



banish the crows

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independent
counselling psychotherapy

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Dear client,

REASSURING OUR CLIENTS ABOUT THE STEPS THAT WE ARE TAKING IN RESPONSE TO THE ESCALATING CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) OUTBREAK.

We appreciate that our clients are likely to be concerned about the coronavirus outbreak. We want to reassure you that **our priority is for your safety and welfare.**

Our work in therapy is always:

- To foster and encourage your **personal responsibility**,
- To respect your **capacity to make decisions** for yourself, and
- Improve you **taking control of your own life** - this whilst giving due consideration to the lives of **other people**.

As such, we supportively encourage you to take the necessary steps and those which feel intuitively right for you, to safeguard your own health and wellbeing as well as that of others with whom you may come into contact with - including your therapist.

At Banish the Crows we are **also** doing this and this communication contains aspects of our own practice to make the setting of therapy as safe as possible for us both and in-turn, other people whom we will both come into contact with.

We are signposting clients to the [NHS guidance on coronavirus](#) for general information about the virus, what you can be doing to prevent the spread of the virus and what to do if you worried that you might have symptoms.

Q: What steps is my therapist taking to safeguard my health and wellbeing?

A: They are keeping up-to-date with current government guidelines, which change day-by-day. This includes restrictions to our freedom of movement, during the progression of the COVID-19 outbreak. As such, for as long as we are able to travel and work **without restriction** then we will **continue** to offer to see you (and other clients) at our premises at St. James House in Longton.

A: We will take **personal responsibility** to establish whether we ourselves are personally well enough (not infected) and that it is safe for us to meet face-to-face with our clients. At the time of sending this information to you we believe we are **not** infected and are well enough to be in personal contact with you and others. Should our own situation change then we will make further contact with you and discuss alternative options to enable the continuation of your therapy.



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We do encourage **you** to take responsibility for establishing whether you are well enough to attend or whether you might need and wish to make alternative arrangements with your therapist. See below.

A: We will take practical steps to ensure that the risk of infection in our studio space is minimised. We will make hand sanitising products available to clients; use air and fabric sanitising products for our soft furnishings - spraying between sessions, and minimising the total number of client sessions per-day to avoid unnecessary cross-over of clients.

Q: Can I continue with my therapy without seeing my therapist face-to-face?

A: Clients who wish or need to limit their face-to-face contact with others; for whatever reason, and clients who have been required by government to 'self-isolate' but wish to continue with their counselling and psychotherapy sessions can do so by either **telephone** or **online** means, such as SKYPE and Google Hangout, and Face-Time - so-called, **e-counselling**. However, we would encourage you to give serious consideration as to the nature and content of 'personal material' that you might talk about and whether you would feel safe and comfortable doing so via telephone or 'online' means. Creating private and safe space for such communications will be important to preserving your own confidentiality; for example when calling or communicating online at home, or indeed elsewhere.

You should speak to your therapist about telephone and e-counselling, as an alternative way of 'meeting' with them. They will guide you through the approach, including some of the benefits (there are some) as well as 'downsides' of talking over the telephone, particularly, or via the internet. Your therapist **does** meet the BACP competency framework to conduct therapy via telephone or using e-counselling methods.

Q: What if I need to cancel my session at short-notice - will I still be charged for it?

We will **not** charge you for cancelling your session at **short-notice** i.e. less than 48 hours, if this becomes necessary due to you developing symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) and, for example, being recommended to 'self-isolate' **OR** have escalating symptoms requiring urgent medical attention. Similarly, if you are a parent or a primary carer for others and become affected by their situation **OR** you are a health worker or professional employed by the public sector frontline emergencies services and are required to work at short-notice.

However, per the 'Charges' section at paragraphs 36 and 38 of the Therapeutic Agreement you **will** still be required to pay for sessions cancelled at short-notice for reasons other than a valid urgent or emergency situation, as outlined above.



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Q: What happens if my therapist is admitted to hospital with serious or fatal symptoms, due to the coronavirus?

A: You will remember the section in the **Privacy Statement and Agreement**, which you and your therapist both signed at the start of working together, and how we talked about a **'Therapist Will'** (also called **'Clinical Wills'**). Whilst this sounds morbid it is a practical arrangement that all counsellors and psychotherapists are encouraged to have in place - perhaps more-so in private practice, where therapists often work single-handedly. What we said about the **'Therapist Will'** remains relevant, as does our commitment to upholding **client confidentiality** in all but exceptional circumstances.

Due to the coronavirus becoming a **public health crisis** we are obliged to make our clients aware that in the event that their therapist becomes **seriously unwell and is required to be admitted to hospital** then once asked we will be required to make a disclosure in the **'public interest'**, so that the NHS tracing service can establish persons who have been in recent contact with the therapist concerned. We propose doing this via the **'nominated colleague'** named in the therapist's **'Will'** being contacted and making the necessary disclosure to the NHS tracing service. This is likely to be limited to name and contact information and will only be given **'exceptionally'**. The **'nominated colleague'** will simultaneously make contact with you about the circumstances and status of your therapist's health.

Keep up to date with the latest advice:

We are actively monitoring the advice provided by the [Government](#) and [NHS](#) and we advise you to stay updated with the most current information.

We hope that this information is useful in reassuring rather than worrying you unnecessarily. We take our work with you very seriously and this is made doubly challenging when we are required to respond to a public health crisis, such as the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. We would encourage you to talk through any concerns or further questions that you might have about continuing therapy, with us. The last thing that we want to do at this stage of your therapy is for progress to be to adversely affected, or to reinforce any isolation or existential anxiety being experienced by you.

We wish all to be well at a challenging time for all of us.

JEREMY BOUGHEY
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