

DRAFT

Counselling and Case Management: a short guide to the differences and similarities.

Case Management and Counselling often go together, and there is often doubt about which does what and why, and how they work together. This note will help people who come across either Counselling or Case Management to understand their main purposes and the differences between them. It is only a general and introductory note; for full information it is always best to ask your Counsellor or Case Manager, as practices and applications vary.

Both Counselling and Case Management are focussed on the needs of an individual who is usually called the 'client'.

What is Case Management?

'Case Management' is the organisation of a range of activities that help a client to achieve a particular goal. For example, Medical Case Management finds, organises and follows up on clinical activities of all kinds to support the client back to health. Vocational Case Management organises and procures services that will help a client stay in work or get a job. Usually Case Management does not pay for nor actually carry out the services that it organises, but this can vary. Case Management typically includes a detailed assessment of the situation, the selection of a goal— such as being in work - setting plans and working towards the goal. It also arranges for a variety of services or activities to help towards that goal, and advocates for the client.

Vocational Case Management

Mr G was in a lot of pain after a spinal operation, and could not go back to his work. He had insurance against loss of earnings, so his insurer asked for a Case Manager to visit and arrange a return to work plan for him. The plan included liaison with his GP and employer so that he could work part time and from home while his recovery continued. The employer was given help adapting his workstation and a parking space at the office helped with his travel.

Medical Case Management

Mr G's consultant felt that he would also benefit from additional therapy, and the Case Manager organised Physiotherapy sessions, a pain management course, and liaison between the hospital team and outpatient services. The Case Manager reported to the insurer, to Mr G and to the treating teams.

What is Counselling?

Counselling involves supporting the client with their own thoughts and decisions, so that they can find solutions to their problems or issues. Counselling is often considered quite separate to 'therapy' although some clinically trained therapists do call themselves counsellors. Some people use counselling to mean giving advice and guidance, such as you might get from a Careers Counsellor or a Jobcentre. Counsellors do not often have contact with others in a client's life (an exception would be in family therapy).

Counselling refers to the activities of the Counsellor, who works with the client one-to-one or in a group. The purpose is decided by the client with the support of the Counsellor. Most Counselling involves talking with the client about things that worry or upset the client, or that the client wants to change.

Counselling - therapy

Mr H suffered from depression after the death of a close family member. The illness affected his work and he was absent sick for several weeks. His recovery was helped by medication from his GP, but he was still upset and had no confidence about rejoining his work colleagues. His GP prescribed Cognitive Behavioural Therapy which helped him to cope with his feelings and reduced his anxiety until he was able to go back to work.

Counselling – helping

Ms B wanted to go to work back to work, but was unsure whether she should do so since she had to care for her elderly mother and had a young family to look after. A counsellor helped her to talk through the issues until she was clear in her own mind what she wanted to do, and how she could get help from the local childcare facilities and social services.

What are the main differences between Case Management and Counselling?

The biggest difference is that Case Management is not only about the wishes and health of the client. It also procures other services to help the client, and may involve advocacy and negotiation with employers, insurers, jobcentres, health providers and so forth. Case Management provides help and support. Case Management is complete when the goal has been achieved, or progress can no longer be made. Case Managers have to be aware of and meet the needs of others in their client's life, such as employers.

Counselling mainly concentrates on helping the client to identify their own goals, and on gaining the ability to manage their own life to achieve them. It does not usually undertake any work or negotiation on behalf of a client.

Usually, reports by a Case Manager are provided to the client and, with the client's permission, to the organisation that has commissioned the work – such as an employer or clinical team.

Usually but not always, Counselling reports are only made to other organisations if both the client agrees and the circumstances demand it. It is quite common for there to be no formal reporting of progress except to the client.

Being qualified in Counselling or in Case Management does not necessarily make a person capable of doing the other.

What is the same between Case Management and Counselling?

Counselling and Case Management have a lot in common. Both rely on a relationship of open-ness and trust with the client. They involve similar skills, such as active, sympathetic listening and empathy.

Each has its own set of standards for ethical and proper practice, and these standards have much in common. For example, both are concerned to place the needs of the client foremost, and to take account of everything that is important in the client's life and circumstances.

A good Case Manager will use the personal skills of a counsellor, but will not try to provide therapy. A good Counsellor may have the breadth of information of a Case Manager, but will not act in place of the client.

In summary:

Case Management is there to help the client and all others on the scene to achieve an agreed goal that is possible for the client in their current circumstances. It might include organising some counselling for the client. It provides advice, access to information, advocacy, and it negotiates and arranges services.

Counselling is there to help the client to reach a point where they can help themselves. It might offer information, but rarely negotiates with others nor arranges other services.