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Guidance to Workplace Experience

Level 4 Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling (TC-L4)

This RQF qualification is regulated by Ofqual in England, Qualifications Wales in Wales and CCEA in Northern Ireland.



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Please note that:

This document can be downloaded from the CPCAB Website along with candidate support materials and is intended to provide information that will enable you to maximise your learning on this course and to complete the qualification successfully.

1. Introduction for Candidates

The work-based experience placement offers candidates an opportunity to integrate their theory and practice. Like apprenticeships, this is a process of learning, testing, theorising, speculating, understanding, and re-working. Good workplace experience allows the candidate to develop their knowledge and experience, whilst still ensuring the safety of the client.

A Zen teaching story tells of a group of students who ask their wise teacher:

"What is the source of good judgement?"

The great teacher replies:

"Experience"

One student respectfully asks:

"And what is the source of experience?"

The teacher smiles, and says:

"Bad judgement"

To successfully complete their client hours the candidate needs continual support and encouragement from agency staff. The agency is part of a network which consists of the trainee, supervisor, and tutors at the centre. Agency managers and staff are a vital component in the development of trainees. While every college and agency will manage the relationship differently and that is welcomed by CPCAB, there are some necessary guidelines for all concerned.

2. CPCAB Requirements for TC-L4

(a) Client hours

Candidates need to complete a minimum of 100 hours of *formally contracted* one to one counselling with at least five different clients in an agency setting during the life of the course. Up to 49% of client placement hours can be online/telephone and the remaining 51% client placement hours should be conducted in-person.

(b) When to start a placement

Centres must have their own systems for ensuring that candidates start in a placement when they are ready to do so, considering client safety and individual competence. Candidates should begin their placement in the first year once they are assessed as ready to work with clients in an agency. Where candidates will be working with clients online/telephone, centres should assess candidates' readiness for working in this medium specifically before starting.

Centres must explicitly tell candidates what might happen in the event of a satisfactory placement not being found. Candidates who have been unable to secure a suitable placement during year one should not proceed onto year 2.

(c) Reports

Candidates need formal feedback or reports from the counselling agency and supervisor to help evidence their capability. This takes the form of:

- Supervisor report and feedback (minimum of one)
- We would also request that supervisors check the candidate's log of client and supervision hours. Supervisors need to sign each page to validate the hours claimed.
- Agency report and feedback (minimum of one).

While it is the candidate's responsibility to negotiate and arrange this, the training centre is encouraged to assist by liaising with local agencies and to provide recommended proforma for feedbacks. Candidates need to keep careful records of their client work and supervision to meet CPCAB requirements. Tutors should monitor these during tutorials and reviews.

(d) Cause for concern reports/meetings

There may be occasions when the tutors have concerns about a candidate, they may ask for or send the agency a report about their concerns. They may invite the agency to attend a 'cause for concern' meeting where the agency would meet with the candidate and tutors and explore the best ways of helping this candidate move forward or to take other appropriate action.

(e) Incomplete hours

CPCAB recognises that some candidates will not have completed all the course requirements by the end of the second year. CPCAB allows a MAXIMUM of one year (beyond the course end date) for completing client hours. Centres must make absolutely clear what the requirements are for late completion of hours and course work, at the start of the first year. See the 'Supporting NP/deferred candidates' support document on the CPCAB website.

3. What is an Agency?

By 'agency' CPCAB means any setting in which candidates can work within a formal counselling contract (this does not include being in 'private practice'). Finding a placement agency could be managed by the centre but is more likely to be arranged by the candidate with the agreement of the tutor(s).

A good agency will:

- Provide appropriate indemnity and liability insurance.
- Provide appropriate client assessment and referral procedures.
- Assess client suitability for any online/telephone counselling.
- Meet the health and safety obligations to client and counsellor.
- Work in accordance with relevant legislation.
- Provide induction, training, mentoring and line management support to the trainee.
- Provide agency supervision, OR monitor supervision provided by independent supervisors who are not part of the agency.

4. Developing Workplace Experience Opportunities

Placements provide an opportunity for candidates to gain experience as a volunteer/trainee counsellor which is the next step from working with their peers in a classroom setting.

Training centres need to develop links with local counselling service providers to assist candidates in finding client-work experience. Both agencies and supervisors need to be provided with information on the qualification and training programme requirements. Candidates will need to complete a minimum of 51 in-person client hours in one or more agencies.

Ideally, the agency and supervisors' own orientation to client work would be broadly similar to that of the training programme.

Ideally the medium of placement counselling will be broadly similar to that of the training programme.

5. What Kinds of Clients can Candidates Work With?

CPCAB does not explicitly specify the type of client groups a candidate can work with (this is to accommodate centres who choose from a wide range of descriptors and contexts for the qualification), but we do offer the following advisory guidance which is in line with BACP Accreditation Guidelines.

Tutors need to ensure that candidates are in safe, ethical, and well-managed agency placements:

- The placement must offer candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their proficiency in the relevant assessment criteria and at the relevant service level.
- The workplace experience must provide candidates with a minimum of 51 in-person hours of counselling.
- The quality and depth of experience offered in the workplace needs to match the training, proficiency, ability, and experience of the candidate.
- Client experience should not be limited to a narrow client group unless there is a descriptor e.g. 'working with young people' attached to the qualification (and even in this case candidates still have to meet all the generic criteria of the qualification).

With reference to working with children or young people, please see Appendix 1 'Counselling hours – should they include working with children?'

Working online/telephone

Where candidates will be taking up workplace experience which offers online/telephone counselling, centres should ensure that candidates are competent and ready to start working in this medium.

Centres should support online/telephone workplace experience through the training programme.

Centres must publish all requirements and guidelines regarding workplace experience to candidates in pre-course information.

The safety of clients and candidates is of paramount importance. Section 7 (P8) outlines the different responsibilities of the training centre, tutor/placement coordinator, agency, candidate, and supervisor.

It is the training centre's role to ensure that these responsibilities are addressed in their procedures for approving workplace experience and to make all requirements clear to candidates in pre-course literature.

6. Defining Responsibilities

Defining responsibilities for all those involved in a candidate work placement is an ethical requirement. Although lines of responsibility will vary according to the context, it is important to define these responsibilities explicitly.

The following guidelines suggest which areas of responsibility need to be addressed:

(a) Centre responsibilities

To support tutors (in their task of enabling candidates to find appropriate placements) by:

- Providing appropriate support (e.g. administrative hours)
- Publishing workplace experience requirements and guidelines in pre-course information or student handbook.

(b) Tutor responsibilities

- To ensure that candidates are working with suitable client groups in well-managed placements.
- To define lines of communication between agencies, supervisors, tutors, and candidates.
- To negotiate contracts with agencies on behalf of the centre where appropriate.
- To provide new placements with details of the Diploma course content and candidates' methods of assessment.
- To send or receive a 'cause for concern' report to agency and/or supervisor if required.
- To arrange a 'cause for concern' meeting with all necessary parties if required.

To ensure that candidates:

- are recommended to become members of a professional body.
- are aware of and can apply the BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions, NCPS Code of Ethics, ACC Code of Ethics, (or equivalent professional framework) to client work.
- are ready to work in the medium specified before starting work with clients
- have professional indemnity insurance, paid for either by the placement or by themselves.
- have arranged supervision with an appropriately qualified supervisor, who is experienced in the same way of working as the candidate (in-person, online or telephone), if not provided by the agency.
- have arranged clinical supervision with someone who does not hold any other role within the agency or has any other possible conflict of interest e.g. a line manager or a tutor.
- have undergone a DBS (formally CRB) check if requested by the agency or centre.

(c) Agency/placement responsibilities

- To offer formal induction to volunteers/trainee counsellors.
- To make volunteers/trainee counsellors aware of all relevant agency policies and procedures including:
  - code of conduct, complaints and health and safety procedures.
  - confidential handling of client records according to agency policy and data protection laws (UK GDPR and Data Protection Act (2018) to clarify agency training requirements for volunteers/trainee counsellors.
  - to clarify administrative procedures.
  - undergoing a DBS check if required.
- To set out an agreed explicit referral procedure which ensures candidates work with clients within the limits of their abilities (See CPCAB's Model of Helping Work and Counselling Practice)
- To take clinical responsibility for the client work.
- To carry out prior assessment of clients or assist the volunteers/trainee counsellors in carrying out client assessments
- To provide a safe therapeutic space for the counselling work.
- To assess candidates' resources and competencies for online/telephone counselling work
- To clarify relevant expense arrangements (e.g. travel costs, supervision costs).
- To give written feedback to the volunteer/trainee counsellor to meet course requirements.
- To receive or send a 'cause for concern' report if required.
- To attend a 'cause for concern' meeting at the college/centre if required.

Examples of client logs, supervision logs, supervisor and agency reports can be found on the CPCAB website.

(d) Candidate responsibilities

- To conduct themselves according to the ethical standards of the profession and within the agency policy and procedures.
- To negotiate an individual contract with the agency. (See an Example Contract)
- To make it clear to clients (if not already made explicit by the agency) that they:
  - are still in training.
  - work according to the BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions (or equivalent).
  - may refer to client work in college assignments without identifying the client in any way.
  - will give the client the opportunity to refuse permission to refer to their work together if they so wish.
- To ensure they are covered by professional indemnity insurance either through the agency or privately.
- To undergo a DBS check if requested.
- To work within their level of competence for in-person/online/telephone work.
- To make referrals if directed by their supervisor or agency manager.
- To arrange clinical supervision with an appropriately qualified person who does not hold any other role within the agency or has any other possible conflict of interest e.g. a 'line manager' or a tutor-assessor.
- To ensure that arrangements for supervision meet the requirements of the relevant professional association.

- To ensure their supervisor is experienced in the same way of working that they will be working with their own clients.
- To keep a client record and supervision log; to ask their supervisor to sign each page of their client/supervision log to confirm hours.
- To inform the agency (and any individual supervisor where appropriate) of all relevant course and qualification requirements prior to commencement.
- To attend a 'cause for concern' meeting if requested by the tutor, agency and/or supervisor

(e) Supervisor responsibilities

The responsibility of the supervisor will depend on whether the supervisor is:

(a) employed as part of the agency (though must not be in a line-management role within the agency).

(b) providing independent supervision arranged by the supervisee.

In all cases the supervisor will:

- Provide a suitable environment for supervision to be conducted.
- Provide supervision with knowledge and experience of the medium of counselling offered by the candidate.
- Support the candidate in applying course concepts to their client work.
- Provide feedback to the candidate according to qualification/course requirements.
- Negotiate clear arrangements regarding all contractual issues (e.g. time, place, remuneration).
- Make explicit all lines of communication with agency and centre.
- Assist the candidate with developing recording-keeping procedures, paying particular attention to confidentiality, ethical boundaries and UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- Assist the candidate in making a referral where necessary.
- Monitor the candidate's fitness to practice and assist the candidate in making ethical decisions in this regard referring to the appropriate ethical framework.
- Clarify their responsibilities as a supervisor with both the agency and training organisation.

Please note that two example Supervisor Reports are available as support documents on the CPCAB website.

7. Proformas

Many agencies will have their own contracts and proformas for volunteers/trainee counsellors. The proformas on the following pages are offered as samples which can be adapted to individual training centre needs.

Also note that the following relevant documents can be downloaded from the CPCAB website:

- Two example Supervisor Reports – interim and final
- Agency Report proforma

8. Sample 1: Candidate Workplace Record

Tutors are asked to (a) ensure that each candidate completes this form; and (b) makes a copy for centre records.

Name of agency/organisation: .....

Address of agency/organisation: .....

.....

..... Tel No. .....

Named contact person at agency: .....

Name of counselling candidate: .....

Address of candidate: .....

.....

Start date of workplace experience: .....

Professional body name and membership no. .....

Insurance certificate no. .....

I confirm that I have checked both of the above:

Signed (course tutor): ..... Date:.....

Sample 2: Contract Between the Agency and Volunteer/ Trainee Counsellor

Name of agency/workplace experience organisation: ……

Address of agency/organisation: ……

……

Tel no: …… Email: ……..

Name of volunteer/counselling trainee: ……

Address of volunteer/counselling trainee: ……

…… Tel no: ……

Email: ……

Named agency contact responsible for feedback to volunteer/trainee counsellor ……..

The agency and the counselling trainee agree to the following:

1. That the agency retains accountability for the volunteer/counselling trainee's work with clients.
2. That the trainee is aware of the agency's aims and policies relating to in-person/online/telephone work
3. Date of commencement of placement: ……
4. The details of where/how the counselling work will take place:

5. The allocation procedure. (How will the internal referrals be managed? Who will be responsible in the organisation for this?):

6. Client assessment and suitability procedure:

7. Client referral procedure (should referral be necessary):

8. Support/mentoring arrangements:

9. Details of supervision and name of supervisor – if offered internally by the agency. Otherwise, volunteer/counselling trainee to give details of alternative supervision arrangements. Specify length and frequency of supervision and whether individual /group, in-person/online/ telephone.

10. Management of client records according to data protection legislation:

That the volunteer/counselling trainee is aware of the agency's aims and policies including:

- Code of Conduct.
- Complaints and health and safety procedures for in-person and online/telephone client work.
- Confidential handling of client records.
- Relevant agency policies.
- Relevant insurance requirements for in-person and online/telephone client work
- Agency training requirements for volunteers.
- Administrative procedures.
- Relevant expense arrangements (e.g. travel costs, supervision costs).

11. Procedure for terminating the placement:

Signed ..... (Agency representative) Date.....

Signed ..... (Volunteer/counselling trainee) Date .....

Signed ..... (Tutor) Date.....

Signed ..... (Supervisor) Date .....

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Sample 3: (Completed) Client and Supervision Records

The client log (100 hours +)

To provide evidence that the CPCAB requirements have been met, it is necessary to keep a running record of the amount of counselling work being carried out. This record may also provide evidence of supervised counselling hours for future professional personal accreditation. See Appendix 2 for a blank log sheet.

DATE	CLIENT*	SESSION NUMBER	TOTAL COUNSELLING HOURS In-person	TOTAL COUNSELLING HOURS Online/ Telephone	FOCUS OF THE SESSION
3.5.23	SW	15	30		SW mourned the loss of his relationship with O and expressed his anger. Began to work on "What I want now".
4.5.23	AL	4	31		AL arrived late, so spent session exploring A's rigid pattern of punctuality and need to please others.
5.5.23	RN	2		2	Explored RN's views of the family stresses. Looked at his patterns and what he wants from family members.

A record of supervision is needed to evidence the CPCAB (and ethical) requirement that all counselling work must be appropriately supervised. Your supervision log should map to your client log. [1]

Example 1 supervision log:

Date	Type of supervision group/individual In-person / Online/telephone	Hours claimed	Client*	Focus and outcome
10.5.23	I Online	1.5	AL	Contracting: Discussed my difficulties with contracting online. Outcome: Explored idea of an "information sheet" to give to share with client prior to discussing in 1st session.
25.5.23	G In-person	2	MR	Difficulty with time boundaries- went over session limit. Outcome: To review contract with client at next session

[1] You should aim to meet the supervision ratio requirements of your chosen professional membership association/ethical framework. This varies depending on the amount of client work undertaken and you should seek guidance from your professional membership association, placement agency and centre as to how these ratios are ethically achieved. For example, the BACP requirements for trainee counsellors in individual supervision is a minimum of 1.5 hours per calendar month. Ratio of 8 hours counselling to 1-hour supervision, with supervision every two weeks. The BACP formula for counting time gained through group supervision is that if a candidate is in a group of four or less, half the time of the session can be claimed. So, if there are four people in a session of 1½ hours, then each person can claim 45 minutes each. If there are five or more in a session, then divide the length of the session by the number or people present - i.e. five people in a 2½ hour session could claim ½ an hour each. Peer supervision is not acceptable. For student members of BACP, please read GPiA054 Introduction to supervision for members for further information and check with your tutor for further assistance.

Example 2 supervision log

It can be useful to see exactly where the supervision is situated in the client log; an example of how this can be set out is illustrated below.

Date	Client	Session	Hours	Focus of session and outcome
5.5.23	SW	15	63	SW mourned the loss of his relationship with O and expressed his anger. Began to work on "What I want now".
5.5.23	AL	4	64	AL arrived late, so spent session exploring A's rigid pattern of punctuality and need to please others.
5.5.23	RN	2	65	Explored RN's views of the family stresses. Looked at his patterns and what he wants from family members.
10.5.23 **Supervision Signature** ……	AL Contracting		1 hour (individual)	Concern that I am not challenging AL's perceptions of reality. Possible identification with my issues. **Outcome:** Take to my therapy. Re-focus on client goals in next session. Discussed my difficulties with contracting when there is so much to cover. **Outcome:** Explored idea of an "information sheet" to give to clients and how this would be received at my agency.
12.5.23	SW	16	66	SW back to grieving, very upset for most of the session; looked at all the aspects of the relationship he is missing. Left looking more peaceful.
12.5.23	AL	5	67	AL arrived on time, congratulated him. Not sure I should have done so, he did not respond in a pleased way. Thought I was being patronising. Eventually discussed his relationship with mother.
12.5.23	RN	3	68	RN arrived very angry, a new stress with siblings, feeling he does not belong in this family.
19.5.23	SW	17	69	Still very sad – lots of tears – O's birthday this week which was a painful landmark.
19.5.23	AL	6	69	AL no show.
19.5.23	RN	4	70	RN more upset than angry this session, explored his childhood and how he has never felt as though he belonged. Could see his sense of abandonment and rejection clearly.
24.5.23 **Supervision Signature** ……	AL and no show RN using archaic material in Here and Now		½ hour (group)	Felt I had made a big mistake with AL. Not sure how to rectify it. Outcome: decided to write to him, offering him his usual time, hoping to see him. RN uncertain how to use childhood issues in person centred, here and now. Outcome: this is where the client wishes to be, supporting her to make links between feelings then and feelings now important.

This example enables the tutor to see instantly if the required ratio of hours to supervision is being met. Furthermore, the tutor can review links between issues brought up by the client and use this log to identify areas that are not being discussed in supervision and to check in with the candidate to explore why, especially if they have a particular concern.

Appendix 1: Counselling hours – should they include working with children?

CPCAB is often asked whether candidates can undertake placements working with children when studying the Level 4 Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling (TC-L4) and if so what percentage of the required 100 hours can be with children.

The answer is not simple because several factors need to be taken into consideration. The key issues to consider are:

- The safety and protection of children is paramount and specialist training, knowledge and skills are needed to work with children.
- The client work undertaken for TC-L4 must include sufficient client hours to demonstrate competence with adults and enable the candidate to meet the learning outcomes and assessment criteria.
- Centres (usually course tutors) hold responsibility for managing placements so the final decision of where candidates undertake placements rests with the centre.
- Particular reference should be made to the requirements of the chosen professional association, for example centres offering the BACP APQ and candidates wishing to gain BACP membership must adhere to the BACP requirements.
- Some individual candidates may have specific skills and knowledge acquired outside the course that enable individual candidates to work ethically and safely with children.
- Candidates should not carry sole responsibility for client assessment in the agency and should have access to referral routes if they encounter clients or issues that are beyond their individual competence.
- The term 'child' encompasses a wide age range; competence to work with 16+ is different from the competence required to work with children of primary school age.
- Agencies may have their own requirements for candidates working in their placement.

Courses are not all the same

The CPCAB Level 4 Diploma is assessed to a national standard via a common set of learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria but each individual centre has its own unique training programme. If the centre training programme (1) includes specific skills and knowledge for working with children and (2) the tutors are themselves suitably qualified and experienced in this area, they may support candidates to take up placements working with children.

If the course itself does not include specialised training for working with children but the agency offers and supports candidates to work with children via their own induction and training programmes, candidates may undertake a proportion of their hours with children provided the course tutors are happy to support this. Guidance on best practice in preparation and induction can be found in BACP's Counselling children and young people (4-18 years) training curriculum (Stage 1).

Appendix 2: Sample Client Log Hours for TC-L4

In all cases candidates should be supported by appropriate clinical supervision. This is often provided by the agency itself.

Centres and Group Training Supervision

Centres/tutors are required to run group training supervision sessions as part of the course in addition to the candidate's external/placement supervision. If centres/tutors do not feel confident supervising candidates working with children, they are acting ethically in making it clear to candidates that they may not take up placements working with children. In addition, some tutors are happy for candidates to work with clients who are 14+ or 16+ or 18+ but not younger children. As tutors have responsibility for candidates this is ultimately a centre decision not a CPCAB decision. All information regarding the centre's policy on placements should be clearly published and made available to candidates during the selection process and in the course handbook.

Working with adults

All candidates must undertake sufficient client hours to demonstrate their ability to work one to one with adults. In practice this means that only a proportion of client hours can be with children or young people. Tutors can exercise discretion as to the exact proportion in relation to their own candidates but CPCAB requires that at least 70% of the total client hours should be with adults. Careful consideration should be given to working in online/telephone mediums with children and young people, and the relevant professional association guidance should be sought (for example BACP guidance currently states that CYP hours must be in-person).

The only exception is where the counselling placement is with Place2be, in which case up to 50% of client hours can be working with children if this has been explicitly agreed by the candidate's own training centre after considering all the professional aspects of the arrangement. CPCAB has entered into this unique agreement with Place2be in recognition of the high quality of additional specialist training and supervision offered to all their volunteer counsellors.

This exception does not apply to TC-L4 BACP APQ.

Appendix 3: Sample Log of Supervision Hours for TC-L4

			In-person	Online/ Telephone	

Trainee Signature: Date:

Agency Representative Signature: Date:

* Ensure client confidentiality by using letters or numbers.

Date	Type of supervision group/individual In-person/ Online/ telephone	Hours claimed	Client*	Focus and outcome
Trainee Signature:			Date:	
Supervisor Signature:			Date:	

* You should aim to meet the supervision ratio requirements of your chosen professional membership association/ethical framework. This varies depending on the amount of client work undertaken and you should seek guidance from your professional membership association, placement agency and centre as to how these ratios are ethically achieved. For example, the BACP requirements for trainee counsellors in individual supervision is a minimum of 1.5 hours per calendar month. Ratio of 8 hours counselling to 1-hour supervision, with supervision every two weeks. The BACP formula for counting time gained through group supervision is that if a candidate is in a group of four or less, half the time of the session can be claimed. So, if there are four people in a session of 1½ hours, then each person can claim 45 minutes each. If there are five or more in a session, then divide the length of the session by the number or people present - i.e. five people in a 2½ hour session could claim ½ an hour each.

* Ensure client confidentiality by using letters or numbers