



Guidelines (interim) for Workplace Practice During Covid 19

These guidelines have been put together to help those IACAT members who are returning to practice in their existing work situations. For those that are or intend to offer client support via Tele Therapy, please see the relevant guidelines and support information on the IACAT website. Changes and additions to these guidelines may occur, as best practice develops, and members should refer to the IACAT website for updates, which will be communicated to members as they occur.

Whilst these guidelines relate to the delivery of the Creative Arts Therapies, members should also refer to HSE Covid 19 guidelines, as well as your own workplace guidelines/ protocols that are in place.

Workplace Situation

In returning to practice in your workplace, you should initially seek information of any changes that might/ may have occurred since your last time of working.

- Are these the same clients I will be working with?
- Will/ can the same work spaces be used?
- Are my commitments to the service still the same?
- Will I be expected to work in a different way?
- Has my line of management/ responsibility changed in any way?
- Are my supervision arrangements still the same?
- Have my pay and conditions changed in any way?

Risk Assessment

When undertaking direct client work, individuals should assess each situation and work accordingly taking into account:

1. Space limitations and environmental considerations

Are you using the same spaces as used before and how does this space meet the social distancing guidelines that are in place at this point in time? It may be that in meeting these social distancing guidelines that other spaces might need to be used. If you are seeing more than one client this will impact on the size of the space used

and may change your way of working i.e. moving from group to individual sessions or reducing the size of the group.

If you are having to work in a ward or inpatient space or other more public space, how might confidentiality still be maintained or is this possible?

2. Client/ Therapist Safety re Covid 19

If you intend to engage creatively in sessions with your client/s, consideration should be given to how you maintain a low risk of any covid 19 transmission between the client and therapist and between clients who will be using the same space.

It may well be useful, during this period of the covid 19 challenge, to reduce the range of materials that are in offer so that both the risk and the time spent cleaning materials/ utensils etc is reduced and kept to a practical level. Offering and keeping a range of materials (where practical) that are assigned to each client and kept separately might help this situation. The use of disposable/ single use materials and /or equipment should be also be considered.

Further information on the use of art materials can be found at <https://arttherapy.org/blog-best-practices-using-art-supplies-during-covid-19-outbreak/>

General hygiene should be observed after each session for the client and therapist, with hand washing and the wiping down of the table etc. The use of masks might also need to be considered. The disposal of materials may be necessary during and at the end of the session, so adequate facilities need to be arranged to do this e.g. designated refuse bags etc.

It is also important for you to know that you will and do have access to appropriate hygiene materials and equipment prior to the start of any session. Sessions should not be undertaken where the appropriate safety materials are not available. If there are issues these should be discussed with your manager or the individual responsible for the work place you are working in.

It may be useful to discuss with staff/ support workers. what prior help and actions can be done in order for the sessions to begin without too much delay or distraction, from what should be a therapeutic intervention.

3. Client Assessment

It is advised that those clients that you will be seeing are reassessed in relation to the covid 19 risk itself. The following are a range of considerations to take in terms of determining how and if sessions can begin/ continue:

3.1 Client Behaviour/ understanding – will the client be able to maintain and observe social distancing during their time with you and do they have this understanding? If this is an issue are there ways to mitigate this and to put into place measures to alleviate the risk?

- 3.2 Having a clear understanding prior to each session of the clients present conditions and any changes, particularly in relation to health status. This will also relate to the unit/ ward etc overall.
- 3.3 If running a group, is the space suitable and might it necessitate another facilitator? Whilst this might present a new a therapeutic dynamic it may allow for the continuation of the sessions which in itself may be beneficial.
- 3.4 Co facilitating/ session support – consideration should be given to the support you need in working with clients in this changed environment. This might be knowing that you can call on support during a session and the client/s also knowing of this possibility. Co facilitating of a group session might allow a group to continue, in which case both facilitators should prior to the start of the new sessions reflect on and determine their new roles and ways of working with the group. The group itself should also be informed and consulted on these changes.
- 3.5 Client Contract – It is recommended that a new contract be agreed with the client/s. This contract will inform the clients of any restrictions that will be in place during this period of time and give information on how the sessions will proceed and the precautions being taken. The contract could usefully include:
- How the space will be organised in relation to social distancing
 - Restrictions and hygiene during the session/s
 - Use of materials/ equipment in the sessions
 - Any changes to the facilitation of the session (co facilitation/ support)
 - Use of external support by the therapist during the session
 - Changes to membership if a reduced group is decided
 - How the contract will be reviewed post Covid 19

Service users will be aware of the current situation, in most instances, so it is important to reflect on this with them and how this will/ may have an impact on the service/ sessions that you are now offering. Where children/ adolescents are involved, this should also be discussed with their guardians/ parents or direct carers.

Conclusion

These guidelines are to support the continuation of the therapeutic work undertaken by Creative Arts Therapists and IACAT members. Covid 19 has changed all aspects of our lives and changed the way that Creative Therapists are currently engaging in their work with their clients. Importantly, Creative Therapists are keen to be an active part of the teams/ organisations they work within in helping the MDT; offering flexible support, clinical guidance and reassurance as the pressures mount for all.

21/4/20 IACAT/ WP Guidelines