

Reviewing the Redesign of a Sexual Health Counselling service - 1 year later

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WHY: In 2019 the Sydney Sexual Health Centre (SSHC) Counselling Unit was reviewed to inform improvements to client care, service quality, and staff wellbeing. Capacity, demand, and risk issues were identified, with a solution proposed of implementing a triaging - Intake - system. Counselling *Intake* was implemented at SSHC in 2020. Approximately 12 months later, the new system was reviewed and evaluated.

HOW: Qualitative and quantitative methods, including surveys of SSHC clients and staff data extracted from electronic medical record platform, were used to:

- Assess SSHC client and staff satisfaction with the Intake process;
- Compare **average wait time** for clients to see a counsellor with at initial review;
- Compare **average number of counselling sessions** received by each client with at original review;
- Calculate **correlation of client priority with allocation list wait time**; and
- Assess whether the SSHC Counsellor Referral Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) **auditable outcome** was achieved.

FINDINGS – Satisfaction with Intake Process

Client - 100% clients surveyed agreed that the intake process was explained to them. 70% reported that they were either *satisfied* or *highly satisfied* with the Intake process.

Staff - 94% of non-Counselling SSHC staff indicated they were either *satisfied* or *highly satisfied* with availability of counselling appointments, and 81% were either *satisfied* or *highly satisfied* with feedback they received about clients they had referred. 75% of respondents were either *satisfied* or *highly satisfied* with availability of counsellors for consultation when needed.

100% of Counselling staff reported that they were either *satisfied* or *highly satisfied* with: the counselling referral process; their capacity to schedule ongoing appointments; and the weekly Counselling Unit Intake meetings.

FINDINGS – Intake allocation and outcomes

Post Intake implementation at SSHC:

- Average wait time for counsellor allocation was 2 days, significantly briefer than prior to the redesign (estimated 2-3 weeks).
- Average number of counselling sessions received in the previous 12 months was 4 sessions, 2 sessions fewer than prior to the redesign.
- Correlation of client priority, calculated using the *Client Priority Rating Scale*¹, with the wait time for allocation was calculated as -0.39 (Pearson PMC), which represents a *medium strength of negative association*²
- Auditable outcome stated in the SSHC Counselling Referrals SOP was achieved during the audit period (calculated for June-July 2021 snapshot when Unit fully staffed); 100% who attend a counselling intake appointment and were assessed as appropriate were allocated to a counsellor within 1 month.



FINDINGS – Qualitative

Qualitative feedback included suggestions for how the process may be improved including:

- Increase availability of counsellors for opportunistic introductions to new clients;
- Resources / strategies to 'sell' counselling to clients who MOs or RNs wish to refer;
- Stream-lining of Intake meeting administration tasks to increase expediency and reduce risk or error; and
- Adapt the CPRS to better fit the community sexual health clinic setting.

CONCLUSIONS: The majority of client and staff are satisfied with the Intake process. The new system appears to be improving the efficiency and efficacy of client assessment, allocation and treatment, in that average wait times and number of times a client is seen are reduced, and clients are allocated to Counsellors according to their priority rating. It is recommended that the Intake system remain standard practice for assessment and management of new referrals to SSHC Counsellors. The qualitative feedback received by SSHC staff and intake clients has provided some direction for further service improvements.

NUMBER OF COUNSELLING SESSIONS PER CLIENT AUG 2020 - SEP 2021

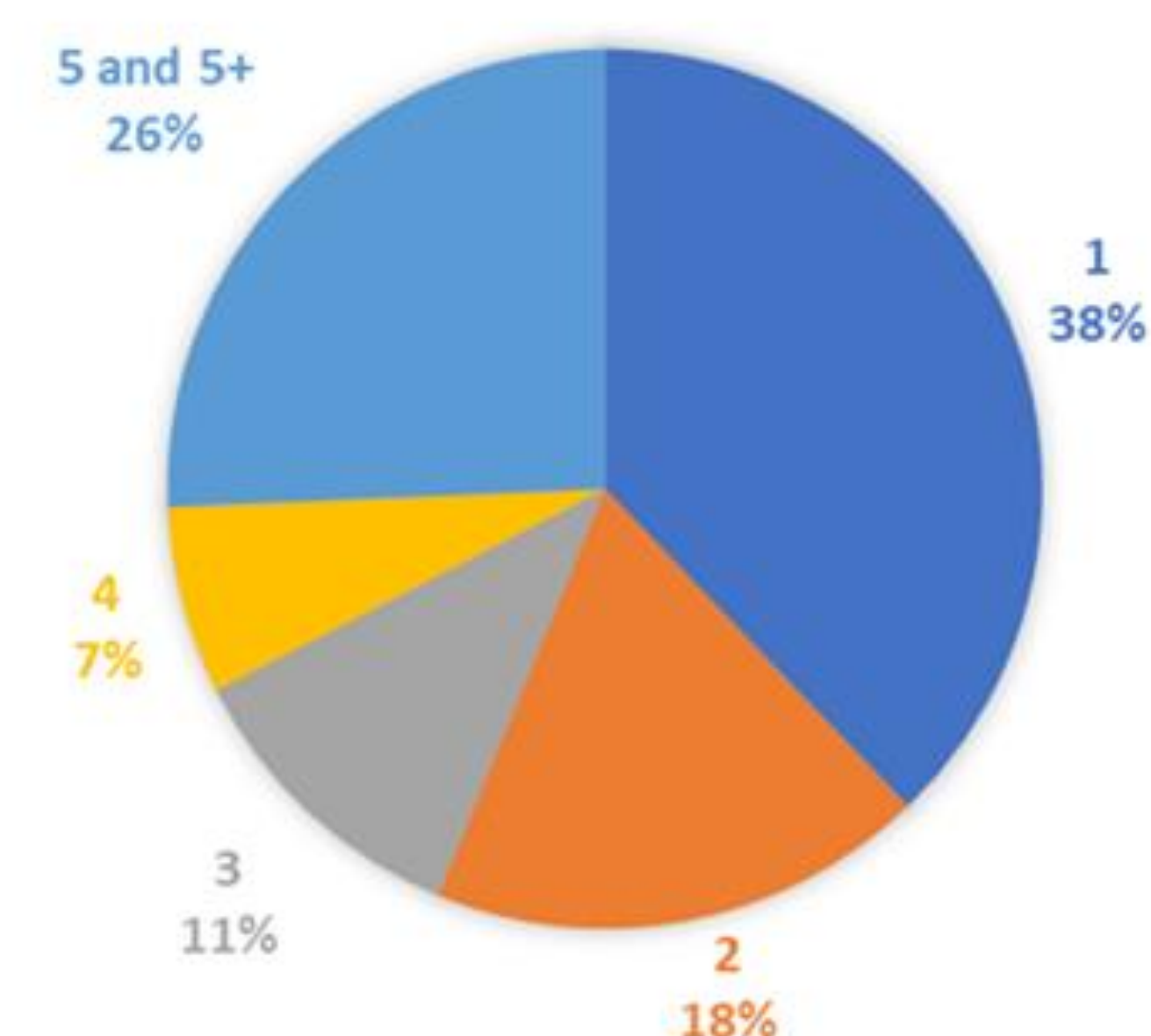


Figure – Showing number of Counselling sessions received by clients seen at SSHC between August 2020 and September 2021.