

### Overview

This unit is about developing and/or using a clear policy on pre-assessment communication. You will be required to develop or implement pre-assessment tools and provide information to the potential client about the service being offered. You will also be required to conduct an assessment interview during which you will be expected to use critical appraisal to identify key aspects of the client's circumstances and presenting problems. You will need to discuss and agree with the client their and your responsibility to the counselling contract. You must be able to carry out a risk assessment to identify any risk of harm to the client's self or others. You will then be required to interpret all the information you have been given and make decisions with regard the appropriateness of counselling.

There are four elements to this unit

1. Make use of pre-assessment tools and information
2. Conduct an assessment interview
3. Carry out risk assessment
4. Make decisions in assessment

This unit is relevant to those working in the following counselling contexts

1. Institutions
2. Statutory Services
3. VCS (Voluntary Community Sector Services)
4. Social Enterprises
5. Individual Practice
6. Commercial Enterprises

All units within the suite of National Occupational Standards for Counselling are not specific to any theoretical model.

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### Performance criteria

#### Make use of pre-assessment tools and information

*You must be able to:*

- P1 develop a clear policy and/or implement agency procedure on pre-assessment communication with the client consistent with your/your organisations aims, ethos and objectives, your client group and the counselling theoretical perspective
- P2 develop and/or implement pre-assessment tools compatible with your counselling theoretical perspective, agency ethos and client group
- P3 provide clear and transparent information in an accessible format to the potential client about the counselling service that you/your agency are offering and how it works
- P4 provide clear and accessible instructions about ways in which the client can contact you or your service
- P5 provide clear information in an accessible format to referring agencies about the service you or your agency are offering
- P6 ensure that the client's first contact with you/your organisation is positive, welcoming and professional
- P7 implement the agency's existing policy and/or develop a procedure for the practice arranging appointments that may include providing information about waiting times or waiting lists
- P8 implement the policy and/or use the agency's existing procedure for collecting information about the client and client concerns prior to the first appointment consistent with your theoretical perspective
- P9 use the pre-assessment information in the initial assessment interview to inform the process and outcome of the interview where appropriate

#### Conduct an assessment interview

*You must be able to:*

- P10 implement the agency policy and/or develop a procedure for conducting an assessment process with a client that is compatible with the client group, the setting and the counselling intervention
- P11 undertake an assessment interview and understand its relevance to an ongoing counselling and therapeutic relationship
- P12 provide accessible, clear information to the client about the assessment process, its purpose, the timescale and the way in which an outcome will be reached, discussed and communicated
- P13 conduct the assessment process in an appropriate manner suited to your client and consistent with your theoretical counselling perspective
- P14 integrate pre-counselling information into the assessment process for further exploration with the client
- P15 identify any potential situations in which the assessment process should be halted and take appropriate action
- P16 use critical appraisal skills to identify key aspects of the client's

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- circumstances and presenting problems
- P17 exercise a critical understanding of presenting symptoms and indicators in the assessment process
  - P18 discuss, familiarise yourself with related policy/procedure/guidance and identify areas of potential risk for the client, such as suicide and self-injury, and possible danger to self and others
  - P19 discuss and be open about confidentiality with your client, the limitations of confidentiality concerning risk, in what circumstance breaches might occur and where issues of consent will be sought, legal process and other relevant legislation when conducting an assessment interview
  - P20 evaluate critically whether the type of counselling offered by you or your service will be beneficial to the client, making referrals if appropriate
  - P21 discuss with the client their motivation for counselling
  - P22 discuss and agree with the client their and your responsibility to the counselling contract
  - P23 comply with all relevant legislation, codes of practice, guidelines and ethical
  - P24 if appropriate discuss with the client any other needs relating to for example, culture, faith, ethnicity, language, sexuality, disability, age and difference
  - P25 record outcomes of assessment interviews in accordance with agency/your policies for record keeping

### **Carry out risk assessment**

#### *You must be able to:*

- P26 familiarise yourself and implement/develop the agency/service comprehensive risk assessment and make use of specific assessment tools or guidelines
- P27 recognise the language used by the client that may imply risk of harm to self or others
- P28 ask direct questions about the client's intention to harm self or others
- P29 facilitate the client's ability to talk about specific suicide plans and quantify the likelihood of the client carrying them out
- P30 apply ethical and organisational guidelines that relate to risk assessment
- P31 consult with other health professionals/colleagues whenever there are indications of potential risk to the client, self or others
- P32 recognise the potential stress for you as a practitioner in working with a suicidal client and utilise supervision and self-care strategies
- P33 assess and discuss the client's support system outside the therapeutic relationship
- P34 take appropriate action, including referral to other health professionals, if you decide that the level of risk to the client or others is significant
- P35 implement a competent care plan influenced by research, current best practice and/or agency policy and procedure
- P36 keep a detailed record of the assessment process, the outcome and a

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care plan

- P37 contribute to the development, implementation, review of a risk management policy or guidance document to ensure that best practice is supported, as appropriate
- P38 ensure that the assessment process is transparent and easily understood by the client
- P39 as far as possible involve the client in the risk assessment process using a straightforward, empowering, boundaried and sensitive approach

#### **Make decisions in assessment**

*You must be able to:*

- P40 make a concise formulation of the client's presentation
- P41 use all available information, including pre-assessment information, client presentation in the interview, therapist response to the client, quantitative and qualitative measures, to make a decision about appropriate counselling interventions
- P42 analyse and interpret all forms of information collected in the assessment process
- P43 consider and discuss with the client the use of appropriate counselling interventions using critical evidence-based guidelines in relation to the client's problem or circumstances
- P44 discuss with the client the outcome of the assessment to the client using accessible language appropriate to the client's understanding
- P45 make a referral to another agency or practitioner when it is appropriate to the client's needs
- P46 discuss and explain sensitively to the client the reasons why counselling would not be beneficial to them and suggest other options/services and provide information/support on how to access them
- P47 employ knowledge, skill and/or experience to make an estimate of the amount of counselling that will needed to be able to address the specific goals and needs/problems of the client
- P48 explore with the client whether or not the therapy or service available offers the optimum benefits for his or her problem

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### Knowledge and understanding

*You need to know and understand:*

#### Make use of pre-assessment tools and information

- K1 pathways and routes which a wide range of clients use to access counselling services in the settings you work in
- K2 the importance of anti-discriminatory practice in developing pre-therapy information and knowledge of the legislation that informs practice
- K3 relevant legal, ethical and organisational requirements and codes of practice relating to service provision
- K4 the importance of facilitating access to services in a professional manner
- K5 factors that influence the achievement of best practice
- K6 the requirement for pre-assessment information that is consistent with the counselling theoretical perspective that underpins organisation/or your counselling practice
- K7 the range of standardised assessment tools that are available
- K8 research approaches to process and outcome management
- K9 ways in which pre-assessment tools are coded and interpreted
- K10 transparent criteria for assessment as appropriate to the service that is to be provided

#### Conduct an assessment interview

*You need to know and understand:*

- K11 how to conduct an assessment process in a way that is informed by a consistent, coherent and in-depth theoretical understanding and agency/your policy and procedure
- K12 assessment processes that are appropriate to different settings and client groups
- K13 factors that might affect the assessment process
- K14 assessment of the suitability of clients for counselling in general
- K15 factors that affect the suitability of clients for particular models of counselling
- K16 how and when it is appropriate to provide opportunities for clients to review, evaluate and feedback their experience of the assessment
- K17 how and when it is appropriate discuss with the client any other needs relating to for example, culture, faith, ethnicity, language, sexuality, disability, age and difference
- K18 how and where to locate research findings relating to appropriate types of counselling for particular client problems or client groups
- K19 national, local, professional and organisational requirements relating to diversity, discrimination, health and safety, security, confidentiality and data protection, disclosure of risk and abuse
- K20 confidentiality policy, its limitations and procedures for breaches, seeking consent and how responses should be managed and communicated to the client

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### Carry out risk assessment

*You need to know and understand:*

- K21 how to locate and use research evidence relating to risk factors with specific client groups
- K22 how to locate and use research evidence relating to risk factors associated with environmental circumstances
- K23 a theoretical framework for thinking about self harm and violence
- K24 how to locate and use research evidence relating to risk factors associated with life events
- K25 how to locate and use research evidence relating to risk factors associated with previous experience of attempted suicide and suicide plans
- K26 national policy and guidelines on suicide prevention
- K27 appropriate mental health legislation
- K28 relevant legal, national, ethical and organisational requirements, policies and codes of practice
- K29 causes of stress and coping strategies for healthcare professionals
- K30 how to formulate and use a comprehensive risk assessment strategy and appropriate referral system
- K31 appropriate risk assessment tools

### Make decisions in assessment

*You need to know and understand:*

- K32 a range of mind-body models of human functioning
- K33 awareness of the causes and development of psychiatric disorders
- K34 awareness of psychological, behavioural and physical symptoms that are indicators of mental ill health
- K35 how client's medication could affect their presentation
- K36 research evidence relating to risk assessment
- K37 guidelines on the use of evidence-based research in your practice
- K38 in depth knowledge of developmental psychology as appropriate to your chosen theoretical approach(es) and an awareness of others
- K39 a consistent, coherent and in-depth theoretical understanding that underpins counselling practice
- K40 predominant models of counselling that might be locally or nationally available
- K41 mental health legislation
- K42 quantitative and qualitative research methods
- K43 data analysis related to methods, instruments and tools used in assessment
- K44 the integral role that assessment and risk assessment have in planning the appropriate counselling intervention or the need for other care and support
- K45 decision-making strategies

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K46 self-knowledge

K47 equal opportunity legislation anti-oppressive practice guidelines and human rights legislation

K48 relevant legal, national, ethical and organisational requirements, policies and codes of practice

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### Additional Information

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**Relevant occupations** Health, Public Services and Care; Health and Social Care; Child Development and Well Being; Associate Professionals and Technical Occupations; Education and training; Preparation for life and work; Health and Social Services Officers; Health Associate Professionals; Therapists; Social Welfare Associate Professionals; Healthcare and Related Personal Services; Childcare and Related Personal Services

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**Suite** Counselling National Occupational Standards v4

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