



## Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

At Quaggy Community Counselling Service, equality, diversity and inclusion are central to our commitment to providing high-quality, accessible and culturally responsive counselling in the Royal Borough of Greenwich and North Lewisham.

Our work is guided by our values of **Quality, Fairness, Transparency, Belonging and Collaboration**, and underpinned by anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice. We recognise that structural inequalities, socioeconomic disadvantage and discrimination can affect access to mental health support. We are committed to identifying and reducing barriers, promoting equity, and ensuring our service is welcoming and inclusive for all.

We take a transparent, data-informed approach to understanding who accesses our service and where inequalities may exist. By listening to client and staff feedback and working collaboratively with our community, we continually reflect, learn and improve.

Our EDI work is subject to ongoing review. We monitor access, engagement and experience data regularly, with oversight from our Senior Management Team and Board of Trustees, to ensure accountability and continuous improvement. Where we identify gaps or inequalities, we commit to taking proportionate action.

Through collaboration with our community, partners and team, we strive to build a service that reflects and responds to the diverse needs of the people we support.



## Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Strategy

### Quaggy Community Counselling Service

**Period:** 2026–2027

**Last Updated:** May 2026

**Review Cycle:** Quarterly (SMT) / Annual (Trustees)

#### 1. Our Commitment

Our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion strategy is grounded in our organisational values of **Quality, Fairness, Transparency, Belonging, and Collaboration** and in a commitment to anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice.

We are committed to providing high-quality, accessible, inclusive and culturally responsive counselling to the diverse communities of Greenwich and North Lewisham. We recognise that structural inequality, discrimination and stigma can affect access to mental health support, and we aim to identify and reduce these barriers so that people can engage with our service more equitably.

Our commitment to anti-oppressive practice means we:

- Reflect on power, privilege and bias within therapeutic relationships and organisational systems
- Challenge discrimination and exclusion where it arises
- Create space for diverse identities, cultures and experiences to be recognised and respected
- Promote equity rather than equality alone, recognising that different individuals and communities may require different forms of support

We aim to foster a culture of **Belonging** in which clients, staff and volunteers feel respected, valued and able to contribute fully. Through **Transparency** and **Collaboration**, we use data, feedback and partnership working to understand people's

experiences, identify where improvement is needed, and shape a more inclusive service.

## **2. Service Context**

QCCS supports adults in Greenwich, offering low-cost counselling with session fees ranging from £2 to £35. Counselling is delivered in 12-week blocks, either in person or online.

We also offer free perinatal counselling ranging from single session therapy to an eight-week block for Greenwich residents who are pregnant or caring for an infant under two years old. Sessions can be taken online, in-person or over the telephone depending on client preference and suitability.

Clients can self-refer or be referred by professionals, providing multiple routes into the service.

The service receives approximately 240 referrals per year. We track an individual's journey from point of referral through to the end of their engagement with QCCS. Demographic monitoring information is collected at assessment although completion is not yet universal.

## **3. Equality Diversity and Inclusion Review (March 2026)**

This strategy sets out QCCS's current priorities for strengthening equality, diversity and inclusion across our service. It draws on our recent review of practice, data and feedback, and is intended to provide a transparent account of the areas where we are making progress, where further improvement is needed, and the actions we will take to create a more inclusive and equitable service over time.

## **4. Current Limitations**

The review identified a number of important areas where we need to strengthen equality, diversity and inclusion in practice. While our service offers flexible ways to access support, including online and telephone counselling, we recognise that we do not yet have a full understanding of all the barriers people may experience. We have not yet completed a comprehensive accessibility audit of our premises, digital systems and client journey, and some key documents are not currently available in easy read or multiple language formats. Our current data collection also does not fully capture the experiences of people who enquire about the service but do not go on to engage, which limits our understanding of who may be excluded and why.

The review also highlighted gaps in the evidence available to assess how inclusive and equitable our service is across different groups. Monitoring form completion rates remain too low to provide a reliable picture of access, experience and outcomes, and our workforce does not yet fully reflect the diversity of the local community. In addition, our engagement with community organisations is still developing, particularly with groups supporting disabled people, refugees and asylum seekers, and LGBTQIA+ communities. Being open about these limitations is an important part of our EDI strategy, and these findings are helping to shape practical actions to improve access, representation and accountability over time.

#### **4. Priority Actions**

In response to these findings, the following five actions have been identified as the immediate priorities for strengthening QCCS's equality, diversity and inclusion approach.

1. Improve equality monitoring by reviewing when and how monitoring information is collected, increasing completion rates, and enabling earlier analysis of who is and is not engaging with the service.
2. Complete a structured accessibility review of our premises, digital systems and client journey, and use the findings to identify and reduce physical, digital and procedural barriers.
3. Develop more accessible client information by prioritising key documents for easy read formats and reviewing the need for translated, simplified or alternative versions.
4. Improve how we gather feedback from people who disengage or do not proceed with support, so that barriers to access, retention and experience can be better understood.
5. Build stronger partnerships with local community organisations, particularly those supporting disabled people, refugee and asylum-seeking communities, and LGBTQIA+ communities, to inform outreach, consultation and service development.

The table in Appendix 1 summarises these priorities and provides information on activities we will undertake, timescales and accountability.

#### **5. Approach and Governance**

- EDI will be reviewed quarterly within Service Management Team meetings.
- An annual summary will be presented to Trustees.

- Quantitative data and qualitative feedback will inform service development decisions.
- This approach ensures improvements are proportionate, realistic, and evidence-informed.

## **6. Closing statement**

This strategy reflects our commitment to embedding equality, diversity and inclusion across every aspect of QCCS's work. We recognise that this is an ongoing process that requires reflection, accountability and partnership, and we are committed to reviewing progress, listening to feedback and taking practical action to ensure our service becomes increasingly accessible, inclusive and responsive to the communities we serve.

## Appendix 1

Priority Action	Key Activity	How we will evidence activity	Timescale	Lead
1. Improve equality monitoring	Review monitoring points in the client journey, improve completion rates, and strengthen analysis of engagement patterns. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use monitoring data to review the demographics of individuals who are engaged in our service</li> <li>• Review referral sources</li> <li>• Review client feedback from end-of-counselling evaluation forms to identify potential access barriers</li> </ul>	The following measures will be monitored quarterly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of monitoring forms completed &amp; analysis of demographic of service users vs. demographics of local population</li> <li>• Referral source patterns</li> <li>• Themes from client feedback relating to access and inclusion</li> </ul>	Data is updated and analysed quarterly (Q1- April-June 2026, Q2- July-Sept 2026, Q3 – Oct-Dec 2026 & Q4 – Jan-March 2027 etc.)	Counselling Lead
2. Complete a structured accessibility audit	Assess premises, digital systems and client journey to identify and reduce barriers to access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research tools that will help us carry out structured review alongside researching financial feasibility of commissioning an accessibility audit</li> <li>• Carry out review/audit which will be evidenced in a report</li> </ul>	Sept-Dec 2026	Counselling Lead

Priority Action	Key Activity	How we will evidence activity	Timescale	Lead
3. Develop accessible client information	Prioritise key documents for easy read, simplified or alternative formats. Consider options for translation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy read documents will be published</li> </ul>	Jan -March 2027	Counselling Lead
4. Reducing barrier at assessment and early engagement	<p>Identify whether early unplanned endings (defined as pre/post assessment and within 3 sessions) disproportionately affects particular groups and explore potential barriers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor overall assessment DNA rate (~20%)</li> <li>• Where data permits explore early unplanned endings by the following demographic data</li> <li>• Consider practical factors such as appointment flexibility, online/in-person delivery, and affordability</li> <li>• Where qualitative data permits, review client feedback to understand reasons for non-attendance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall assessment DNA rate</li> <li>• Unplanned endings (3 weeks or before rate)</li> <li>• Client feedback themes related to engagement</li> </ul>	Data is updated and analysed quarterly as per priority action 1.	Counselling Lead

Priority Action	Key Activity	How we will evidence activity	Timescale	Lead
5. Build stronger community partnerships	Develop relationships with community organisations to inform outreach, consultation and service development, particularly those supporting disabled people, refugee and asylum-seeking communities, and LGBTQIA+ communities, to inform outreach, consultation and service development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting notes</li> <li>• Outreach activities and events</li> <li>• Marketing and promotional activities</li> </ul>	Ongoing – priority is currently developing activities to increase referrals and engagement of male clients which includes working in partnership with community groups on activities to mark Men’s Mental Health Awareness week in November 2026	Counselling Lead/Deputy Counselling Lead