

Last Reviewed: 23 September 2020

Policy Guidance for Tobias Students doing placements During the Covid 19 Pandemic

1. Background

1.1 Tobias School of Art and Therapy recognises that we are all continuing to live in extraordinary times, with unprecedented levels of challenges as we seek to continue to practice our profession.

1.2 Whereas the previous advice aimed to discuss the needs of clients currently receiving therapy, this new document will aim to continue to address working with existing clients, but will also address the potential necessity to take on new clients, given that social distancing measures are likely to be an important aspect of our lives moving forwards. Whilst that in itself presents a variety of challenges, it is important for Tobias to acknowledge the difficulties facing our students in this current climate. As Arts Counsellors, we are going to have to adapt to these new parameters of working and find ways to ensure the needs of our clients and those of ourselves are met.

1.3 Arts Counsellors have a duty of care to their clients and provide therapeutic interventions within the scope of their practice and level of competency. They should gain appropriate training, knowledge and supervision to do so. Tobias expects that all members will practice both ethically and professionally during the Covid 19 pandemic, ensuring the integrity and efficacy of Arts Counselling services.

2. Statutory Guidance

As well as this information, there may be additional advice from the various Public Health websites that will be useful for therapeutic practice.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cantdo/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do>

2.1 The U.K. Government also has an update service for any changes in statutory guidance that are issued. Tobias recommends that if possible, members sign up to this service. The web link is found below:

<https://www.gov.uk/email-signup?topic=/coronavirus-taxon>

3. Health of the Arts Counsellor

3.1 Remember to take care of your own health and that of your family. It can be tempting to prioritize client needs, but remember that if you become ill, you cannot provide effective care. In these challenging circumstances, it may be necessary to prioritise our own health needs, and those of our families, especially if members or others in the household are considered vulnerable or have an underlying health condition that mitigates the need for self-isolation or shielding. This can be a difficult time for our students, so Tobias would suggest that members either seek additional clinical supervision, or personal therapy if necessary.

3.2 Students have to ensure that they have procedures in place in case of their absence. This will also be the case if there are other instances of lockdown, or if the client or members of their family have health concerns which also require absence. Tobias recognises that this maybe significantly difficult for both Arts Counsellor and client and expects that members will adhere to our own Ethical Basis for Good Practice in Therapy in ensuring that clients' needs are met. Rather than continuing with therapy, which may not be appropriate at this time, alternative means of supporting the family should be considered.

4. Telephone/video call therapeutic intervention

4.1 The most important factor in determining whether telephone or video calling is an appropriate means of intervention, is to determine if it is in the client's best interests to proceed with this change of therapeutic medium. It will be necessary to evaluate the client's previous history, including trauma, adverse childhood experiences and attachment history in creating a therapeutic plan to deliver Arts Counselling through the vehicle of telehealth. It will be necessary to ascertain true, informed consent. The Arts Counsellor must be certain that the client, and where appropriate, parents/carers are truly engaged with this significant change in therapeutic approach.

4.2 The Arts Counsellor must make an assessment of the parent/carers wellbeing to ensure they can meet the needs of their client, if therapy is to take place within the family home. In these uncertain times, the personal circumstances of the family may have an impact on how they are able to manage. At this point, it is essential to ensure that the client is in a position of safety, before therapy should continue at home. It may be appropriate to re-contract with the client, and where appropriate, parents/carers before any commencement of teletherapy.

4.3 Arts Counsellors should also continue with the same level of clinical supervision hours regardless of whether they are conducting face to face therapy sessions or teletherapy and are encouraged to seek additional hours if they feel it is appropriate for their needs. Tobias also expects that the Clinical Supervisors are competent in the modality of their supervisees, and again, seek appropriate levels of training to ensure they can fully support their supervisees.

4.4 There are a number of factors that need to be carefully considered before undertaking any new form of therapeutic engagement, all of which should be discussed with the client, and where appropriate, parents/carers prior to undertaking a change in intervention.

4.4.1 Confidentiality

It is imperative that the family home is able to provide the appropriate privacy, respect and boundaries in order for you to practice through telephone / video calls. Just as in face to face therapy, the client needs to have a regular, safe space in which they are able to engage with the Arts Counsellor. The family, where applicable, need to ensure that the client cannot be seen or overheard during the therapy session. The family need to agree that they will not attempt to record the session on another device. The family will also need to ensure that the client will not be distracted by other noises in the house, nor will the family attempt to listen in to the therapy session or disturb the client whilst the session is in progress.

4.4.2 All Bluetooth devices within the therapists' home should be turned off. If the client is using a mobile device or tablet, then they should also have Bluetooth turned off due to the potential of calls being transferred to other such devices within the family home.

4.4.3 The Arts Counsellor should also ensure confidentiality within their own home. It may be necessary to wear headphones to ensure the client cannot be overheard. The Arts Counsellor needs to ensure they will not be disturbed when conducting the therapy session. It may be necessary to use a virtual background when conducting a session, in order to maintain boundaries with your clients.

4.4.4 Materials

The Arts Counsellor will need to decide what, if any, materials they are going to provide for their client. The Arts Counsellor will need to ensure that the client has access to the same materials for every session. It is inappropriate for the client to use materials that are their own, so the family will need to ensure that the materials used in each therapy session, are kept safe and are only used for the sessions with the Arts Counsellor.

4.4.5 ICT Suitability

The Arts Counsellor should ensure they have sufficient internet bandwidth to host online sessions, and the appropriate equipment necessary to adhere to the confidentiality requirements listed above. The Arts Counsellor needs to have procedures in place to mitigate issues with lag, call dropout or poor connection. This may be the case at the therapists' place of work, or within the client's home. The Arts Counsellor needs to ensure that there is another line of communication in place if the session is terminated suddenly due to issues with IT.

4.4.6 Depending on the age of the client, certain platforms of communication may not be appropriate. If conducting telephone sessions, the Arts Counsellor will need to consider the age of

the client and whether this form of communication is appropriate. Some younger clients have access to their own telephones and the Arts Counsellor needs to ensure that child protection and safeguarding procedures are followed, if the client is contacted on their own equipment.

4.4.7 Containment and Limit Setting

In the case of sessions terminating suddenly as mentioned above; the Arts Counsellor will need to ensure that the family are able to be contacted if the session is terminated due to connection difficulties. It may be necessary for the Arts Counsellor to coach the family in appropriate containment strategies. In order to undertake any intervention via telehealth, the Arts Counsellor may need to engage more with the family to ensure they are able to appropriately limit-set around the therapy. It may be necessary to assess the family as to their ability to contain the client in this regard. If the Arts Counsellor feels that it is not possible for the family to be able to adequately contain the client at this time, then moving to telehealth may not be appropriate for the client at this moment, and other forms of connection may have to be considered.

4.4.8 In addition to the family's ability to support the client before and after the session; it is crucial that the Arts Counsellor has the means of assessing the client's level of support during and after the session.

4.4.9 Insurance

The Arts Counsellor must ascertain whether their insurance policy covers providing therapy through mediums other than face to face delivery. Not every insurance policy is the same or offers the same level of cover, so Arts Counsellor must ensure they have the adequate level of cover for their Arts Counselling practice.

4.4.10 External Processes

Arts Counsellors must take responsibility to ensure that the devices and communication platforms that are used for telephone/video calls meet the appropriate level of business cyber security and relevant ICO (Information Commissioner's Office) requirements. This not only includes the devices used by the Arts Counsellor but also those used by the client and, where appropriate, the family or carer.

4.4.11 If the Arts Counsellor feels it is appropriate to change the method of therapeutic intervention, it is vital that the appropriate procedures are in place in line with GDPR. The Arts Counsellor will need to ensure that a new consent form is completed which specifies the detail of the plan of work, including any plans to record any sessions, which will also require additional consent.

4.4.12 Safeguarding and Child Protection

If the Arts Counsellor has chosen to work with telehealth as an appropriate intervention, safeguarding and child protection policies will need to reflect the changes to the therapy delivered. Being 'present' within a family home will incur additional challenges concerning safeguarding. With the additional parameters around social distancing, most Arts Counsellors are having to work from home, and therefore do not have access to colleagues to assist, should a matter of safeguarding arise.

4.4.13 It is, therefore, of extreme importance that any Arts Counsellor working with children either by telephone or video call has a cyber safeguarding strategy in place. The Arts Counsellor will need to consider how to respond if the child makes a disclosure during a teletherapy session. This is especially pertinent should a potential perpetrator be present in the family home. The Arts Counsellor needs to identify a form of support for themselves, as well as the child; together with the necessary contact details of social care available in advance of any therapeutic work commencing. If the Arts Counsellor is a lone worker, it may not be appropriate to undertake teletherapy at this time.

4.4.14 At present, there is a lack of evidence-base for the efficacy of Arts Counselling delivered via telehealth, and it is good practice that this and the highlighted risks associated with this method of delivery is discussed with clients and, where appropriate, parents/carers prior to any therapy commencing.

4.4.15 Some children and young people may prefer to engage with their Arts Counsellor using

telehealth. It will be an important aspect of the work with the child, to prepare them for the transition back to face to face work, at a time that is deemed appropriate and all levels of risk have been clearly looked into.

5. Face to Face Work

5.1 The current U.K. Government advice is changing rapidly across all regions, with significant differences to each devolved Government's approach to lockdown measures currently in place. Whilst many adults and children in England have returned to work and school, many people are continuing to stay at home.

Across the four nations, some lockdown restrictions have been lifted, and with some businesses able to re-open, there is the discussion around whether Arts Counsellors are able to resume work with their clients on a face to face basis.

5.2 It is essential to follow the government guidelines at <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

5.3 Whilst the needs of the client are of paramount importance, the Arts Counsellor must consider their own health needs and those of their close family members who may have heightened risk factors. In this regard, it may be inappropriate to resume face to face sessions with clients at this time. Arts Counsellors should also check with their insurance company, as to whether they are covered for face to face work or are prevented from doing so depending on their own health needs.

5.4 This is also the case for the health needs of clients and their families who may also have significant health risks. As per paragraph 4.2, it is essential to consider the family's situation at the present time and assess whether the family are able to support and contain the client if face to face therapy is to resume. It may be inappropriate at this time to resume face to face sessions. The family may also have a change in circumstances which has a significant financial impact upon continuing with therapy. It may be necessary to facilitate an appropriate ending for the client.

5.5 Depending on the context of the Arts Counselling Service, it may not be possible to resume sessions. The premises where the Therapy occurs may not be open due to employer guidance, or social distancing measures currently in place, and as such, are not able to facilitate sessions with clients due to lack of physical space for the sessions.

5.6 Arts Counsellors who undertake sessions in a school setting will also have to consider the risks associated with such a venue before they decide whether to resume any face to face working. This may not be the case for Arts Counsellors who are employed by schools, and as such, will need to follow their employer guidelines. However, Arts Counsellors who visit peripatetically, may have to consider the additional risks of travelling between sessions, and therefore may consider it inappropriate to resume sessions on a face to face basis. This will need to be discussed locally with each school on an individual basis, and the school's own policies and risk assessments will need to be followed.

5.7 It will also be necessary for Arts Counsellors to evaluate the risks associated with travel to and from sessions for both themselves, the client, and where appropriate, their families. Different devolved governments have restrictions on certain types of travel, and this would need to form part of any risk assessment undertaken.

5.8 If careful consideration has been given to the risks associated with face to face Arts Counselling, and the counsellor has deemed it appropriate to resume sessions with the client, it will be necessary to prepare both the client and family and re-contract due to the number of factors that may have changed within the therapy practice. The Arts Counsellor needs to have a plan in place, should the Arts Counsellor be unable to continue the sessions for any length of time. This could be due to illness of the counsellor, but also if the counsellor requires to self-isolate. Consideration should also be given to the potential of further regional and localised 'lockdowns', and how this is going to be conveyed to the child and their family.

5.9 There are a number of factors that should be given due diligence when preparing to resume face to face sessions. Social distancing measures will need to be in place for all communal areas of the Arts Counselling venue. The Arts Counsellor will need to consider how to prepare the client for how this may feel within the session. It may be necessary to withdraw some materials.

5.10 When deciding to resume face to face Arts Counselling sessions, the Arts Counsellor will need to take into account the number of clients they plan to work with on a daily basis, considering that more time will be needed to clean materials and venue, and limit the number of people who are within a confined area.

5.11 The Arts Counsellor will also need to ensure there are adequate handwashing facilities within the venue, and alcohol hand sanitiser is used by all who enter and leave the premises where the Arts Counselling is to take place. Clients and, where appropriate, their families should be encouraged to wash their hands for the required twenty seconds before they enter the therapy room. Arts Counsellors may wish to consider posting signage to encourage hand washing, and the use of hand sanitiser. This should be provided within the playroom and other communal areas.

5.12 The Arts Counsellor will need to consider whether they will be able to offer refreshments to the clients and their families. Certain communal areas may not be available, and as such, the need for regular cleaning may outweigh the need to provide refreshments.

5.13 It will be imperative that the Arts Counsellor has access to all cleaning materials deemed necessary to maintain a clean environment for public use. All hard surfaces that are in contact with members of the public and clients and their families will need to be cleaned regularly depending on the footfall and number of clients seen per day.

5.14 The Arts Counsellor needs to ensure that there are procedures in place to communicate with clients and their families concerning their own health. It may be appropriate to ask families to have a temperature check before they attend the Arts Counselling session. Arts Counsellors may wish to contact the client and, where appropriate, their families or carer before the start of the session to check if anyone in the family has any symptoms. If the client or any member of their household is self-isolating, then they should not attend the arts counselling session.

5.15 If the client becomes ill during the Arts Counselling session, the client should return home immediately. The Arts Counsellor will need to deep clean and disinfect the premises, this will include the therapy room and all materials, together with all communal areas. If you work for an agency or school, then you should inform them immediately and follow their guidelines. If you are a lone worker and uncertain what to do about having contact with a client with potential Covid 19 symptoms, Tobias recommends you contact your GP for advice. In both cases, inform your clinical supervisor, and it may be appropriate to contact your insurance company. Further guidance on cleaning can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcaresettings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>

5.16 Arts Counsellors should consider whether the art materials used within sessions are appropriate for use at this time. Tobias recommends that items such as soft furnishings, fabric, soft toys, puppets, costumes, and other material and soft surfaced products should not be used unless the counsellor can guarantee such items can be cleaned and disinfected to an appropriate standard.

5.17 Tobias recommends that art materials and clay items are provided for each individual client for their sole use. The Arts Counsellor may wish to consider changing the materials regularly as they cannot be cleaned and disinfected, but this is at the discretion of the therapist. All items within the therapy room should be cleaned and disinfected after every session.

The Arts Counsellor may feel it is more appropriate to provide each child with their own individual art kits that consist of a limited number of art materials to be used in sessions. Thought should be given to their composition, as they would still require cleaning and disinfecting at the end of every use.

5.18 It should be good practice to inform your clients of your cleaning procedures, but Tobias recommends that you inform them that whilst precautions are being taken, it is not possible to ensure the therapy room and communal areas are completely clear of all infectious contaminants.

5.19 The U.K. Government also recommends keeping working places well-ventilated with windows and doors open as much as possible. Tobias recommends this before and after sessions, as the

confidentiality of the client and their families is of paramount importance, together with any safeguarding concerns.

6 Business Contingency

6.1 Arts Counsellors should have a business contingency plan in place, in accordance with GDPR guidelines. GDPR mandates that professionals should have an identified third party and relevant processes which come into play when the professional becomes unavailable. This is especially important during a time of crisis. This third party may need to communicate with clients and professionals to cancel appointments and give updates about when arts counselling may resume. In the worst-case scenario, this third party must know what to do with confidential client records and business in the event of the Arts Counsellor's death. Any identified person must work within GDPR guidelines.

This guidance is aimed at helping Tobias students navigate these difficult times, so we are able to continue to offer high-quality, professional services to clients and their families. Whilst it is appreciated that this is not prescriptive policy, as some students would have preferred, Tobias is unable to offer such guidance due to the range of factors that affect arts counselling practice on an individual basis and would therefore not be applicable in every case.

COVID-19 EDUCATION ESTABLISHMENT CHECKLIST FOR FACE-TO-FACE ART THERAPY

This checklist is by no means exhaustive, it serves as a guide to support best practice for students working on placement.

Although some establishments are following 'bubble' guidelines this will not be possible for students on placement who see clients from different groups. Therefore, stricter measures may need to be taken to ensure client and student safe working practice.

The student will need to be informed of any COVID-related bereavement in the young person's family/community.

Risk assessment

A Covid-19 site risk assessment should be readily available to all those working on any site.

Therapy Room

1. Does the room have space for social distancing (2m apart)?
2. Is there sufficient ventilation and can the room be aired between clients?
3. Is the space confidential and can confidentiality be maintained if ventilation is needed for air circulation (for example open windows)?
4. Is there room to make art whilst social distancing?

Sanitising/infection control

1. Hand sanitizer and antibacterial cleaning products/wipes available.
2. All contact surfaces and door handles to be wiped down between sessions.
3. Toilets to be cleaned regularly, distancing measures in place.
4. Hand washing upon arrival and at the end of the session.
5. PPE available – used in line with government and the establishment's guidelines, at the student therapist and client's discretion. Check with the client before commencing face-to-face sessions.
6. If masks need to be worn, awareness that masks may feel threatening to some clients. If so and if possible, meet the client outside in a socially-distanced (2m+) space without a mask before putting it on.
7. Check for allergies to sanitizer.

Covid-19 screening

1. Has the Covid-19 questionnaire (attached) been completed before face-to-face contact with each client?
2. Checking for any shielding requirements, particularly important as students are not part of 'bubbles'.

Materials

1. Each client assigned a basic personal art therapy kit (for example, a small packet of pastels, watercolour paints, pencils, lump of clay), which can be wiped down and stored in a container or plastic folder for individual use only. Containers/folders wiped down between sessions. Clients can bring additional materials if they choose to.
2. Space will be needed to store the materials and artwork securely.

Working outside

1. Is the space confidential?
2. Is there sufficient space to socially distance (2m apart)?
3. Will the client feel sufficiently contained?
4. Is the area safe (if the client leaves, is there a risk/safety protocol in place)?
5. Consider allergies that could be activated in outdoor spaces.
6. Contingency plan for changes in weather, such as rain or extreme heat/sun.

Other considerations

1. If drinking water is usually provided, ask clients to bring their own drink.
2. If tissues are usually provided, availability of individually packaged tissues, not to be shared between clients.

Further guidance on risk assessment

Consider the following:

- • Who might be harmed and how?
- • What is already being done to control the risks?
- • What further action needs to be taken to control the risks?
- • Who needs to carry out the action?
- • When is the action needed by?

Government guidance on risk assessment can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities>

Risk assessment templates:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/risk-assessment-template-and-examples.htm>

Dear Client,

Please complete and return this questionnaire to your student arts counsellor on the first day of starting arts counselling.

Have you or your family arrived from overseas or a UK lockdown area within the last 14 days?

Please circle YES or NO

- If you answered yes to the above question, please state which country or countries you have visited. _____

- Have you knowingly been exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days? Please circle YES or NO. If Yes please state how long ago.

- Have you experienced any of the following cold or flu-like symptoms in the last 10 days? Please tick all that apply.
 - i. Fever
 - ii. A new or persistent cough (i.e. 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours)
 - iii. Sore throat
 - iv. Difficulty breathing
 - v. Fatigue
 - vi. Loss of smell or taste
 - vii. None of the above

- Do you have any underlying health conditions which could you put you at increased risk if you should contract COVID-19? Please tick. A list of these conditions, from the Government website, can be found below:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/whos-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/>

Circle: Yes or NO

Although every effort has been taken with enhanced safeguarding, cleaning, social distancing, signage etc, it is impossible to reduce the COVID-19 risk to zero.

Please confirm that you understand and accept that there is a small inherent risk of COVID-19 transmission, which cannot be completely eradicated. Advice on social distancing, how to avoid spreading the infection, facing coverings can be found on the government website at

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/social-distancing/what-you-need-to-do/>

I confirm that I accept and understand the above. Please circle: YES.

Print Name

Date

Signature