



Riverside Counselling Service
Chief Executive Officer
Recruitment Pack
September 2026

Charity Number: 1018853

Welcome from our Chair

Thank you for your interest in the role of Chief Executive Officer at Riverside Counselling Service.

For more than 30 years, Riverside has provided clinically excellent, affordable and accessible counselling and therapeutic services across our local communities. Every day, we see the life-changing difference that timely, compassionate support can make to people experiencing mental health and emotional difficulties.



Our vision is simple but ambitious: **stronger, healthier communities where everyone can access the mental health support they need.**

Like many charities, we face growing demand, increasing complexity and financial pressures. At the same time, there are exciting opportunities to strengthen our services, develop new partnerships and extend our reach.

We are seeking an exceptional Chief Executive who shares our values and has the vision, energy and determination to lead Riverside into its next chapter. Working with a committed Board and dedicated team of staff, volunteers and counsellors, you will help shape our strategy, strengthen our partnerships and build a sustainable future for the charity.

This is a unique opportunity to make a lasting difference. We hope this recruitment pack gives you a clear sense of who we are, what we stand for and the impact we make.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, thank you for considering joining Riverside. We look forward to receiving your application.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'C. McLaughlin', with a horizontal line underneath.

Catherine McLaughlin

Chair of Trustees

About Riverside Counselling Service

Riverside was borne out of the motivation of a small group of volunteers who wanted to make a difference to the mental wellbeing of local residents. The charity started life in 1989 in Henley. Our mission is to improve quality of life across South Oxfordshire by providing high-quality, accessible, and affordable counselling for adults and young people. We offer one-to-one sessions and therapeutic groups, adapting our services to meet local needs through strong community engagement. Our service has expanded its reach with bases for our counselling provision in Henley, Wallingford and online. We run a therapeutic group in Didcot and a brief intervention service in Berinsfield. Riverside is accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP).

Riverside provides mental health support to around 350 local residents each year. In the past 12 months, we delivered 3,800 one-to-one counselling sessions, ran 44 therapeutic group sessions and supported 48 adults through our brief intervention service.

Riverside is a placement provider for volunteer counsellors who are all aligned to a training institution. The contribution of our counsellors is core to our service delivery and we are supported by up to 50 counsellors each year.

Our values as a charity are:

Ethical

Riverside works in line with the ethical guidelines of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) ensuring safe, professional, and accountable therapeutic practice.

Community Oriented

Riverside identifies and addresses barriers to mental health support, ensuring services are accessible, relevant, and responsive to local need.

Compassionate

Riverside treats all individuals with empathy, dignity, and respect in every aspect of our work.

Clinical Excellence

Riverside is committed to the development of our clinical team and counsellors to ensure that we offer clinically excellent therapeutic services.

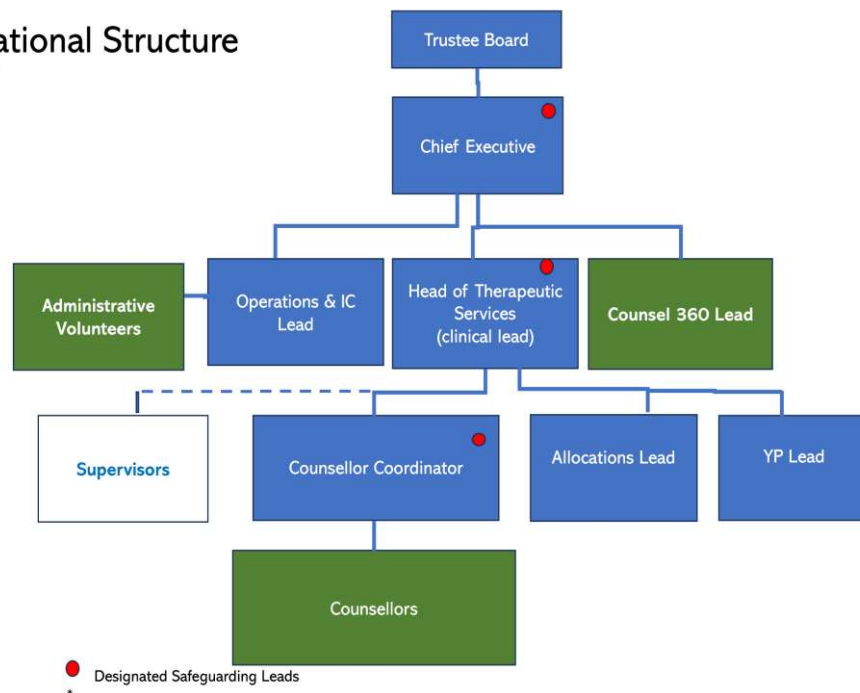
Continuous Learning

Riverside is committed to learning, reflection and improvement across our trustees, workforce, counsellor community and service provision.

The Riverside Team

Riverside operates with a small staff team who all work remotely. The current team structure is detailed below. We are supported in our work by clinical supervisors who all work on a freelance basis providing monthly supervision to our counsellors.

Organisational Structure
January 2026



Chief Executive Officer

Location:

Home-based, with regular attendance at Riverside sites and meetings across South Oxfordshire.

Hours:

21 hours per week

Salary:

£55,000 per annum pro rata.

Contract:

Permanent

Accountable to:

Chair of the Board of Trustees

Responsible to:

Board of Trustees

About Riverside Counselling Service

Riverside Counselling Service's (Riverside) vision is for stronger, healthier communities where mental health support is accessible to all.

Our mission is to improve quality of life across South Oxfordshire by providing high-quality, accessible, and affordable counselling for adults and young people. We offer one-to-one sessions and therapeutic groups, adapting our services to meet local needs through strong community engagement.

Established in Henley-on-Thames in 1989, Riverside provides one-to-one counselling, therapeutic groups and brief intervention services for adults and young people aged 12 and over. We adapt our services to meet local needs through strong community engagement.

Riverside is accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and operates in accordance with its ethical guidelines. Our counselling service is delivered predominantly by volunteer counsellors who are either recently qualified or completing the clinical hours required by their training institution.

We support more than 300 beneficiaries each year, providing short-, medium- and longer-term counselling support. Our work makes a meaningful difference to the lives of individuals, families and the wider community.

About the Role

This is an exciting opportunity to lead Riverside through its next stage of development.

The Chief Executive Officer will provide strategic and organisational leadership to Riverside, ensuring that the charity remains focused on achieving its vision and mission while strengthening its long-term financial sustainability, resilience and impact.

A key priority for the CEO will be to **grow and diversify Riverside's income**, developing a strong and sustainable fundraising strategy and identifying new opportunities for income generation, partnerships and service development. The successful candidate will bring a strong track record in fundraising and a good understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing small charities in the current funding environment.

Working closely with the Board of Trustees, the CEO will translate Riverside's strategy into clear priorities and achievable plans. They will provide strong leadership to the small management team, ensuring that resources are used effectively and that the organisation remains financially and operationally sustainable.

The CEO will work closely with the Head of Therapeutic Services and Clinical Team to ensure that the organisation's strategic direction supports the delivery of high-quality, safe and effective services.

As a local charity, Riverside places considerable value on community relationships. The CEO will therefore play a leading role in developing local networks, strengthening partnerships and raising Riverside's profile across South Oxfordshire.

The role requires a confident, entrepreneurial and pragmatic leader who can identify opportunities for growth while maintaining appropriate financial, operational and organisational risk management.

Given the part-time nature of the role, the CEO will be expected to work strategically, prioritise effectively and make best use of the skills and expertise of the Board, management team, volunteers and external partners.

Key Responsibilities

1. Strategic Leadership and Organisational Development

- Work closely with the Board of Trustees and Clinical Team to develop, implement and deliver Riverside's strategic objectives.
- Translate the charity's strategy into clear, achievable operational priorities and plans.
- Identify opportunities for growth, partnership and development of service provision in response to local need and feedback from service users, communities and volunteers.
- Develop Riverside's organisational resilience and long-term sustainability.
- Keep abreast of developments in mental health policy, practice and commissioning and consider their implications for Riverside.
- Provide the Board with clear advice on opportunities, challenges and organisational risks.
- Support the Board in developing an appropriate appetite for growth and investment, balancing ambition with financial and operational risk.
- Ensure that Riverside's activities remain aligned with its charitable objectives, values and strategic priorities.

2. Fundraising, Income Generation and Financial Sustainability

Fundraising and financial sustainability are central priorities of this role.

- Develop and deliver a clear fundraising and income-generation strategy to support Riverside's long-term financial sustainability.
- Build and maintain a strong and diversified fundraising pipeline across Trusts and Foundations, community fundraising, statutory opportunities, partnerships and other appropriate income streams.
- Identify new opportunities to increase income and develop Riverside's reach and impact.
- Build strong relationships with funders, donors, partners and other key stakeholders.
- Ensure that Riverside's impact and outcomes are clearly articulated in funding applications, reports and external communications.

- Monitor Riverside's financial position, forecasts and performance against budget and provide clear reports to the Board.
- Work closely with the Treasurer to develop the annual budget and ensure that Riverside operates within its reserves policy.
- Work with the Treasurer to ensure financial transparency and compliance with relevant regulatory and legal requirements.
- Ensure that fundraising and financial activity is rigorous, ethical and aligned with Riverside's charitable objectives.
- Chair the Community Fundraising Sub-Committee and ensure that its work supports the wider fundraising strategy.

3. Leadership and People

- Provide direct line management to the Head of Therapeutic Services, Operations and Initial Consultation Lead.
- Provide clear direction, support and accountability to the management team.
- Lead and develop the existing team through effective delegation, performance management and development.
- Foster a collaborative, inclusive and values-driven culture across staff, volunteers and counsellors.
- Champion and embed equity, diversity and inclusion across the organisation.
- Create a supportive and safe working environment for staff, volunteers and counsellors.
- Ensure appropriate arrangements are in place for knowledge management, business continuity and cover during the absence of key personnel.
- Make effective use of the skills and expertise available within the Board, management team and wider Riverside community.

4. Service Delivery, Partnerships and Community Engagement

- Work with the Head of Therapeutic Services and Operations and Initial Consultation Lead to maintain strategic oversight of service delivery and operational performance.
- Ensure that Riverside's services remain responsive to local need and are delivered in line with the charity's strategic objectives.
- Develop and maintain strong relationships with key partners across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors in South Oxfordshire.
- Identify opportunities for partnership working that strengthen Riverside's impact, reach and sustainability.
- Represent Riverside at relevant networking meetings, professional forums and community events.
- Act as an ambassador for Riverside, communicating its vision, impact and importance to local communities and partners.

- Maintain an understanding of the wider mental health landscape and its implications for Riverside.

5. Clinical Governance, Safeguarding and Quality

- Work closely with the Head of Therapeutic Services and Clinical Team to support high standards of clinical practice and service quality.
- Ensure that appropriate clinical governance arrangements are in place and that the CEO understands and appropriately escalates significant clinical risks.
- Ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet relevant ethical, regulatory and legal requirements, working with the appropriate clinical leads.
- Undertake Designated Safeguarding Lead responsibilities as part of the agreed rota, subject to appropriate training, supervision and support.
- Work with the Clinical Team to ensure Riverside operates in accordance with the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy's Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions and maintains its annual accreditation.
- Ensure significant safeguarding concerns are appropriately escalated, managed and reported to the Board in accordance with Riverside's policies and procedures.

6. Communications and Raising Riverside's Profile

- Work with the Marketing and Communications Sub-Committee to oversee Riverside's communications and profile-raising strategy.
- Work collaboratively with the Community Fundraising and Communications Consultant and Marketing and Communications Sub-Committee to strengthen Riverside's visibility and reach.
- Ensure Riverside's website, social media, publicity and promotional materials are accurate, current and aligned with the organisation's key messages.
- Develop Riverside's profile and reputation across South Oxfordshire.
- Ensure Riverside communicates its impact effectively to service users, funders, partners, volunteers and the wider community.
- Identify opportunities to raise awareness of Riverside and strengthen its position within the local mental health and community landscape.

7. Governance, Risk and Compliance

- Work closely with the Board to ensure that Riverside fulfils its governance responsibilities and complies with its constitutional requirements and relevant Charity Commission requirements.

- Provide the Board with timely, accurate and relevant information to support effective decision-making.
- Organise Board meetings and the AGM, ensuring papers are prepared and circulated in good time.
- Support the Chair with trustee recruitment, induction and ongoing trustee engagement.
- Maintain Riverside's risk register and ensure that significant risks and mitigating actions are regularly reported to the Board.
- Ensure Riverside continues to meet its charitable objectives within a clear and effective governance framework.
- Ensure compliance with relevant safeguarding, GDPR, health and safety and employment legislation.
- Lead the development, review and implementation of organisational policies, procedures and best-practice guidance.
- Ensure effective communication and information flow between the Board, management team, Clinical Team and wider organisation.

8. Operational Oversight

- Maintain strategic oversight of key operational areas including HR, premises, IT and health and safety, working with the relevant leads and external providers.
- Ensure that operational arrangements support safe, effective and financially sustainable service delivery.
- Ensure appropriate business continuity arrangements are in place.
- Identify operational risks and opportunities and ensure that these are appropriately managed and reported.

Scope of the Role

The CEO will operate strategically and will not be expected to undertake routine administrative, clinical or operational tasks that can appropriately be delegated to members of the management team, staff, volunteers or external providers. However the CEO will be responsible for the strategic and operational execution of ensuring the charity remains a going concern through effective Fundraising.

The CEO will be supported by an active and skilled Board of Trustees and an experienced Clinical Team. The successful candidate will be expected to make effective use of this expertise while retaining clear accountability for organisational leadership, financial sustainability and delivery of the charity's strategic objectives.

In addition, the postholder will be expected to undertake other activities appropriate and commensurate with the level of responsibility and accountability of the role.

Person Specification

Essential Criteria

- Proven leadership experience within a small charity, voluntary sector or public sector organisation.
- Demonstrate a strong understanding of mental health services and the valuable contribution that counselling and talking therapies can make to individuals and communities.
- Experience of developing and delivering strategies that strengthen financial sustainability and generate income.
- Strong financial acumen, including budgeting, forecasting, cost control and income generation.
- Ability to identify opportunities for growth, partnerships and service development while managing risk.
- Excellent communication and relationship-building skills, with the ability to engage effectively with a wide range of stakeholders.
- Collaborative, inclusive and empowering leadership style, with the confidence to make difficult decisions when required.
- Ability to work effectively with a Board, understanding the distinction between governance and executive leadership.
- Highly organised, self-motivated and able to prioritise effectively within a part-time senior leadership role.

Desirable Criteria

- Previous charity CEO experience is a bonus but not essential we know brilliant candidates come from a wide range of backgrounds.
- Understanding and appreciation of counselling and psychotherapeutic approaches.
- Experience of working with a Board and understanding of charity governance, statutory compliance and best practice.
- Experience of developing and delivering community fundraising initiatives.
- Experience of developing partnerships across statutory, voluntary and community sectors.
- Good knowledge of South Oxfordshire and its local communities.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Riverside is committed to embedding equity, diversity and inclusion across all areas of our workforce and service delivery. We recognise that there is always more we can do and are committed to continual improvement.

We actively encourage applications from all sections of the community and seek to ensure that our recruitment and selection practices are accessible, fair and as free from bias as possible.

Making an Application

To apply for the CEO role at Riverside, please send your CV and a **supporting statement** explaining why you are interested in the role and how you meet the person specification to:

contact@riversidecounselingservice.co.uk

If you choose to use AI to support the preparation of your personal statement, we encourage you to ensure that the final statement reflects your own experience, personality and tone of voice. While AI tools can be helpful, generic or overly polished statements can lack the depth and individuality that help us understand the person behind the application. Please take time to ensure that your application presents your skills and experience authentically.

Informal Discussions

Informal conversations about the role can be arranged with:

Catherine McLaughlin

Chair of the Board of Trustees

Riverside Counselling Service

cath.mclaughlin@riversidecounsellingservice.co.uk

Sophie Wellings

Chief Executive Officer

Riverside Counselling Service

sophie.wellings@riversidecounsellingservice.co.uk

Closing date: 02.10.2026

Shortlisting w/c: 05.10.2026

Interviews (stage 1) w/c: 12.10.2026

We look forward to hearing from you.