

# **FITNESS FOR BUSINESS**

## **A COUNSELLOR'S PERSPECTIVE**

# POSSIBLE CLIENTS

- Client who is off sick and working towards a fit for work certificate.
- Client who is fit to return to work, and is issued with a fit for work certificate.
- Client who is not fit for work and the certificate is withheld by GP.
- Client who is not ready to return to work although the certificate is issued by GP.
- Client who is keen to return to work however the GP does not issue the fitness certificate.

# COUNSELLING – WHEN?

- While client is on sick leave.
- When certificate is issued.
- When client returns to work.
- When certificate is not issued.

## **CLIENT WHO IS OFF SICK AND WORKING TOWARDS A FIT FOR WORK CERTIFICATE.**

- Short term goals focused on the client working towards gaining the certificate through their own effort.
- Responsibility-taking and empowerment.
- Identification of steps in the process towards fitness for work.
- Problem solving with client around any difficulties the client has.
- Motivation from working towards a certificate rather than something the GP does to the client.

## **THE CLIENT WHO IS ISSUED WITH A FIT FOR WORK CERTIFICATE AND IS READY TO RETURN TO WORK.**

- Positive reinforcement of client's fitness for work, effort and change made.
- Short term goals focus on the process of returning, staggered start, resources needed.
- Client facilitated to take responsibility for a continuing process of change and/or self-care.
- Problem solving around any difficulties encountered with emphasis on client being empowered to change or accept.

# **CLIENT WHO IS NOT FIT FOR WORK AND THE CERTIFICATE IS NOT ISSUED.**

- Acceptance or change?
- Exploring the options for improving health and fitness for work.
- Exploring the options and consequences of changing their job or not returning to work.
- Rather than focusing just on the negatives putting forward the positives such as opportunity for change future hopes and a different style of life.

## **CLIENT WHO IS NOT READY TO RETURN TO WORK ALTHOUGH A CERTIFICATE IS ISSUED BY GP.**

- Empathy and hearing client's anger, and fears.
- Building self-esteem and regaining confidence by small steps.
- Exploring 2 contrasting views of self – GP says “fit for work” Client feels “not ready” Are these conflicting or just steps in a process towards full fitness?
- When a client has lost a lot of confidence – reinforcing what has been achieved already, and encouraging mountains to be seen as bumps in a road.

**CLIENT WHO IS KEEN TO RETURN TO WORK.  
HOWEVER, THE GP DOES NOT ISSUE THE FITNESS  
CERTIFICATE.**

- Empathy and hearing client's frustration and disappointment – recognition of the discomfort in having to wait.
- Reality testing – explore reasons why GP may not have issued certificate – encourage client to gather as much information.
- Exploring safety issues with client.
- Unpack any elements of client being “in denial” about their situation.
- Recognition of effort needed by client in achieving fitness certification.

# CONFIDENTIALITY 1

- BACP ethics statement on confidentiality.
- Disclosure when a client would be a potential danger to others or self in the workplace.
- When client/organisation safety is an issue, the GP has the option to with-hold of the fit for work certificate.
- What is fitness for one job may not be fitness for another. Greater clarity needed around specific jobs and roles.

# CONFIDENTIALITY 2

There needs to be greater clarity/ research about which conditions are dangerous for specific work and at what level they become dangerous.

- Alcohol and drugs – driving and heavy machinery
- Anger – high stress jobs, team leader, customer services.
- Bullying behaviour.
- Emotional flooding.
- Decision making impaired.

# CONFIDENTIALITY 3

- Confidentiality statements need to be seen and understood by clients from the very beginning of counselling.
- Possible pathways of disclosure need to be clearly stated and identified involving client where possible
- With client's written permission there may be times when counsellor and GP co-operation over certificate would be helpful.

# CONTRACTING 1

- Important at the outset of counselling
- Inclusion of the fit for work certificate in the contracting process when relevant.
- Short term work may include clear goals and targets working towards certification or maintaining fitness for work.
- Negotiation with client may include the identification of actions, behaviours, resources, and new skills to work towards certification or staying work-fit.

# CONTRACTING 2

- The contract needs to be tailored to client's specific situation.
- Some contracting may be around acceptance of circumstances outside the client's control.
- Some contracting may be about gaining the skills and qualities to change the current situation.

# IN CONCLUSION

- Fitness for work certification can be seen positively for counsellors and clients:
- 1. Emphasis is placed on becoming **well** rather than being sick.
- 2. Client can be more pro-actively involved in working towards and achieving a fitness for work certificate than receiving a sick note.
- 3. Counselling in the workplace can be part of the process of achieving a fitness for work certificate.
- 4. Counselling can have greater clarity with a focus and real sense of meaning and achievement.<sup>14</sup>