

# **Counselling and Mental Health Support Service Statement on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

## **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at King's College, London**

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) cover all aspects of individual identities where difference can lead to barriers to access or disadvantages. Working to achieve EDI in any organisation is a continuous process, similar to how our own identities go through a process of change, growth and development. It's an ongoing area of learning and improvement.

King's College London is committed to creating an inclusive environment that promotes equality of opportunity for everyone in its community. This extends to the Counselling and Mental Health Support provision at King's.

King's values the diversity of its staff and student body and recognises that this is both a strength and a defining feature of King's as a London university in a global context. Equality, diversity and inclusion are cornerstones of King's Strategic Vision 2029, and at the core of our commitment to provide counselling and mental health support that is equitable and accessible to all students.

We are committed to providing a service which is culturally competent and responsive to all students.

A key guiding principle of King's Strategic Vision 2029 is to create an inclusive environment where all members of King's community are valued and able to succeed. This Policy applies to all students who apply and receive support from C&MHS.

King's aims to embed inclusion in its practice and culture to provide an extraordinary student experience which includes and extends to the provision of its counselling and mental health support to students. The Equality Act (2010) underpins all the university's work. It protects the rights of individuals based on specific characteristics and sets out which behaviours are unlawful. Under this Act, the following characteristics are protected by law: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

At King's, the definition of diversity encompasses and goes beyond the characteristics protected by law to include everything that makes us unique, from our backgrounds and experiences to our personalities and ways of thinking. Additionally, King's recognises the intersections between

different elements of individuals' identities and experiences, acknowledging that there may be multiple factors that affect people's sense of belonging.

Commitment to inclusion means that King's will create an environment where differences are not just respected but valued and celebrated. Everyone should be able to bring their whole self to King's, without having to downplay or change elements of their identity. King's will identify and remove barriers to inclusion. King's is committed to taking the required actions to support this Policy. To achieve equality of opportunity, King's recognises that to be treated fairly, sometimes people need to be treated differently. For example, students with Specific Learning Needs may require adjustments in their assessment process. King's will evaluate the impact of the actions it takes and will publish information on its progress as part of annual diversity and inclusion reporting.

### **Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and the Counselling & Mental Health Support Service**

Linked to this the Counselling and Mental Health Support Service aims to address and remove any barriers to access, particularly to individuals from marginalised groups who may find it harder to access our service. We are committed to providing support which facilitates engagement in its outreach provision and provide more bespoke support to marginalised individuals.

- **Addressing Barriers to Access**

Evidence shows individuals, especially those from marginalised groups may find it harder, for multiple reasons, to access counselling and mental health support. We strive to address and remove any barriers to access counselling support and provide an accessible and inclusive service.

For example, we adapt processes and interventions to meet the needs of different students. For example, prioritising applications from individuals from marginalized groups; offering specific interventions such as Health Advice for Mandarin Speaking Students (HAMSS); focused group support such as Conversations around Race, Queer Identity Group for LGBTQ+ students. We assess our outcome data for different marginalized groups and take actions to improve these outcomes if different from other groups.

- **Commitment to working in line with Ethical and Good Practice Guidelines**

All our therapist and psychologists are accredited with professional bodies and abide by their respective Ethical and [Good Practice](#) Frameworks or [equivalent](#) organisational statements. These set out the expected ethical principles, values and good practice for members and practitioners

providing therapeutically informed services in regard to EDI. We work to ensure that no student is prevented or dissuaded from accessing support because of their differences.

This reiterates our commitment to valuing diversity, actively working against discriminatory behaviours, and recognising that we all bring values and assumptions, which are not universally shared, but which may impact how we work with others. The Ethical Frameworks and the Good Practice Guidelines in regard to EDI require us to actively seek out learning and knowledge about those subjects which may impact or inform our clients (students). They also remind us to show humility in recognising that there are areas where we will need to educate ourselves, or to refer our (students) clients or patients to other practitioners in order that their needs and wishes may be more sensitively and appropriately met. As stated in the BACP Ethical Framework, *'We will ... strive for a higher standard than the legal minimum'*.

- **Diversity of the team**

We recognise how important it is to have a diverse and representative Counselling and Mental Health Support Team. We actively recruit to increase representation from the LGBTQ+ community, from the global majority and include team members from other marginalised groups as well as address any gender imbalance in representation.

- **Cultural competency and ongoing training**

Practitioner modality is also informed by an awareness that traditional models of therapeutic intervention are structured according to Western paradigms of wellness and psychological understanding. Our team have ongoing training around aspects of cultural competency. For example, in 2023 the team attended Diversity Matters training at King's; A\_Z LGBTQ+ Awareness delivered by MindOut; C&MHS hosted a university sector conference on Working with Intersectionality in Student Mental Health.