

## **PRIVACY, SAFETY AND ETHICAL POINTS RELATED TO ONLINE THERAPY**

Since I transitioned to working online at the start of the UK lockdown, I attended certified Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses for facilitating online therapy with children as well as adolescents. CPD's are integral to my work for maintaining the highest standards in line with UKCP and BACP requirements.

As a psychotherapeutic counsellor, it is my responsibility to ensure that I take every cautionary measure to provide a safe environment in order to facilitate the therapeutic needs of the child. This means that I am fully versed with the ethical aspects of providing an online service.

The following outline relates privacy in online therapy:

Sending confidential documentation by email can be transmitted through Egress, an end to end encryption to ensure data protection which can be access at <https://switch.egress.com/> - I have been using this method directly with older adolescent clients or parents for children and other minors. This would also include taking photos of artwork.

In addition to the above, all hard copies of documentation containing client-parent data is kept in a filing system which is locked in my office. Also, the anti-virus protection I use has been recommended by Apple Tech and is a paid subscription.

Normally, the child-adolescent client's therapeutic work is locked up in the therapist's office. However, in this situation, it is necessary for the child's materials to be locked away in their home so that it cannot be accessed in-between sessions by the child. Nor should it be accessed by anyone else. On this matter I am limited as the situation is not in my control but its purpose is to safeguard the containment, integrity and confidentiality of the child and the work. I also offer parental support sessions.

- If the child is aged 7 up until about 8 and possibly 9 (usually I wouldn't see a younger child online) they will be with the parent at the beginning of each therapy session

- For an initial session I would ask that the parent or guardian be present in the beginning and end if the child is aged 7 – 10 years old.
- Separate phone meetings can be arranged the parent or guardian to discuss anything which is important and relevant to the child which is integral to the therapeutic work with the child.

The online platform I normally use is Zoom, though I have used a medical platform if it's compatible with the client's computer software, but there have been problems with some of the clients' microphones which is why I have been using Zoom.

Initial Assessments with parents takes place online but also for face-to-face therapy-counselling sessions can be arranged online for convenience and preference.

It is my duty of care to ensure that the child client understands that

- It is their choice as to whether they want to be in therapy or not
- they have the right to end the therapy session if they wish
- I need to share any disclosures the child may make that comprises their safety or the safety of others with the appropriate adults
- If there is anything they are confused about, I will ensure their understanding through concept checking and may use illustrations and simple graded language to produce a hard copy that can be re-visited for continued clarifications when necessary.
- Ensure that the room where they are engaging in the therapy sessions is suitable, private and safe, such as furniture or portable objects.

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