

The role of workplace counselling
in the promotion of well-being
and effectiveness at work

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What is workplace counselling?

- Counselling services paid for by employers
- Immediate access – no waiting
- Typically brief 1-1 therapy – 6-8 sessions
- Provided through in-house service or external agency (e.g., Employee Assistance Programme; EAP); often co-ordinated by Occupational Health
- More than 10% of UK employees have access to such schemes (higher proportion in North America)

Characteristics of users of
workplace counselling

- Mix of work-related and personal/family issues
- Staff from all age, ethnic and occupational groups; women slightly over-represented
- Over 80% defined at 'caseness' level on GHQ-12 (Arthur 2002)
- Average uptake per annum – 6% of eligible employees

How effective is workplace counselling?

- Consistent evidence of significant gains in relation to:
 - Alleviation of symptoms of anxiety, stress and depression
 - Reduction in sickness absence rates
- Some evidence of gains in job commitment, work functioning and job satisfaction and reduced substance misuse
- No evidence of differential effectiveness of any specific therapy approach
- Major methodological issues associated with the evidence base in this area

Why is workplace counselling effective?

- Clients do not need to wait
- Clients have access to personal, relational and material resources – are in work or have the possibility of returning to work
- Experienced counsellors who are closely monitored and supervised
- Flexible, pragmatic approach to therapy

The future of workplace counselling

- Innovation: development of interventions tailored to specific client groups (e.g., occupational PTSD; burnout)
- Use of email/internet counselling
- Awareness of organisational factors that support or hinder uptake of counselling
- Fresh look at limit on numbers of sessions (Csiernik 2005)
- More and better co-ordinated research

Further information

- McLeod, J. (2007) *Counselling in the workplace: a comprehensive review of the research evidence*. 2nd edition. Lutterworth: British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy
- (purchase details on BACP website)
