

Covid-19 Safe Working Policy

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.

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.

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.

At least 1 metre distance between all individuals will be maintained wherever possible.

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. On parents' request the SLT will wear a clear visor / use a perspex table top screen.

1.2. School Contracts

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.

At least 1 metre distance between all individuals will be maintained wherever possible.

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. If requested by school, the SLT will wear a clear visor or use a perspex table top screen.

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 tabletop therapy if requested by the client, as outlined in section 1: *Reducing Contacts and Social Distancing*.
- Use of a clear face visor during ambulant therapy sessions if requested by the client, 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.

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 10 days.
- Engage with NHS Test and Trace.

5.3 Engaging with NHS Self Isolation Process

The SLT must ensure he / she understands the NHS self isolation 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 self isolating:

Self-isolate straight away and get a PCR test (a test that is sent to the lab) on GOV.UK as soon as possible if you have any of these 3 symptoms of COVID-19, even if they are mild:

- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

You should also self-isolate straight away if:

- you've tested positive for COVID-19 – this means you have the virus
- someone you live with has symptoms or tested positive (unless you are not required to self-isolate – check below if this applies to you)
- you've been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace following contact with someone who tested positive unless you are fully vaccinated

If someone you live with has symptoms of COVID-19, or has tested positive for COVID-19, you will not need to self-isolate if any of the following apply:

- you're fully vaccinated – this means 14 days have passed since your final dose of a COVID-19 vaccine given by the NHS
- you're under 18 years, 6 months old
- you're taking part or have taken part in a COVID-19 vaccine trial
- you're not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons

Even if you do not have symptoms, you should still:

- get a PCR test on GOV.UK to check if you have COVID-19
- follow advice on how to avoid catching and spreading COVID-19
- consider limiting contact with people who are at higher risk from COVID-19
- Tell people you've been in close contact with in the past 48 hours that you have symptoms

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 10 days and rebook these appointment(s) on date(s) after this 10 day period.

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