

HRP39 - Accessibility Limitations Strategy

Context

Nexus aims to provide a counselling service that is free of charge to all those in need and who are assessed as being able to make use of the service we offer. Thus our target population is according to need.

We recognise the challenge in reaching our target population and this strategy aims to address any limitations in accessibility to our service.

What might deter clients accessing our service?

1. Knowledge of our service
2. Time of opening
3. Type of therapy used and waiting time
4. The client's own fear of the process

1. Knowledge of our service

Only those who are aware of our service can access it and only those external referrers who know about our service can make referrals. Thus our publicity and networking needs to be up to date and effective.

Increasingly clients are likely to access our website as a first point of information. As a direct endeavour to address the likely limitation of an outdated website, we have in the last year invested resources and completed the redesigning our brand and website investing in search engine optimisation. We have also included a referral form so clients can contact us directly via the web site. The numbers of client enquiries have increased since this work was launched.

We have built a reputation within Northern Ireland and in each of the local communities within for quality therapy and for time limited work. Our strategy includes maintaining that reputation and building links with other service providers as well as an increased awareness through the use of local media. We have developed MOUs (memorandums of understanding) with local services to accept direct referrals. This has been enhanced through funding made available by the Big Lottery in partnership with 7 other charity providers each referring within the partnership.

2. Time of opening

We endeavour to provide a service accessible to all; hence our main offices are open two late evenings a week. Our outreach locations also vary in the hours of service, depending on the hours of opening of the location.

3. Type of therapy used and waiting time

We continue to actively monitor waiting times and provide a timely, responsive service. Within the past year we have had to reduce our maximum limit for number of sessions to 18 as the demand for our service out stripped our resources. Our strategy is to maintain this new system and continue to develop practices to reduce the waiting time for our services.

Whilst balancing our reputation for providing deep trauma therapy, our strategy includes continuing to provide a broad CPD study programme for our counsellors to support and develop high quality, informed therapeutic practice.

4. The client's own fear of the process

Often the biggest access difficulty for our service is the client's own fear and interpretation of what this involves. In an attempt to alleviate some of these fears we commissioned a project with Nexus clients to create a film to answer some questions the clients may have when thinking of approaching us. This film used clients as the actors and uses the words of these clients, it can be found on our web site www.nexusni.org

Physical Access

Our main offices are wheelchair accessible and we carry out formal reviews of any new outreach location to check on this facility.

This strategy is on the website and intranet, it will also be placed in our offices waiting rooms, to make sure our stakeholders know that the Strategy is available electronically or by hard copy and that we invite and welcome comment.