

Covid-19 Safe Working Policy

We have conducted a thorough risk assessment in accordance with the government guidance, '*Working safely during COVID-19*' (updated 13 August 2020), '*Safe Working in Education, Childcare and Children's Social Care*' (updated 21 July 2020) and current guidance from the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists. This policy outlines the actions we are taking as a service based on this risk assessment.

We will continue to review and update our risk assessment in line with changes to guidance from the government and The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists. As such this policy is subject to necessary amendments.

1. Reducing Contacts and Social Distancing

Maintain social distancing, minimise contact between individuals wherever possible and minimise potential for contamination so far as is reasonably practicable.

1.1 Home Visits

If teletherapy is deemed by the Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) to be appropriate for the client it will be offered as a means of intervention instead of face to face contact.

If the client attends an education setting intervention will be delivered in the setting rather than at the client's home subject to agreement by the education setting.

Parents / guardians and education settings should be aware that the SLT may be visiting multiple sites in the same day. A maximum of 4 sites may be visited by an SLT in one day.

Intervention will be delivered outdoors if safe and practical rather than inside.

For intervention taking place inside the client's home: Prior to the SLT arrival, parents / guardians should make small adaptations to the room in which the intervention will be carried out such as opening a window or a door for ventilation, making as much space as possible by moving necessary furniture and objects, thoroughly cleaning a surface designated for the SLT to work at e.g. table top.

The SLT reserves the right to cancel the appointment on arrival if he / she deems the space made available to work in to be inappropriate.

On arrival at a client's home the SLT will knock on the door / ring the doorbell then step 2 metres away from the door. A distance of 2 metres should then be maintained between the SLT and parent / guardian wherever possible. At least 1 metre distance between all individuals must be maintained.

If assessment / therapy is carried out at a table the SLT and client will sit at a right angle maintaining the 1 metre distance rather than face to face wherever practical. As a 1 metre plus measure a perspex screen will be placed on the table top separating the SLT and client.

It will not always be possible to carry out assessment / therapy whilst sat at a table. For children who will need to move around the room during the session the SLT will maintain a 2

metre distance wherever possible and always 1 metre. As a 1 metre plus measure the SLT will wear a clear visor.

For types of therapy where maintaining distancing may not be possible, the SLT will supervise the session at a safe distance whilst providing clear guidance for the parent / guardian to carry out the therapy with the child.

1.2. School Contracts

The SLT will not visit multiple settings within the same day.

Intervention will be delivered outdoors if safe and practical rather than inside.

For intervention taking place inside the school building: School should make small adaptations to the room in which the intervention will be carried out such as opening a window or a door for ventilation, making as much space as possible by moving necessary furniture and objects, thoroughly cleaning a surface designated for the SLT to work at e.g. table top.

Movement around the school site will be kept to a minimum. Where possible a member of staff should escort the child to the SLT for their session.

The SLT will maintain social distancing whilst in school wherever possible. Ideally the SLT should maintain 2 metre distance from staff and children and always 1 metre.

Where possible school staff should organise for children being seen by the SLT in succession to be from the same bubble.

If assessment / therapy is carried out at a table the SLT and child will sit at a right angle maintaining the 1 metre distance rather than face to face wherever practical. As a 1 metre plus measure a perspex screen will be placed on the table top separating the SLT and child.

It will not always be possible to carry out assessment / therapy whilst sat at a table. For children who will need to move around the room during the session the SLT will maintain a 2 metre distance wherever possible and always 1 metre. As a 1 metre plus measure the SLT will wear a clear visor.

For types of intervention where maintaining distancing may not be possible, the SLT will supervise the session at a safe distance whilst providing clear guidance for a supporting staff member to carry out the therapy with the child.

For a small proportion of interventions, such as the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), it may be necessary for 2 members of staff to support the child.

2. Robust Hand and Respiratory Hygiene

2.1 Hand Hygiene

The SLT must clean his / her hands thoroughly more often than usual, particularly after arriving at a setting, when returning from breaks, when changing rooms, and before and after eating or handling food, as well as after touching his / her face, blowing his / her nose and sneezing or coughing.

To ensure clean hands the SLT must wash hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with warm running water and soap and dry them thoroughly, or use alcohol hand rub / sanitiser ensuring that all parts of the hands are covered.

2.2 Respiratory Hygiene

The SLT should ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach; Cover your mouth and nose with disposable tissues when you cough or sneeze. If one is not available, sneeze into the crook of your elbow, not into your hand. Dispose of tissues into a disposable rubbish bag and immediately clean your hands with soap and water or use a hand sanitiser.

The SLT should avoid touching his / her mouth, eyes and nose.

3. Enhanced Cleaning Arrangements

At all times the SLT will carry hand sanitiser and disinfecting wipes for surfaces and therapy equipment.

The SLT will ensure enhanced cleaning of their workspace and equipment including:

- Cleaning frequently touched surfaces more often than normal and always in between client sessions
- Cleaning door handles often and always after someone entering / leaving the room
- Thoroughly cleaning therapy equipment and toys after each use
- Frequently wiping electronic devices such as phones and iPads
- Cleaning of Personal Protective Equipment as per product instructions

When cleaning whilst on site therapists should use disinfectant wipes. Once returning home all equipment and wipeable toys should be washed using usual products like detergents and bleach, which are effective at getting rid of the virus (*Covid-19: Cleaning in Non-Healthcare Settings Outside the Home*, updated 15th July 2020).

The use of soft toys and toys with intricate parts or that are otherwise hard to clean should be avoided.

For individual and very frequently used equipment, such as pencils and pens, it is recommended that the therapist and children have their own items that are not shared. The therapist should inform a relevant staff member if the child is required to bring any of their own items to the session.

4. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

4.1. Background Information:

Public Health England does not (based on current evidence) recommend the use of face coverings in schools. This evidence will be kept under review. Face coverings are not required in schools as pupils and staff are mixing in consistent groups, and because misuse may inadvertently increase the risk of transmission. There may also be negative effects on communication and thus education (*Safe Working in Education, Childcare and Children's Social Care Settings, Including the Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)*, updated 21 July 2020).

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) reports the following:

It is not always possible for speech and language therapists to work at a two-metre distance from their clients. By nature of what they do, which is supporting and developing someone's speech, language and communication, it is important that their client can see their mouth and face, in a safe manner. The use of transparent face masks is therefore vital. The RCSLT continue to communicate with the Department of Health and Social Care re whether approved new 'clear masks' will be available to speech and language therapists going into schools to support the vital development of children's speech, language and communication needs (*RCSLT Statement on The Use of Clear Face Masks*, 13th August 2020).

4.2 SLT PPE

As external professionals working in schools we have considered school's position on face coverings whilst balancing this with RCSLT guidance. Based on the current guidance Away With Words SLTs will adopt the following PPE measures:

- Use of a washable mouth and nose covering when moving around the school site but not during intervention sessions. This covering must be washed after each daily use in accordance with the manufacturer's laundry instructions.
- Use of a perspex screen for all tabletop therapy, as outlined in section 1: *Reducing Contacts and Social Distancing*.
- Use of a clear face visor during ambulant therapy sessions, as outlined in section 1: *Reducing Contacts and Social Distancing*.
- The SLT will ensure that they wear freshly laundered clothing on each new working day.

The RCSLT approved 'clear mask' (clear mouth and nose covering) will be considered as a replacement of the SLT's use of the clear face visor as described in this policy if it becomes available.

5. Response to Infection

5.1 Infection Symptoms

The main symptoms of coronavirus, outlined by the NHS, include:

- High Temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- New and Continuous Cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour OR 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- Change in your sense of smell and taste - this means there has been a change in your normal sense of smell and/or taste (also called anosmia)

(<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/>)

5.2 Immediate Response to symptoms

If an SLT presents with symptoms he / she must:

- Get a test as soon as possible. Tests can be booked on the NHS testing and tracing for coronavirus website or ordered by telephone via NHS 119.
- Stay at home – only leave home to have a test.
- Inform Lauren Green (Lead SLT).
- Contact all necessary schools / parents to cancel booked visits for the following 14 days.

- Engage with NHS Test and Trace.

5.3 Engaging with NHS Test and Trace

The SLT must ensure he / she understands the NHS test and trace process so that they know how to respond if anyone they have had contact with is suspected or confirmed to have coronavirus or if they themselves present with coronavirus symptoms.

The NHS provide the following information about the test and trace process:

- In England, you'll be contacted by the NHS Test and Trace service if you test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19).
- You'll be instructed to self isolate. This usually means staying at home for 14 days. More information about self-isolating can be found at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/when-to-self-isolate-and-what-to-do/>
- You'll be asked where you've been recently and who you've been in close contact with.
- This will help the NHS contact anyone who may have caught the virus from you.
- You'll be contacted by email, text or phone.
- Text messages will come from NHS tracing. Calls will come from 0300 0135000.
- You'll be asked to sign in to the NHS Test and Trace contact tracing website at <https://contact-tracing.phe.gov.uk>.
- On the contact tracing website, you'll be asked for information including:
 - your name, date of birth and postcode
 - if you live with other people
 - any places you've been recently, such as a workplace or school
 - names and contact details of any people you were in close contact with in the 48 hours before your symptoms started (if you know these details)

If you cannot use the contact tracing website, you'll be asked for this information over the phone.

- Anyone you've been in close contact with will be told to stay at home (self-isolate) for 14 days. This is because it can take up to 14 days for coronavirus symptoms to appear.
- If you're contacted by NHS track and trace and told you've been in contact with a person who has coronavirus:
 - stay at home (self-isolate) for 14 days from the day you were last in contact with the person – it can take up to 14 days for symptoms to appear
 - do not leave your home for any reason – if you need food or medicine, order it online or by phone, or ask friends and family to drop it off at your home
 - do not have visitors in your home, including friends and family – except for essential care
 - try to avoid contact with anyone you live with as much as possible
 - people you live with do not need to self-isolate if you do not have symptoms
 - people in your support bubble do not need to self-isolate if you do not have symptoms (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/>)

The SLT must keep online diaries up-to-date as a means of recording schools / homes visited so that this information is easily accessible should it be requested by NHS Test and Trace. The SLT must also ensure that he / she engages in the signing-in procedures as requested by schools.

5.4 SLTs Returning to Work Following Self-Isolation

The SLT may return to work once they have completed their period of self-isolation.

The SLT must contact necessary parents / guardians and schools to rebook, wherever possible, cancelled intervention sessions / school contract days.

5.5. What to do if you are a client with symptoms

If you are the parent / guardian of a child receiving speech and language therapy with Away With Words and they or anyone in their household presents with symptoms, you must email or telephone your SLT to inform them.

The SLT will cancel any appointment(s) booked within the following 14 days and rebook these appointment(s) on date(s) after this 14 day period.

If you have any questions about this policy please contact Lauren Green (Lead SLT) at lauren@yorkshirespeechtherapy.com