

Leeds Beckett University Counselling Service Accessibility Strategy

1. Introduction

Leeds Beckett University is committed to providing an inclusive and accessible counselling service for all students, in line with the Leeds Beckett University Equality and Inclusion policy:

https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/-/media/files/policies/human-resources/uphr_equality_diversity_policy.pdf

The Leeds Beckett University Counselling Service is committed to taking a proactive and whole-university approach to mental health. We look to work collaboratively with course teams to ensure all students are better equipped to take care of their mental health and feel more confident in accessing our counselling service when needed.

This strategy outlines our approach to ensuring that our counselling services are accessible to everyone, regardless of their needs, personal attributes or backgrounds.

2. Objectives

- To reduce barriers to accessing counselling services.
- To ensure that all students feel welcomed and supported.
- To provide a range of accessible counselling options.
- To continuously improve our services based on feedback and best practices.

The above objectives are in line with the following university-wide policies:

- EDI Framework - <https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/our-university/equality-and-inclusion/edi-framework/>
- Support Report Respect Strategy - <https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/our-university/equality-and-inclusion/addressing-bullying-harassment-and-sexual-misconduct/>
- Athena Swan and gender equality plan - <https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/our-university/equality-and-inclusion/athena-swan/>
- Race Equality Charter - <https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/our-university/equality-and-inclusion/race-equality-charter/>
- Leeds Beckett University anti-racism statement - <https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/our-university/equality-and-inclusion/anti-racism-statement/>

3. Physical Accessibility

- **Facilities:** Ensure there are appropriate counselling rooms available to meet all the ability needs of LBU students.
- **Location:** Provide clear information on the location of counselling services, including accessible routes and transportation options.
- **Environment:** Maintain a welcoming and comfortable environment, with consideration for sensory sensitivities (e.g., lighting, noise levels).

This is in line with Leeds Beckett University's EDI Framework (link above)

4. Digital Accessibility

- **Website:** Ensure the counselling service website is fully accessible, following WCAG 2.1 guidelines. This includes providing text alternatives for images, ensuring compatibility with screen readers, and offering content in multiple formats.
- **Online Services:** Offer online counselling sessions via accessible platforms that support various assistive technologies.

5. Communication Accessibility

- **Materials:** Provide counselling materials in accessible formats such as screen/text readers and large print.
- **Interpreters:** Offer sign language interpreters and other language support services as needed.
- **Training:** Ensure all staff are trained in effective communication strategies for working with students with diverse needs via our Study Skills Tutors, Specialist Mentors and Disability Advisors.

6. Service Delivery

- **Flexible Options:** Provide students with the choice of face-to-face, online, and telephone sessions.
- **Feedback Mechanism:** Implement a robust feedback system to gather input from students on the accessibility of services and make continuous improvements.

7. Awareness and Promotion

- **Outreach:** Conduct outreach activities to raise awareness of the counselling services available and their accessibility features.
- **Partnerships:** Collaborate with student groups, disability services, and other stakeholders to promote accessible counselling services.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

- **Regular Reviews:** Conduct regular reviews of the accessibility strategy to ensure it remains effective and up-to-date.
- **Continuous Monitoring and Improvement:** Use feedback and data to monitor and continuously improve the accessibility of counselling services.

9. Conclusion

Leeds Beckett University is dedicated to providing an inclusive and accessible counselling service for all students. By implementing this strategy, we aim to ensure that every student has the opportunity to access the support they need in a way that works for them.