



Accessible to all

We share responses from our 2020 FHT Equality and Diversity Survey, take a critical look at equality and diversity within the industry and discuss actions we can all take to improve inclusivity.

The death of George Floyd and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement led us to consider the actions that the FHT can take to promote anti-racism within the industry. It also drove us to question where the gaps lie when it comes to equality, diversity and inclusivity and to consider the steps we could take to create change.

We identified three key areas to look at: the diversity of therapists, the diversity of clients and the adequacy of training to cater for a diverse client base. To find out more, we asked our members to fill out the 2020 FHT Equality and Diversity Survey and tell us their views.

STATISTICS FROM OUR DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY SURVEY

Thank you to all of you who took the time to respond, below we have highlighted some key feedback from the survey.

Diversity of therapists

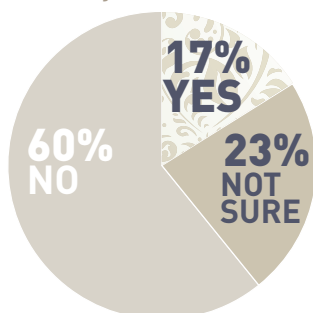
We asked survey respondents, 'do you consider yourself part of a minority group?'



Though the overwhelming response was 'no', it led us to consider that the term 'diversity' may mean different things to us all and that 'diversity of client base' should be considered in relation to the area where a service is being provided.

Challenges when promoting diversity

We asked survey respondents, 'have you faced any challenges when trying to promote diversity?'



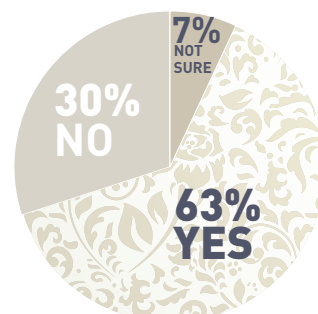
'Apart from including my friends and family in my own photos for the website, it has been quite challenging to find good quality photos that I can use for my digital and physical marketing materials.' Survey respondent, MFHT.

Training

We asked survey respondents, 'During training did you learn to offer treatments that support a wide range of clients?'

'The only diversification in practice that was covered during my training was age related, and generally related to pressure application.'

Survey respondent, anonymous.



'Most basic training seems to be how to deal with a typical "cookie cutter" client. Apart from addressing health issues in the initial consultation, there was very little discussion around, for example, adjusting your massage table for a wheelchair user, or communicating with a person who is deaf. I believe diversity training needs to be added to all Level 3 courses.'

Survey respondent, MFHT.

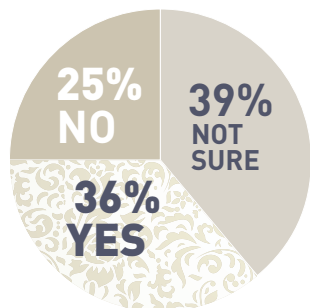
Though it is positive that 63% of respondents felt their training was adequate for equality and diversity, it is important to consider that this may only relate to certain courses and that respondents might be unaware of the gaps that exist.



Inclusivity

We asked survey respondents 'do you think there are inclusivity gaps within the therapy industry as a whole?'

'We live in a society with systemic racism so there is no reason to think it wouldn't exist in our industry as much as any other. It's probably more evident in the beauty sector, as beauty ideals and fashion tend to be focused on white people. But without anti-bias and race awareness training, most white people are unaware of their own privilege and don't actively challenge racism.'
Survey respondent, MFHT.



The fact that the highest response to this question was 'not sure', made us consider whether there has been enough research on equality and diversity within the industry. There are indications that research in this area is being undertaken, with organisations such as the British Beauty Council having recently published their diversity and inclusion report. It is also worth mentioning that inclusivity gaps may be visible if we broaden our awareness of what an inclusive industry could look like and work to address those using the tips outlined in this feature.

Caroline Boulton, MFHT, talks about creating an LGBTQ+ inclusive therapy space...



I believe treatments that improve physical and mental wellbeing must be accessible to everybody and delivered in an inclusive and safe environment. This is why being able to offer an LGBTQ+ inclusive therapy practice is so important to me.

My current client base includes people from the LGBTQ+ community, from a range of ethnic backgrounds and people with health conditions. At my practice, we treat everyone as individuals and without preconception.

Making small changes within your therapy practice can go a long way to making your LGBTQ+ clients feel immediately comfortable, this is hugely important because they are likely to be feeling more anxious on initial assessment.

A few examples of the anxieties that someone from the LGBTQ+ community might be feeling are, being misgendered or being asked their medical history in a non-trans-affirming way, they may also have had a previous discriminatory experience within a healthcare setting. A trans or non-binary* client may not be comfortable in their own body, leading to anxieties about their treatment. They may pick up on any uncomfotability felt by the therapist or notice intolerant reactions of others working within the practice, they may also be concerned about the availability of appropriate toilet facilities.

All our clients will have different experiences of being LGBTQ+ so we always ensure to ask what something means to them, rather than us making assumptions. If a client feels seen and validated from the moment they walk through the door, their experience of treatment is more likely to be positive and effective in enhancing wellbeing.

*People who understand their gender in a way that goes beyond simply identifying as either a man or a woman. →



Creating an LGBTQ+ inclusive practice

1 Disclosing gender

It is important that the decision to disclose gender remains up to the individual. Within the clinic we have tailored our paperwork to include all pronouns (she/her, he/him, they/them), as well as the spectrum of gender identities. Some clients who come for treatments may also be exploring their gender so there is acknowledgement that pronouns or name may change during a course of treatments. In rare cases of misgendering, apologies are made swiftly and confidently.

2 Approaching treatment collaboratively

Treatment is approached collaboratively to ensure the treatment room is a safe space for my clients. Trans clients may never have experienced positive touch before and may feel worried about being judged if their body image does not 'match' ingrained societal expectations. I will always ask the client to wear the clothing they are comfortable in and alter my techniques to work around this. I will assume the client may not be comfortable in their own body so will explain the steps of my treatment as I carry it out, working to how their body responds to treatment and regularly asking how they are feeling.

3 In and around your practice

Having rainbow and trans flags in our front window communicates to the LGBTQ+ community that our centre is inclusive and welcoming. Our toilet is gender neutral too, which we make clear on our website.



4 Professional development

Therapists can improve their own knowledge by researching online for relevant articles on how LGBTQ+ clients can benefit from therapies and the common barriers. Trans-awareness training courses are also delivered in certain cities and online.

Conclusion

In the future I would like to see a therapy industry where diversity is no longer a surprise and where everyone feels confident to access therapies. I would also expect training on how to work with diverse bodies to become an integrated part of our industry and an expectation of every course.

Caroline Boulton has been a sports therapist for 26 years. She runs her own clinic in Wilmslow, Cheshire and is an expert in sports injury rehabilitation, watt bike coaching and training.
handforthsportsinjurycentre.co.uk



Denise Berwick, MFHT, looks at using localisation to increase diversity and how to support clients from a low socio-economic background...

I worked as a youth worker and project manager before training as a reflexologist and was given a broad range of equality and diversity training. This training, paired with having worked in a diverse community, helped shape me and increased my understanding of inclusivity. It grounded me in good practice, such as being aware of the language I am using and the language that is being used around me, indirect discrimination, unconscious bias, emphasising the benefits of diversity and offering appropriate support.

When I became a reflexologist in 1997, my aim was to make reflexology inclusive to the community that I lived in. As a reflexologist in rural Gloucestershire, I believe that localisation is a sustainable way for therapists to build business. Working locally strengthens our ability to withstand ups and downs, to contribute to the local economy and to respond to the needs of our communities.

My current client base includes people living with disabilities, members of the LGBTQ+ community, men, older people, full-time carers and people struggling with their mental health. I currently only treat one person from the BAME community which reflects the area I live and work in. I find it helpful to use the demographics of my local community as a measure of how diverse my client-base is (this information is available through your local council).

Supporting clients financially

Years ago, I made connections with local GP surgeries by contacting local health visitors and speaking to them about reflexology and the way I wanted to work. From these conversations it became clear to me that those who might benefit the most from reflexology treatments may struggle to pay for the service. I decided that the best way to ensure I could continue to support these clients was to come to an arrangement, below are just a few of the ways I support my clients financially:

- Working collaboratively to decide what they can pay at the time. This also means that when they are in a financial position to be able to pay more, they are often honest enough to do so.
- Offering a gift economy where a client can exchange goods or services in return for a treatment.
- I provide an agreed number of free treatments to clients who have been diagnosed with a life-threatening health condition.

Overall, I find that there is a financial flow and I have a steady income to meet my needs. How much I charge where there is financial hardship is done case by case, nobody so far has abused this and it helps that I have a steady stream of clients who don't have difficulty paying.

My vision for the future is to see a richly diverse multicultural industry where practices are regularly reviewed and reacted to where necessary.

Denise Berwick, MFHT, is a reflexologist, stress management practitioner and natural mindfulness guide based in Gloucestershire. deniseberwick@icloud.com



Hinna, MFHT, explains the steps she takes to make her therapy practice more inclusive for her BAME clients...

I have a diverse client base with people from Indian, Pakistani, black-Caribbean, Bangladeshi, British Asian and black-British backgrounds. The majority of my clients are either in full-time employment or are retired.

I have always loved languages and am fluent in Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi and French, I also speak a variety of regional dialects. I am often approached by a family member of a potential client to ask if I can communicate with their relative. One of the first things I am usually told is, 'my mum can't speak English, she has mobility issues would you be able to help?' I use my listing on the FHT therapy directory to raise awareness of the different languages I speak, I also list my qualifications and I have uploaded photos of myself so that people can familiarise themselves before they meet me. When I meet my client in person I sit and have a chat with them in a language they feel comfortable speaking in. I ask them

what they would like their treatment to entail, how they are feeling and if they have any concerns.

Many clients are nervous but when I do communicate to them in their mother tongue, they begin to open up. It is important that as a therapist I can empathise with my clients and create a space where they feel comfortable. Accessing complementary therapies is normal in many cultures but language barriers can make it a struggle for individuals to find a replacement once a person has left their native country. Being able to communicate effectively has led to me making incredible bonds with my clients and a strong feeling of connection.

Above and beyond language, I am aware that I need to promote complementary therapies in a way that my BAME clients can relate to.

Below are just a few of the ways I achieve this:

- Relating my treatments to ones my clients may be familiar with in their own native countries.
- Using products and oils that my clients have grown up using.
- Being careful of not using technical jargon.
- Explaining why I am using certain techniques during the treatment.

I am optimistic about the future in terms of equality and diversity in our industry. If therapists are able to support clients from different backgrounds, then why is this not the norm? I hope the industry can take note and move with the times because these conversations are here to stay.

Hinna, MFHT is a complementary therapist with over 12 years' experience. She has a diverse range of clients varying from athletes, the corporate sector and those with learning difficulties. [facebook.com/hinna_relaxology](https://www.facebook.com/hinna_relaxology)



Creating change

We had some helpful feedback on the actions that the FHT and the industry as a whole can take to improve equality and diversity. From this feedback, we have outlined some of the short-term actions we pledge to take.

- Training and CPD focused on how to increase equality and diversity within your therapy practice.
- Regular articles within International Therapist magazine on equality and diversity and sharing stories from therapists from a diverse range of backgrounds.
- Recognising the contribution of therapists from a diverse background at FHT events.
- Continuous review of the imagery used in FHT marketing materials both in print and online.
- Regular reviews of policies and practices.

The FHT has produced six anti-racism commitments that embed into everything we do. This document is available to view at fht.org.uk/anti-racism-commitments

We will be keeping members informed about our long-term ambitions to creating change in the industry in future issues of the magazine, please keep an eye out for the latest from us.

Conclusion

This has been a difficult time for many as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the incredibly sad and angering news about George Floyd. These events have made us all take a broader look at the way we live and the impact it has on the world around us. The FHT is no different, we have taken an inward look at the way we operate and outlined our own commitments to anti-racism.

Going forward, we will continue our efforts to support and encourage inclusivity, across all levels of the industry. In the meantime, as well as the tips provided by members in this article, we have highlighted a few simple changes you can make to create a more inclusive practice in our 'six ways to' regular (page 32). Though we are at the start of the road when it comes to initiating wide-scale change, it is positive that each step we take could make a difference to more people accessing therapies and feeling comfortable doing so. 🗣️



We have also considered what a fully inclusive industry could look like and how that could one day be achieved.

To gain five CPD points, visit fht.org.uk/CPD and download a reflective practice on this feature.

What are your thoughts?

We would love to know what you have been doing to increase equality and diversity within your therapy practice.

Do you have any information you'd like to share with other members on this topic? Please email Leanne Sheill at lsheill@fht.org.uk writing 'equality and diversity' in the subject box.



USEFUL RESOURCES

There are lots of resources available to increase your own awareness of equality and diversity, including online training and resources, tests, podcasts, books and communities.

ORGANISATIONS & WEBSITES

Your local council - Through your local council website you can find helpful statistics on the diversity in your area.

■ gov.uk/find-local-council

Harvard implicit bias - Any of us could have an unconscious bias as a result of the environment we are brought up in. Harvard have created a series of short free tests to check your unconscious biases, educational links are provided at the end for further information.

■ implicit.harvard.edu/implicit

Future Men - A charity looking to break the social constructs around male behaviors and expectations. This website includes information on community groups and how to contact these for support on encouraging men to access therapies.

■ futuremen.org/who-we-are

Black Lives Matter - Resources to support the Black Lives Matter movement.

■ blacklivesmatter.com

Scope UK - A charity focused on achieving equality for disabled people with useful resources and information.

■ scope.org.uk

FHT Education - Find training that offers guidance in supporting clients with

additional needs. Please be aware that the FHT is looking to broaden its scope on equality and diversity but we do have training in cancer care, mental health and working with babies and young people.

FHT.ORG.UK/TRAINING

Articles to help you diversify your business

■ fht.org.uk/diversity-best-practice

■ fht.org.uk/forbes-business-advice

■ fht.org.uk/workplace-diversity

PHOTOGRAPHY

Free stock images of people from BAME and LGBTQ+ backgrounds.

■ nappy.co

■ eyeforebony.com

■ genderphotos.vice.com

APPS

Duolingo - A free gamified language learning app that helps you to learn languages such as Polish, Hindi, Japanese and Swahili.

■ duolingo.com

British Sign Language (BSL) - This free app provides level 1 sign language tutorial. BSL has also been providing their level 1 course at a discounted rate over the pandemic.

■ british-sign.co.uk

PODCASTS

Nancy - Stories and conversations about the LGBTQ+ experience today. Prepare to laugh and cry and laugh again.

■ wnycstudios.org/podcasts/nancy

About Race - Reni Eddo-Lodge, author of the book 'Why I'm No Longer Talking

to White People About Race' looks at the recent history that has led to the politics of today.

■ aboutracepodcast.com

Diversifying the Wellness Industry by Yoga Girl

Rachel Brathen discusses how making a change begins with recognising just how far we are from equality and diversity within the wellness industry and taking active steps towards change every day.

■ yogagirl.com/podcast

BOOKS

Biased: The New Science of Race and Inequality by Dr Jennifer Eberhardt

- In this book, Jennifer explains how these unconscious biases affect every sector of society, leading to enormous disparities from the classroom to the courtroom to the boardroom.

■ fht.org.uk/inequality-book

Complementary therapies for older people in care by Sharon Tay

- A book for complementary and beauty therapists working with older people in care, this book offers unique information and practical advice on the issues that are often overlooked in training.

■ fht.org.uk/older-clients-book

Unlocking generational codes by Anna Liotta

- Generational expert, Anna Liotta, explains how to overcome the 'generation gap' to effectively communicate and develop meaningful relationships with members of all the generations in the workplace and in everyday life.

■ fht.org.uk/generational-codes-book