

## Introduction

# Contents

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Introduction	3
What does this course involve and who is it for?	5
About the authors	6
Learning outcomes	6

# Introduction

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This continuing professional development (CPD) course has been jointly developed by The Open University (OU) and the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) as a response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The aim of the course is to offer a primer on working online as a counsellor or psychotherapist at a time when face-to-face therapy is neither possible nor safe. Course completion will boost your knowledge and confidence, and will support counsellors and psychotherapists to offer technology-based counselling safely and effectively.

## Activity 1: Welcome to the course

Allow approximately 5 minutes

In the following video Fiona Ballantine-Dykes, Deputy CEO and Chief Professional Standards Officer of BACP, talks about why BACP has worked with the OU to produce this CPD unit.

Video content is not available in this format.



### Pause for reflection

What are your key reasons for taking this course? Are there things about doing counselling online that you are particularly worried about? Or are looking forward to?

Record your answer in the space below.

*Throughout this course you will be asked to write activity answers and reflections in the spaces below. Anything you write here will be saved and will be available to you if you return to this page of the course at a later date. It will be visible only to you, and will not be shared with anyone else.*

Provide your answer...

## What does this course involve and who is it for?

**What does this course involve?** This course should take around six hours to complete (depending on the individual learner). The course is a combination of reading material, watching videos and listening to podcasts, and doing activities. At the end of the course is a quiz that assesses your learning.

**What do I get for passing this course?** If you score 70% or higher in the quiz at the end of the course, you'll be awarded with a statement of participation and a digital badge:



Badges are a means of digitally recognising certain skills and achievements acquired through informal study. They are a useful means of demonstrating participation and recognising informal learning.

The statement of participation will demonstrate your commitment to your ongoing continuing professional development.

**Who is this course for?** This course is aimed at trained (registered/accredited) counsellors and psychotherapists who are transferring their work with existing clients online.

- *What if I am still in training?* This CPD is not designed for counsellors and psychotherapists in training (who have not completed their initial qualifying training), but it is recognised that students in placement settings may have been asked to work with clients online. Students should consult with their training institute in the first instance to see if they are supporting online working. It is additionally recommended that students and their supervisors should carefully consider both the potential risks and benefits to clients in offering online counselling during the coronavirus pandemic.
- *What if I want to work with new clients?* This course aims to support counsellors and psychotherapists to work safely and effectively with existing clients, where there is already an established therapeutic relationship and a clear assessment of risk. This recognises the differences and potential challenges in establishing therapy relationships online, and in assessing and managing risk online. Counsellors and psychotherapists who choose to take on new clients during the coronavirus pandemic should carefully consider the potential risks and benefits for those clients, as well as their suitability for online therapy.

**Is this course just for BACP members?** Not at all. The course can be accessed by anyone who feels that it would be helpful. It does align to BACP's competences for

telephone and e-counselling (BACP, 2016a) and existing best practice, but the content will be useful to anyone new to working therapeutically online.

**Does completing this course mean that I am ‘competent’ to provide online therapy after the coronavirus pandemic is over?** No. According to BACP’s *Telephone and E-counselling Training Curriculum* (BACP, 2016b), competence can only be claimed after completing sufficient training: this might include written coursework, skills assessments and online working with clients that is supervised by a supervisor with experience and training in working online. This course is a primer that supports counsellors and psychotherapists to work online in the context of the coronavirus and can be used, alongside other online resources and CPD, to form a basic toolbox of skills and knowledge as an interim measure.

## About the authors



This primer was written by [Dr Naomi Moller](#) and [Dr Andreas Vossler](#), Senior Lecturers in Psychology at the OU.

## Learning outcomes

By the end of this course you will:

- understand the range of technology-based counselling types
- be aware of key technological, legal, ethical and clinical considerations for safe and effective online counselling
- have sound knowledge and critical understanding of key concepts relevant to online counselling
- have reflected on the meaning of your own opinions, experiences and use of digital communication technologies in terms of online counselling practice.

You should now move on to [Topic 1: Technology and me](#).