

Online survey of ACC Sensitive Claims providers and clients

Survey conducted and summarised by

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Introduction

This submission is formed by an online survey conducted between 7th of February and the 9th of March, 2012. It was circulated widely via professional networks and was open to providers of Sensitive Claims counselling and clients of ACC Sensitive Claims.

The questions were structured around the recommendations of the “Clinical Review of the ACC Sensitive Claims Clinical Pathway, 2010,” and are presented in this format in this report. Due to the nature of a number of the recommendations, some of the recommendations were not measured by any survey questions. Where this is the case it is clearly noted.

Results

The survey totals **n=218** completed surveys, made up of **146** providers and **72** clients.

The qualitative data has been summarised for the purpose of analysis and all qualitative answers have been analysed as either “positive”; “neutral”; “positive and negative”; or “negative” based on a reading of their content. Further analysis has been provided in terms of a count of answers that reflect certain themes. Not all answers included a theme, and any theme with only one answer was discarded.

Recommendation 1

That ACC ensures that all aspects of their Pathway(s) and associated claims processes are in line with the Massey Guidelines by seeing that they:

- are developed and implemented in ways that recognise and protect client safety and the importance of the therapeutic relationship;
- take a client focus; and
- recognise the special needs of particular groups including children, adolescents, people with mental illness, people with intellectual disabilities, Maori, and Pacific peoples.

Survey questions and results:

How much do you feel that ACC's approach in the last 18 months has protected client safety?

Counsellors

Answer Options

Responses

A lot	5.1%
A little	31.4%
Neither has or hasn't	7.7%
Very little	40.4%
Not at all	12.2%
Don't know	3.2%

Clients

Answer Options

Responses

A lot	9.8%
A little	8.7%
Neither has or hasn't	13.0%
Very little	26.1%
Not at all	29.3%
Don't know	13.0%

How much do you feel that ACC's approach in the last 18 months has protected the importance of the therapeutic relationship?

Counsellors

Answer Options	Responses
A lot	7.1%
A little	23.1%
Neither has or hasn't	5.1%
Very little	37.8%
Not at all	25.6%
Don't know	1.3%

Clients

Answer Options	Responses
A lot	7.6%
A little	9.8%
Neither has or hasn't	6.5%
Very little	29.3%
Not at all	38.0%
Don't know	8.7%

How much do you feel that ACC's approach in the last 18 months has taken a client focus?

Counsellors

Answer Options	Responses
A lot	9.0%
A little	29.5%
Neither has or hasn't	4.5%
Very little	42.3%
Not at all	13.5%
Don't know	1.3%

Clients

Answer Options	Responses
A lot	6.5%
A little	13.0%
Neither has or hasn't	3.3%
Very little	37.0%
Not at all	35.9%
Don't know	4.3%

How much do you feel that ACC's approach in the last 18 months has recognized the needs of particular client groups (i.e. Maori, children, adolescents, physically disabled etc.)?

Counsellors

Answer Options	Responses
A lot	7.7%
A little	14.1%
Neither has or hasn't	8.3%
Very little	26.3%
Not at all	17.9%
Don't know	25.6%

Clients

Answer Options	Responses
A lot	6.5%
A little	5.4%
Neither has or hasn't	6.5%
Very little	26.1%
Not at all	31.5%
Don't know	23.9%

Comments:

These results suggest that none of the requirements of Recommendation 1 have been met.

Recommendation 2

That future changes to the Pathway and associated processes are planned, managed and implemented with meaningful engagement and consultation with the sector and relevant government agencies.

Survey questions and results:

In your experience do you feel that ACC's changes to the Sensitive Claims system over the last 18 months have been planned, managed and implemented with meaningful consultation?

Counsellors

Answer Options	Responses
A lot	4.6%
A little	20.9%
Neither a lot or a little	3.3%
Not very much	42.5%
Not at all	26.1%
Don't know	2.6%

Clients

Answer Options	Responses
A lot	4.8%
A little	7.2%
Neither a lot or a little	3.6%
Not very much	26.5%
Not at all	50.6%
Don't know	7.2%

Comments:

These results suggest the none of the requirements of Recommendation 2 have been met.

Recommendation 3

That, as a priority, ACC commence work with relevant sector experts to agree additional standardised systems for determining mental injury – including ones that would be appropriate for children and for Maori – and discuss how they should be used to confirm that a claimant has a mental injury for ACC when making cover decisions under its legislation.

Comments:

This recommendation was not directly measured, however I note that a number of the qualitative answers provided for Recommendation 4, 11 and the “overall responses” indicate concerns by both counsellors and clients about the accuracy of diagnosis. In particular the impression that symptoms are being incorrectly ascribed to diagnoses other than the sexual abuse/ assault trauma.

Recommendation 4

That, in determining whether a mental injury has been caused by a Schedule 3 event, the test should be that the sexual abuse was a substantial or a material cause of the injury.

Survey questions and results:

In the last 18 months do you feel that the ACC have interpreted the legislation correctly, namely approving claims if the sexual assault/ abuse was a "substantial or a material cause of the injury?" Note: This is different from a "causal link," where the sexual assault/ abuse is required to be the ONLY cause of the injury for a claim to be accepted. This is important because prior to the Independent Clinical Review claims were being declined due to the claimant having for example: a mental illness, coming from a "dysfunctional family" etc. despite a clear sexual assault/ abuse incident. It was argued if other factors existed the sexual assault/ abuse was seen as not being the ONLY cause, and therefore not coverable by ACC and the claim was declined. This should no longer be occurring.

Counsellors

Answer Options	Responses
Always interpreted correctly	11.1%
Sometimes interpreted correctly	38.6%
Mostly not interpreted correctly	29.4%
Never interpreted correctly	4.6%
Don't know	16.3%

Clients

Answer Options	Responses
Interpreted correctly	16.9%
Mostly interpreted correctly	20.5%
Mostly not interpreted correctly	8.4%
Didn't interpret correctly at all	33.7%
Don't know	20.5%

“Feel free to provide examples...”

Qualitative summary:

Counsellors reponses

n=25

Positive	4
Neutral	1
Negative	20

Summary of themes:

Theme	Number of times mentioned
Symptoms ascribed to “mental health”	4
Symptoms ascribed to addictions	3
Claim seen as too “complex” to ascribe to trauma	3
Symptoms ascribed to family dysfunction	2
Concerns about stigma of diagnosis	2
Concerns about manner of assessor	2

Clients responses

n=18

Positive	0
Neutral	2
Negative	16

Summary of themes:

Theme	Number of times mentioned
Symptoms ascribed to family dysfunction	5
Excessive delays	4
Felt disrespected/ poorly treated by assessor	3
Wrong interpretation of the Act	3
Excessive number of assessments	3
Felt misunderstood	2

Comments:

The results for this recommendation are mixed. It seems there is some support from professionals for this recommendation being partially met, and that the client sample would see it not being met.

When the qualitative data is included it would seem that many of the ongoing concerns are the same as when the review was initially conducted, particularly trauma symptoms being ascribed to “family dysfunction” and excessive delays.

Overall the data would suggest this recommendation has not been met.

Recommendation 5

That all ACC communications with survivors of sexual abuse need to be reviewed as a matter of urgency taking a client perspective and using survivor and expert provider assistance in the process.

Survey questions and results:

In your experience have ACC's communications with survivors improved over the last 18 months?

Counsellors

Answer Options

Responses

A lot	13.1%
A little	32.7%
Neither a lot or a little	10.5%
Not very much	25.5%
Not at all	13.1%
Don't know	5.2%

Clients

Answer Options

Responses

A lot	4.8%
A little	9.6%
Neither a lot or a little	4.8%
Not very much	19.3%
Not at all	45.8%
Don't know	15.7%

Comments:

Results here are also mixed. However given the nature of the recommendation higher weight should be given to the clients responses, and this would indicate this recommendation has not been met, in the experience of clients.

Recommendation 6

That ACC establish an appropriately constituted working party involving professional groups to examine credentialing or other means of ensuring that the workforce for treatment and assessment, including the new therapeutic assessment and recovery support process, is fit for purpose and meeting quality standards.

This recommendation was not measured by any of the survey questions.

Recommendation 7

That, in order to ensure processes around the Pathway(s) are of good quality, safe and effective for ACC, clients, and providers, ACC work with the sector, survivor representatives and relevant government agencies to develop and implement a comprehensive quality framework including strengthened processes for:

- provider approval and auditing
- appropriate service standards and monitoring
- workforce training and development
- ongoing professional development, and
- continuous service improvement.

This recommendation was not measured by any of the survey questions.

Recommendation 8

That ACC move to improve access for survivors by introducing 16 hours of immediate therapeutic assessment and recovery support from a registered ACC treatment provider for new claimants, those currently under consideration under the Pathway, those who have had a claim declined and those who have chosen to withdraw their claim under the Pathway.

Survey questions and results:

Do you feel that the provision of the sixteen support sessions has improved access to Sensitive Claims treatment?

Counsellors

Answer Options

Responses

A lot	38.9%
A little	35.6%
Neither a lot or a little	2.7%
Not very much	12.1%
Not at all	7.4%
Don't know	3.4%

Clients

Answer Options

Responses

A lot	22.2%
A little	19.4%
Neither a lot or a little	5.6%
Not very much	25.0%
Not at all	22.2%
Don't know	5.6%

Do you feel that the process for moving from the 16 support sessions to ongoing treatment, or a "full claim," is an understandable process?

Counsellors

Answer Options	Responses
Very clear, fully understandable	4.7%
Mostly clear	26.2%
Confused about aspects of the system	50.3%
Makes no sense to me at all	16.1%
Don't know	2.7%

Clients

Answer Options	Responses
Very clear, fully understandable	5.6%
Mostly clear	11.1%
Confused about aspects of the system	61.1%
Makes no sense to me at all	19.4%
Don't know	2.8%

Do you feel that the process for moving from the 16 support sessions to ongoing treatment, or a "full claim," is carried out in a timely manner?

Counsellors

Answer Options	Responses
Very timely, no delays	3.4%
Mostly timely, occasional delays	18.8%
Mostly not timely, delays most of the time	36.2%
Always experienced lengthy delays	21.5%
Don't know	20.1%

Clients

Answer Options	Responses
Very timely, no delays	5.6%
Mostly timely, occasional delays	19.4%
Mostly not timely, delays most of the time	16.7%
Always experienced lengthy delays	41.7%
Don't know	16.7%

Comments:

Results here are once again mixed. Counsellor responses would support this recommendation having been met, client responses suggest otherwise, but with a wide spread across the possible answers. Of concern is the high degree of confusion amongst both counsellors and clients about the process and ongoing significant delays experienced across the board.

Overall the results suggest that this recommendation has been met, but further work is required on communicating how the system works and on timeliness.

Recommendation 9

That these initial changes are planned, managed and implemented quickly and effectively – giving priority to claims for children – with input and/or oversight from relevant sector experts and relevant government agencies.

This recommendation was not measured by any of the survey questions.

Recommendation 10

That ACC work with sector representatives to evolve the Pathway(s) based on the Massey Guideline principles and the proposals and principles in section 9 of this report giving particular attention to the needs of children and adolescents. The amended Pathway(s) must clarify how cover for treatment according to need will be available to those needing more than the initial 16 sessions recognising that this will be particularly important for adult survivors of child sexual abuse.

Survey questions and results:

Do you feel that the process for moving from the 16 support sessions to ongoing treatment, or a "full claim," shows an understanding of the needs of survivors of childhood sexual abuse?

Counsellors

Answer Options	Responses
High degree of understanding	3.4%
Moderate degree of understanding	27.5%
Lack of understanding	40.9%
No understanding at all	21.5%
Don't know	6.7%

Clients

Answer Options	Responses
High degree of understanding	2.8%
Moderate degree of understanding	22.2%
Lack of understanding	33.3%
No understanding at all	33.3%
Don't know	8.3%

Do you feel that the process for moving from the 16 support sessions to ongoing treatment, or a "full claim," is consistent with the recommendations of the "Massey Guidelines?"

Counsellors only

Answer Options	Responses
Highly consistent	4.0%
Moderately consistent	16.8%
Moderately inconsistent	22.1%
Not consistent at all	34.9%
Don't know	22.1%

Comments:

The results suggest that the requirements of this recommendation have not been met.

Of particular concern is view amongst counsellors and clients that the ACC pathway continues to not recognise the needs of adult survivors of child sexual abuse.

Recommendation 11

That a proportion of claimants may be required to undergo an assessment for cover from an assessor who is not their treatment provider before a decision about cover is taken or to review ongoing therapy. These assessors should themselves be experts who have worked with sexual abuse victims and, wherever possible and desired by the client, the client's usual treatment provider should also be involved in the formal assessment process and in determining appropriate treatment goals and plans.

Based on the counsellor survey respondents the current percentage of cover assessments that are then subsequently referred, by the ACC for an additional external cover assessment is:

67%

were referred for additional external assessment, despite their "counsellor" providing an assessment and diagnosis.

Of those who had had a client referred for an assessment, or been assessed themselves:

In your experience was the assessor(s) an "expert" in sexual abuse and childhood sexual abuse trauma and it's effects?

Counsellors

Answer Options

Responses

Was an expert	25.8%
Showed some knowledge	33.1%
Didn't have a good knowledge about the area	13.7%
Clearly knew very little	13.7%
Don't know	13.7%

Clients

Answer Options

Responses

Was an expert	16.7%
Showed some knowledge	28.6%
Didn't have a good knowledge about the area	19.0%
Clearly knew very little	23.8%
Don't know	11.9%

As the "counsellor" you were able to be involved in the assessment, and this was made clear to you by either ACC and/or the assessor.

Counsellors

Answer Options	Responses
Yes	49.2%
No	45.2%
Don't know	5.6%

Clients

Answer Options	Responses
Yes	21.4%
No	66.7%
Don't know	11.9%

“Any other comments on assessments?”

Qualitative summary:

Counsellors reponses

n=47

Positive	1
Neutral	3
Positive and negative	13
Negative	30

Summary of themes:

Theme	Number of times mentioned
Assessor had no qualifications in sexual abuse	13
Treatment driven by ACC	3
Client traumatised/ excessively distressed	3
Excessive delays	3
Suicide attempt attributed to assessment	2

Clients reponses

n=12

Positive	0
Neutral	1
Negative	11

Summary of themes:

Theme	Number of times mentioned
Felt disrespected/ not listened to	4
Traumatizing	3
Wasn't told assessors expertise or wasn't an expert in sexual abuse	3
Privacy concerns	2

Comments:

The results here are once again mixed. Overall it seems that assessors are seen to have "some knowledge," but there is a wide spread. The qualitative responses suggest ongoing concerns around the expertise of the assessors, the overall experience of external assessment and the process of external assessments continuing to be traumatising to clients.

Of particular concern is ongoing lack of counsellor involvement in the assessments.

Recommendation 12

That ACC ensure that any assessment for cover processes for all claims requiring a treatment decision have occurred and a decision has been made within 6 weeks of being notified that a decision on cover will be needed. If this is not possible for any reason outside the client's control then further two weekly therapeutic assessment and recovery support sessions should continue to be funded until the assessment is completed and a decision on further cover is taken. The assessment and cover decision must be taken at the latest within nine months of the claim being lodged – and preferably sooner.

Comments:

Whilst not measured directly, it is clear from the answers to Recommendation 8 and the quantitative answers to Recommendation 4, and the “overall responses” that many counsellors and clients still experience significant delays.

Recommendation 13

That ACC provide mechanisms for involving families/whānau in therapy especially for children and adolescents.

This recommendation was not measured by any of the survey questions.

Recommendation 14

That a process be established to independently monitor the development and implementation of actions recommended in this report

Comments:

Given the indications of this survey, that many of the recommendations have not been met, it would seem important for independent monitoring to continue beyond this 18 month period.

Overall responses:

Overall, in the last 18 months would you say that the ACC's Sensitive Claims counselling system has improved...

Counsellors

Answer Options	Responses
A lot	14.4%
A little	31.5%
Neither a lot or a little	6.2%
Not very much	24.0%
Not at all	23.3%
Don't know	0.7%

Clients

Answer Options	Responses
A lot	1.4%
A little	13.9%
Neither a lot or a little	6.9%
Not very much	12.5%
Not at all	51.4%
Don't know	13.9%

“Please feel free to add any general comments about any aspect of the Sensitive Claims system over the last 18 months”

Qualitative summary:

Counsellors responses

n=92

Positive	6
Neutral	4
Positive and negative	12
Negative	70

Summary of themes:

Theme	Number of times mentioned
Poor communication by case managers	20
Excessive delays	17
ACC dictating treatment	15
The ACC don't understand needs of sexual abuse clients	14
Confusing processes	12
Problems with excessive reporting	11
Problems with split of assessor and provider	7
Poor communication by assessors	3
Assessments traumatic for clients	3
Absence of Maori assessors	3

Clients responses

n=35

Positive	4
Neutral	1
Negative	30

Summary of themes:

Theme	Number of times mentioned
No trust in the “system”	13
Feel re-traumatized by the “system”	11
Excessive delays	7
Feel disrespected/ not believed	5
Privacy concerns	4
Communication problems in SCU	4
Symptoms attributed to dysfunctional family	2
Want a wider range of treatment options	2
Ended treatment because of changes	2

Comments:

Of the “Overall ratings”, results are mixed. If the Counsellor responses are added: 46% are positive (A lot + A little) and 47% negative (Not very much + Not at all).

The results from clients are clearer, with very little support for improvement over the last 18 months.

Once the qualitative responses are added the tenor is much clearer, with ongoing concerns about issues that the independent review sought to address, including poor communication by the ACC, ongoing systemic delays and of most concern an overwhelmingly negative experience of clients of the system and the assessment processes.

Discussion and summary

Of the 14 recommendations of the “Clinical Review of the ACC Sensitive Claims Clinical Pathway, 2010” this survey can make no comment on four of the recommendations, namely recommendation 6, 7, 9, 13.

Of the remaining twelve, the results suggest that only two of the recommendations have been met, namely Recommendation 8, which refers to support sessions. However there are concerns about delays when transitioning from the support sessions; and Recommendation 14 is arguably met simply by the existence of this review.

A further five recommendations are clearly not met, according to the data, namely Recommendations 1, 2, 4, 5, and 10.

Of the rest, Recommendation 3 was not directly measured but qualitative responses show strong concerns around the issue of diagnostic tools and assessment; Recommendation 11 showed mixed responses, but there are strong concerns about the ratio of external assessments required and lack of involvement of treating counsellors; Recommendation 12 was not directly measured but qualitative responses show strong ongoing concerns about delays experienced.