

Covid-19 Guidance for Training Centres Best Practice Guidance

Returning to Close Contact Learning in Complementary
Therapies

Version 1 (15th August 2020)

This document is designed to assist educators in the 'close contact' (massage and complementary therapy) industry to resume teaching practices in accordance with Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) Regulations 2020 and in accordance with the devolved Governments own return to work guidance and [restrictions on gatherings](#).

In designing this guidance and collating information from numerous sources, the GCMT has carefully considered best practice over and above minimal government standards. In reading the guidance this should be carefully considered to enable training providers to make informed decisions.

Please note it is the responsibility of each training institution to carefully check the local and regional restrictions that govern return to teaching. We further emphasise that the guidance detailed below is for return to close contact teaching and does not include on-line tuition. Schools that offer a blended learning approach to teaching should carefully design their curriculum to ensure sufficient time is afforded towards practising the practical skills and competencies necessary for professional practice.

Each individual learning provider must put a plan in place for a safe return to face to face learning, so that it is fully prepared and can articulate that approach and how it complies with the [Health Protection \(Coronavirus Restrictions\) Regulations 2020](#).

[This protocol and guide should be read in conjunction with the resource pack for training providers which contains additional forms and documents.](#)

In making decisions on this and future phases of reopening, providers should consider the following points:

- Characteristics and learning needs of the learners
- Individual's learning plan needs
- Necessity for the learners to return to face to face learning
- Geographical location of training venue with respect the latest government guidelines for that area
- Layout of venue and any limitations it imposes
- Term dates for training centres
- Modality involved in the learning

Introduction

1. Every effort must be made to reduce the risk to the lowest level practicable. If the risk remains high, there must be consideration of whether it is appropriate to teach.
2. No learner or member of staff are excluded from these guidelines.
3. Professional associations may wish to view the training provider's risk assessment. This is to offer support and **advice**, and to ensure the training provider meets the overall Covid-19 Secure policy for the individual professional association's members as part of the course accreditation process.
4. The completed risk assessment should be published on the training provider's website. Appropriate signage should be displayed to indicate the facility is Covid-19 Secure. This will reassure learners and enable them to feel more confident in the learning environment. The relevant notice can be downloaded here. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-covid-19-secure-in-2020-notice>

Note that Government guidelines state: "You must share the results of your risk assessment with your workforce. If possible, you should consider publishing the results on your website (and we would expect all employers with over 50 workers to do so). We would expect all businesses to demonstrate to their workers and clients that they have properly assessed their risk and taken appropriate measures to mitigate this. You should do this by displaying a notification in a prominent place in your business and on your website if you have one".

5. At this time, vulnerable or shielded individuals should not attend face to face learning. Education providers must prioritise the safety and wellbeing of staff and learners above all considerations. Planning, communications and delivery must reflect up-to-date government guidance on the protection of "clinically extremely vulnerable", "shielded" and "vulnerable" or "at risk" individuals.
6. Consideration should be given to the requirements and guidance for learners and staff who have caring responsibilities or vulnerable family members. Support and flexibility may be required to return to learning safely. A system should be put in place to facilitate communication in this instance.
7. Covid-19 screening forms should be distributed and returned 24 hours before class (see GCMT resource pack for training establishments).

8. Prior to returning to education the learners should be advised, in writing, of all new procedures so that they are prepared to act accordingly. It may be prudent to ask the learners to sign an agreement of compliance with Covid19 procedures and policies. Disciplinary policies should reflect this.

Managing Premises

1. A risk assessment is mandatory in order to minimise risk – *“if people must work face-to-face for a sustained period with more than a small group of fixed partners, then you will need to assess whether the activity can safely go ahead”*.
 - Include provision for delivery of any supplies to the premises.
 - Review the suitability of individual buildings and rooms to comply with social distancing and hygiene requirements and plan accommodation of returning groups of learners accordingly, including:
 - size and layout of rooms and corridors
 - entrances and exits
 - physical barriers
 - eating arrangements
 - emergency and medication arrangements
 - toilet
 - handwashing and sanitising facilities
 - Provide different bins as required – lidded pedal bins for wet waste and open bins for dry waste and recycling.
 - Consider provision for visiting external assessors. Contact awarding organisations for their Covid-19 related policies in order to comply.
2. Calculate maximum numbers allowed in the teaching space based upon the room size, equipment needs and social distancing requirements (allowing for ‘bubbles’) and local restrictions e.g. in Wales, a maximum of 6 learners and in Scotland, a maximum of 8 learners in bubbles.
3. Teaching location and layout must be prepared prior to the start of class
 - A minimum of two metre distance must be maintained between workstations, seat/desks. This may require removal of equipment or furniture to ensure required spacing requirements are satisfied.
 - Remove unnecessary items from learning environments.
 - Bolsters, face supports, or pillows need to have washable or wipeable covers.
 - Ensure availability of a foot operated and lined refuse bins which should be emptied regularly.
 - Ensure maximum ventilation by opening windows and doors, where possible. Caution with fire doors. If it is too cold to ventilate during the lesson, then ensure this is carried out between room use.
 - If air conditioning is in use, make sure it is vented to the outside and not recirculating air. Electric fans may be used if there is sufficient ventilation.

4. Prepare guidance for shared areas to prevent congestion and bottlenecks, e.g. one person at a time, do not cross in doorways. If there is a common seating area, ensure distancing of seating. Prepare visible and clear signage for rules.
5. Provide disinfectant sprays/wipes in the bathroom so that toilets, sinks and taps can be sanitised before and after use.
6. Ideally, paper towel or air-drying options should be used following hand washing. A lined and lidded foot operated bin should be available for paper towel disposal. If hand towels or flannels are used, they should be placed into a lidded container for washing following use and subsequently washed at 60°C.
7. Signage should clearly state bathroom use requirements.
8. Unless there is a managed cafeteria, food and drinks will not be supplied and there will be no cooking facilities. Learners must supply their own refreshments and meal. Fresh water should be supplied for filling water bottles.
9. It is advisable to remove all soft furnishings from the premises: blankets, cushions, couch covers.
10. A detailed checklist of all requirements needed to be followed can be emailed to learners in advance. Suggestions for inclusion are listed below and included in the resource pack:
 - Signed agreements and Covid-19 declarations
 - Food and refreshments should be brought by each learner.
 - No access will be available for a microwave or a fridge
 - Ideally learners should bring their own mug
 - Bring only essential equipment to training
 - There will be no sharing of possessions, including pens and paper
 - All breaks will be taken outside and if the weather is poor, alternative arrangements will need to be planned, e.g. to either sit in their car or find a sheltered area.
 - Leaving the venue at break times will require changing clothes again, so additional time will be required if learners need to go off site for lunch.

Managing Arrival of Learners and Staff

1. Prior to arrival, learners and staff should be instructed about entry details such as arrival time, waiting area, and markings should be made on the floor to maintain social distancing in the queue. If possible, access to the teaching room should be directly from outside.
2. Upon entry, verbal screening for Covid-19 should be carried out, temperatures can be taken and recorded (optional), hand sanitiser should be used by all learners and disposable shoe coverings could be offered (optional).
3. Learners and staff must change into clinic uniform or fresh clothing from 'street wear' prior to entering the classroom to prevent potentially contaminating the venue. It is suggested that front fastening tops should be worn so that clothing is not passed over the face on removal.
4. A register of all attendees must be kept, complying with NHS Test and Trace requirements. Ensure the establishment have the correct address and telephone number for each entry, complying with GDPR rules. Registers are retained anyway, but if separate Test and Trace records are kept, they should only be stored for 21 days.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Face Coverings

1. It is the responsibility of the training provider to comply with the local regulations for the use of masks and visors. This is a requirement by all Governments within the UK. The GCMT “best practice guidelines” recommends that full personal protective equipment is used throughout the training: visor, type II face mask, apron and gloves. This applies to learners and tutors.
(The GCMT appreciate that the use of facemasks and visors together is best practice but further acknowledge that this may not always be possible for tutors such as the case of students who rely on lip reading. In these cases which rely on the exposure of the mouth, precautions should be taken to further protect students and staff such as increasing the distance.)
2. Face coverings or masks should be used in indoor spaces, even when not in the training room.
3. When demonstrating practical techniques, the tutor should wear appropriate PPE. GCMT recommend the tutor wears visor, type II face masks, apron and gloves. It is suggested selecting one learner for the whole day to act as the model and hands are washed before and after each demonstration.
4. Apron, gloves and mask should be replaced after each use and disposed of appropriately. Visors should be cleaned and sanitised between each use.

Management of teaching environment

1. All lessons must start with clear instructions about hygiene and sanitising procedures. If hand washing facilities are not available, provide effective alcohol-based hand sanitisers.
2. All lessons must start with instructions about donning and doffing personal protective equipment correctly. It is suggested that this is informally assessed to ensure competence.
3. Based on the risk assessment and venue requirements, decide on a shoes or no-shoes policy for the training room. If working a no-shoe policy, when learners enter the room, shoes should be removed at the door, then hands should be washed. Indoor only shoes or thick socks may be worn. Alternatively, shoe covers could be issued.
4. Minimal belongings should be brought into the training room. It is suggested that bags etc are stored under the table/couch as placing them all into one area can result in cross contamination. Alternatively, each student could be assigned a plastic box for their possessions, which is sanitised after use. Each student is assigned their station (usually where they are sitting) wherein they can store their items for the day, so that they do not have to walk across the room to access them.
5. Phones must be placed with their belongings/bag and not used during the lesson (unless by prior agreement with the tutor).
6. Learners and staff are to provide own stationery and sharing is not permitted. If handouts are needed, learners could be emailed these in advance to print or view on their own device.
7. Ensure all staff and learners:
 - whenever they change rooms, visit the toilet, or move between training rooms/workshops and communal areas) frequently wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds and dry thoroughly, (or in absence of washing facilities, use hand sanitiser)
 - sanitise their hands-on arrival at the setting, before and after eating, after exercise and breaks, and after sneezing or coughing
 - are encouraged not to touch their mouth, eyes and nose or their face masks
 - use a tissue or elbow to cough or sneeze and use lidded, lined bins for tissue disposal.

8. Each workstation should have its own supply of clinical consumables:
 - disinfectants sprays/wipes,
 - all required bedding
 - necessary personal protective equipment – gloves/masks/visors/aprons
 - consumables (oils, lotions, creams etc) necessary for the therapy practical session. Note that learners should not bring their own products, except in case of allergy because hygiene is not manageable.
9. Learners should be placed in pairs for practical work, in which they remain for the whole session/day/permanently if feasible. This is classed as a 'bubble'. Bubbles must remain two metres apart from other bubbles.
10. Identity of learner bubbles should be documented.
11. Outside 'bodies' will not be brought into the learning situation.
12. Where learners use the same room on consecutive days, providers should ensure that the same workstation/desk/treatment couch/chair is used where possible.
13. No equipment should be shared with other learners at any time.
14. Hygiene standards must still be maintained within the 'bubble's' working environment.
15. Learners and staff should take precautions when using frequently touched 'contact points' e.g. door handles, light switches etc. so perhaps use sleeve, elbow, cough roll etc.
16. Risk assessment should contain information about deep cleaning of the room following each session (or at the end of the day if the room is used by the same occupants throughout) which should include floor washing, sterilising of all surfaces, sinks, common touch points, bottles etc. All cleaning procedures should be documented.

Laundry Procedures

1. All used laundry must be placed in a sealable laundry bag/basket for transporting to washing facilities. The person responsible for laundry must wear full PPE whilst transferring the laundry to the washing machine.