



## **ACCESSIBILITY TO SERVICES AT WCTC**

The purpose of this statement is to ensure a place of work that provides equality of access to those who use the service with dignity and respect for all. It is also paramount that this principle is extended to our volunteers, workers, clients; member institutions, and the service providers including ethical suppliers. For the benefit of this statement I will refer to anyone who seeks access services at WCTC as Service Users.

In line with BACP guidelines, our vision for diversity and equality extend beyond achieving change and we monitor progress on an ongoing basis with regard to clients, service providers, employees and volunteers.

WCTC is an equal opportunities organisation and will not tolerate discrimination against any actual or potential associate that is based on age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability, race, religion or belief.

### Accessibility of Building

WCTC endeavours to make the service as accessible as possible to all Service Users. However our premises' has challenges; WCTC is situated on the first floor of a Georgian building and there is no lift. This poses problems for Service Users with mobility issues and to address this issue WCTC have:

- Purchased portable ramps for wheelchair users
- Negotiated with the landlords to use a room on the ground floor if anyone accessing the first floor is not able to use the stairs
- We inform Service Users that with advance notice, we are likely to be able to organise a downstairs room
- We notify all Service Users coming to our building for the first time that there is a flight of stairs to the counselling and services so we can address accessibility

WCTC has been considering home visits to assist clients access the counselling service we offer. One major improvement would be to rent a room permanently downstairs and WCTC is considering an arrangement with the landlord.

### Transport and Parking

Wantage has direct access by bus from Oxford, Didcot, Abingdon and surrounding areas; the main bus stop in Market Place is a 5 minute walk to the service for the able bodied. Buses are also accessible to accommodate wheelchair users and people with buggies.

There was a 'Dial a Ride' service from the surrounding rural areas and unfortunately this has been cancelled in 2016, however there is a taxi rank on Market Place and admin staff if asked, will call a reputable taxi firm; this reasonably ensures Service Users are not taken financially advantage of and reach their destination safely.

Orchard House is adjacent to a large car park that offers free parking for 2 hours and unlimited free parking after 6pm and on Sundays. Disabled parking is unlimited but as it is a busy carpark, WCTC is looking at possibilities of leasing a private car parking space for clients; however there is a waiting list.

### Amenities close to WCTC

Many of our clients come from some distance and it is important for them to have access to amenities so they can look after themselves. Most of these are situated around the Market Place (5 minutes' walk from WCTC) where there are a variety of places to take refreshments to suit different budgets; there's a major bank, Post Office and 2 major supermarkets. There is also a café in the Beacon Centre adjacent to Orchard House.

### Access to other Health Professionals

We also share the premises' with an osteopath, complementary health practitioners and counsellors who work independently in the building. WCTC is dedicated to providing appropriate services; so we have a Relationship Mediator who uses our premises and we refer clients to other services if they are considered more appropriate.

We receive referrals from GPs and Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust (where we have worked with clients with learning difficulties) and been available to attend meetings to discuss care packages and their special needs. WCTC would like to support vulnerable clients and is considering how best to liaise with care managers and support staff.

It has been identified that relationships with health professionals are underdeveloped at WCTC; due to lack of funding, networking has been neglected. However WCTC has now employed a part-time Office Manager who works Monday to Friday; and it is hoped there will be adequate time for the team at WCTC to foster relationships within a broad range of health professionals to complement our services.

#### Typical Demographics in Wantage and the Surrounding Areas

The census of 2011 revealed that:

- The majority of the population of Wantage was white middle class
- The majority of residents were born and grew up in Wantage and the surrounding areas
- There is a higher level of residents born in the UK than the national average
- A lower rate of residents either born in other EU countries or outside the EU
- Does not have a significant immigrant population

This is likely to change as there are several large building projects within a 15 mile radius of Wantage with many young families from abroad to serve growing industry. WCTC is yet to find ways to meet the needs of the ethnic minority in South Oxfordshire and this is a goal for 2016/2017

#### Service Users who have difficulty with access and availability

An issue WCTC needs to address is the difficulty parents and carers have when arranging childcare or support for those they care for when arranging counselling sessions. Also it is difficult to reach out to vulnerable adults who would benefit from our services but can't access them physically; and this is where a home visiting service would be a useful resource.

However WCTC has yet to address issues with implementing 'Lone Working'. At the moment WCTC does not allow 'Lone Working' and in the near future we will need to consider how we might introduce a safe 'Lone Working' strategy to protect Service Users and those working with them. Increasingly clients have work patterns that decrease their availability; and though some counsellors are available during the weekends and out of work hours to accommodate them, WCTC prohibits this unless they are working with others in the building. This will be a project for 2016/2017.

#### Working with Young People below 15 years of age

Though we don't work with young people under 15 years of age (and this is unlikely to change in the near future); several of our counsellors are qualified to do so and volunteer at King Alfred's Academy which is the school adjacent to Orchard House. They are valuable ambassadors for WCTC and we are able to reach out to older siblings, parents and carers in crisis.

We also support Sweat Box which is the local youth group in Wantage (where there have been 2 tragic deaths of young people in the past year). WCTC offers a presence at events so that young people and youth workers have someone to talk to if they want to. There is much scope for developing our support for younger people and this is yet to be explored.

#### Affordability

WCTC is an affordable counselling service and every effort is taken for clients to negotiate a fee with their counsellor that is fair and affordable; they also have opportunities to renegotiate fees if their financial situation changes. WCTC will never refuse to work with a client because of their financial difficulty.

WCTC is a self-funding organisation and it will be essential that we address our fundraising issues so that we are able to offer more to our most vulnerable Service Users. We hope to do this by employing a professional fundraiser free of charge; this is still in the negotiation stage.

We also advertise in various locations so that WCTC can reach as many people as possible.

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