

Curriculum for Career Counsellors

Unit K: Counselling Young People with Mental Health Condition



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Content:



Group work: Reflecting on preconceptions – what do (we think) we know?



Lecture: What is a mental health condition – common disorders encountered in career counselling – implications and support.



Individual reflection: Exploring individual experience and thinking about implications for career counselling and job placement.



Counselling young people with mental health conditions: in what way is it different?

Rule One:

It is not different in principle. All that you know about good career counselling also applies to people with mental health issues – only more so!

Your client is to receive at least the same level of career guidance and counselling as any other client

This means, not only should, evidently, the same professional standards of empathic enquiring and assessment of aptitudes and preferences, competent and knowledgeable information on options and opportunities, apply.

It is of prime importance that counselling is not primarily informed by.



Assessment of preferences and aims

In the first instance – no limits to dreams Just as in all career counselling, it is important to know what the aspirations and dreams of the client are without regard to how realistic they may be

High aims can be motivators for less ambitious intermediate steps – Not all dreams can be realised, but having them motivates steps and efforts for easier goals in the meantime, if they become meaningful with a view on the long-term target

No options are to be excluded on the basis of illness and disability Because conditions may change. Because accommodations may be possible. Because benefits may outweigh disadvantages. (examples)

Narrative and biographical approaches should be used alongside occupational-psychological tests. ... just as in any good career counselling. In particular, for those with interrupted educational biographies, past choices should be reviewed to see whether any threads can be taken up again and/or explore alternatives fitting those aspirations

Exploration should be facilitated. This can mean arranging for internships. But it can also mean arranging for vocational-orientation programmes



Assessment of capabilities

It is important to assess limitations and functional deficits BUT: (The purpose must be avoiding immediate overload and frustration. Keep in mind that functional deficits may lessen especially with therapy progressing, but also with improvements in life situation etc.

Exploring capabilities is much more important: It is crucial to put the emphasis on what the client can do and will be able to do in the future, i.e. what potentials there are. It must also always be a priority to look at how potential can be realised by accommodating for deficits, rather than to give up on potential because of deficits.

Assessments should be made in cooperation with mental health professionals. This can mean that reports from an occupational-psychological service contribute to the assessment, or that the career services' own assessment is run past the psychiatrist by the client... or that (given the client's consent) the psychotherapist joins a session with the career counsellor..

Assessments should, where necessary, contain a practical element. Depending on health status, this may be a stress-test in a vocational rehabilitation centre, an internship, a summer job...



Check out the
Work4Psy
Toolkit
Activities!

[examples]






Planning and reviewing



Getting aims, abilities and limitations in tune: What are realistic targets in the middle range? What obstacles are there? Can they be overcome – and if so how? What resources can be drawn on?



Identifying and activating networks– as seen, networks are indispensable in most cases. Utilising all sources of support available is part of the counselling process! (e.g. using activities from the Work4Psy Toolkit)



Visualising and/or writing up the plan. Creating a document that client and counsellor agree on helps the client organising and maintaining commitment. It also makes it easier to review and revise the plan



Review and revise. No plan is perfect and there will also be unforeseen challenges and opportunities. Therefore regular counselling sessions should include updating the plan: what has been achieved, what still needs to be done, what has to be changed?

Networking processes

Needs assessment – what are the concrete tasks for which the network will be needed? (e.g. housing benefits, working time adjustments, disability allowance) – it may be necessary to already draw on existing networking partners to help with this (e.g. informal carer, social worker at former school etc.)

Planning – drawing on/connecting to existing planning (e.g. from the therapeutic process), in what order are problems to be tackled and what kind of network partner could help with specific tasks. Plans are constantly to be adjusted as opportunities and challenges arise.

Mapping existing networks – What networks do already exist for the client? What networks are ready at hand to those involved (including the professional networks of the career counsellor) – and how do they correspond to the plan? What kind of networks are they and how are they to be navigated?.

Navigating, fortifying and extending networks. – are the existing networks sufficient or do you build new connections? How are existing and future network partners to be approached and by whom? Who will act as network pilot (and what can be done to help the client to grow into that role themselves?)



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[examples]



Limitations of and extensions of career counselling for young people with mental health conditions

Life is long and counselling is short – career counselling can only be part of the equation. The challenges of labour market access are not overcome in a few sessions. It involves building on prior support and activating further systems of support.

Plans fail – not all (or not even most), but some do. Given the nature of many mental health conditions and the volatilities of contemporary world of work, this is nobody's fault. It is essential not to give in to frustration, not to give up hope, but maintain vicarious optimism and start again (if necessary multiple times)

Extend the process – external providers – Often regular one-on-one sessions will not suffice. Draw on the support available through vocational orientation and preparation programmes (but make sure they work for your client, e.g. by regularly getting updates on progress regarding agreed targets).

Extend the process – apply innovative practice. – where possible, extend your own practice, for instance by using innovative approaches like, e.g., Symfos (see Work4Psy Toolkit activity no.____, and <https://cesie.org/media/symfos-basic-clearing-en.pdf>)





And now – practice:

**The next sessions
are dedicated to
role-play exercises.**

**Please read through the assigned tasks and attached case studies.
Also familiarise yourself with the feedback principles and procedures
provided to facilitate an ordered, respectful and productive reflection
process.**



Thank you for
your attention.
Any questions?

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