

# Cornerstone Counselling and Therapy Centre

## UPDATED Health and Safety Policy – COVID-19 Risk Assessment Reviewed and amended in the light of most recent government advice 20.5.22

Cornerstone has put in place various procedures to minimise risk of Covid-19 transmission. We trust that you will cooperate with these measures to maintain as safe an environment as we can.

In conducting our risk assessment we have consulted government advice and recommendations (HSE) and considered the following:

- What might spread transmission?
- Who could be at risk?
- How likely is it that someone will be exposed?
- Ways to remove or control risk

### General Points

It is expected that all staff and Associates, and our clients, take care that each other's safety is maintained by not coming to Cornerstone premises if they are showing any signs of illness, and by observing recommended social distancing and hygiene. A thermometer is available in the hall if you wish to check temperatures.

Hand and surface sanitisers are provided, and paper towels.

Notices are displayed reminding everyone about precautions.

Cloth towels, cushions and blankets have been removed.

Objects that might normally be handled, such as stones, shells, pens etc, have been removed. Please take responsibility for hygiene with any of your own items that you might use in therapy. If anything at Murray Road has been removed that belongs to you it has been stored in the cellar there. At Breathe any such items will be in the small room (previously room C).

### Clients

- Information:** Admin staff will inform new clients, and any existing clients where they arrange appointments for you, of the precautions that are in place. If you are the channel of communication there is a Cornerstone notice you can send your clients. There are advisory signs up in the building.
- Masks:** There are a number of specified indoor settings where masks should be worn, and this list does not include counselling and psychotherapy settings: "For other indoor settings, employers should assess the use of face coverings on a case-by-case basis depending on the workplace environment, other appropriate mitigations they have put in place, and whether exemptions or reasonable excuses apply." One of the exceptions to wearing a face mask indoors is, "if you are speaking to or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expressions to communicate". As our work involves the need

for clear sound and seeing facial expressions, in both directions, we make the judgement that this exception applies to our work

If possible, we would prefer everyone to use a face covering in the **communal** areas of our premises. The wearing of a mask and/or a visor in the counselling room is a matter for you and your client to discuss and agree. Please observe the advice that you should wash hands before and after using a mask/face covering, placing it in a plastic bag when not in use and washing or replacing it daily.

- C. **Waiting area:** We ask you to (and Admin will also, where relevant) request that clients arrive as close to their appointment time as possible. Due to our restricted waiting area this will not be used except in exceptional circumstances where someone needs to be present in the building with a client (e.g. a parent).
- D. **Sanitiser:** We ask you to ensure that clients use the hand sanitizer provided in the hallway and avoid unnecessary touching of surfaces.
- E. **Refreshments:** Water will not be provided for the rooms and drinks and biscuits will not be offered to clients. We ask you to suggest clients bring a drink (or their own refillable bottle).

## Associates

1. **Information:** A notice is available that Associates can forward to clients to explain the above points.
2. **Appointments:** When arranging appointments be aware that we are operating staggered appointment times to avoid unnecessary contact in common areas so you will need to check with Admin before confirming timings with clients.
3. **The office:** Please do not enter/use the office and desk unless unavoidable, and the computer and printer are not to be used by Associates. Appointments should be checked/notified to admin by email. Personal and other items should be taken to your room rather than stored in the office.
4. **Masks:** PPE and face coverings were not previously recommended by government advice, as long as social distancing and hygiene measures are in place. However, it has been mandatory *for members of the public* to wear a face covering indoors (see separate Cornerstone Covid News 4.8.20). This may be subject to acceptable exceptions within the counselling rooms, but please observe the requirement for a face covering in the communal areas of the building unless there is an exemption.

We have purchased enough face visors for **Associates** to have one each, if you wish to use them. Please be responsible for your own visor, and hygiene thereof (wash hands before and after using, keep in a plastic bag that can also be washed daily). It is not practical for us to supply visors to clients.

5. **Refreshments:** Associates can make their own drinks at their own risk/responsibility, taking care to wipe touched surfaces with sanitizer and paper towel.

6. **Social Distancing:** Do your best to maintain maximum distance possible in common areas and within your room.
7. **Ventilation:** Please open a window in your room (remembering to close afterwards and wipe handles), as ventilation reduces risk.
8. **Surfaces:** Where possible avoid sofas and direct clients to the chairs (as the arms are wipeable). There is, however, currently no evidence that coronavirus can be transmitted from fabrics.

You are requested to wipe (with sanitizer and paper towels provided, but liquid soap is as effective) most-touched surfaces between sessions – i.e. chair arms, coffee table, relevant door handles and bannister, and waiting room chair arms if relevant). Hard surfaces may otherwise retain active virus for 4-5 days.

Please let your clients in and out of the building so they don't need to handle the front door handles.

9. **Waste bins:** Please empty your waste bin before departure.