

ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN (2026-2030)

Metanoia Institute believes that excellent psychotherapy education should be accessible to talented people from all backgrounds. Our Access and Participation Plan (2026–2030) sets out how we will widen access to the counselling and psychotherapy professions, improve student success, and ensure that every student has the opportunity to thrive regardless of their background or circumstances.

As one of the UK's leading specialist providers of counselling, psychotherapy and counselling psychology education, we recognise that the profession must better reflect the diversity of the communities it serves. Our plan therefore goes beyond regulatory compliance, representing a long-term institutional commitment to creating a more inclusive profession and strengthening the future psychological workforce.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Demand for mental health services continues to grow across the UK, yet many communities remain underrepresented within the therapeutic professions. At Metanoia, we believe that increasing diversity within counselling and psychotherapy benefits not only students, but also clients, employers, healthcare providers and society more broadly.

Our own analysis highlights a number of persistent inequalities affecting access to higher education and student success. These include lower participation from people living in areas of socio-economic deprivation, lower representation of students from some ethnic minority backgrounds, lower participation by disabled students, lower completion rates for male students, and differential attainment for non-white students.

OUR STRATEGIC AMBITION

By 2030 we aim to:

- increase participation from students living in the most socio-economically disadvantaged communities
- improve representation of students from non-white backgrounds
- increase participation by disabled students
- reduce differential attainment between white and non-white students
- reduce completion gaps for disabled and male students
- minimise the impact of financial hardship on student success.

These objectives support Metanoia's wider strategic priorities of Inclusion, Innovation, Intelligence and Sustainability while contributing to a more diverse and culturally responsive mental health workforce.

OUR FOUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



1. WIDENING ACCESS INTO THE PROFESSIONS

We are expanding access through outreach, partnerships and more inclusive admissions. Key initiatives include:

- partnerships with schools, colleges and community organisations
- greater recognition of prior learning and professional experience
- more accessible admissions processes, including replacing traditional personal statements with structured application formats
- targeted scholarship promotion
- enhanced guidance and feedback for applicants
- inclusive pre-arrival communications and induction resources.

These activities are designed to encourage applications from groups who have traditionally been underrepresented within counselling and psychotherapy, while ensuring that prospective students feel that higher education and therapeutic careers are genuinely accessible.

2. SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS THROUGH INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Improving access alone is not enough. We are equally committed to ensuring students succeed once they arrive.

- Over the lifetime of the plan we will invest in:
- inclusive curriculum design
- more flexible and accessible assessment
- enhanced academic support
- accessible learning resources
- staff development in inclusive and trauma-informed pedagogy
- assistive technology
- student-led initiatives
- a new Student Investment Fund supporting professional development opportunities.

We are also embedding employability throughout the student journey, including five years of careers support following graduation, career boot camps and alumni mentoring to help students build sustainable careers.

OUR FOUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



3. CREATING A MENTALLY HEALTHY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Psychotherapy training is personally and emotionally demanding. Many students are balancing study alongside employment, caring responsibilities and complex personal circumstances.

Our approach treats mental health as a shared institutional responsibility rather than an individual issue.

Our work includes:

- proactive pre-entry support
- enhanced onboarding for students with additional needs
- improved disability disclosure processes
- trauma-informed staff development
- peer support initiatives
- inclusive quiet spaces
- clearer access to support services
- proactive wellbeing communications.

Our aim is to create psychologically safe learning environments where students feel able to seek support early and remain engaged throughout their studies.

4. REDUCING FINANCIAL BARRIERS

Professional psychotherapy training involves costs beyond tuition fees, including clinical supervision, personal therapy and professional membership. To reduce financial barriers we are investing in:

- scholarships
- an expanded Cost of Living Fund
- more affordable supervision and personal therapy opportunities
- simplified financial support processes
- initiatives designed to reduce hidden costs associated with professional training.

By reducing financial pressure we aim to improve both access and student retention while ensuring that financial circumstances do not determine who can enter the profession.

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

Partnership working is central to our approach.

Over the lifetime of the plan we will continue to strengthen relationships with:

- schools and further education colleges
- widening participation partnerships
- community organisations
- employers
- NHS and healthcare partners
- professional bodies
- voluntary sector organisations
- alumni and graduates.

Together we can improve awareness of therapeutic careers, broaden participation, create stronger progression pathways and ensure the future workforce better reflects the diversity of the communities it serves.

MEASURING OUR SUCCESS

The plan contains clear, measurable objectives against which progress will be monitored annually.

Evaluation will focus on improvements in:

- student access
- continuation and completion
- academic attainment
- graduate progression
- student experience
- effectiveness of individual interventions.

Findings will be published regularly and shared with the wider higher education sector through conferences, partnerships and evidence-sharing networks, contributing to national understanding of effective widening participation practice.

LOOKING AHEAD

Metanoia's Access and Participation Plan reflects our belief that widening participation is fundamental to the future of counselling and psychotherapy.

By removing barriers, strengthening student support and working collaboratively with partners across education, healthcare and the voluntary sector, we aim to develop a more representative, inclusive and highly skilled therapeutic workforce: one capable of meeting the increasingly diverse mental health needs of communities across the UK.



FIND OUT MORE AT

[METANOIA.AC.UK/ABOUT/ACCESS-AND-PARTICIPATION-PLAN](https://metanoia.ac.uk/about/access-and-participation-plan)