



**The Queen's Award  
for Voluntary Service**

*The MBE for volunteer groups*



## STRATEGY FOR ADDRESSING ACCESSIBILITY LIMITATIONS POLICY

VERSION 1.2  
Effective from September 2021

# STRATEGY FOR ADDRESSING ACCESSIBILITY LIMITATIONS POLICY

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## INTRODUCTION

Accessibility planning involves identifying and assessing the barriers to access faced by certain social groups in particular areas, and developing strategies to improve accessibility for those most at risk.

The Counselling and Family Centre (CFC) recognises its responsibility to offer affordable counselling for all over 5 years of age.

We also recognise the challenge of reaching our target population and undertake to review this annually with a view to addressing, within our means, any issue preventing people from accessing our service.

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## APPROACH

CFC is a local charity that has been at the heart of the community for over 40 years providing a range of high quality professional counselling in Trafford, Greater Manchester and the surrounding area. Our counselling services are accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP).

We offer a supportive, diverse and inclusive environment where the participation and contribution of all workers (staff, trainees and volunteers) is highly valued. Our services are built around our core values in that we believe all members of our community should have access to affordable high quality counselling and training. We place our clients' needs at the centre of our service delivery and ensure easy and equitable access to our services without discrimination.

Our Counselling Services are provided at an 'affordable rate' to individual clients. The majority of clients are self-referring and the cost of counselling depends on household income with free counselling being offered to those on means tested benefits and subsidised rates available for those on low incomes. Our counselling services and rates are published on our website and in our literature.

We recognise the challenges faced by clients within our target group. We look to address accessibility limitations in the following areas:

1. Cultural Inclusivity and Diversity
2. Affordability
3. Physical Disabilities
4. Location of Services.

## STRATEGIC APPROACH

<b>Cultural Inclusivity and Diversity</b>	<b>Strategy</b>
Recruitment	<p>In accordance with our equal opportunities policy, CFC welcomes applications from a diverse range of applicants and does not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, ethnicity or disability.</p>
Team Induction and Continuous Personal Development (CPD)	<p>We only recruit based on the candidate’s competence but look to ensure that the most suitable person is recruited to any vacancy posted. Currently our ratio of female to male counsellors is 4:1 and our counsellors are diverse in background</p> <p>We require our counsellors to be professionally registered with the BACP or equivalent professional body. This ensures that our counsellors are maintaining an annual log of CPD activities including addressing diversity and ensuring best practice is followed when working with clients from diverse backgrounds. A 1 day training in Cultural Awareness is a part of the mandatory training at CFC across all roles at CFC</p>
Gender	<p>Male clients are under-represented. We continue to encourage male clients and have experienced small but significant increases in the percentage of men accessing our services year on year. In 2011 - 32% of all service users were male. This has increased steadily to 40% of all service users from 2018-2021.</p>
Ethnicity/ Language Requirements	<p>We monitor ethnic access to our services and are currently working to promote links with our local Muslim community. Clients who seek counselling in languages other than English are allocated accordingly to our bi-lingual counsellors. Current languages offered are: Urdu, Punjabi, Arabic and Hindi. When we cannot meet the need, we signpost the client to other services.</p>
Age	<p>Older (60 +) members of the community are under-represented as they only represent 10% of our service users. To encourage older clients, we offer a social group on Fridays in the café lounge for members of the local community and this group is attended in the main by older (60+)people. This group is going to replicated on Tuesdays from October 2021 due to popularity. Over 60s are well represented in both our operational and clinical teams – currently about 30% operationally, and 20% clinically., members of the community.</p>

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans – sexual community	We have both clients and counsellors from this community. Although we recruit counsellors on the basis of competence only we seek to provide a diverse and sensitive service.
<b>Affordability</b>	<b>Strategy</b>
Cost of services	<p>Those not eligible for our free or subsidised cost counselling may struggle to afford access to the service.</p> <p>A principal focus for our bid and fund writing strategy continues to be the seeking of funding to benefit those on the lowest incomes. We already provide free and/or heavily subsidised counselling to those with a household income of below £30,000.00 p.a. Additional fundraising activity continues to be focused on extending both the range of services and the extent of those eligible for free/subsidised support.</p> <p>We also have negotiated a number of contracts with local schools to provide counselling on site. These contracts enable free at the point of access counselling to their pupils.</p> <p>In addition to this we run a Good Mental Health Allotment project and offer the following remote support groups free of charge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affected by Addiction</li> <li>• Carers of Children with Special Needs</li> <li>• Life after Bereavement and Loss</li> <li>• Managing the Menopause</li> <li>• Managing Stress and Anxiety</li> <li>• Mindfulness</li> <li>• Social Group</li> </ul>
<b>Physical disability</b>	<b>Strategy</b>
Mobility	<p>Our building is accessed via a ramp with handrails and all rooms are at ground level, with all doorways, corridors and toilets wide enough for wheelchairs. In 2021 we had automatic doors fitted with push button opening at waist height.</p> <p>We provide telephone or internet video counselling where it is deemed clinically appropriate for the client and the counsellors with the appropriate expertise are available</p>
Hearing	We will continue in our quest for a BSL proficient counsellor
Sight	H&S checks include close monitoring of lighting and trip hazards.

Location and Availability of Services	Strategy
Location	Our main Centre for clients is in Altrincham, Manchester. Through Home-Start Trafford and Salford, Trafford Domestic Abuse Service and the CleanStart we also offer appointments to their service users at locations across Trafford, Salford and Manchester.
Waiting Area for Carers/ Parents/ Family members	We opened 'The Café in the Park' in 2015 on the premises to provide for the comfort of Carers and family members whilst services are being accessed. The café has an additional room available for internal and external bookings. The café lounge services are being developed to offer the community a safe space to meet.
Time of Day	We are able to offer appointments from 9am to 9pm Monday to Friday and where counsellors are available can offer Saturday appointments.
Office Hours	The Centre's reception is open 9am to 9pm Monday to Thursday, 9am to 4pm on Fridays, 9am to 1pm on Saturdays. Outside of these times contact can be made via email and the website enquiry form. Answer phone messages are checked every day the office is open.

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## RESPONSIBILITIES

All staff and volunteers are expected to act in a manner that will not cause damage to the environment and to follow the organisation's procedures

The Chief Executive ensures that this policy is adhered to and reviewed in line with changes in legislation or as required.

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## DOCUMENT DETAILS

Author	<b>Rosalind Allison-Calvert</b> 
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Approved by	The Board of Trustees
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