



## Case Study Guidelines for TC-L4

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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.

A case study is a means of demonstrating the integration of your learning ie

- Working within the professional framework of the agency
- 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/assessor is not expecting you to already be an 'expert' - s/he wants to assess your understandings 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 6 sessions should have been carried out. Your first case study in year 1 could be based on a client who has had 6 sessions but has not necessarily ended the counselling process. Another case study should then concentrate on middles and endings.

### 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: referral from, pseudonym for client, gender, 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 him/her.

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):

- » 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.
- » 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, therapeutic relationship and integration of your theoretical skills and interventions, mental health concerns and explicit and/or implicit patterns in self and personal history (linked to your core theoretical model).

The ending section can explore:

- » A reflection on the ending - how this was managed as part of the whole process.

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.