

Equal Opportunities Guidelines : Counselling

1. The Centre will offer its counselling services to everyone assessed as able to make use of them; where appropriate, people will be re-referred on clinical grounds, if the Centre's services are deemed unsuitable for their needs.
2. For clinical/legal reasons, the Centre does not accept as clients, young people under the age of 18 except in the case of specific contracts.
3. When publicising, or representing the Centre's services through networks likely to reach the potential clients, the Centre will strive to take positive steps to increase accessibility to those services by under-represented client groups.
4. Receptionists will be offered training in how to respond to a non-discriminatory way, when receiving enquiries from potential clients, and in how to be responsive for people's needs.
5. Pre-counselling information, provided for clients, will aim to make clear the extent of the limits of the service and the means by which access to them is obtained, and of the Centre's intention to offer equal opportunity of access within these.
6. When information is requested from clients for the purpose of preparing statistics, monitoring equal opportunities, or supporting fundraising; it will be made clear what the information is for, and that the information will be separated from clinical information, and kept unidentifiably.
7. The Centre is committed to the provision of counselling services regardless of individual financial circumstances, so long as funds are available. All clients are asked to make some financial contribution towards their counselling (unless covered by a contract with another body) but this is carefully negotiated with each client. The service may take on Service Level Agreements with outside agencies, which entitle clients thereby referred to preferential assessment and counselling service provision.
8. Serious attention will be given to particular requests or indications of need on the part of potential clients for a counsellor with particular attributes (for example, age, gender, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religious affiliation). At the same time, it is recognised that the availability of such counsellors and clinical considerations also have to be taken into account, and may result in requests not being met. The assessment counsellor will make the parameters clear to the client, when such requests are made. (Requests for

“experienced” counsellors cannot normally be met except on clinical grounds at the discretion of the Centre).

9. The Centre will endeavour to be flexible in arranging counselling sessions for those people whose work or other commitments (eg. shift work) mean that they cannot come at the same time each week.
10. The Centre will actively seek to build a team of counselling service personnel, which reflects the balance of the local population, especially with regard to ethnic origin.
11. Counsellors and supervisors are expected to be alert to prejudice and stereotyping, both within themselves and their work with any client/counsellor, and especially to how language and behaviour embody such attributes. Counsellors are expected to adopt a contemporary approach to psychodynamic counselling which is appropriate to a multi-cultural society, and acknowledges and values difference.
12. Clients will be informed of the existence of the Centre’s complaint procedure and how to access it.