



## COUNSELLING SERVICE

### Accessibility Strategy

#### **General**

The borough of Croydon is an area of great diversity. We try to reflect this diversity in the way we provide the counselling service and respond effectively to the needs of a diverse population with varying needs. This accessibility strategy sets out in writing the practical steps that we take in attempting to provide the counselling service to the broadest possible range of people.

#### **Cost**

We are aware that there are many people on low incomes/benefits in the area and we have managed to keep our costs as low as possible to accommodate this need. This is something that we aim to continue and constantly monitor.

#### **Evenings**

We have noticed a huge increase in demand for evening sessions for those people who are working or have child care issues. We are now open for 3 evenings a week.

#### **Waiting times**

We know from feedback from our users that shorter waiting times are preferable and we would like to make the wait as short as possible. With that in mind we strive to keep all of our counselling placements full. We have also changed our procedures regarding assessment booking in an attempt to reduce the number of assessments that do not turn up, hence losing valuable resources. Due to the long waiting times experienced, we have reduced the number of sessions offered from 20 to 12.

#### **Languages**

The service at this time does not offer counselling in other languages apart from English. This is something that we would like to research into and with greater resources the service would be looking into possible recruitment of further counsellors with other language skills.

#### **Childcare**

At this time, the service does not offer child care facilities or have any appropriate space for this facility. There are no child care services within the local vicinity that we can access, so we are unable to provide this service.

## **Ethnicity**

The borough of Croydon is an area of great diversity with 47% of the population classifying themselves as white British. Our service data from 2014/15 indicates that 45% of the people assessed for counselling were from BME communities. We are constantly monitoring this figure, In 2011, a report was published by ourselves into the uptake of counselling within BME communities, the results of which continue to inform the provision of our service.

## **Age**

A few years ago we became aware that there was a demand for our counselling service from an older age range. We are pleased to report an increase in the number of people over 61 being seen within our counselling service, particularly our carers counselling service. This is something that we monitor on an ongoing basis.

## **Disability**

The counselling service premises provides a ramp as well as 2 counselling rooms on the ground and lower ground floor for those with mobility issues, unable to use stairs. Clients with disabilities are also able to park free of charge in the premises car park.

We can offer information in large print where requested and guide dogs are also accepted into the building. We also have a counselling room with a hearing loop.

We can offer help to fill in counselling application forms for those who may have difficulties in reading/writing.

We are aware that some needs are beyond us at this time, in these cases we liaise with the client's consent with organisations such as Disability Croydon.

## **Gender**

We are aware of the lower uptake of men into counselling. (40% to date). We ensure to recruit male counsellors, supervisors and staff members wherever possible and continue to monitor the figures.

## **Data Collection and Evaluation**

We collect demographic data on all clients who access the service including: gender, age, employment and ethnicity. This data is reviewed quarterly to assess who is accessing the service and to analyse attendance and drop-out rates.

We read our end of therapy questionnaires and evaluation forms to ascertain how well we are meeting our clients' needs and what areas of improvement need to be made. The service also collects feedback forms from clients which often include suggestions for service improvements.