



Accessibility to Services

Context

YMCA Dialogue is part of YMCA DownsLink Group (YMCA DLG). Our [2020 Vision](#), outlines our strategic plans to transform more young lives by increasing our impact and reach over the next four years (2016-2020) through our Youth Minded Community Approach.

YMCA Dialogue provides counselling services to children and young people in a wide range of settings in schools and in communities. Services are offered pan-Sussex and in Surrey, in:

- Infant, junior and primary schools
- Secondary schools and 6th form colleges
- Special provision schools
- Independent schools
- GP practices, Children's Centres and Community buildings
- Our centres in Brighton and Guilford
- Online counselling service in Brighton & Hove

Accessible Information

YMCA DLG has an Accessible Information Policy (see Appendix) which has been developed to show that we understand the need to ask our clients about their communication needs so that we can respond appropriately and meet their needs.

Participation

YMCA DLG employ a Participation Lead; service users are invited to give feedback via annual surveys the results of which are disseminated to all staff and offered to service users, with an action plan drawn up by the Leadership Team. YMCA DLG is reviewing how we can involve young people in governance.

All counselling clients are offered the opportunity to feedback on the service they received and information is used to develop services and make improvements.

Equal Opportunity

YMCA DLG collects Equality & Diversity Data which is given voluntarily by service users and analysed annually. The Equality & Diversity policy is reviewed annually by the Equalities Forum and/or when the emergence of related legislation requires an additional review. Employees and clients will be consulted by way of staff forums, service user focus groups, and annual service user survey to gain feedback on the policy and whether



services are meeting local needs. YMCA DLG Leadership Team will draw up an action plan and the Equalities Forum reviews equalities related development activities.

Equality & Diversity training is mandatory for all staff.

Funding

We have been successful in securing funding for counselling services from schools and statutory agencies e.g. NHS, local authorities and counselling services are free to clients. We acknowledge the current economic climate and the risks to continued funding.

Access to Services

Our own counselling centres are compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act. There is on-street parking and/or car parks and centres are on main bus routes and close to railway stations. Where we work in other organisations' premises, we will work with them to facilitate ease of access.

We recognise that some clients may have limited hours to access services (e.g. working, lack of child care). In our community services, we offer flexible appointments during the day and evening. We have an online counselling service in Brighton & Hove and refer to online counselling services in East and West Sussex. In schools and colleges, hours of service are stipulated by the school.

We have access to Language Line translation service; a number of BSL counsellors and counsellors who speak languages other than English.

We employ LGBTQ+ and BME counsellors.

We offer play, art and canine assisted therapies offering ways of communicating as alternatives to traditional talking therapy.



Appendix

ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION POLICY

1.0 Introduction

The national Accessible Information Standard aims to ensure that people have access to information they can understand and the communication support they may need. The Standard applies to service providers across the NHS and adult social care system, including in the voluntary sector where there is commissioning from health care commissioners (e.g. Clinical Commissioning Groups).

This policy has been developed to show that at YMCA DownsLink Group (YMCA DLG) we understand the need to ask our clients about their communication needs so that we can respond appropriately and meet their needs.

We are committed to being adaptable in our approach, revising materials where needed to ensure that they are accessible to those who have specific communication needs (e.g. sensory impairment).

2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all our staff, volunteers and managers.

3.0 Responsibilities

Executive and Leadership Team

Are responsible for implementing this policy and ensuring there are resources to enable services to respond to individual need.

Line Managers

Are responsible for supporting staff to make necessary arrangement to meet client need.

All Staff and volunteers

Are responsible for following this policy and ensuring that clients are asked about their communication needs, and that all elements of the standard are followed.



4.0 The accessible information standard

There are five key elements to the standard:

1. **Identify** the communication and information needs of those who use our service.
2. **Record** the communication and information needs they have identified: clearly and consistently on the individual's record, recording their needs not why they have those needs i.e. "requires BSL interpreter" not "person is d/Deaf".
3. Have a consistent **flagging** system so that if a member of staff opens the individual's record it is immediately brought to their attention if the person has a communication or information need.
4. **Share** the identified information and communication needs of the individual when appropriate; for example a GP referring a patient to the hospital including the information that the person needs a deafblind manual interpreter in the referral letter so that the hospital can arrange it for the upcoming appointment.
5. **Meet** the communication and information needs identified. For example, send an appointment letter in Braille or book an interpreter for an appointment.

4.1 What We Will Do to Meet the Standard

We will ask clients or their carers to tell us if they have any communication or information needs relating to a disability, impairment or sensory loss, and if so, what they are. New clients will be asked at the point of first access if they have any communication or information needs relating to a disability, impairment or sensory loss, and if so, what they are.

Clients should be asked to self-define their communication/information needs and it is these needs which should be recorded.

Once a client has informed us that they have communication or information needs relating to a disability, impairment or sensory loss, the document will be scanned and a coded entry added to their record.

In order to inform all workers and provide the opportunity to keep information up to date a flag/alert will also be added to the record so that any staff member will be aware of the needs each time the record is accessed.



As the information is being recorded in a standardised way, in many services, via In-form, and workers are being informed of any needs every time they enter the record the information recorded will be shared subject to client's choice regarding the sharing of information.

Services will provide one or more contact methods which are accessible to the clients. Methods include email, text message or telephone, and in many projects the use of Social Media (e.g. twitter, Facebook).

Where information/communication needs are identified, information (e.g. correspondence) will be provided in one or more accessible formats (e.g. non-standard print). Alternative formats can be provided if available either through auto-generated systems, or through prompting staff to make alternative arrangements. The adjustments made should be reasonable – but this does not mean that the client must always receive information in their preferred format. What is important is that they can access and understand the information.

A client's family member, friend or carer may also provide necessary support in certain circumstances and where this is the client's explicit preference.

5.0 Working with languages

If you do not speak the language of the client and they do not speak a language you are able to communicate in you may need to use an interpreter. YMCA DownsLink Group has a contract with Language Line. The service is charged on a pay-as-you-go basis. Please check with your line manager that they are happy for you to use Language Line.

Language Line Services is a large provider of Over the Phone and On Demand Telephone Interpreting Services. The service is available 24hours, 7 days week, 365 days a year and enables callers to access a Professional Interpreter in any one of 170 different languages with an average connection time to an interpreter of less than 39 seconds.

More information on Language Line can be found here: <S:\General\Language Line>.

Please exercise caution when using your mobile phone for language line and/or Google translate as costs can be very high for 0845 numbers and data roaming.

6.0 Further Information and Resources

6.1 YMCA DLG Policies and Documents

- Casenote Guidance
- Data Protection and Information Handling
- Equal Opportunity and Diversity
- Information Sharing



YMCA DIALOGUE

Counselling and therapeutic support for
children, young people and families

YMCA

6.2 Useful resources

<https://www.sense.org.uk/> - Sense is a national charity that supports people who are deafblind, have sensory impairments or complex needs, to enjoy more independent lives.

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/accessibleinfo/>

Information Review

Policy first published: June 2017

Review date: June 2019