



ON-LINE COUNSELLING FOR CHILDREN – PARENTAL AGREEMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

Following updates from [DfE](#), [Public Health England](#) and [World Health Organisation](#) regarding the status of the COVID-19 virus I have taken the decision to offer web based counselling sessions to my existing clients should we find school is closed due to the need to instigate social distancing or social isolation practices.

This is a new way of working for me so I have laid out how this will look for myself, your son/daughter, their school and yourselves as parents/guardians – this will be a four cornered contract with us all working together to ensure your son/daughter's current therapeutic support is uninterrupted. My primary focus is always your child and as an accredited member of the [British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy](#) I adhere to their ethical code ensuring you and your child have confidence in my competence and fitness to practice in this way.

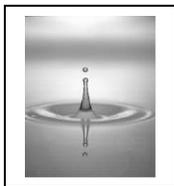
2. WHAT IS WEB BASED COUNSELLING?

Web-based therapy is any sort of counselling or psychotherapy that takes place over the internet instead of in person. This will mean your child and I interact via a screen within a confidential space at each end of the internet connection. As we will not be in our usual therapy room we will have to put in place some new ways of working together and this document aims to set out this plan so you can assess if it something you would like to access for your child.

3. HOW HAVE YOU INTRODUCED THIS TO MY CHILD?

As of Monday 9th March 2020 I have been working with your child (in age appropriate language/play) to support:

- a) Their understanding on the current climate
- b) Expression of their feelings around when, or even if, they have heard any information regarding the current pandemic Covid-19 as well as their understanding of current school and PHE hygiene guidance.
- c) Our therapeutic journey and my commitment to the promise your son/daughter and I agreed together (i.e our contracted sessions – this may be a 6 / 12 session intervention)
- d) My commitment to be available to them or offer signposting to supports available if we have a break in sessions due to a school closure
- e) Introduction to the concept of web based sessions and seek their choice in terms of this type of support – client autonomy is paramount here – I am child led in my work so this decision is theirs firstly. If they choose not to access this web-based support I will ensure we are able to 'park' our therapeutic journey – just as I do when we approach natural breaks in our weekly sessions, such as school holidays. This preparation is important to manage these types of 'endings'. School counselling pauses and endings are really carefully prepared for and managed to ensure a child has understanding and feels safe in the process.
- f) A transitional object – to manage the sense of connection I will offer your son/daughter a choice of a stone to take home with them. In our last school based session I will invite them



to choose a stone for themselves and a stone for me. This is a symbolic gesture and will enable your child to hold the stone and feel a sense of connection outside of the therapy room to remind them of all their helpful coping strategies that we have discussed in session – we call this their ‘cool down plan’ which is used in conjunction with their mood ladder. This is a scale of feelings from 1 – 10. I will send this home with them so you can check in with how they are feeling at home. When we all hold hands, metaphorically, around children the best support is in the put place that enables the right conditions for change and healing. You are your child’s greatest support.

4. WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO?

You may have questions around this new service. I invite you to read through this document and if you would like to discuss any part of this further please email me and we can set up a good time to chat. It is important that you are part of this process as it will be you that gives the final approval, books the session and sets up the space for your child to have their session at home – so I really want you to feel comfortable with this process. I am here to answer any questions and discuss any issues you feel may be relevant. This is all new to me too so I am committed to working with you and your child’s school to ensure we offer the best support for your son/daughter in these current exceptional global circumstances.

- a) **Self-care** – Look after yourself in all this too – any anxiety we feel as adults will naturally have an impact on our families. Check out the advice from the Mental Health Foundation [here](#).
- b) **Autonomy** – check in with your son/daughter and see how they feel about a web based session with me.
- c) **Your permission** – check in with yourselves as parents and see how you feel about this type of approach.
- d) **Setting** – consider if you have the facilities to connect with a web based session:
 - i. **Equipment** – internet access; a tablet, PC or laptop with a webcam.
 - ii. **Confidentiality** – a room that can be used for the session at your end that will provide a safe, confidential and uninterrupted environment – just as the therapy room at school provides.
 - iii. **Resources** – As we will not be in the usual school therapy room we will not be able to access our usual play equipment so I would ask if you could provide some basic equipment at your end if at all possible please. I will have the same my end so if we decide to use this I can mirror the work to create a sense of connection. If you have the following items available at home we could make use of these in session. (Please do not feel this is prescriptive – just ‘a nice to have’). A basic set of resources could be: colouring pens; paper; a soft toy; play doh.
 - iv. **Boundaries** – If we go ahead and facilitate an on-line session this will be done with the same boundaries I put in place at school. We will have a 30 minute session on-line at the booked time. You can be present for the initial check in and set up and then we will make an agreement with your son/daughter if it is ok for you to leave the room until the end of the allocated time session.
 - v. **Support** – I will offer signposting to support services if anything comes up in session that may need further support. Services could include, for example: your GP, specialist services, Local Children’s Safeguarding Board. This is always done with



your knowledge and prior agreement (the only exception is in the case of safeguarding issues)

- e) **Session ending** – I will ensure your child feels grounded at the end of their session using some strategies we have practiced in session, for example the 54321 senses exercise. After they have exited the space you allocate for the session you may like to provide them with a ritual that symbolises the change in the space from therapeutic to home. We can discuss this to decide what works for you – it could be useful for them to wear a certain hat or their school tie, for example, which they can wear during the session and take off at the end. This will help your child to differentiate between the home environment and the temporary therapeutic space we will occupy for the session time.

Once you have considered points a – e here we can then go on to set out our parental – counsellor agreement – copy on page 4.

5. **HOW TO BOOK YOUR CHILD'S ON-LINE COUSSELLING SESSION**

- a) Access my on-line booking system [here](#). Where possible we can keep to the same day and time I facilitate your child's usual in-school session with me – this is useful to maintain consistency, boundaries and routine to create a sense of safety in the availability of me as their counsellor. This is a valuable part of the therapeutic alliance and enables trust, which is a big part of the counselling relationship.
- b) My calendar booking system connects to a service called [ZOOM](#) – a simplified video conferencing and messaging service used across any device.
- c) Download the ZOOM app here:
- [iphone/ipad](#)
 - [android device](#)
 - [Desktop](#)
- d) On booking your session on-line you will be sent a confirmation email with your joining instructions and link. You can access the Zoom facility via the internet here: <https://zoom.us/join>



Parent – Counsellor Agreement

You can expect the following from me:

- Empathy, respect and a non-judgemental approach.
- Assessment on the suitability of on-line sessions for accessibility in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act
- Strict confidentiality during our sessions. I will provide feedback and recommendations to you as a parent but I promise the sessions with your son/daughter will remain confidential, the only exception is if I am required by law to disclose; if I feel you or others are at serious risk of harm; where you give consent. This will always be discussed with you before.
- Support services directly from myself or a referral/signpost to a relevant service/agency.
- Provide support required in a professional and courteous manner.
- I am GDPR compliant (see www.nicolastewart.org.uk/privacy for full privacy statement). I will only use the information you provide me with for my counselling services.
- Use of [Zoom](#) – Video conferencing system where we can meet securely. End-to-end encryption for all sessions, role-based user security, password protection, waiting rooms.
- Ensure the therapeutic space is free from audible distractions.
- Ensure I am attentive to the client’s tone of voice and body language, pace and use of silence if required.
- I am an accredited member of the BACP – British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy and follow their ethical code of practice.
- Provide you/your child with support services for a set number of sessions, discussed at the beginning of our contract. Sessions facilitated in school will be in line with the school timetable/calendar but on-line sessions will be for 30 minutes.
- If I need to cancel a session due to sickness or holiday I will advise you as soon as possible.
- Communication informing you if there are any technical disruption that could affect the session eg: internet outage/failure
- Inform you of the complaints procedure should you wish to raise an issue with this service
- Regular supervision of my caseload with an independent qualified clinical supervisor

Your name:.....

I agree to:

- Engage in a preliminary conversation to allow Nicky to gain an insight of how our on-line working alliance will be best set up.
- Book on-line sessions at Nicky’s [website](#)
- Set up the equipment needed to enable my child to meet with Nicky on-line for a 30 min session booked for the frequency you require: weekly / bi-weekly / monthly.
- Ensure the therapeutic space is free from audible distractions.
- I understand the confidentiality of these sessions and know I will receive feedback appropriate to work towards any goals set at the beginning of the intervention.
- Give 24 hours notice for a cancelled session if possible. If you/your child is unwell or you have any technical issues advise Nicky as soon as possible so the session can be cancelled and support offered at another time.
- I understand if I currently pay for school counselling sessions a fee will still apply for on-line support, as stated in our original contract. The session fee will be applied to your school fees.
- An understanding that this agreement will only be put in place if school is closed due to a Governmental DfE/PHE directive. Otherwise our current contract for school-based counselling will continue.

Signed: Name:

Counsellor : Date:.....