

The solution focused approach – hopeful beginnings

Once the necessary bureaucratic functions are satisfied, forms filled in etc. establishing hope and direction is helpful in a first meeting.

We can support a hopeful beginning by:

- ◆ **Problem-free talk** – finding out about hobbies, interests, positive traits, things the client enjoys, etc.
- ◆ **Asking about pre-session change** – Since the appointment was made, what has changed for the better? What difference has it made to have the appointment waiting? Has the client tried anything new or different to improve things?
- ◆ **Discovering coping strategies** – what already works, even if only a little bit? What is the client/their family etc. already doing to manage the problem? What's worked in the past? How does the client manage to keep going even though the problem is there? Who/what helps?
- ◆ **Discovering exceptions to the problem** – are there ever times when the problem is less intrusive, even just a little bit less? What's happening at those times? What's the client doing differently at those times? What are others doing differently?
- ◆ **Understanding goals for therapy** – What are the client's best hopes for coming to the service/having counselling? Afterwards, how will the client know that coming to the service has been helpful?
- ◆ **Offering and agreeing any choices available** - eg. where will the work take place? When can it begin? Would the client like to book a group of sessions, or book the next one at each session? Would the client like to consider any further help now, and call if they wish to take this up? Does the client have choice over how many sessions/how long each session is (up to the limit?). Can the client choose the gender of the therapist? Any other choices?
- ◆ **Discussing how many sessions** are available (if the number is limited by the organisation) and how much choice the client has in when they might want to come and how they might want to spread these out in time.

The client comes to discover whether the service can be helpful to them. The more flexible the service can be in respecting and going with the client's choices, the more the client is likely to feel empowered and thus hopeful. Hope is a major predictor of success in therapy.

For further information and/or team facilitation to help with waiting list management in community services, contact Carole Waskett at Northwest Solutions on carole@waskett.org or call 0161 959 6515