



Placement Counsellors' Handbook

Beginning with The Awareness Centre Counselling Service (TACCS)

TACCS holds clinical responsibility for clients of the Counselling Service. This underpins all elements of the contract between the Service and counsellors.

TAC is an Organisational Member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and all counsellors working at the Centre on placement must work according to the BACP's Framework for Good Practice. TAC reserves the right to end a counsellor's placement if it is felt that the counsellor is in breach of their contract with TACCS or is in breach of the BACP's Framework for Good Practice or other relevant codes of ethics, conduct or practice.

TACCS offers NHS and addiction placements. **All counsellors begin on an initial probationary period of six months.** This probationary period may be extended by the Counselling Services Manager as deemed necessary.

There is an initial induction process during which you will be introduced to the practical workings of your placement such as paperwork, policies and procedures and the layout of the building. You will be assigned a personal supervisor who you will see on both an individual and group basis. Your client session times will also be agreed and rooms booked accordingly.

ADMINISTRATION

Beginning With Clients

All counsellors must use their allocated Awareness Centre room or room at the relevant GP Surgery during the time slot allocated to them.

You will be contacted via e-mail or telephone by the Counselling Services Manager when a potential client has been referred to you. You will then receive a copy of the completed Referral Form. It is important that you comply with any stated client preferences for contact by phone in making the first appointment. You should book a first appointment within 24 hours of receiving the referral and inform the Counselling Services Manager if a client fails to make contact within 48 hours.

Please remember that the client is told at the assessment and also in TACCS documentation that they are expected to attend the first six sessions. At the sixth session, you should conduct a review with the client to discuss whether counselling is meeting their needs and/or whether more specialised help is needed. NHS counselling is limited to 6 or 12 sessions, according to the client's needs.

If a client misses a session without notice, send DNA Letter 1. If a client does not attend for two sessions in a row without notice or contact, send DNA Letter 2. The client will then go back to his/her GP for another referral and consequent assessment. You should then;

- Discuss the case in supervision
- File all documents
- Inform the Counselling Services Manager

Occasionally, you may feel that a referral is inappropriate when, for example, the client's needs are beyond your frame of competence. You will need to discuss this in supervision and then:

- Discuss this with the client
- Contact the Counselling Services Manager
- File all documents
- Inform the client that the Counselling Services Manager will get in touch with the client offering a re-assessment or a new counsellor

If the client decides to end counselling before the completion of their initial contract of six sessions, check whether the client is ending because they would prefer another counsellor, and then, if not,

- Inform the Counselling Services Manager
- Discuss with your supervisor
- File all documents

If it transpires that the client wishes to continue counselling with a new counsellor, the above procedure should be followed. In addition, you should ask the client to contact the office for an appointment with the original Assessor. You should also inform the client that the process of finding a new counsellor may take up to two weeks.

If the client approaches the original Assessor to change counsellor but has not spoken about it to the counsellor, he or she will normally be asked to go back to discuss the issue with the counsellor.

Fees

TACCS NHS Service is funded by the Primary Care Trust - clients seen within this service pay no fees.

Additional Intervention With Clients

Bear in mind the possibility of your client also being offered a place in a group. This can run concurrently with one-to-one counselling or begin after this has been completed. Please contact the Counselling Services Manager to discuss referrals.

If you feel at any time that the client is manifesting behaviour or thought processes that indicate more specialist interventions are needed (for example for active drug misuse, mental illness or the need for more intensive therapy etc.), you should consult with your supervisor and then inform the Counselling Services Manager so that the Assessor can see the client, explain our concerns and discuss possibilities of more specialised support.

Client Evaluation Feedback Form

On the penultimate session, you must give your client a User Satisfaction Form and envelope. Ask your client to return the form to you in a sealed envelope at the last session and which you then file. If the client has not completed the form, or has forgotten to bring it, give them a form to fill out during the last session and then place it in an envelope and seal. It is very important that this form is filled out during the final session. Clients should also be given the list of other free counselling services unless they have decided to work with a counsellor at TACCS, go into a group at TACCS or have decided that they no longer want to receive counselling.

Case Ending Summary

You must complete the Final Assessment Form and Case Closure Form after a client's final session. These should then be filed appropriately. No further clients will be referred until all previous clients' paperwork is complete.

CONTACTING THE OFFICE

Changes in Circumstances

You must promptly inform the office of any changes in circumstances relating to your contract, for example, changing address, external supervisor, lowering frequency of external supervision and ending personal therapy while still in training. You should also inform your supervisor, who will check to make sure you continue to meet placement requirements.

Room Booking

Awareness Centre rooms are available from 09.00 until 22.00; GP surgery hours vary. Due to ethical and security concerns, you must ensure that you *never* work in the building alone outside office hours.

You must book rooms with the office every week. Reception will need to know the last name and first initial of your client. However if you are working from the GP surgery then you will have to book your clients in on the computer system weekly. Your room and hours of practice will be allocated by the GP Surgery where you are working in this setting.

We have nine rooms at the Awareness Centre that can be used for counselling, one of which, Room 1, is wheelchair accessible.

Office Hours

The Awareness Centre's opening hours are:

Monday – Friday: 9am – 10pm

Saturday: 10am – 6pm

Sunday: 10-4pm

Office hours are:

Monday – Friday: 9am-5pm.

If you need to speak to the Counselling Services Manager, you may either phone or come into the Centre during office hours. We are closed on Bank Holidays.

Other Services

TACCS NHS clients are referred by their GPs. Up to date information about existing support groups, mental health centres, specialised units etc. is available from the office.

Room Safety

There is a No Smoking policy throughout the centre. Please ensure you close and lock windows and turn off light before you leave the room.

In the Event of Fire

Please make yourself familiar with all exit locations and fire extinguishers (main door, side front door and the back door in room 3).

In the Event of an Accident

For minor accidents, there is a First Aid Kit in the office in the basement. For more serious incidents, phone the emergency services and make an entry in the Accident Book.

GOOD PRACTICE AT TAC

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is essential to the service offered by TACCS and client details are kept confidential *within the Awareness Centre* as an organisation. ***You must not enter into any other confidentiality agreement with the client.***

While summary information is given to NHS clients' GPs, no client-related information obtained from the assessment or counselling/therapy or support work can be passed onto any other individual outside the Centre without the express written permission of the client. Such requests must always be discussed in supervision before any action is taken.

Note-Keeping

You must keep appropriate records of all client sessions and file them in the filing cabinet either at the surgery or the Centre. **All records are the property of TACCS and the relevant GP Surgery. Clients also have the right to see notes kept of their sessions.** Records should concentrate on factual material and exclude comments on the counsellor's own process or diagnostic speculation. Records should include accounts of letters sent, telephone messages received or telephone conversations etc. Please familiarise yourself with the BACP's guidelines on note-keeping.

You may make copies of your notes for your training or case studies; you must ensure that these notes do not make any reference to client's personal details, such as name, address, or phone numbers.

Taping

If you wish to tape record sessions as a requirement of your training course, you will need to first discuss the matter with your supervisor. You will then need to ask for your client's informed consent and have them sign the Consent for Audio Recording of Sessions. You must also stress that the client is under no obligation to agree and that refusal will not jeopardise their right to work with you.

You should erase any tapes of sessions once you have finished using them. Please bear in mind that clients have a right to hear any existing tapes of their sessions. Where such a request is made, you should explore with the client how he or she will keep the tape confidential.

Cancellations

Clients are normally seen weekly and you should give your clients at least one month's notice of any absences. If you have concerns about a client during your absence, these should be raised with your supervisor. TACCS is not a crisis intervention service and the Administration is only available during office hours 09.00 – 17.00, so ensure that your client has contact details for appropriate sources of support in a crisis.

Holidays

The Awareness Centre Counselling Service is offered to clients all year round. This means that at all times throughout the year there needs to be a minimum number of counsellors available to take on referrals.

All placement counsellors are entitled to up to 5 weeks holiday a year.

- Up to 4 weeks may be taken over the summer period – please note that only 2 weeks of this can be taken during August
- Up to 2 weeks may be taken over the Christmas period
- Up to 2 weeks may be taken over the Easter period

If you choose not to take your holidays during this time you can apply to take your holiday throughout the year.

You will need to give a minimum of 6 weeks advance notice for your holiday dates. During popular holiday periods such as summer and Christmas, holiday requests will be authorised on a first come first served basis and so you may wish to give as much notice as possible in order to ensure you can take the dates you wish.

The Holiday Form needs to be completed and signed off by the Counselling Services Manager before you can take your holiday. It is your responsibility to bring your holiday period to the attention of your supervisor in order to discuss appropriate clinical management.

Leaving the Service

You must give at least two months written notice of your intention to leave the service to your supervisor and to the Counselling Services Manager. Failure to do so could result in the issue being referred to your training institution as well as the BACP as a breach of ethics. Upon agreeing notice with your supervisor, you must ensure that all client documentation is appropriately filled out.

Where counselling ends without adequate notice due to unforeseen circumstances, your client will be offered a priority appointment with the Assessor or Counselling Services Manager to discuss their response and options. A new counsellor will be assigned if necessary.

TACCS Clients and Private Practice

The transfer of a client from the service to the counsellor's private practice is not generally

permitted and is *never* sanctioned where the counsellor has been with TACCS for less than one year or is still in training. Nonetheless, TACCS recognises that exceptional circumstances can arise and wishes to respond appropriately in such cases. If you believe there is an overwhelming case for a client to continue with you in private practice, you should raise this with your supervisor. You would need to identify extenuating circumstances that might justify transfer and account for how this would be in the client's best interest. Additionally, the client would need to meet with the Counselling Services Manager to discuss the proposition.

If a client ends counselling and, at a later stage, contacts you to request counselling on a private basis, you may do so only after six months has elapsed since your ending at the Centre and where you are insured to work in private practice. You will then need to inform the Counselling Services Manager so that a letter can be sent to the client stating that TACCS no longer holds responsibility for their treatment.

Personal Psychotherapy

All counsellors working on placement at TACCS must be in personal therapy for the duration of their placement. TACCS can offer a list of accredited therapists affiliated with the Centre if necessary.

Supervision

Supervision is provided monthly, both on an individual basis (50 minutes) and in groups of up to four counsellors (two hours). You will be assigned the same supervisor for both group and individual supervision. You will not normally be able to change groups once you have agreed to join one except in exceptional circumstances. If you do need to change groups, you will need to give your supervisor and the Counselling Services Manager as much notice as possible as vacancies in supervision groups are rare and you need to have secured a place in a new group before leaving your old one. Personal difficulties or conflicts within the supervision group are not normally grounds for a change of group and should be discussed and resolved within the group.

Attendance at all monthly supervision is mandatory. When you are on holiday and not seeing clients at the Centre, you do not have to attend any supervision sessions during your absence. Failure to attend without adequate notice or explanation will be grounds for terminating your placement. If you miss either an individual or group supervision session, you will have to pay for an additional individual supervision session with your supervisor. If you miss more than two supervision sessions within six months, your placement will be terminated.

You are responsible for ensuring that you receive adequate supervision according to any training requirements. Any additional supervision outside TACCS of TACCS clients should be fed back into your TACCS group in order to avoid potential conflicts.

Supervision for Trainees

TACCS provides 1.5 equivalent hours of supervision per month; this is the BACP minimum for experienced counsellors and is not regarded as sustainable over an extended period of time. The

BACP recommends a ratio of 1 supervision hour per 8 client hours for trainees and it is your responsibility to ensure that you have adequate supervision for your caseload.

If a client is at high-risk or a case is very complex, the frequency of supervision may need to be increased. Your supervisor will support you by offering you more time individually, negotiating more time for you in the group, or referring you to another TACCS Supervisor or the Counselling Services Manager for additional support.