



Policy/Procedure Document	
Title	43. Strategy for Addressing Accessibility Limitations
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Executive director owner	Chief Executive
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Cross Reference	1. Introduction and GCS Mission Statement

Background and context

Gloucestershire Counselling Service (GCS) is a leading provider of high quality counselling and training in Gloucestershire and the surrounding area. GCS was founded as a charity in 1984, becoming a charitable company limited by guarantee in 2003. GCS has undergone significant growth since inception and now provides a broad range of services to around 900 clients and 27 trainee counsellors every year, in addition to this around 145 people attend the CPD program and short courses a year. GCS is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated in 2003 and registered as a charity in 2005.

Gloucestershire Counselling Service (GCS) is an established charitable organisation providing a range of services to secure the delivery and development of high quality professional counselling in Gloucestershire and the surrounding area. The organisation is undergoing a positive programme of change and development, building on our strong, local track record and a well-founded reputation for quality in the provision of counselling services and training.

In particular we offer a supportive and inclusive collegiate environment where the participation and contribution of all workers (volunteers, trainees and staff) 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 design to ensure easy and equitable access to our services without discrimination.

Data Collection and Evaluation

We collect demographic data on all clients who access our services including: gender, age, district, education, employment, ethnicity and disability. This data is reviewed regularly to inform service development and effectiveness.

GCS also collects feedback forms from clients which monitors:

- The level of distress a client is experiencing at the beginning and end of the counselling process (CORE), which is an adapted tool which also measures salient risk factors.
- At the end of the counselling process, clients are asked to feedback to the service with qualitative and quantitative feedback which can include suggestions for service improvements.

Outcome measures are monitored on regularly by the Heads of Counselling to ensure the needs of the client are being met.

This level of data collection is mirrored in our Training department in terms of course evaluation and feedback opportunities.

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

1. Inclusivity and Diversity
2. Knowledge of the service
3. Finance and affordability
4. Physical and Learning disabilities
5. Location of Services
6. Client choice
7. Client contact
8. Counselling Model
9. Referral/Collaboration with other appropriate agencies
10. Specialist statutory service referral

1 Inclusivity and diversity

Counsellor Recruitment

In accordance with our equal opportunities policy, GCS welcomes applications from a diverse range of counsellors and does not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, ethnicity or disability.

In order to better represent the communities we serve, we are committed to developing a strategy for increasing the numbers of male, BME and European counsellors which are currently underrepresented in relation to the local demographics of the county.

Team Induction and Continuing Professional Development

We are proactive on the requirement for counsellors to be professionally accredited with the BACP or equivalent professional body. This ensures that our staff are maintaining an annual log of CPD activities including addressing diversity and ensuring best practice is followed when working with clients from diverse backgrounds.

Client Representation

Gender: male clients make up 44% of our client base, female clients therefore make up 56% of our client base in comparison to the local demographic we are aware that males do not engage as readily as females with our counselling services. This is representative of the profession across the UK.

Ethnicity: 96% of our clients are White British therefore 4% are from the BME and European communities. The county Census (2011) data reflects 11% BME and European population. This reflects the national picture where men and also certain BME and European cultures (Jackson et al, 2013) fail to seek support for mental health issues due to perceived stigma.

In order to address these under-representations we are planning to widen our marketing activity and target specific communities within the county for both Training and Counselling opportunities. We have also recently introduced a fully funded Introduction to Listening Skills course delivered in localities in the county which are currently under represented in our service. This led to a follow up by attendees onto our Certificate in Counselling skills and may lead ultimately to qualifying a counsellor who represents male and BME communities.

With regards to young people accessing our services independently, we are working on raising funds so that we can offer free counselling to young people, removing the need to have parents and carers funding access. We are also reviewing our online registration forms so as to accommodate a young person wishing to access counselling independently.

District

We regularly analyse the numbers of referrals we receive according to district to ensure we are meeting the need of the whole county. Statistics show that the clients we attract to our services are generally proportional to the population. However, we see proportionally greater numbers of clients from the areas of highest deprivation and more central locations e.g. Gloucester, Cheltenham, Stroud. We are aware that we do not engage well with communities in the very north of the county and the Forest of Dean, mainly hindered by public transport.

2 Knowledge of the Service

GCS have been delivering counselling services to the communities of Gloucestershire for over 40 years. We are therefore well known with local GP's and awareness is increasing with education, health and social care professionals and to the voluntary and community sector agencies. This knowledge is aided by:

Website – www.gloscounselling.org.uk

Facebook Page – www.facebook.com/GCSSTROUD

Twitter – <https://twitter.com/GlosCounselServ>

We also have entries in the following Gloucestershire based directories/websites:

- Health Watch Directory
- Gloucestershire Family Services Directory
- NHS Gloucestershire CCG Website 'On your mind'
- Gloucestershire Healthy Living & Learning (for Schools and Colleges)
- GVCSA
- GRASAC
- Counselling Directory
- BACP
- BPC

3 Finance and Affordability

Our Counselling Services are provided at an 'affordable rate' to individual clients. This means in reality that we ask all self-referring clients to cover the cost of the initial consultation/assessment at the rates advertised on our website and in our literature.

Following being assessed as appropriate for counselling, clients will review their ability to contribute at a rate affordable to their individual circumstances. In the event of a client not being able to afford our lowest fee, they can complete a Bursary Application form and the service will consider what rate they can afford to subsidise the client to. We try not to turn

anyone away on the basis of cost and continue to work hard to generate income and donations to enable us to subsidise the cost of Counselling in this way. An average year sees GCS subsidising the cost of Counselling in the region of £50k.

We also have a number of contracts which facilitate funded counselling such as:

- With local schools to provide counselling on site. These contracts enable free at the point of access counselling to their pupils.
- Through our Employee Wellbeing Service we have contracts with local businesses to provide Counselling sessions to their employees funded by the employer.
- A contract with a local GP practice to provide Counselling sessions in their practice which is then heavily subsidised for their patients.

From time to time we secure funding through the local Clinical Commissioning Group to provide free at the point of access specialist counselling such as to survivors of sexual abuse or in partnership with GamCare to provide free at the point of access counselling to Problem Gamblers.

Where we are successful with applications to trusts and grants, we are able to offer heavily subsidised counselling to those in financial hardship or who have experienced specific traumas that the trust fund would like to support such as children who have experienced domestic violence or male victims of hate crime.

4 Physical and Learning disabilities

Client's learning and physical disabilities are assessed upon referrals. We have a wide range of venues some having disabled parking on site or nearby and access. Other premises present access issues with stairs which our Board of Trustees are actively evaluating. In the event of a client requiring access to a venue that is not accessible, we do have local arrangements to hire accessible venues nearby.

We are able to provide telephone or skype counselling in some circumstances where it is deemed clinically appropriate for the client and the counsellors with the appropriate expertise are available.

5 Location and Availability of Services

Location: GCS have a number of counselling rooms that we permanently lease across the county (namely Gloucester, Cheltenham, Stroud and Tewkesbury) with as and when needed rental in Cirencester and the Forest of Dean.

Time of Day: We are able to offer appointments from 8am through 8pm Monday to Friday and where counsellors are available can offer Saturday appointments.

Waiting Areas for Parents/Carers: Our Stroud, Gloucester, Cirencester and Tewkesbury venues offer a safe space to wait for clients. Unfortunately, our Cheltenham venue does not have a waiting area and need can be accommodated if other Counselling rooms happen to be vacant at the time of the appointment. However, the Board of Trustees are aware that this is not ideal and we are actively seeking alternative premises in Cheltenham. We have also made use of Cheltenham Children's Centres to see children and families where demand is sufficient to make this affordable.

Office Hours: Our main office hours are from 9am to 4.20pm Monday to Friday and outside of this time contact can be made via email and the website enquiry form. Answer phone messages are checked every day the office is open. Registrations for Counselling can be made as a self-referral via our website at any time of the day/night.

Home Visits: we do not offer home visits currently but instead look to provide telephone or skype counselling in response to a specific need such as agoraphobia, anxiety disorders or severe disability.

6 Client Choice – Service Delivery

We offer a client centric service which means we are dedicated to removing barriers that can prevent clients from engaging comfortably with Counselling. We proactively involve clients in making decisions regarding the service they are to receive and we work hard to ensure we accommodate their wishes as far as resource availability allows. Each client is able to decide:

- The venue they wish to be seen in
- The time and day of their regular weekly appointment
- Which service they believe would best suit them e.g. Open Ended Counselling or Time Limited Counselling.
- Which gender counsellor they would prefer
- Whether they are happy to be seen by a Trainee or fully qualified counsellor.

7 Client Contact

From feedback we receive from our clients and referring agencies, we are aware that on occasions clients may find it too difficult to make a phone call to refer themselves or their child for Counselling. We have sought to overcome this by working with referring agencies to support potential clients to complete our registration forms or enabling clients to complete registrations via our website which is then followed up by our trained reception staff. We offer to post forms out to prospective clients so they can be reviewed and completed in their own home and we offer to talk through the forms with them if they are requiring further support.

8 Counselling Model

GCS provide Psychodynamic Counselling, offering both open-ended and time-limited engagements.

Time-limited counselling is focussed, brief therapy for up to 12 sessions in our main Adult Service and for 6 sessions in our EWS and Schools Services.

Although our counsellors may use CBT techniques in the course of counselling as appropriate, we do not offer pure CBT.

Our Child & Family Counselling Service provide family therapy, family counselling and individual counselling using systemic and psychodynamic principles to meet client needs.

9 Referral/Collaboration with other appropriate agencies

GCS have strong links with other charity and voluntary sector organisations and has a mutual signposting where another service is more appropriate or where joint working is required such as:

- SARC (Sexual Assault Referral Centre)
- GRASAC (Gloucestershire Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre)
- HOPE Support Services (for young people coping with a family member with a life threatening illness).
- Infobuzz (Schools exclusion, Young Offenders, Transitions to adult mental health).
- GDASS (Gloucestershire domestic Abuse Support Service)

- RETHINK (Self-Harm Helpline)
- Winston's Wish (Bereavement Support)
- Young Carers Gloucestershire
- Carers Gloucestershire
- AGE UK Glos
- GAY GLOS (LGBT)
- Family Lives (for parenting support)
- Young Gloucestershire (Young parents and NEET education and support)
- CGL (Addictions)
- SOBS (Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide)
- Sunflowers (Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide)
- Independence Trust (Mental Health Support Groups)

10 Specialist Statutory Service Referral

Where a young person requires a specialist service, our Head of Counselling will make a referral to the NHS Together Trust Children and Young People Service.

Where a client over the age of 18 requires referral to statutory and/or adult mental health/recovery services, we would in the first instance refer back to the clients GP.

For more information please refer to our Onward Referral Policy which is available on request.

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Office Enquiries: 01453 766310

Email: info@gloscounselling.org.uk

Website: www.gloscounselling.org.uk

Registered Charity: 1109904

References

Census 2011 and Census 2001 www.nomisweb.co.uk

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