



A strategy for addressing accessibility limitations October 2015

Context

The Dove Service (TDS) aims to provide a counselling service that is available to all those experiencing issues around bereavement, loss and/or life-changing or limiting illness, 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 at the Board Development Day in 2015 we reviewed our organisation with a view to developing our strategy for addressing any limitations in accessibility.

Equal Opportunities information from 2014/2015 was reviewed as part of this strategy, as was information from previous years.

This review was used to support the development of the 2016-2019 TDS Business Plan and Business Objectives.

What might deter clients accessing our service?

Our initial review during this meeting evolved around the question 'what might prevent clients accessing our service?' and we identified three broad accessibility limitations:

- 1) Knowledge of the service (including possible misconceptions about the service).
- 2) Financial Sustainability (the service needs to be both affordable to clients and viable in operating terms).
- 3) Providing a 'Fit for Purpose' Service

1) Knowledge of the 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 need 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 As a direct endeavour to address the likely limitation of an outdated website, we have in the last year invested resources in completely redesigning our website and

investing in search engine optimisation. The numbers of client enquiries have increased since the inception of the new website

- We are renewing our policy to send a letter and leaflets to local GP Practices and other local service providers on an annual basis including CAB, NHS Talking Therapies, Libraries etc. We distribute posters, leaflets and our magazine 'Dovetales' widely, including in the areas where we have our outreaches.
- TDS continues to monitor numbers of client enquiries and will review the structure of the organisation annually to ensure the structure of the organisation enables us to best meet the needs of our clients.
- We will review the structure of our Development Team to ensure that our Marketing and PR function remains fully functional and produces a Marketing and PR strategy which is reviewed continually.
- We have built a reputation within the local community (including the medical community) for quality Counselling and Bereavement support. Our strategy includes maintaining and developing that reputation and building links with other service providers.

2) Financial Sustainability

TDS offers counselling and group support free at the point of delivery wherever possible due to funding from local CCG's and other charitable grants and trusts.

However, the decreasing availability of funding from external sources means that TDS must seek greater financial sustainability to ensure the organisation can continue to provide services through:

- Seeking contributions from our clients and past clients
- Ensuring that any 'paid for' services are priced to be affordable and are reviewed regularly against standard industry prices.
- Developing a fundraising strategy and employing a Fundraising Lead to drive this strategy
- Working with external consultants to develop a strategic plan for financial sustainability

3) 'Fit for Purpose' Service

- We continue to actively monitor waiting times, and we provide a timely, responsive service. However, with the increase in referral numbers, the organisation will review the referral process within the next 12 months and is considering introducing an initial assessment procedure.
- We continue to actively explore with our members the implications of IAPT and CAMHS, and whether we wish to develop our service to include broader evidence based therapies, whilst balancing our reputation for providing person-centred/integrative therapy, and staying true to our organisational vision.

- We continue to focus on the quality of the services that we offer, which includes a commitment to maintaining BACP Accredited Status, and working within the BACP 'Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions'. We also plan to maintain our ISO9001 quality standard for the quality of our policies and procedures.

Physical Access

We have undertaken a formal review of our disability access.

At our Head Office at the Dudson Centre we have full disabled access, including a lift, ramps, automatic doors and full access toilet facilities.

We aim to only utilise outreach facilities that offer full disabled access, however we do recognise that this is not always possible, and are able to offer alternative accommodation when necessary.

We have published this Strategy on the website, and will make reference to it in our Annual Report to ensure our stakeholders know that the Strategy is available electronically or by hard copy and that we invite and welcome comment.