

# TC-L4 Case Study Guidelines

You will be required to write at least two in-depth case-studies during your training. These must be based on actual client work in your work placement agency; though your tutor may in addition ask you to do a 'practice' one using peers in your group early on in the first year. Where applicable, it is encouraged to write one case study on in-person client work, and one case study on your work with a client whether online or by telephone. If you are unsure about an appropriate client for your case study, then check with your tutor for further guidance.

It is important to be aware of both ethical considerations and confidentiality when using client material for your case study. It is good ethical practice to ask your client's permission to use their information in the case study (or in other work you produce for your training). If permission is asked at the beginning of the work, it should be checked again when the work finishes. It is not unusual for clients to disclose information within the sessions they may not have intended to when the work first began. It is vital to remember that clients have the right to withdraw their permission for their information to be used.

Ensure you fully understand and abide by your agency policies and current legislation regarding data protection.

A case study is a means of demonstrating the integration of your learning i.e.

- Working within the professional, ethical and legal framework of the agency giving consideration to the medium of counselling (in-person, online or telephone).
- Using technology effectively to facilitate counselling sessions (where applicable)
- Working with risk and referral
- Understand the role and impact of the disinhibition effect on the therapeutic relationship in online or telephone working (where applicable)
- Understanding and integration of your theoretical approach with related skills and interventions
- Working with understanding of the client's self, personal history and patterns of relating
- Using your own personal development and self-awareness
- Your use of supervision

In year 1 of the Level 4 Diploma the focus will be very much on beginning client work, establishing a professional framework to your practice, establishing a therapeutic relationship and working with explicit presenting issues and psychological patterns (service levels A and B1).

In year 2 the focus will be more on working with the client's implicit psychological patterns (service level B2), as well as their explicit psychological patterns, using the relationship at depth, managing breaks and conflicts and ending the sessions appropriately.

## **Identifying a suitable case:**

Your tutor is not expecting you to already be an expert – they want to assess your understanding as applied to day-to-day counselling practice. It may not be appropriate, therefore, to take your most successful case. Capability is often best seen through the process of struggling with the difficulties and uncertainties of the counselling process, reflecting honestly on them and gaining deeper insight into self and client.

It is easy to feel overwhelmed with material, so, it is a good idea to make some notes for yourself after each client session (whilst respecting the agency's record keeping policy). A minimum of six sessions should have been carried out. Your first case study could be based on a client who has had six sessions but has not necessarily ended the counselling process. Another case study should then concentrate on the middle and ending of the client work.

### **Structuring the case study:**

You could, for example and where applicable to your model, write a cover sheet with headings and brief notes to cover the basic information such as: source of the referral, pseudonym for the client, gender (if appropriate to the counselling work), agency setting, contract, theoretical orientation, presenting problem, brief family history, support network, focus for the work, number of sessions seen, number of times taken to supervision etc.

A case study should not be just a chronological account of each session - it should be rooted in the *process* rather than the *story/content*. Brief examples of what was said can sometimes be helpful, but lengthy sections of narrative are not required. The aim is to give a reflective overview of the therapeutic relationship and counselling process, and at the same time illustrate some of the fine detail which makes each counselling relationship unique. The reader should be able to gain a real sense of who the client is, and build up a clear and vivid picture of how you worked with them.

It is often helpful to have a beginning section which focuses on the agency itself, their legal, ethical and professional framework, including detail of how the agreement or contact was negotiated, followed by an overview of the first session including own thoughts and feelings.

This beginning section could also include (with the emphasis depending on whether it is a year 1 or 2 case study):

- » How permission was gained to use the client's information in the case study.
- » An overview of the client's personal history and interpersonal relationships (if applicable).
- » An outline of the history and development of the client's problem.
- » Your initial assessment of the client, in consultation with your supervisor, with regard to the level of the client's needs, and your level of competence in both the medium used and in meetings the client's needs.
- » An exploration of the first session and the formation of the relationship - bearing in mind that the nature of the referral might have an effect on the establishment of the relationship and negotiation of the counselling agreement/contract.
- » Your own self (response/reaction/process) in relation to this client.

The middle section can then cover several sessions grouped together, depending on the total number of sessions carried out, and can include a discussion of the subsequent sessions including:

- » the use of supervision, in terms of your work with the client's presenting concerns,
- » the counselling process, including how the medium of counselling impacted the counselling work (where applicable),
- » the therapeutic relationship and integration of your theoretical skills and interventions,
- » any mental health concerns
- » explicit and/or implicit patterns in self and personal history (linked to your core theoretical model).

The ending section can explore:

- » An outline and reflection on how the relationship came to an end – how this was managed as part of the whole process.
- » The clients response to endings with a focus on their reaction(s) to the end of the therapeutic relationship
- » Your own response to the end of the client work. For example, by considering how does this ending mirror or contrast other endings you have experienced in the past.

Unless already incorporated above it is often helpful to have a final overview/evaluation of the whole counselling process with this client – reflecting on what worked well, what didn't work, what in hindsight you might have done differently. Remember that a case study is an excellent way of addressing a number of criteria - your tutor will give you further guidance.