



**banish the crows**  
independent  
**counselling psychotherapy**

**COVID-SECURE GUIDELINES**  
**Guidance for Existing and Prospective**  
**Clients**

Addendum

**31 December 2020**

## Changes

Following the latest Government announcement, tier 4 restrictions are now in place in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent; this being effective from 00.01am on Thursday 31 December 2020.

The restrictions mean that the city, along with many other parts of the country including the whole of the Staffordshire area, and indeed the West Midlands, will need to follow the highest Coronavirus restrictions set out by Government. A summary of tier 4 restrictions can be accessed by clicking [here](#).

## Situation / Context

There continues to be an absence of clear and definitive guidance about the provision of counselling and psychotherapy, at least beyond that provided by the NHS, as an 'essential health care service' and I am not aware of independent therapists being termed 'key workers', as other health and social care professionals employed by the public sector are. That is not to say that the work of independent counsellors and psychotherapists is not essential and in support of this many of us would suggest that presently there is a critical element of need amidst our population.

Consistent with Government guidance, the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), the UK's largest accrediting body for counsellors and psychotherapists, of which I am a Registered Member, continue to encourage therapists to work from home and for this to be via video or telephone (not in-person), wherever they can.

However, in more recent guidance, the BACP does acknowledge that "there is scope for face-to-face counselling and psychotherapy to take place, including within Tier 3 and 4 areas, but that workplaces and spaces should follow COVID-secure guidelines" and that regulations specifically state "...exceptions to home-working relate to that which takes place in registered business premises [only]".

I have interpreted this to mean that it continues to be permissible for in-person, face-to-face work to take place providing that it does so outside of a domiciliary setting (where therapists meet with clients in the therapist's home) and complies with COVID-secure guidelines, which

requires a risk assessment and appropriate safety measures being put in place by the (business) owner. I believe that my Practice meets this scope and exception.

### My intentions

- It is my intention to continue to offer a service to my clients that is flexible but safe and responsible, and takes account of their views and needs. However -
- I will limit the number of clients that I see in-person each day but **will not** cease seeing clients in-person, per-se during the period of increased local restrictions.
- It is **not** my intention to act as if our world is unchanged, currently. It clearly and sadly is and myself and clients, as responsible citizens, need to be responsive to this.
- There is a high proportion of clients with whom a strong therapeutic relationship is already in-place and/or we have been able to work via video or telephone with varying degrees of success during previous periods of Coronavirus restriction. I will be encouraging, though not presuming nor insisting these clients do the same again, and where this is mutually agreed, only until rates of Coronavirus infection have lessened and restrictions are lessened and eventually lifted by Government. This typically includes clients who visit me from outside of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent area and may live and work in an area categorised under a different tier.
- For those people who I **do** continue to see in-person during the period of increased restrictions we will (continue) with the COVID-secure measures already in-place at Banish the Crows and which you will be familiar with. This includes me and those clients being sensible about meeting and only doing so when we feel or know that we are well enough and it is safe to do so. I routinely take a voluntary COVID test through the community testing scheme in the City. I would encourage though not insist clients consider doing this, also. At the time of writing, I have consistently tested negative. More information about the City Council's community testing scheme can be accessed by clicking [here](#).
- If clients need or wish to 'pause' therapy during the period of restriction then, as previously, I will be open to this arrangement.

I will always encourage clients' autonomy and control in what we agree and what we do. As is the case in individual therapy.

Those clients whom might benefit more specifically from us meeting in-person are:

1. People who are **socially isolated** though not specifically due to the Coronavirus pandemic i.e., people who live alone, live in a remote area, and/or have limited family and support networks.
2. People with a specific **clinical need**, meaning that in-person contact is (more) critical to maintaining a sense of wellness and progression of our work together.
3. People whom have **recently entered into the therapeutic relationship** and alliance is still building. I would be keen to avoid transition to video or telephone, for such persons, unless and until our relationship has reached a stage where trust and a position of emotional and psychological wellbeing is secured.

I will be writing to existing clients to determine the most appropriate way forward for our individual work together.

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This is an Addendum to original COVID-secure guidelines published by Banish the Crows, on its website, in August 2020 - click [here](#) to read. Existing and prospective clients should refer to both documents as part of the ongoing Therapeutic Agreement.



**JEREMY BOUGHEY**

COUNSELLING PSYCHOTHERAPIST / CLINICAL SUPERVISOR  
PGDIP (MBACP), MSC HEALTH CARE POLICY & MANAGEMENT  
BACP REGISTERED MEMBER: **311978**