

Introduction

Judy Moore and Ruth Roberts

Counselling and Psychotherapy in Organisational Settings was conceived in response to ongoing developments in the world of counselling and psychotherapy. We were aware that many counsellors and psychotherapists enter the workplace with little or no awareness of the likely impact on their work of the broader organisation in which counselling takes place. Counselling and psychotherapy training, whatever the orientation of that training, usually majors in the one-to-one therapeutic encounter. While contextual factors such as class, race and gender may be considered as part of training, little attention is generally given to how the immediate organisational context may impact – both positively and negatively – on counselling work. Yet the reality is that most counsellors, at some time in their working lives, will work within an organisation. There is an increasing diversity of public and private organisations where counselling and psychotherapy are embedded as part of the provision to employees and service users and counselling is already embedded in many educational establishments. In recognition of the need for deeper understanding of organisational issues, the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) now requires 50 hours ‘work-based learning’ in addition to placement hours for accredited counselling courses (2009). Although the new course accreditation requirements will not be implemented until 2014, courses are increasingly introducing projects and assignments that require trainees to consider the context and practices of a typical counselling service.

Some counsellors and psychotherapists might argue that, even within organisations, counselling and psychotherapy should take place within a vacuum of confidentiality that provides clients with a neutral, safe place in which to voice their concerns. However, in practice, many counsellors and psychotherapists working in organisational settings find that the needs of the client have to be finely balanced with the interests of the organisation as a whole. These competing interests can raise some interesting and taxing concerns for practitioners who are usually working within strict budgetary restraints and with an awareness of the overarching aims and mission of the organisation. The aim of this book is to illustrate how many counsellors and psychotherapists grapple with these issues on a day-to-day basis and how an awareness of the contextual setting of practice can actually enhance the service that is offered to clients.

This book is aimed at experienced and trainee counsellors and psychotherapists alike. Readers who are currently in training will find the book useful on many levels, whether applying for training placements or undertaking the work-based learning elements of their course. For the experienced practitioner, we hope this book will offer an insight into different sectors in which counselling and psychotherapy are embedded and provide valuable background information for individuals applying for new posts in organisational settings. For others, already working in the settings described here, we hope the book will enable reflection on current practice and a chance to understand better the counsellor's role in organisational settings.

SOME GENERAL POINTS TO NOTE

Counselling in an organisational setting may or may not be workplace counselling. Several texts address issues involved in counselling in the workplace (e.g. Carroll, 1996; Coles, 2001; Berridge and Cooper, 2004; Franklin, 2003; Bryant-Jefferies, 2005) and a comprehensive review of research in this area have been drawn together (McLeod, 2008). Less has been written about the broader organisational context and this book endeavours to acknowledge the fact that voluntary organisations, educational establishments and residential settings face many of the issues that also confront those who offer counselling to employees in the workplace. Trainee counsellors on placement suddenly find themselves in a context where they are highly trained in one-to-one interpersonal interaction but are totally ignorant of organisational dynamics and institutional pressures under which they may be working.

Carroll and Walton cite McLeod's list of challenges faced by counsellors working in non-counselling organisations:

- being pressured to produce results desired by the agency rather than the client;
- maintaining confidential boundaries;
- justifying the cost of the service;
- dealing with isolation;
- educating colleagues about the purpose and value of counselling;
- justifying the cost of supervision;
- avoiding being overwhelmed by numbers of clients, or becoming the conscience of the organisation;
- avoiding the threat to reputation caused by 'failure' cases;
- coping with the envy of colleagues who are not able to take an hour for each client interview;
- creating an appropriate office space and reception system.

(McLeod, 1993, p273; quoted in Carroll and Walton, 1997, p18)

These challenges are common to all contexts covered in the following chapters, even including the voluntary sector where trustees are likely to scrutinise the work of the counselling agency for which they hold financial responsibility.

The paradox of counselling and psychotherapy training in the UK to date is that scant attention has been given to where the work for which individuals are being so intensively trained will actually take place. Several factors are now, however, inviting a more rigorous approach to this aspect of our work.

A RESPONSE TO ONGOING DEVELOPMENTS: REGULATION OF COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

In February 2007, the British government published a White Paper entitled *Trust, Assurance and Safety – The Regulation of Health Professionals in the 21st Century*, which stated that:

- 7.2 *The Government is planning to introduce statutory regulation for applied psychologists, psychotherapists and counsellors and other psychological therapists. . .*
- 7.16 *Psychologists, psychotherapists and counsellors will be regulated by the Health Professions Council following that Council's rigorous process of assessing their regulatory needs and ensuring that its system is capable of accommodating them. This will be the first priority for future regulation.*

The BACP defines regulation in the following terms.

Statutory regulation means that a profession is regulated by an independent council that does not belong to any professional body or interest group. In regulating a profession a professional title is protected. Then it is only people who are registered to use that title can legally refer to themselves by it.

(www.bacp.co.uk/regulation/regulationFAQ.php)

One of the primary implications of regulation is the standardisation of training and core competencies for entry into the professions of Counselling and Psychotherapy. Under current proposals, Counselling and Psychotherapy will be separate titles on the register and will thus have some variation in the core competencies identified for each role. Practitioners currently accredited as counsellors and psychotherapists will most likely be able to enter the register on both strands, while new entrants may need to decide prior to commencing their training under which title they would like to register. In practice, however, many training institutions are likely to provide comprehensive training courses that encompass the core

competencies for both titles. It is with this in mind that this book addresses both counsellors and psychotherapists alike (and those who use both titles in their professional work).

The philosophical and practical issues currently being debated in the Health Professions Council (HPC) consultation on statutory regulation are wide ranging and sometimes evoke passionate responses. There is not scope in this Introduction to address these issues fully. However, it is important to note that regulation provides an important backdrop to the book and may bring about important changes to the way in which Counselling and Psychotherapy are presented to the public (both in the use of titles and in the employment of practitioners). From our perspective, the single most important implication of regulation will be on the training of counsellors and psychotherapists, and the increased requirement for work-based learning in accredited courses preparing trainees to meet the core competencies for regulation.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TRAINING

Counselling training is usually undertaken within the context of a particular theoretical approach (or integrated approaches) whereby the primary focus is on the encounter between client and counsellor. Emphasis is usually placed on the counsellor's own growth and development in preparation for the challenges of practice at the interpersonal level of the counselling process. Paradoxically, it was only in the early years of the development of counselling in the UK that context-specific training took place, through courses in student counselling established at the Universities of Aston (1971) and London (1972). Since then, training has become shaped more by the definitions of the theoretical approach.

Increasingly, however, counsellors find themselves working in a variety of institutional settings where counselling practice is determined not only by the counsellor's theoretical approach but by the philosophy, culture and economic boundaries of the institution. Additionally, wider social and economic pressures are increasingly at the forefront of policy decisions with regard to the nation's mental health and emotional well-being. Every counsellor, therefore, whether starting out or managing changes in the workplace, needs a thorough understanding of these contextual challenges to practice.

In addition to these developments, as noted above, the introduction of statutory regulation is likely to have important implications for training. The BACP has already responded to this likely future development by publishing a new 'Core Curriculum', popularly known as the 'Gold Book' (2009), with an increased requirement for work-based learning of 50 hours in addition to a training placement of 150 client hours.

The BACP defines work-based learning as:

[presenting] students with opportunities to explore and gain contextual awareness in a professional counselling and/or psychotherapy or appropriate related setting. The learning experience should be designed to enable students to relate their training to the workplace.

Such opportunities for work-based learning might typically include clerical duties; attending team meetings; case management conferences; reading literature, policies and procedures; skills practice; structured training; observation, assisting, mentoring or job shadowing . . .

(BACP, 2009, p12)

We hope that *Counselling and Psychotherapy in Organisational Settings* will provide a useful training resource to lecturers and students regarding these elements of their course as well as providing practical advice and insight for qualified practitioners preparing for accreditation or regulation in the future.

Implementation of the 'Gold Book' has been delayed from its original launch date of 2011 to 2014. In the meantime, courses are adapting themselves to the new requirements and there is likely to be a gradual phasing-in of work-based learning between now and 2014. Courses are re-accredited on a five-year cycle and those that come up for review between now and 2014 will need to accommodate the new work-based learning requirements.

ACCREDITATION

Most counsellors working in organisational settings will be accredited either by BACP, the Confederation of Scottish Counselling Agencies (COSCA), the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) or an equivalent professional body. For the purposes of this Introduction we will focus on BACP requirements as they exemplify the need for practice-based learning.

Accreditation by a professional body will be a requirement under statutory regulation and advertisements for counsellors in any organisational setting are likely to include a statement that applicants should either be accredited or 'working towards accreditation'. Current BACP requirements state that the applicant should be a member of BACP, covered by professional indemnity insurance, be in current practice, with a minimum 1.5 hours of supervision per month, and have met the training requirements, which include 450 hours of supervised practice, at least 150 of which must be undertaken after the completion of training.

It is this last requirement that most impacts on counselling in organisational settings. All counsellors-in-training and their newly qualified colleagues need placements. Counsellors are discouraged from taking private clients during and immediately after their training period and most counsellors will work on a voluntary basis to achieve most, if not all, of their qualifying 450 hours. Their services are increasingly sought by organisations which are under constant pressure, particularly in the current economic climate, to provide more counselling with fewer resources.

Despite this requirement, it is interesting to note that the current 'reflective practice' criteria for accreditation do not invite reflection on workplace or organisational issues:

8.1 Knowledge and understanding

8.1.1 Describe a rationale for your client work with reference to the theory/ theories that inform your practice.

8.1.2 Describe the place of your self-awareness within your way of working.

8.1.3 Describe how issues of difference and equality impact upon the therapeutic relationship.

(www.bacp.co.uk/accreditation)

It is interesting to speculate how this aspect of the criteria might change in the light of the new 'Gold Book' requirements. Our hypothesis is that 'knowledge and understanding' of organisational context is likely to be included in the future.

ETHICS

All of the counsellors and psychotherapists who have contributed to this book work to the ethical guidelines of their professional body. In recent years, 'codes' of ethics have been replaced by a less rigid 'Framework', which invites the practitioner to reflect on the competing pressures under which they are operating. In addition to the BACP Ethical Framework criteria for 'Providing a Good Standard of Practice and Care', of 'Keeping Trust' (criteria 11–19) and 'Respecting Privacy and Confidentiality' (20–4), which are common to all counselling practice, the criteria that most impact on the organisational setting, and present some of the challenges to counsellors outlined in the chapters below, are 'Awareness of Context' (56) and 'Making and Receiving Referrals' (57 and 58).

In terms of 'Context', the Ethical Framework suggests that the practitioner *is responsible for learning about and taking account of the different protocols, conventions and customs that can pertain to different working contexts and cultures* (BACP, 2010, p9). In terms of 'Making and Receiving Referrals' the criteria for ethical practice are as follows:

57. All routine referrals to colleagues and other services should be discussed with the client in advance and the client's consent obtained both to making the referral and also to disclosing information to accompany the referral. Reasonable care should be taken to ensure that:

- *the recipient of the referral is able to provide the required service;*
- *any confidential information disclosed during the referral process will be adequately protected;*
- *the referral will be likely to benefit the client.*

58. Prior to accepting a referral the practitioner should give careful consideration to:

- *the appropriateness of the referral;*
- *the likelihood that the referral will be beneficial to the client;*
- *the adequacy of the client's consent for the referral.*

If the referrer is professionally required to retain overall responsibility for the work with the client, it is considered to be professionally appropriate to provide the referrer with brief progress reports. Such reports should be made in consultation with clients and not normally against their explicit wishes.

(BACP, 2010, p9)

The chapters in this book engage with the complexities of how the need for referral or collaboration can arise and some of the ways in which the institution or organisation can work with any client and their counsellor towards the best possible outcome. The need to work ethically is always paramount for counsellors and it is their responsibility to make clear the limits of their communication outside the counselling room, to be aware of when communication with other parts of the organisation can be helpful or where it can amount to a breach of the client's trust.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

There are eight chapters in this book, each written by experienced practitioners active in their field. The organisational settings chosen here were considered to be sectors where counselling and psychotherapy have an established presence and where many counsellors and psychotherapists find employment or placements. In some instances, such as Occupational Health and Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT), the nature and role of counselling and psychotherapy are relatively new, and are continuing to be established and defined. In all settings, however, the roles of counselling and psychotherapy are under constant review and the shifting nature of the profession is something that underpins the focus of the book. Readers will understand the need to be responsive to changes in policy and regulation that affect practitioners in different fields. In addition, each author has provided a background to the field in which they work and an overview of the current issues facing counsellors and psychotherapists in their day-to-day work.

The first three chapters focus on counselling in educational settings: schools, Further Education and Higher Education. In these chapters we see how the educational setting can be both a focus and backdrop to the therapeutic work. In her chapter on counselling in schools, Gwen Spall considers the wider role of the counsellor in informing educational practice with an exploration of new initiatives in schools such as introducing restorative justice for conflict resolution. In the chapters on Further and Higher Education we see the effects of funding on counselling provision and the need for counselling services to clearly and continually define their purpose and role in these sectors. Chapter 4 gives an overview of working in the voluntary sector. Many trainees find placements in this sector and this chapter gives valuable insight into the qualities required to work in a sector where many people are unpaid yet remain committed to professional ideals and standards. Chapters 5 and 6 provide an insight into counselling and psychotherapy in settings where clients are either incarcerated (in prison) or in residential treatment for addictions. There are specific and difficult challenges facing practitioners in these settings with regard to the nature of the client group, the physical setting of the work and the tasks of the role. In particular, the therapist in a residential setting may be required to develop several strings to his or her bow in addition to one-to-one therapy. Chapters 7 and 8 focus on areas where counselling and psychotherapy are undergoing development and redefinition. Frank Paice's chapter on Counselling for Employee Assistance Programmes and in Occupational Health settings draws out the different influences and stakeholders in the counselling process and the need to work with an awareness of, and sensitivity to, these interests. Chapter 8 focuses on the newest development in counselling and psychotherapy; that of the Increasing Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) agenda introduced by the Labour government in 2006. The focus of this chapter is on the professional structure of this new sector of work and the challenge to practitioners working within tightly defined roles.

As you will see, the weighting of chapters varies throughout the book. Some chapters are heavily referenced due to the availability of literature and research in these fields – for example, the chapters 'Counselling and psychotherapy in prisons' and 'Addictions counselling in a residential treatment centre'. Others, however, have few external references as there is currently little information or research on counselling and psychotherapy in these fields. In particular, there were few external resources for Chapter 4, 'Counselling in a voluntary agency', and Chapter 2 'Counselling in Further Education'. These chapters draw heavily on the contributors' experiences of working in these fields and highlight avenues for future research into the effectiveness and role of counselling and psychotherapy in such sectors. All chapters draw on the contributors' hands-on experience of working in their chosen field(s) and this factor gives a unique emphasis to the book, providing what we hope will be useful personal insight as well as academic analysis.