

Returning to Schools and Colleges: Guidance on face-to-face working this autumn

Covid-19 has presented some unique challenges, forcing businesses, schools, colleges, careers companies and independent career development practitioners to make critical decisions for colleagues, students, parents/carers and other stakeholders.

CDI members have been asking for guidance, so we have written this paper drawing on government publications and the detailed work of other personal service and counselling organisations.

Please note that the guidance changes rapidly and it is important that you check regularly with the government website - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>, national and local public health authorities, your employer and schools and colleges.

Observing school and college guidelines

If you are contracted to provide personal guidance in a school or college it is important that you familiarise yourself with their guidelines and those of the Local Authority. All Employers have a duty of care to protect staff and others from harm. This includes taking measures relating to the risk from coronavirus - <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/index.htm>

Good relationships with your careers leader should mean that if you have any concerns, these can be discussed openly. If the school/college has not issued its own guidelines, see the government's website *and* consider the guidance below.

Expanding the Government guidelines

While the government has not provided any guidance specific to career practitioners, they have published a large number of papers on working safely during coronavirus. Many of these are listed at end of this paper.

At the heart of their message they identify 5 main steps. We have added bullet points to make these more relevant to school/college working:

- 1. Carry out a Covid-19 risk assessment of the workplace in line with HSE guidance**
 - Strictly speaking you are legally required to carry out a risk assessment before returning to face to face working. Your school/college will have done this, but you may wish to follow the guidelines for peace of mind. This site - <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/risk-assessment.htm> has a downloadable risk assessment template.
- 2. Develop cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures.** Increase the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning by:

- Asking the institution to provide hand sanitiser, but it also makes sense to carry your own. An example of good practice: an organisation that provides a 'sanitising box' with disinfectant, sanitiser, antibacterial wipes, bags etc, in each room.
- Asking that surfaces and objects that are touched regularly are frequently cleaned.
- Sanitising your laptop and phone after use/between clients, after each interview.

3. **Maintain 2m social distancing where possible.** This can be facilitated by:

- Checking in advance to ensure the space/room you will be using allows for social distancing. This includes waiting areas; exits and corridors
- Putting up signs to remind students of social distancing guidance
- Avoiding sharing workstations or getting too close to a workstation when showing something to a client. One way round this is to invite the client to bring and use their own device – phone, tablet or laptop. Alternatively have two laptops available, or a second tablet device, which you can clean with antibacterial wipes between different users.
- Resources: if you have resources that you regularly need to share, you could provide useful links to websites or files stored online, calendar entries for events, contact details, or even map locations by generating QR codes on screen, or printing them off so clients can scan codes with their phone and open them directly on their own device.
- Using floor tape to mark areas to help people keep to a 2m distance
- Ideally seeing clients by appointment only
- Where location means that social distancing social is not possible, seek additional space and/or consider a two-room solution, with the careers adviser in one room linked online to the client in another room in the school/college. Also see section below on PPE and face masks.

4. **Manage transmission risk**

- Staggering arrival and departure time of clients. For example, allowing a 10-minute gap between appointments to minimise the chances of mixing; asking clients to wait until they are invited in so the room can be sanitised, and you can wash your hands.
- Wiping surfaces between interviews. This includes chairs, door handles, keyboards, light switches, door plates
- Using side to side working rather than sitting opposite your client
- Ensuring good airflow in the interview room – open windows
- Considering whether passing on paper-based resources is really necessary. Action plans and careers information can be emailed to clients. It is advisable to use disposable gloves before handling or passing over any support materials.
- Avoiding sharing pens/or wipe after use
- Checking out the arrangements for breaks and lunch in advance. Do you need to take your own water/snacks/food?
- Advising the careers leader that anyone with symptoms should not attend a careers interview, even if they have tested negative for Covid-19. Discussing protocols with your careers leader in advance, for example what you should do if you see a client

you suspect of being unwell? Make sure you have discussed this type of eventuality in advance. Also agree arrangements for the school/college to contact you, should you have seen a student recently who has since tested positive or where a student in their bubble has tested positive.

- If you are concerned you should be able to refuse to go ahead with the interview. Good practice: Where interviews are booked several weeks in advance you could introduce a simple triage tool/questionnaire at the start of the interview to ascertain that it is safe to see the client. (See – Further information)

5. Working from home

- Finding out the institution's stance on online personal guidance. For example, whether i) a blended approach is possible, i.e. a mix of remote and face-to-face appointments ii) second interviews and other personal guidance activities can be managed remotely using video conferencing?

PPE and face masks

Since August 8th it has been mandatory to wear face coverings in a wide range of indoor settings, including premises where personal services are provided to clients. However, because transmission rates are thought to be lower amongst young people, the wearing of PPE and facemasks is currently not required in schools and colleges in England.

Be aware that government guidelines are subject to change and it seems likely that the wearing of face masks will be required in geographical areas where there are spikes in the transmission of Covid-19. Some schools, including those in Scotland, are requiring students and adults to wear face masks in corridors and shared/communal spaces.

At the time of writing, this is a matter of personal choice. However, if you feel safer wearing a facemask and/or reusable face shield, that can be cleaned between students, then explain this to the careers leader. These types of arrangements should also be included in any information that goes out to parents/carers, so the young person knows what to expect when they arrive.

Different parts of the UK are issuing independent guidance on the wearing of face coverings so check what applies in your location:

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

Guidance for career practitioners working with adults

The face to face element, combined with length of exposure, increases the risk for you and your clients. Many of the points highlighted above will be relevant for you to consider, particularly with respect to social distancing and avoiding contact with surfaces near to the client and thoroughly cleaning those surfaces after each client.

The Government guidance states that where a distance of two metres is not possible, a face mask (Type 2 surgical) should be worn, in addition to a clear visor that covers the face. How this works in the careers room depends on individual circumstances. Even if you can maintain the two-metre distance, you and your client are at increased risk due to the face to face position and prolonged exposure during an interview session. This is particularly important where the client is exempt from wearing face coverings themselves. We suggest you consider:

- Can you maintain the recommended social distance?
- If you can maintain social distancing, do you feel the risk to you and your client could be reduced through the use of face coverings?
- The known risk factors of age and any pre-existing health conditions for yourself and your client?
- If you can't maintain social distancing, would continuing to work online be the safest option for you and your client?

What's the difference between a face covering and a surgical face mask?

The Health and Safety Executive has issued [guidance on face coverings and face masks](#) which explains the difference between the two.

Government advice is that a face covering is appropriate for the client. For the service provider a face covering is also appropriate when social distancing cannot be maintained. In this instance a Type 2 face mask and visor should be worn.

In the UK, face coverings and face masks are being sold by a large number of retailers online and in store. See the [Government's guidance on face coverings](#).

Informing clients of changes to your practice and re-contracting

It is advisable that you check whether your contract(s) are still relevant or need updating. You may also want to consider whether it would be helpful to provide your clients with any additional information relating to any changes to your practice, for example:

General practice:

- Any practical changes to your practice, such as location, access, sanitisation procedures, reduced access to facilities
- Any requests of your clients - for example do they need to bring their own hand sanitizer, face masks or visors. What should they do if they have symptoms of COVID-19, or have been in contact with someone who has the virus?
- How you will include reference to the restrictions imposed by COVID-19 in your interview contracting?
- What actions you will take if you have symptoms of COVID-19 or have been in contact with someone who has the virus? (See page section on contact tracing below)
- What would happen if there was a local lockdown?

Re-contracting:

- Any changes to reflect any variation in the nature/format of a careers interview or other sessions
- Client access to online support
- Any changes to your method of payment and cancellation fees
- Any potential implications to confidentiality, for example contact tracing, trusted others contacting them in your absence

Insurance

It is important to check that your indemnity policy covers you for face to face work. It is also worth considering whether you need to make any amendments to your contract with the school/college.

If you are reviewing your insurance cover and considering switching to another provider, check:

- The cancellation policy of your current provider - some insurers will not cover claims made against you for past practice if you don't follow their cancellation procedure
- Any associated cancellation costs
- Whether your potential new insurer covers you for claims against COVID-19 as well as your general practice needs.

Contact tracing

If you test positive for coronavirus, the NHS test and trace service will ask you about people you have been in contact with. The NHS will then contact them to provide support and testing. This has raised concerns about client confidentiality and whether you can identify your clients to the NHS?

The government recommends that businesses keep a temporary record of clients and visitors that they have seen in the last 21 days. See the guidance for information on what this record should include and how to keep it in accordance with GDPR – <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/maintaining-records-of-staff-customers-and-visitors-to-support-nhs-test-and-trace#information-to-collect>

Managing client confidentiality

You will need to think how you talk about the current implications of Covid-19 in your interview contracting. This includes making reference to the possible need for contact tracing if you, or your client, tests positive for coronavirus. If you are self-employed you may also need to consider the implications for your business contracts too.

Disclosure of personal details in the case of contact tracing is deemed to be in the public interest. Public interest is the general welfare and rights of the public that must be recognised, protected and advanced. Disclosures in the public interest, based on the common law, are made where this is essential to prevent a serious and imminent threat to public health, national security, the life of the individual or a third party, or to prevent or detect serious crime.

You could explain to your clients that, under this clause, you may need to share their name and contact details with the NHS if you or another client contract the virus.

If you want to make it clearer to clients through a business contract, you could add a separate coronavirus contingency clause, stating that confidentiality will be broken if necessary, for reasons of public interest in the area of public health.

CDI Code of Ethics

It is worth remembering that CDI members work to a strong Code of Ethics, which includes a Duty of Care – to clients, colleagues, organisations and self.

Members have a duty of care and are expected always to act in the best interests of their clients.

Members must develop and maintain professional and supportive working relationships with colleagues both inside and external to their own organisation and respect the contributions of other career development professionals to the activities and services on offer.

Members must fulfil their obligations and duties to their employer (where applicable), except where to do so would compromise the best interests of clients.

Members have a duty of care to themselves, both in terms of their personal integrity, personal safety and their capacity to practise in order to provide an effective service to clients.

Overview

Members will be returning to face to face working at different stages depending on your concerns, risk assessments, organisational policy, region and context or setting. In summary, we recommend you consider the following factors:

- the client's need and safety
- your needs and safety, including creating your own 'sanitising kit' (facemasks; hand sanitiser; antibacterial wipes; disposable gloves; plastic bags)
- the context of the service
- whether other options are possible and the ethical and practical risks of any decision
- the known risk factors of age and any pre-existing health conditions for both yourself and your client
- advice on social distancing, cleaning surfaces and tools and face coverings
- two room solutions and online personal guidance interviews
- personal guidance interview contracting – what you will say about the current situation, disclosure in the event of contact tracing and how you will be operating
- clients with particular needs who may not be able to engage using online platforms
- whether your clients could be putting themselves at risk during the journey to and from your location/premises
- business contracting – whether contracts need to be reviewed and new contingency clauses added.

Further information

HM Government: Keeping workers and clients safe during Covid-19 in close contact services - <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5ef2889986650c12970e9b57/working-safely-during-covid-19-close-contact-200813.pdf>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-educational-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020>

HSE: Managing risk and risk assessment at work - <https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/>

Sample health triage tool, which can be adapted (Public Health England, COVID-19: Guidance for the remobilisation of services within health and care settings Infection prevention and control recommendations) - Page 43 Appendix 1.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/910885/COVID-19_Infection_prevention_and_control_guidance_FINAL_PDF_20082020.pdf

[Safe and ethical use of web videoconferencing for personal careers guidance](#) - CDI Position Paper (April 2020)

British Institute of Counselling and Psychotherapy - <https://www.bacp.co.uk/news/news-from-bacp/coronavirus/faqs-about-coronavirus/>

CIPD - <https://www.cipd.co.uk/search?q=coronavirus+managing>