



PCPB core principles for synchronous online counselling and psychotherapy

More therapists are now working online, which brings new opportunities but also responsibilities around safety, privacy and professional standards.

Online therapy can be effective and valuable, but it requires careful consideration of technology, client suitability and risk management.

These principles are not regulatory requirements and do not replace the detailed guidance provided by individual professional bodies. Instead, they are shared good practice principles, agreed by all PCPB partners, to help therapists think about how to practise safely and ethically online and to give the public reassurance about what good online practice looks like.

Acting legally and ethically

Follow data protection laws (e.g., UK GDPR).

Keep client data private and secure.

Get informed consent for online work and any recordings.

Use supervision that meets your needs for online practice.

Choosing secure platforms

Always use secure, encrypted platforms, whilst being aware this may not be possible in some countries.

Avoid free, low-security options.

Agree backup plans with individual clients/patients for managing technical problems.

Prioritising client suitability

Assess whether online therapy is appropriate and safe for the client/patient.

Request clients/patients use a private and confidential space free of distractions with awareness of therapeutic boundaries.

Support accessibility and cultural sensitivity.

Manage risk and safety

Have clear and agreed plans for emergencies and crises.

Maintain emergency contact information for clients/patients.

Use encrypted emails and secure messaging.

Maintain professional standards

Ensure your insurance covers online work.

Ensure you keep up to date through CPD in technology and data security.



PCPB partners have further guidance for their members for working safely and ethically online.