



**North Yarra Community Health**

**CASEWORK COUNSELLING PROGRAM**

**Quality Improvement for Single Session Counselling at NYCH**

**December 2006**

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## SUMMARY

This project applied quality improvement processes of the NYCH single session counselling to evaluate its efficacy and effectiveness and to understand more about client's experiences in the single session counselling process. The project aims are:

1. to evaluate single session counselling practice
2. to evaluate the single session counselling system
3. to develop a body of knowledge and recommended areas for improvement.

The project recommendations are:

1. to continue to improve the methods of communication to clients regarding the expectations of, and the appropriateness of, this achievement in a limited one-off counselling session.
2. to examine the system for possible improved streamlining to reduce communication problems, in order to routinely implement with confidence client-based evaluations of the single session counselling,
3. to refine the evaluation instruments to show improved clarity and coherence for presenting evidence.
4. to undertake an evaluation of the waiting list and allocation of counsellors that were beyond the scope of this project.
5. to measure NYCH single session client and ongoing client attendance data over a given period
6. to track the allocation of same counsellors to clients from single session to ongoing counselling.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Aims

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This project applied quality improvement processes of the NYCH single session counselling to evaluate its efficacy and effectiveness and to understand more about client's experiences in the single session counselling process. The project aims are:

1. to evaluate single session counselling practice
2. to evaluate the single session counselling system
3. to develop a body of knowledge and recommended areas for improvement.

### 1.2 Service context

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NYCH provides an innovative program of single session counselling, introduced upon a backdrop of a proposed restructure of its casework counselling practice and procedures, with the purpose of improving its efficiency of casework counselling provision to clients and community. Single session counselling aims to relieve the pressure on casework provision. Its specific purpose is to address:

1. the fact that about one third of people seeking counselling attend only once
2. the need to provide prompt assistance to those seeking counselling
3. the needs of those people seeking to address issues that can be resolved in a single session
4. the need for a comprehensive assessment to identify future counselling needs of clients.

The focus of the single session counselling system is a counselling session which will provide an assessment. Clients may choose to have a further session, or ongoing counselling, in which case they will be placed on a waiting list for the first available vacancy. The single session is preceded by a letter of confirmation and explanation ([Attachment 3](#)) and a pre-session questionnaire ([Attachment 4](#)) to identify expectations and previous counselling experiences. A follow-up phonecall is made two weeks after the single session.

### 1.3 Service delivery area impacted upon

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The expected impact from undertaking the quality improvement project of evaluating the NYCH single session counselling is an improvement in its efficacy and efficiency. This impact will come from evidence-based knowledge gained from surveying single session clients, by formulating recommendations for improving the single session counselling practice and service and for communicating these recommendations through reports, discussions and forums to colleagues, peers and stakeholders.

## 1.4 Evaluation process

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The impact of the project on improving the NYCH single session counselling in its demonstration phase will be determined by the efficiency of the single session counselling process according to routine client monitoring and the efficacy of the single session counselling practice to client's needs.

Outcomes from the demonstration phase using the evaluative method will influence the further development, for routine application, of these evaluative tools in the service. Accordingly, the future delivery of an improved single session counselling service to clients will occur in response to revising the data set and evaluation tools, developing proposals for improvement and then communicating, implementing and reviewing these changes.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Overview

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This NYCH quality improvement processes project has been implemented by:

- developing a proposed model, an evaluative research data set and evaluative tools based on Bouverie Centre data set and guidance from an evaluation academic
- regularly reviewing and discussing progress on the basis of preliminary evidence, to adapt and modify the project and to provide information and development about the project
- gathering data through surveying NYCH single session counselling clients through the evaluative tools
- collating, analysing and interpreting the data
- providing a written report on findings and recommendations for this project.

### 2.2 Method

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The evaluation project of the NYCH single session counselling has sought, in an evidence-based approach, both quantitative and qualitative data and written and verbal feedback from clients of their experiences of the single session counselling practice and system.

The evaluation instruments are:

1. Single Session Written Evaluation Questionnaire ([Attachment 1](#))
2. Single Session Phone Evaluation Questionnaire ([Attachment 2](#)).

### **2.2.1 Single Session Written Evaluation Questionnaire**

The Single Session Written Evaluation Questionnaire consists of thirteen questions in plain language. The questionnaires were distributed after a follow-up phonecall that occurred two weeks after the single session. They were returned to NYCH by post.

The questionnaire aimed to address:

1. clarity of the single session process for clients
2. the benefits of pre-session information and questionnaires
3. the impact of single session counselling on client's issues
4. client's likes and dislikes of the single sessions
5. program usefulness.

The questionnaire contains ten seven-point Likert scaled questions. Nine provide an opportunity for comments. Three questions are open-ended: one each on client's likes and dislikes of the single session and one for other comments.

There were 52 responses although one respondent only answered the first four questions. Question 9 was inserted during the course of the survey resulting in 17 responses for this question.

### **2.2.2 Single Session Phone Evaluation Questionnaire**

The Single Session Phone Evaluation Questionnaire was conducted with those clients who indicated on the written survey their willingness to be contacted to discuss the feedback they provided.

The phone questionnaires took approximately 40 minutes and consist of 11 open-ended questions and one set of closed questions, with a client profile preamble at the beginning. The questions aimed to establish:

1. reflections from clients regarding their initial requirements and current needs for counselling
2. client likes and dislikes of the single session counselling system
3. client likes and dislikes of the single sessions
4. client preferences regarding other components of the single session system.

Two of these questions replicate the open-ended questions of the Single Session Written Evaluation Questionnaire.

Thirty-six clients of the 51 respondents to the written questionnaire (70.58%) identified themselves as willing to be contacted for this follow-up phone survey. Nineteen were contactable and of these 14 completed the evaluation process, however one client only had time to answer four questions.

## **2.3 Analysis and interpretation**

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For the written questionnaire the data was analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. For the ten scaled questions the responses were aggregated and percentages drawn for each question according to the seven

scaled levels of agreement. Percentage rates were calculated for the total numbers of responses from positive to negative for this questionnaire (see Chart 1).

The data was analysed for these quantitative questions and for the three open-ended questions according to the aims of the questionnaire identified in section 2.1 above and according to the themes represented by the questions themselves. The comments following each scaled question informed these analyses.

For the phone questionnaire the data was transcribed fully and in the main analysed qualitatively with some quantitative input according to the aims of the questionnaire identified in section 2.2 and according to the themes represented by the questions themselves. Data from the written and phone questionnaires was integrated where possible.

The ongoing interpretations of the responses of NYCH single session clients are embedded within the analysis of the data. The interpretations are drawn from the results according to broad levels of confidence.

## **2.4 Outcomes and evaluation**

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Outcomes of the evaluation project of the NYCH single session counselling were identified from the analyses and interpretation of the data and formed the basis for recommendations for the ongoing quality improvement of this project.

# **3 PROJECT OUTCOMES**

## **3.1 The single session counselling practice**

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The evaluation of the single session counselling practice is presented according to themes that occur in both the written and phone questionnaires.

### **3.1.1 Impact of single session counselling on client's issues**

#### **3.1.1.1 Immediate benefits of the single session**

In the Single Session Written Evaluation Questionnaire questions 4 and 5 addressed the immediate benefits of the single session to clients.

Question 4 asked clients to confirm whether the session helped them set clear goals. There were high levels of agreement (84.62%) (Table 1) and client's comments confirmed this: 'understood a bit better what was happening to me and how I wanted to go about fixing them' and 'it guided my ability to make decisions about the problems I faced'. However some identified that time was a problem: 'would really appreciate more time to go into the other issues and map solutions more clearly' and 'one session was not sufficient time to set clear goals'.

Question 5 asked whether the session talked about what was important to them to which 96.08% of clients agreed (Table 1). 'I left feeling good about opening up and getting stuff off my chest' was an indicative comment.

**Table 1**

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	AGREE MORE THAN DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE MORE THAN AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
Question 4	34.62%	21.15%	28.85%	13.46%		1.92%	
Question 5	62.75%	31.37%	1.96%	1.96%			1.96%

### 3.1.1.2 Acceptance and outcomes

Question 6 seeks agreement as to whether the session helped the client move towards an acceptable solution. Forty out of 51 clients (78.43%) showed some level of agreement (Table 2) although confidence was still an issue: 'I'm still not very confident', 'for me, that seems a long way off and quite a few baby steps away!', 'perhaps some more practical strategies to take away was what we were really looking for from the sessions' and 'well as I try is not easy, 'nervous'.

**Table 2**

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	AGREE MORE THAN DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE MORE THAN AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
Question 6	27.45%	35.29%	15.69%	19.61%		1.96%	
Question 7	37.25%	31.37%	17.65%	13.73%			

Question 7 focussed on the client's clearer understanding of their situation. A high level of agreement (86.27%) was supported by the comments: 'I get overwhelmed by the 'future', so even momentary clarity is so valuable for me' and 'getting feedback on how I come across'.

### 3.1.1.3 Future benefits

Client confidence in dealing with their situation in the future was sought in Question 8 of the written questionnaire. 27.45% indicated strong agreement and 49.02% other levels of agreement (Table 3). For one client this was about confidence in the system: 'I have clarity on my situation and do not feel so overwhelmed by the system or isolated in it'; for another a determination to continue with counselling: 'my confidence on that certainly increased, but I cant say 'now I know what to do!'; and for others, personal strength: 'I now feel confident and capable about how I will deal with my emotions' and 'I have been able to not put myself in the middle'.

**Table 3**

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	AGREE MORE THAN DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE MORE THAN AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
Question 8	27.45%	25.49%	23.53%	19.61%		1.96%	1.96%

In question 9 clients were asked to rate the level of their problems since having the single session. Table 4 shows a reasonably spread distribution of responses. There were less comments as only 17 clients were in a position to respond to this question (see section 2.1 above). Comments included: 'I was able to make a decision which affected lifelong values and my health' and 'the time with counselling has really given me self esteem'.

**Table 4**

	A LOT BETTER	BETTER	SOMEWHAT BETTER	NEUTRAL	SOMEHAT WORSE	WORSE	A LOT WORSE
<b>Question 9</b>	5.88%	17.65%	29.41%	17.65%	11.76%	5.88%	11.76%

### 3.1.2 Client likes and dislikes

Clients likes and dislikes of the single session counselling practice were sought in both the written and phone questionnaires.

#### 3.1.2.1 Client likes (written responses)

There were 48 responses to question 10 on client's likes of the single session counselling practice. Sixteen responses (33.33%) addressed the professionalism and qualities of the counsellor: their understanding and good listening skills, their non-judgmental approach, their objectivity, their empathy and supportive and trustworthy attitude, and their practical advice for simple achievable tasks and to find solutions. Representative comments were: 'the counsellor's attitude toward me made it easier to be forthright' and 'it was very validating'.

Eleven responses (22.91%) were about the single session providing clients with the opportunity and freedom to talk... 'without prejudice', 'without interference', 'to talk with someone I don't know about my problems'. There was a lot I needed to say and she provided the space for that'. In summary: 'the attention' - 'it was good sitting and being heard'.

Another eleven clients identified that they liked being more empowered to deal with their problems. They liked being given clear, practical and helpful solutions, realistic options, goal setting, understanding, recognition of achievements, reassurance, confidence to deal with problems, validated: 'I walked out with a sense of what I had to do to help myself'.

Six clients liked the session itself: its flexibility, supportive environment, friendly atmosphere and that it was relaxing. A final four clients liked the practical outcomes of 'getting a photocopy of useful services and phone numbers' and being 'linked into the system for more counselling'.

#### 3.1.2.2 Client likes (phone responses)

Of the fourteen phone questionnaire respondents, thirteen identified the counsellor's approach as being what they liked, namely

- that they were very nice, had an approach that suited them, were genuine and made them feel comfortable
- that they were doing their job, attentive, showed focus and concentration, not clock watching

- that they were easy to talk to, open, direct, natural, reassuring, validated what they were saying, helped them get perspective, challenging
- that they explained their problem, had input, intelligent, helpful, offered alternative approaches or solutions, prompted, gave examples and helped set realistic goals.

Many clients liked the clear benefits from the session, namely:

- that they covered a lot in the session, could hear objective views, receive help, practical advice and reassurance, obtained necessary information and materials, not be burdened by cost
- that they gained personal insight, new perspectives, increased understanding and insight into issues
- that they gained increased motivation and strategies for changing behaviour, could 'name the problem'.

Other respondents liked the session length, pace, environment and opportunity to talk, namely

- the one and a half hour length mostly adequate to talk out all issues and better than 50 or 60 minutes
- opportunity to have a break even if not taken up
- comfortable, safe, non-judgmental, validating, environment
- opportunity to talk to someone independent, professional, a third-party,

Finally, several liked the feeling of relief:

- 'it was like a clearing'
- 'able to talk out problem and then became clearer what had to do/decision'
- 'got stuff off chest that was bottled up'
- 'I felt someone cared about me'.

### 3.1.2.3 Client dislikes (written responses)

There were 22 responses (43%) to question 11 of the written questionnaire on dislikes about the single session counselling practice. Eight clients (36.36%) considered that there was insufficient time in one session to adequately address their issues. Four clients disliked the idea of waiting lists and lack of continuity: 'I need help and support now'; 'that feeling of uncertainty regarding on-going help and 'that I'm now appointed a different counsellor'. Two disliked the break between the single session and previously seeking help and another two disliked the single session process including that 'it was a stressful process to secure an appointment'. Two other responses focused on the client's own feelings: 'my inability to communicate' and 'the fact I had to revisit issues avoided before'. The remaining four responses varied from being unhappy about another counsellor assisting, the smallness of the room, the counselor's reference to their own personal experience and the lack of a specific smoking cessation support program.

### 3.1.2.4 Client dislikes (phone responses)

Nine of the phone questionnaire respondents stated that there was nothing they disliked of the single session counselling. The only criticisms were:

- that it was too much in one session, too short, rather like an assessment and too pressured and too quick, like work
- that it was contrived, threatening, the counsellor did not fully understand the issue well enough, that medication was the primary focus
- a preference for ongoing counselling from the outset, no follow up and being put on the waiting list.

### 3.1.3 Efficacy of the single session

Phone respondents were asked in question 7 whether the single session was enough at the time. Half of the respondents answered that it was and half that it was not, preferring ongoing counselling from the outset.

For the question 'do you think you needed further counselling – then and/or now?', nine respondents answered 'yes' to both; four respondents answered 'no' to both and one respondent answered 'yes' to 'then' and 'unsure' 'now'.

The next question was 'did having a single session encourage or discourage you from having more, or ongoing, counselling?', twelve responded 'encouraged', one was discouraged at first but now happy with the ongoing counselling whilst another was discouraged due to perceived unhelpfulness.

For the next question 'would you recontact this service if needed in the future?', thirteen responded 'yes' and one 'maybe'.

The above responses are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5**

QUESTION	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	UNSURE
7a – Was the SS enough <i>at the time</i> ?	50%	50%	
7b – Do you think you needed further counselling?	64.28%	28.57%	7.14%
7c- Did having a SS encourage or discourage you from having more counselling?	85.71%	7.14%	7.14%
7d – Would you recontact this service if needed in the future?	92.85%		7.14%

### 3.1.4 Single session counselling reflections from those undergoing further counselling

Question 10 of the phone questionnaire asked of those having further counselling the views on the function of single session counselling. This question was applicable for six respondents. Their views were that single session counselling provided:

- immediate counselling,
- opportunity to identify and work through main issues arriving at strategies for coping

- assessment of needs and for ongoing counselling
- reduced cost burden for clients
- assistance to access appropriate services.

### 3.2 The single session counselling system

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Similarly the evaluation of the single session counselling system is presented according to themes that cross between both the written and phone questionnaires.

#### 3.2.1 Understanding of process

The first question of the written questionnaire aimed to determine whether clients understood the single session process. There was 96.15% overall agreement (Table 6).

**Table 6**

	<b>STRONGLY AGREE</b>	<b>AGREE</b>	<b>AGREE MORE THAN DISAGREE</b>	<b>NEUTRAL</b>	<b>DISAGREE MORE THAN AGREE</b>	<b>DISAGREE</b>	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE</b>
<b>Question 1</b>	55.77%	28.85%	11.54%	3.85%			

#### 3.2.2 Benefits of information and pre-single session questionnaire

Questions 2 and 3 of the written questionnaire surveyed the benefit of the information in the letter of confirmation and the pre-session questionnaire. There were high levels of agreement (Table 7). Comments confirmed this: 'knowing I could get a one off session was great' and 'it help me to create picture about possible help from your service!'. For the questionnaire: 'it helped me to prioritise what was in my thoughts before the session began', 'I was amazed at what I addressed' and 'helped by clearing certain doubts', though one respondent stated that 'it was a fairly isolating task, becoming too emotional to complete'. The 30.77% neutral responses for question 5 was mainly a result of six clients stating that they had not received the questionnaire.

**Table 7**

	<b>STRONGLY AGREE</b>	<b>AGREE</b>	<b>AGREE MORE THAN DISAGREE</b>	<b>NEUTRAL</b>	<b>DISAGREE MORE THAN AGREE</b>	<b>DISAGREE</b>	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE</b>
<b>Question 2</b>	28.85%	53.85%	9.62%	3.85%	1.92%	1.92%	
<b>Question 3</b>	9.62%	34.62%	19.23%	30.77%		1.92%	3.85%

### 3.2.2.1 Pre-single session questionnaire experience

The phone questionnaire surveyed client's experience in completing this pre-single session questionnaire. There were thirteen responses. For three respondents it was a good experience as either they had some control over the direction of the session or it helped clarify the reasons for seeing the counsellor. Additionally, issues were now already raised before the single session started – 'didn't have to go in cold'. For three others the pre-session questionnaire was difficult to fill out as clients felt confused and struggled to be selective and clarify their thoughts on paper. Five clients did not feel the need to do complete this pre-session questionnaire due to going straight into a single session counselling or, in one instance, that they did not receive one. Two respondents knew that they had filled in the questionnaire but could not recall how they had found the experience.

### 3.2.3 Likes of the single session system

The phone questionnaires showed that single session counselling system was liked for a variety of reasons, namely:

- the flexibility in the system to provide clients with options, whether to see their old counsellor, to see a counsellor closer to where they lived or to have ongoing counselling if needed
- the sessions themselves as stimulating, impressive counsellor, well organised, safe, available, welcoming, nurturing, less critical and cold and non-threatening and not judged by service staff
- the immediacy of the service (as mentioned by eight respondents), the responsiveness to need and not needing to go on a waiting list
- the mid-session break in order to regroup.

'I just think it is wonderful that the service is there.'

### 3.2.4 Dislikes of the single session system

Five respondents did not have any dislikes of the single session system. The main criticism of the single session system was a fear that either it would not be enough or a conviction that the one session was not enough to provide the necessary support. Six respondents believed they needed ongoing counselling immediately and for four respondents their frustration was exacerbated because the counsellor did not get back to them as expected. The waiting period was therefore difficult in terms of keeping up personal motivation and momentum. Two respondents expressed their dislike at being presented with an unfamiliar

model and for one not given a rationale for the model. For another there was pressure to be adequately assessed in one session. A final respondent was critical of the lack of publicity of such a good provision.

### **3.2.5 Follow-up Phone**

Two clients did not receive a follow-up phonecall as either their counselling sessions were over the phone or within two weeks their counselling became ongoing. Four clients did not receive a follow-up phonecall as expected.

Of the eight clients that did receive a follow-up phonecall, six appreciated them in that:

- the phonecalls made things clearer and confirmed if they were on an ongoing counselling waiting list
- clients were pleased that someone checked up on them to see how they were and were concerned about them
- clients felt nurtured and safe.

Two clients felt there was no need for the phonecall or did not get enough help and advice in the 10 minutes of the call.

In seven instances the decision making during the phonecall as to what would happen next about further counselling were joint decisions. These mutual decisions were in two cases initiated by the counsellor and once by the client. In three cases the client made the decision and in one case the counsellor made the decision. Two responses were deemed not applicable.

### **3.2.6 Counsellor continuity**

In the phone questionnaire, ten respondents confirmed that they were told that the same counsellor is not always available for further counselling, two were unsure and two stated that this was not explained to them.

This effect was of concern to five respondents with the main reason given that clients were reluctant to revisit issues or start again with a new counsellor. The remaining eight were either resigned to coping or determined to cope if they were in a crisis.

The next phone question was 'for ongoing counselling would you ideally prefer the same counsellor the option to choose the same or a different counsellor, or don't mind either way?' Ten clients preferred the option to choose and two wanted the same counsellor offered. (One respondent did not have this question put to them.)

### **3.2.7 Preferences regarding ongoing counselling waiting list**

Question 11 of the phone questionnaire asked clients to recall when were they given the opportunity for going on the waiting list for ongoing counselling. For five clients it was during the single session, five clients did not know or could not remember when the offer occurred, for one client the offer was not made and for another the offer was made after the single session. Two clients were not asked these questions.

Three clients responded that they would have preferred this offer to have occurred either earlier or at a different time, for three clients there was no problem, for one they did not know, and for five it was not applicable.

Client preferences at the time when they first called the service were:

- |  |        |
|--|--------|
| a. single session appointment only with later offer to go on waiting list                    | 41.66% |
| b. immediate opportunity to go on waiting list and more immediate single session appointment | 41.66% |
| c. waiting list only (no single session) even if longer wait to see counsellor               | 16.66% |

### 3.2.8 Phone reflections on the single session counselling system

The first question in the Phone questionnaire asked clients about their first thoughts on the single session counselling system. Many clients were hesitant about what to expect and skeptical that their perceived need for more support and for ongoing problems would not be met, additionally that they were tired of forming and re-forming relationships with new counsellors. However, these concerns in the main were offset by relief at being offered some help and that it was better than no help. Several were surprised at how accessible it was especially the ease and immediacy of getting an appointment. Others anticipated a conventional one-on-one counselling session whilst others did not know what to expect or were surprised that single session counseling occurred. One respondent was concerned about the method being too contemporary but was pleasantly surprised. One final respondent was concerned that too much relied on one session for a full assessment of his needs.

### 3.2.9 Program usefulness

Table 8 presents the usefulness of the program overall from question 12 of the written questionnaire. All responses were positive with 45.10% indicating that it was extremely useful.

**Table 8**

	EXTREMELY USEFUL	VERY USEFUL	USEFUL	REASONABLY USEFUL	NOT REALLY USEFUL	NOT USEFUL	NOT AT ALL USEFUL
<b>Question 12</b>	45.10%	15.69%	21.57%	17.65%			

## 3.3 General comments

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### 3.3.1 Written responses

Twenty-five clients provided other comments on the single session counselling in the written questionnaire. Overall, clients showed considerable gratitude for this provision and the assistance it gave them.

Clients indicated they were pleased to have discovered the service, that is non-compulsory, supportive, practical and useful, being focussed on present, immediate needs.

They also praised the qualities of their counsellor and that the sessions helped them find an answer, feel understood and feel positive about solving or coping with their problems in the future.

Criticisms about the single sessions were that it is better to build a relationship with a counsellor on an ongoing basis, the lack of support in the gap between the single session and the next session (ie being placed on a waiting list) and that more time is needed.

### **3.3.2 Phone responses**

Phone responses from clients indicated overall that the sessions exceeded their expectations, that the system was excellent and it was a great service, reduced previous wait times, reduced cost burden on clients and was really valuable. The sessions were praised for making clients comfortable to explore needs. In one client's words: 'That day was a turning point.'

Clients praised the follow-up phone evaluation as part of improving the service and demonstrating consumer participation. Clients indicated that the single session counselling service was needed more, that it should expand globally and locally and that it should be better publicised.

Criticisms were about the health sector, specifically that 'counselling is shut out of medical care', and that for one client an afternoon time was preferred.

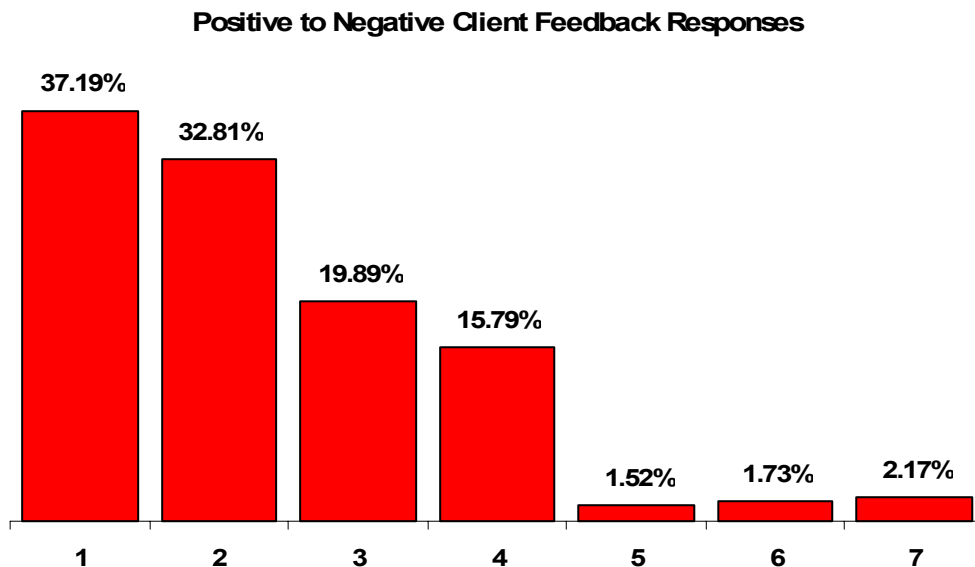
## 4 LEARNINGS OF THE PROJECT

### 4.1 Outcomes and evaluation

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The success of the single session counselling practice and its systems was confirmed in this evaluation process. Chart 1 presents the averaged responses of agreement, usefulness and improvement indicated by clients in the written questionnaire from positive to negative according to the seven-point Likert scales. 89.89% responses were positive with 37.19% extremely positive.

**Chart 1**



#### 4.1.1 Single session counselling practice

Of the single session counselling practice, the immediate benefits were the most positive (Questions 4 and 5 written questionnaire). Questions on the likes of these sessions affirmed counsellor strengths as well as outcomes achieved and the session overall. Dislikes were mainly about the lack of time in the session and the waiting list process for ongoing counselling. Overall efficacy of the single session counselling was confirmed (Table 5) as were the outcomes for the session of immediate counselling and assessment of needs as well as providing reduced cost burden for clients and assistance to access appropriate services (section 3.1.4).

#### 4.1.2 Single session counselling system

The single session counselling system was also affirmed. Almost all clients agreed that in some part they understood the process (96.15%), that they liked the flexibility and immediacy of the system as well as the sessions themselves and that their preferences would be to have a single session (section 3.2.7). Follow-up

phonecalls were in the main appreciated and empowering. Dislikes were linked to client's beliefs that they needed ongoing counselling, that the single session would not be enough and that the waiting period for an ongoing counsellor would be difficult to manage. Irrespective, there was 100% confirmation of the program's usefulness (Table 8). General comments (section 3.3) confirmed these views with clients appreciating the service from all of the above perspectives and indicating they were pleased to have discovered the service.

#### 4.1.2.1 Criticisms

The main client criticisms centred on their perceptions of having not enough time in the single session to address their needs and the consequent waiting list frustration to gain ongoing counselling. Question 7a in the phone questionnaire addressed the time concern directly with 50% of respondents confirming this and 50% refuting it (Table 5, section 3.1.3). Other sections of the questionnaires also addressed this issue including section 3.2.7 where clients indicated that they would definitely prefer to have single session counselling rather than not. The issue of waiting lists is obviously outside the scope of this evaluation.

#### 4.1.3 Administrative review

In many of the questionnaire responses there were gaps in the feedback obtained from clients. The current single-session counselling system represents a challenge for administrative rigor and efficiency on many fronts. Situations of system variance include clients choosing not to complete a required document or a system break-down in sending out information or in not making contact as expected. These outcomes are highly likely as it is quite a complicated process and smaller complicating issues, such as change of client contact details, may be frequent.

#### 4.1.4 Refinement of evaluation instruments

Finally, the collating, analysis and interpretation of the data in this evaluation process demonstrated certain ambiguity and replication. It is preferable to implement clear and coherent evaluation instruments, especially as the evaluation of client experiences is intended to be routine and continuous. Stronger evaluation instruments will also strengthen the analysis and reporting of data and support the process of quality improvement to seek recommendations and communicate ideas.

## 4.2 Recommendations

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The project recommendations are:

1. to continue to improve the methods of communication to clients regarding the expectations of, and the appropriateness of, this achievement in a limited one-off counselling session.
2. to examine the system for possible improved streamlining to reduce communication problems, in order to routinely implement with confidence client-based evaluations of the single session counselling,
3. to refine the evaluation instruments to show improved clarity and coherence for presenting evidence.

4. to undertake an evaluation of the waiting list and allocation of counsellors that were beyond the scope of this project.
5. to measure NYCH single session client and ongoing client attendance data over a given period
6. to track the allocation of same counsellors to clients from single session to ongoing counselling.

## 5 ATTACHMENT 1: SINGLE SESSION WRITTEN EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this form. Your feed-back is important to us and will help us improve our service. In order to provide the best possible service to you we may wish to contact you about the feedback you have given us. If you are willing to be contacted please write your name and telephone no. at the end of this form. If you do not wish to be contacted please do not write your name on the form. Your answers will be treated confidentially and your comments will go to a separate member of our team to ensure your comments are completely anonymous.

If you require assistance to complete this form, please phone .....

Using the following scale, please answer the following questions:

Strongly agree 1	Agree 2
Agree more than disagree 3	Neutral 4
Disagree more than agree 5	Disagree 6
Strongly disagree 7	

1. I clearly understood the single session process.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

2. The information I received before the single session was helpful.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

3. The questionnaire helped me get maximum benefit from the session.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

4. The session helped me set clear goals.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

5. I was able to talk about what is important to me.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

6. The session helped me move towards an acceptable solution.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7



## 6 ATTACHMENT 2: SINGLE SESSION PHONE EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

### Format

- Introduce self (name, NYCH) and check that I have caught them at an OK time to talk:
  - If not, schedule to call at a more appropriate time, or
  - If so, and I've called a mobile, ask if I can call them back on a landline, then...
- Statement that:
  - Some time ago you attended single session counselling at NYCH (if they do not know what the term "single session counselling" refers to, explain it – see next page)
  - You later completed an evaluation form regarding that session(s) and posted it back to us
  - On that form you indicated that it would be OK for us to contact you again about the feedback you gave us
  - That is why I am calling
  - I am calling past SS clients to ask some extra questions about their experiences of single session counselling in order to more thoroughly evaluate, and continuously improve, the quality of that service. We see consumer participation in the review as essential.
  - Would you be willing to participate in this process? – it will involve having a conversation with me for no more than half an hour now or at a more convenient time for you (set one) (OK? If so, continue)

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- Your personal issues and identity will remain confidential/private between me as interviewer, and the service Manager.
- The details of your feedback and your name will not be passed onto the counsellor that you saw for the single session(s) unless you request us to do this. Details of any requests:
- The only time when this confidentiality would be broken would be when there were concerns about the safety of yourself or others (including children).
- Information from these interviews will be used to produce a report evaluating the Single Session Counselling service. The information you provide will be included in a deidentified way (i.e. your name and your Counsellor's name will not be used). Some quotations may be included in the written report but their source will not be identified. The copy of the report will be sent to our funding body (DHS) and may be posted on our website.
- I will make notes of your answers, but only my Team Leader, Manager, and I will have access to these notes (these notes will be de-identified for the Team Leader). These notes will be a combination of summaries of what you have said and direct quotes (OK? If so, continue).
- Just to remind you, our single session system is the process whereby:
  - When a client first contacts us we offer them a single 1.5 hour session with a counsellor
  - An explanatory letter and pre-SS questionnaire is posted to the client to be completed before the SS
  - The SS takes place
  - After that session the counsellor makes a post-SS phonecall a few weeks later - to follow-up on that session(s) and to check if the client wants to be put on the waiting list for ongoing counselling.
- If the client had ongoing counselling:
  - We are only evaluating the SS component of your counselling – not the ongoing sessions you had/are having.



- b) What effect did the possible unavailability of the same counsellor have on you (and on further counselling)?
- c) For ongoing counselling would you ideally prefer the same counsellor, the option to choose the same or a different counsellor, or don't mind either way.
9. a) Did you receive a follow-up phonecall from the SS counsellor a couple of weeks after the SS?  
b) How did you find that phonecall?  
c) Who decided what would happen after that phonecall (after the SSs if no phonecall)? (self, counsellor, or joint decision?)
10. If you've had further counselling – what do you see as the function of the SS?
11. a) At what point in the SS process were you offered the opportunity to go on a waiting list for ongoing counselling?  
b) Would you have preferred to have been offered this earlier/at a different time?  
c) When you first called the service what would have been your preference, to be offered:  
 A SS appointment only - and later offered to go on the ongoing counselling waiting list at that SS  
 The chance to go on the waiting list for ongoing counselling immediately *and* a more immediate SS appointment  
 To go on a waiting list for ongoing counselling only (no SS) - even if it meant waiting longer to see a counsellor  
 Other:
12. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

If we need to clarify anything with you in the future about you feedback today, would it be OK to recontact you?

If you would like to add anything to your feedback, please call me on 9411 4333. (Check the evaluation call OK for them).

Evaluation time end:

Evaluation write up time end:

Other notes of evaluation interviewer:

## **7 ATTACHMENT 3: SINGLE SESSION CONFIRMATION LETTER**

Dear (name)

I am writing to confirm that you have been booked in for a single session counselling appointment at North Yarra Community Health, (Site, date, time)

We will attempt to achieve as much as possible in this session. We are enclosing a questionnaire, which we would like you to complete and bring to the session with you. This will help the counsellor to find out more about your goal(s) and where you are up to.

At the end of the session the counsellor will arrange a follow-up phonecall at a time negotiated with you. You will be given the opportunity to be placed on the waiting list for further counselling assistance if required. Alternatively if you believe the session is sufficient we will close your file but you are welcome to re-contact the service at any time in the future.

Please arrive 10 minutes early to register and allow 90 minutes for the session. There will be a 10 minute break half way through the session.

Regards

Casework/Counsellor

## 8 ATTACHMENT 4: PRE-SINGLE SESSION QUESTIONNAIRE

To assist us to maximise the effectiveness of the consultation, please complete the following questionnaire and bring it to the session with you.

Feel free to fill in as much of this questionnaire as you want. It is not essential, but may help to give you and us a better idea about how we can assist you.

Name of person(s) filling out the questionnaire:

1. Have you had counselling before? Yes/No
2. If Yes - what was useful?
3. What brings you to counselling now?
4. What would you like to get out of it?
5. What are the most pressing issues?
6. How would you know if counselling has been helpful?
7. Are there any risk or safety issues we should know about?
8. Is there anything about yourself or your history that you might like us to know before coming to the session?

Thanks – please bring this to your appointment