



Referrals Leaflet 2022

Who we are and what we do

Room to Heal is a specialist charity working therapeutically with people who have survived torture and organised violence. We provide an integrative programme of group therapy (with some short term individual therapy to start with), creative and social activities, and practical casework assistance. At the heart of our work lies the cultivation of a non-residential community through which our members re-establish trust and belonging, and start to build meaningful lives in exile.

The central therapeutic support we offer is through our weekly mixed-gender therapeutic support groups. We currently run two long term groups on a Tuesday morning and one time-limited group on a Thursday morning (this is a year-long group starting in summer 2022). Each group is co-facilitated by two therapists. At the moment the groups are online, but with the intention for them to be face-to-face again when it is safe to do so. Group membership varies but is generally limited to 10 to 12 people.

In addition, people in our community have the opportunity to meet weekly on a Friday afternoon at Culpeper Garden in Islington for cooking (and eating a meal!), gardening and catching up.

We also provide casework support for members of the community who are in the therapy groups, who need help with housing problems, the asylum process, education and training and health related issues.

We hope to run a couple of intensive therapeutic retreats in the English countryside in 2022 and other social and creative activities depending on what is possible during the ongoing Covid pandemic.



Our Members

The Room to Heal community is made up of people from over thirty countries all over the world. Our members are united by common experiences of torture and extreme human cruelty on one hand, and the challenge and complexity of claiming asylum and building meaningful lives in the UK, on the other.

Our members include people tortured by governments for political reasons; people trafficked to the UK, and people forced to flee their country of origin because of sexuality-based violence, conflict and persecution.

Our members typically struggle with a range of psychological and physical symptoms resulting from their violent, traumatic experiences, as well as the loss of family, home and community, and the sense of isolation that follows.

Our group therapy approach facilitates members to develop the confidence to support each other and to rebuild self-worth. Our emphasis on peer-led healing nurtures a sense of belonging and value. The shared experience of survival can have a profound impact on members. Seeing other people getting past seemingly insurmountable shame, loss and barriers engenders hope for the whole community.



Our community focus

Room to Heal is a community for everyone involved: members, staff and volunteers. There is an important principle here. Whatever the nature of our life experiences, and our differences, we are all human beings united by our need for love and belonging; our struggles and experiences of loss. We have different roles of course – therapist, caseworker or member for example – but, in the end, our commonalities are greater.

To this end, we aim to move beyond an expert-patient relationship and strive to relate to our members first and foremost as human beings, rather than clients or patients. We believe that to be recognised as such, and treated with dignity and kindness, is crucial to the healing process.

We see that talking about trauma has its limits, so we help people to reconnect to their bodies and to the natural world. We bear witness to the depth of pain that people have experienced, but we also appreciate the importance of humour, playfulness and a light touch.

We respond to each individual's needs holistically, and our therapeutic and casework teams work closely to support members as they try to move forward with their lives.

Our garden and the natural world are also at the heart of our work. Our garden is a space to talk, and a space for therapy - a place to cultivate, to contemplate, and to share a meal and some company. Perhaps most importantly, it is a space to simply be.

Supporting our members to move from a place where life feels as though it is already 'finished', to one in which hope and a new life becomes possible, is at the heart of what we do.



Our team



Our programme staff team (all part-time) currently consists of four therapists, three caseworkers, and a clinical administrator, as well as clinical and non clinical supervisors.

We also have a director, a finance officer and fundraiser and a number of volunteers, who support all aspects of the charity, as well as a team of dedicated Trustees.



Referral process - next steps

Referral form and assessments

To make a referral to Room to Heal please download and complete our referral and consent form available on our website www.roomtoheal.org/makeareferral. Please then send the forms to our clinical administrator at info@roomtoheal.org

We aim to get back to you within a week and to see people who have been referred to us for assessments within one month.

When we receive a referral, a decision is made by the therapeutic team if the person meets our criteria - see referral form. If they do, a therapist will meet with the person referred (either face-to-face or online) for an assessment. If they don't, the referee will be informed and suggestions made for other more appropriate places to refer to.

Assessments normally take place over two hourly sessions over a couple of weeks. It is a chance for a potential member and ourselves to decide if Room to Heal is the right place for them, discussing the benefits and challenges of the commitment to group therapy and community work.

Short-term individual therapy

If a decision is made between the person referred and the therapist that they will join the community we are then able to offer short-term individual therapy - normally 6 sessions. This is aimed at preparing new members to join the Room to Heal community and group therapy. This is also a point, where appropriate, to address enduring post-traumatic symptoms such as panic attacks, lack of sleep etc.

Casework

At this point a new member will also be assigned a caseworker to support with practical challenges and develop educational opportunities. It is important to stress that though we do try to assist our members wherever possible with casework issues (including housing, legal and welfare related) the heart of our work involves providing a therapeutic community for our members in order that they can start to heal from their traumatic experiences and build a meaningful life in exile.

Group therapy

After completing the individual therapy, all new members will then be expected to join and regularly attend one of our therapeutic support groups, which run weekly (either on a Tuesday or a Thursday morning from 11.30 am to 1.00pm).

Therapeutic reports and letters

Room to Heal sometimes provides therapeutic reports for members in relation to their immigration cases, however, we are unable to provide reports independently of full participation in our programme. We cannot accept referrals purely for the production of medico-legal reports.

Financial and digital support

We are able to contribute to travel costs towards peoples' travel to our sessions when they are in person. We are also able to support with digital access to our online groups including providing a laptop and internet data when this is needed.