

Covid-19 Policy

Introduction

The LIFE-FORCE Organisation reopened the Centre on **Tuesday 26th May 2020**, however in order to maintain a safe working environment the government social distancing and health and safety practises must be observed and implemented by all Staff, Counsellors, Therapists, Tutors, Students on Placement, School Students hereafter referred to as Members and also clients and visitors. These guidelines have been further revised by the government and from **8th August 2020** it will be a mandatory legal requirement for members of the public to wear a face mask/shield, unless they have a valid exemption, while visiting business premises which provide a professional services. By law it is not compulsory for Members to wear a face mask however the Organisation is required to implement there usage as considered appropriate. The following policy has therefore been developed according to these government standards.

Work Requirements

1. Members, clients and visitors must not enter the Centre if they, or anyone in their household, have any Covid-19 symptoms, eg. flu like symptoms, a temperature, cough or sneezing, loss of taste etc., that are in addition to any normal symptoms that they have on a regular basis.
2. Members who are deemed to be on the **high-risk** list and have been self-isolating for 3 months must contact the Office before coming into the Centre to resume practise.
3. All Members, clients and visitors must have and wear a face mask while in the public areas of the building, including the Rainbow Room and kitchen, and when interacting with others especially when social distancing is not possible. All counsellors must instruct their clients accordingly before they come to the Centre and also ask them to bring a mask with them. Exemptions to this requirement can be viewed on the government website.
4. It is not mandatory for counsellors, students and therapists to wear a face mask during sessions however they must carry out a personal risk assessment according to their individual medical circumstances regarding what precautions they need to put in place to keep themselves safe. Eg. Someone who has a medical condition(s) and was previously shielding should wear a face screen at all times while interacting with others. Also if a client needs the counsellor to wear a face mask and they are unable to comply with this request due to a valid exemption then face to face sessions will need to be discontinued and only provided remotely.
5. All clients are legally required to wear a face mask while in the session unless an exemption is applicable such as, 'to wear a face covering will cause them severe distress', or the counsellor agrees otherwise but this would then be at their own risk. As such all counsellors, students on placement and therapists are responsible for managing the risk with each individual client regarding keeping the client and themselves safe while in the therapy room. Other factors to take into consideration are the working environment, the health issues of the client and counsellor and of the people in each of their households. An informed choice can then be made together that establishes what procedures need to be put in place to keep both parties safe. Eg. The client/counsellor to wear/not wear a face mask during the sessions taking into account government guideline exemptions and the needs of both parties. The agreed procedures should be noted in the client's case notes and implemented at every session.
6. Upon entering the Centre Members, clients and visitors should either wash their hands thoroughly for a minimum of 20 seconds or use the hand gel in the entrance.
7. In-between sessions Members should wash their hands or use the hand gels and sanitise the therapy room door handles using detox wipes.

8. All Members and clients must whenever possible, observe the social distancing rule and maintain a 2-metre distance between themselves and other people. This also applies when using the stairs and kitchen areas. All unnecessary interactions between people should be avoided.
9. Members must ask clients to arrive on time so that they can go straight to the therapy room and should therefore advise their clients in advance which room they will be using and it's location in the building before the session. Alternatively, if this is not possible for some reason then Members must meet their client in the foyer and escort them to the therapy room.
10. The chairs in the therapy rooms must be kept at least 2 metres apart at all times and should not be moved closer or re-arranged by anyone.
11. The Rainbow room will be set up with the chairs 2 metres apart so that clients who are unable to come on time and arrive early can wait in the room. Clients who are accompanied by a visitor should whenever possible ask them not to wait on the premises and to only return at the end of the client's appointment time.
12. All crockery and cutlery must be washed thoroughly, left to drain and put away once dry.
13. Members must ensure they vacate the therapy rooms on time, which is 5 minutes before the booked end time, escort their client out of the building, and return the key to the key box for the next therapist to use.
14. Members must remember to respect social distancing, at all times, and therefore not chat or remain in the foyer or social spaces within the building for any longer than necessary to conduct professional arrangements.
15. Any suspected breaches of this policy and safety procedures, particularly someone with suspected or subsequently confirmed Covid-19 having been to the Centre, must be immediately reported to the Centre Director and Health & Safety Officer by email so that the risk can be managed either by containment or temporary closing of the Centre according to the government guidelines and isolating the relative room followed by deep cleaning and sanitisation procedures.
16. **The Office currently remains closed to all Members, clients and visitors other than strictly by appointment only. Anyone entering the Office, including other staff members, must wear a face mask and keep the interaction brief and leave as soon as possible. However Members can contact the Office by email, telephone or the text only office mobile.**