

Coronavirus Covid-19

Guidance and resources for members

June 2021

PTUK advises all members to keep up to date with the latest advice on the pandemic.

Gov.uk: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

NHS: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Scot.Gov: <https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Gov.ie: <https://www.gov.ie/en/>

PTI members should follow local regional advice

Update

The main change to this guidance is for those therapists working in Private Practice running a business from within their home.

In England

The Government announced the Covid-19 Road Map out of the covid-19 restrictions is continuing

From 17th May, you can socialise indoors in a group of up to 6 people or 2 households, including for overnight stays. Up to 30 people can meet outside.

Restrictions have been eased following the move to step 3. However, we are advised to continue to exercise caution. We should follow Government guidance on [how to stop the spread of coronavirus at all times](#), including if you have been vaccinated against COVID-19.

You should continue to work from home if you can. When travelling within the UK, you should aim to do so safely and plan your journey in advance.

A new COVID-19 Delta variant is spreading in some parts of England.

This new Delta variant was previously referred to as the variant first identified in India. It is spreading fastest in:

- [Bedford Borough Council](#)
- [Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council](#)
- [Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council](#)
- [Burnley Borough Council](#)
- [Kirklees Council](#)
- [Leicester City Council](#)
- [London Borough of Hounslow](#)
- [North Tyneside Council](#)

The new COVID-19 delta variant spreads more easily from person to person. To help stop the spread, you should take particular caution when meeting anyone outside your household or support bubble.

In the areas listed above, wherever possible, you should try to:

- meet outside rather than inside where possible
- keep 2 metres apart from people that you don't live with ([unless you have formed a support bubble](#) with them), this includes friends and family you don't live with
- minimise travel in and out of affected areas

In Scotland

From 5 June, many areas are changing COVID-19 protection levels. Find out [your area's level in Scotland on GOV.SCOT](#).

In Wales

From 17 May, any 6 people can meet indoors at pubs and restaurants. Other venues such as cinemas, theatres and museums can reopen. [Read the rules for Wales on GOV.WALES](#).

In Northern Ireland

You can now socialise indoors in a group of up to 6 people from no more than 2 households, including for overnight stays. Up to 15 people from no more than 3 households can meet in a private garden. Shops, hairdressers and visitor attractions can reopen as well as indoor areas of pubs and restaurants. Read the [guidance on current restrictions on nidirect](#).

Vaccine

All Nations are continuing with the vaccination programme.

It is vitally important to remember that just because you might have received a vaccination it does not mean the risk of Covid has reduced.

All regions are clear we need to be maintaining all of the current restrictions and public health advice, **Face, Hands and Space**.

How does this impact on your practice?

The government guidance is there to support you to work and keep safe during the pandemic. You should continue to interpret and apply the guidance as appropriate ensuring you are complying with all relevant legal duties.

Employers, self-employed and trainees are responsible for undertaking a risk management approach to ensure compliance with government and public health advice. PTUK would encourage you to discuss your decision-making process within clinical supervision.

Interpreting the guidance can pose difficulties, the HSE provide support in understanding the finer details of the published documents <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/index.htm>

Clinical working

Play Therapy comes under the category of essential worker which PTUK/PTIr support.

If you are a student on placement the head teacher or manager of the setting will make a decision based on the government guidance and their risk assessment, as to whether they feel it is safe for you to continue practice at this time and if they still have the available space for you to practice from. Ensure you share your risk assessment with your placement organisation. If there are difficulties with your placement continuing, please contact your Course Director.

If your placement is unable to continue and you find yourself without a placement contact Alun at the clinical team for advice and support, contact@ptukorg.com.

PTUK would encourage you to discuss your decision-making process within clinical supervision.

Factors to take into account while continuing to practice during the pandemic:

Insurance:

- Check you have adequate cover to work during the pandemic
- Risk assessment: Returning to practice webinar is available on ALMs also consult close contact working guidance.
- Hands – hygiene
- Face masks and shields – see close contact guidance
- Space within clinical work, social distancing can it be maintained or not – see close contact guidance
- Ventilation
- Cleaning, space you are working from, equipment and resources including sand and puppets
- Managing equipment and resources
- Clients – safety do they have any underlying health concerns which you should factor into your risk assessment?
- Therapists – safety, any underlying health considerations, pregnancy
- Working within a “bubble system” or between “bubbles” or other schools/setting/organisations
- Vaccination
- Lateral Flow Testing

Face coverings

There are many types of face coverings available. Cloth face coverings and disposable face coverings work best if they are made with multiple layers (at least 2) and form a good fit around the face. Face coverings should be made of a material that you find comfortable and breathable, such as cotton. Bandanas or religious garments may be used but are likely to be less effective if they do not fit securely around the face.

Face visors, shields and transparent face coverings

A face visor or shield may be worn in addition to a face covering but not instead of one. This is because face visors or shields do not adequately cover the nose and mouth, and do not filter airborne particles.

Transparent face coverings may be worn by those who communicate through lip-reading or facial expressions. However, their effectiveness is not supported by evidence, so the government does not recommend their use by the wider public at this time. In order to be most effective, a face covering should fit securely around the face to cover the nose and mouth and be made of a breathable material capable of filtering airborne particles.

When to wear a face covering

There are some places where you must wear a face covering by law, unless you are exempt or have a reasonable excuse (see [When you do not need to wear a face covering](#)).

You can find out more about the different rules across the UK on the relevant regional websites:

- [Northern Ireland](#)
- [Scotland](#)
- [Wales](#)

In England

You are expected to wear a face covering before entering settings and must keep it on until you leave unless there is a reasonable excuse for removing it.

You should also wear a face covering in indoor places where social distancing may be difficult and where you will come into contact with people you do not normally meet.

Face coverings are needed in NHS settings, including hospitals and primary or community care settings, such as GP surgeries. They are also advised to be worn in care homes.

Face coverings should still be worn regardless of whether you have received your vaccination or not. The vaccination gives you protection from contracting Covid-19, it does not prevent you transmitting it to others.

When you do not need to wear a face covering

In settings where face coverings are required in England there are some circumstances where people may not be able to wear a face covering.

Some people are less able to wear face coverings, and the reasons for this may not be visible to others.

This includes (but is not limited to):

- children under the age of 11 (Public Health England does not recommend face coverings for children under the age of 3 for health and safety reasons)

- people who cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability
- where putting on, wearing or removing a face covering will cause you severe distress
- if you are speaking to or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expressions to communicate

Working in Schools

In all schools and FE providers, Gov.uk guidance recommends that face coverings should be worn by staff and visitors in situations outside of classrooms where social distancing is not possible (for example, when moving around in corridors and communal areas). This would also apply when working across class bubbles.

Transparent face coverings can be worn which may assist communication with someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate. There is little evidence thus far to demonstrate that transparent face coverings may be effective in reducing the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). If deciding to wear a transparent face covering, make sure they fit securely around the face to cover the nose and mouth and be made with a breathable material capable of filtering airborne particles.

Face visors or shields can be worn by those exempt from wearing a face covering but they are not an equivalent alternative in terms of source control of virus transmission. They may protect the wearer against droplet spread in specific circumstances but are unlikely to be effective in preventing the escape of smaller respiratory particles when used without an additional face covering.

Safe wearing of face coverings

- Wash or sanitise hands before and after touching face coverings, including the removal or when putting a face covering on.
- Safely storing face coverings in individual, sealable plastic bags between use, ideally use a clean face covering rather than re-using one
- Not touching the front of face coverings during use or when removing them, remove from the ear loops. Sanitise or wash hands.
- Change your face covering if it becomes damp, it should not be re-worn, and the face covering should be replaced carefully. Have a supply of new or clean face coverings within you.

Exemptions

Where face coverings are recommended there are some circumstances where people may not be able to wear a face covering.

This includes (but is not limited to):

- people who cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability

- where putting on, wearing or removing a face covering will cause you severe distress
- if you are speaking to or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expressions to communicate
- to avoid harm or injury, or the risk of harm or injury, to yourself or others, including if it would negatively impact on your ability to exercise or participate in a strenuous activity

The same exemptions will apply in education and childcare settings, and you should be sensitive to those needs, noting that some people are less able to wear face coverings and that the reasons for this may not be visible to others.

Private Practice

Therapists working from their own homes can now continue to offer therapy as long as they adhere to Covid-secure rules, including social distancing requirements.

Gov.uk guidance states you can visit indoor venues in a group of up to 6 people from different households or a larger group of any size from up to 2 households including support bubbles.

COVID-19 is a workplace hazard and should be managed in the same way as other workplace hazards. This includes:

- completing a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks of COVID-19 in the workplace
- identifying control measures to manage that risk

Government guidance www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/close-contact-services states there are a number of steps which should be considered when re-opening or operating your business.

These steps include the following:

1. Make sure that clients who feel unwell stay at home and do not attend the premises. Clients who are self-isolating should not attend sessions, this caution should be applied to the therapists and clients' families.
2. Increase opportunities for handwashing and cleaning surfaces in the workplace.
3. Consider reasonable adjustments for clients with disabilities, including hidden disabilities that are not immediately obvious. When in the workplace/space, everyone should make every reasonable effort to comply with the government's social distancing guidelines. These are 2 metres or 1 metre+ with risk mitigation where 2 metres is not viable. (See above and point 5 below).
4. Provide adequate ventilation through doors, windows and vents.
5. Consider these additional control measures where 2 metre social distancing is not possible:
Increase the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning
Keep the activity time involved as short as possible

Therapist should use PPE in the form of a visor or goggles and a Type II face mask to mitigate the risk.

Work from behind or from the side of the client, circling them regularly

6. Where an activity cannot meet social distance guidelines, take all mitigation actions possible to reduce transmission risk.
7. You must:
 1. display the official NHS QR code poster. Official NHS QR posters can be generated online.
 2. Every visitor over the age of 16 years should check in or provide their contact details. Consider using the NHS Covid-19 app to scan in the NHS QR code poster.

Before clients arrive for sessions

Consider Social Distancing (see above) and how the client will move to the therapy space once they arrive at your home.

Maintain an appointment system to ensure you have adequate time between client sessions for cleaning and ventilating the space.

Prior to the appointment ask Covid-19 related screening questions ahead of their appointment:

- Are you required to be self-isolating?
- Have you had the recent onset of a new continuous cough?
- Do you have a high temperature?
- Have you noticed a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell?

If your client or anyone in their family has any of these symptoms they should reschedule their appointment, likewise if anyone in your household is displaying any of these symptoms the client's sessions should be re-scheduled.

Keep appointments short, for longer appointments e.g., parent meetings consider the use of an online platform.

If clients require the use of the toilet consider their path of travel through your home, making hand sanitiser available where safe, practical and accessible.

Ensure hand washing facilities are available, this includes running water and liquid soap and suitable hand drying options e.g., paper towels instead of hand towels.

Ensure toilets are frequently cleaned and the door remains open when not in use.

Gov.uk guidance suggests you consider using signs to make people aware:

- Of how to wash their hands well
- That they should wash their hands frequently
- That they should not touch their faces
- That they should cough or sneeze into a tissue which is binned safely, or into their arm if a tissue is not available

Informing clients of your operating procedures:

Provide written information about your guidance for operating, expectations for maintaining your covid-19 secure practice.

Following social distancing rules where social distancing is not possible face coverings will be required to be worn (see above).

Testing and Vaccination's

It's important that you continue to put measures in place to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, these include:

- maintaining social distancing
- frequent cleaning
- good hygiene
- adequate ventilation

The above is important even if you have:

- Received a recent negative test result
- Had the vaccine (either 1 or 2 doses)

Regular testing, alongside control measures to reduce the risk of Covid-19 transmission will have a key role to play in the future. Regular testing could identify more positive cases and protect you and your workspace. Where you are offering sessions from within your home your family should also be using the rapid lateral flow tests regularly.

PTUK has previously published the following guidance's to enable you to consider how to safely practice.

- Procedure for resuming Play Therapy June 2020
- FAQ resuming practice Sept 2020
- Webinar Returning to Play Therapy Practice during Covid-19
- FAQ following webinar Returning to Play Therapy Practice during Covid-19
- December 2020 Update
- January 2021 Update
- April 2021 Update

We encourage you to revisit the above guidance which you will find on PTUK's website, keep abreast of government guidance for your region, review your current risk assessment and discuss your decision making within Clinical Supervision.

Additional queries regarding working during the covid-19 pandemic, contact Eileen at clinical@ptukorg.com