

## **COVID-19 POLICY & PROCEDURE**

LAST UPDATED: 08/09/2021

The aim of this policy is to outline how Creative Arts Therapy CIC is managing the risk that COVID-19 poses both to physical and mental health as part of its commitment to provide safe services for the community.

In this policy 'staff' refers to any person or persons delivering services on behalf of Creative Arts Therapy Devon CIC, whether this is employed or contracted, paid or as a volunteer. 'Service Users' refers to anyone, regardless of age, receiving services under contract with Creative Arts Therapy Devon CIC including organisations and individuals.

Creative Art Therapy Devon CIC is committed to ensuring that it follows government guidelines to minimise transmission of COVID-19 and to adapt its procedures and reassess risk in line with current levels of national and local risk.

Creative Art Therapy Devon CIC also works closely with some of the most vulnerable groups in the community, many of whom have been negatively impacted by the fear and anxiety around the pandemic itself. Some have had their mental health impacted by fear of the virus and others have been negatively impacted by the lockdown and social distancing measures. Therefore, those people potentially in most need of mental health support are also those whose willingness to engage will be most influenced by the COVID prevention measures we have in place. Therefore, our policy is to balance the risk of physical harm caused by COVID-19 and the risk of harm to mental health caused by people not accessing quality therapy services, either because our measures are too stringent or because they are too relaxed.

Our policy is to also balance minimising risk with the need for accessibility and the right for all our service users and staff to make their own medical choices.

### **PROCEDURES**

The Creative Arts Therapy Devon CIC COVID-19 Policy and Procedures are based upon the latest UK government guidelines for England and local guidance for Devon. Due to the guidelines changing frequently to meet the current levels of national and local risk, these procedures are frequently reviewed and these updates are posted on our website and sent directly to service users.

There are no longer any legal restrictions placed upon freedom of movement, enforced social distancing or mask wearing, but each organisation has a duty to ensure that they do what is necessary to minimise the risk of spreading COVID-19.

Due to the number of variables across different interventions, service users and settings, most procedures will need to be determined on a case-by-case basis through the construction of thorough risk assessments for each intervention, service user and new setting, and whenever there is a local or national update on guidelines.

### **Staff COVID-19 Symptoms**

The most important symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- A new continuous cough
- A high temperature
- A loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell

All staff must familiarise themselves with the COVID-19 symptoms and follow the most up to date government guidelines on what to do should they develop symptoms by going to <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-whatyou-can-and-cannot-do> .

Our current procedures follow the government guidelines that anyone who presents with symptoms should not go to work, self-isolate and book a PCR test. Only once they receive a negative test result can they stop self-isolating. If they receive a positive PCR test then staff must isolate for 10 days from the onset of symptoms and only when they no longer have any symptoms.

If Staff are not fully vaccinated and live in the same household as someone who tests positive for COVID-19, they will be expected to stay at home and self-isolate.

Staff must inform the Creative Arts Therapy Devon CIC team and are responsible for contacting service users with whom they have been in contact or who may be impacted by their absence.

### **Service Users COVID-19 Symptoms**

All service users are given a copy of this policy and sign a COVID agreement within which it states that it is their responsibility to inform the therapist or Creative Arts Therapy Devon CIC team if they develop symptoms or get a positive test result. Should someone in their household or a close contact get a positive PCR test, the service user should isolate unless they are under aged 18 years and 6 months or have been fully vaccinated.

### **Lateral Flow Testing**

As an organisation we encourage our staff to take a lateral flow test prior to delivering services, although it is not necessary to test more than once every 5 days. Staff should isolate immediately if they receive a negative test result and book a PCR test.

### **Reducing Risk of Airborne Transmission**

Airborne transmission is a significant way that the virus circulates. In accordance with Creative Arts Therapy Devon CIC's commitment to prevent transmission, we plan our interventions with this in mind. Therefore, we work outdoors if possible and when working indoors we do our best to keep the spaces well ventilated.

Wearing a mask indoors is no longer compulsory but it is advised to prevent transmission. Therefore, we request that staff take mask wearing into account as a potential tool to reduce risk when doing risk assessments, but we do not insist that either staff or service users wear a mask. If they choose not to wear a mask then it is important to consider what other ways risks might be reduced such as more frequent testing, increasing ventilation, introducing social distancing etc.

### **Reducing Transmission through Close Contact**

Creative Arts Therapy Devon CIC recognises the importance of reducing transmission through droplets on close contact. Therefore, we will ensure that face to face contact only occurs if contact via other means is not suitable.

When in person contact is necessary, we consider the need for some distancing between participants when choosing an appropriate indoor space for an activity.

Some therapy interventions require physical contact between the participants. Such interventions will only be used if deemed essential for recovery and the risks will be minimised through other means such as more frequent lateral flow testing or mask wearing.

### **Reducing Surface Transmission**

To prevent the potential for the spread of surface of surface transmission:

- Hand sanitiser is provided and placed in an easy to access and highly visible places with a written reminder to clean hands
- Everyone washes hands thoroughly before handling food
- Food is not shared between people
- People are encouraged to cover cough and sneezes and to wash hands immediately after
- Surfaces are kept tidy for easy cleaning and cleaned frequently
- Work surfaces and shared resources are preferred that are of easy cleaning materials rather than soft furnishings
- Sharing of resources is kept to a minimum and cleaned between use

### **Vaccination**

The government guidance is clear that being vaccinated will not prevent spreading or catching COVID-19 and so it is essential that service users and staff continue to follow procedures that prevent the spread of infection, regardless of whether they have been vaccinated.

We do not insist that our staff members are vaccinated but whether staff and participants are vaccinated should be taken into consideration when doing risk assessments.

### **Reducing the Risk of COVID-19 Anxiety**

When assessing risk we will also consider how we ensure that we do not increase anxiety whilst putting COVID prevention measures in place. Therefore, Creative Art Therapy Devon CIC is committed to:

- A person-centred approach to making decisions about whether to wear masks
- Involving staff members in the construction of covid risk assessments to ensure that they feel safe and comfortable during the delivery of services
- Being considered in the wording of signs and agreements to ensure a non-threatening tone
- Ensuring that staff use the signing of the COVID agreement as an opportunity to discuss with service users any difficulties they may have to follow the procedures in place and that we use that time to find ways to support them to overcome or work around these difficulties
- Keeping up to date with local and national government guidelines and communicating this clearly and effectively to all service users as and when changes might impact on policies and procedures.
- Sharing this information in a simpler and more digestible format to service users and staff to reduce overwhelm
- Finding ways to check-in and remain connected with individuals who have to self-isolate
- Having contingency plans for how we might continue to deliver a service should government guidelines change such that the service cannot be deliver and that this 'back up plan' is clearly conveyed to service users to reduce anxiety

### **Working in other settings**

Therapists delivering services on behalf of Creative Arts Therapy Devon CIC will need to familiarise themselves with the COVID-19 Policies and Procedures of the setting where they are delivering services. It is essential that the therapist does this prior to contracting work to ensure that they can follow the procedures outlined by the setting. The therapist also needs to write a COVID-19 risk assessment that draws on both the policies and procedures of the setting and the Creative Arts Therapy Devon CIC policy and procedures. If there is a discrepancy between the two which may impact on the therapist's capacity to deliver the service, then this would need to be resolved with the setting prior to completion of contract.

POLICY REVIEW DATE 08/02/2022

Signed: Caz/Caroline Hoar

Signed: Maaike Geschwindt

Signed: Tracey Wills (Director)

If you have any enquires or concerns in relation to this policy and procedures, please contact **Creative Arts Therapy CIC directors** at:

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Creative Arts Therapy Devon CIC

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