but are unable to see them physically face-to-face, consider if you and the client have the means, competence and facilities to conduct online therapy safely and securely and whether this is appropriate for the client and you.
- For clients who are in a distressed and vulnerable state and in your opinion require imminent and ongoing face-to-face therapy sessions, consider referring them to another psychotherapist, psychotherapeutic counsellor or professional who is able to offer this support. Consider providing details of emergency support and help for the client in your absence.

- Keep your supervisor informed of the situation.
- Do not charge your clients if you are unable to provide your usual psychotherapeutic support and they do not accept other arrangements you offer.

If your client is unable to attend their psychotherapy sessions in person because they are in isolation and/or unwell consider the following:

- What psychotherapeutic support are they likely to need and how can it be delivered safely without your physical health being impacted?
- Consider if you and the client have the means, competence and facilities to conduct online therapy safely and securely and whether this is appropriate and suitable for you and the client.
- Consider the fee arrangements you have in place with your clients and explore whether these still apply in your client's absence and if so, how it may affect your psychotherapeutic relationship with your client.