6. **Overview of the Single Session Work process from intake to follow-up phone call**

The SSW process has three major components:

- **Intake**
- **The Session**
- **Follow-Up**

Each of these involves several tasks and specific paperwork.

**Intake**

- An intake system informs the client about the SSW process.
- A pre-session questionnaire is sent to the client to complete and bring to the session.

**The Session**

- The client attends a face-to-face session with a worker or workers.
- If there are risk issues, the worker follows usual duty of care procedures.
- If there are no risk issues, an appointment is made for a follow-up phone call approximately 1-3 weeks after the session.

**Follow-Up**

- During the follow-up phone call, the worker seeks feedback about the session, provides further assistance, if appropriate, and makes a collaborative decision with the client about what further action (if any) is needed. Options include all available services: a second single session, ongoing work, referral to another program within the service, referral to another service or no action (usually with an invitation to re-contact, if necessary, in the future).
- The worker completes forms to record outcomes of the session.
- The worker may send a client satisfaction survey to be returned to a third party.
Single Session Work Process: Intake

Intake plays a critical role, as the first point of call for clients and in establishing a positive context for effective Single Session Work. Services need to engage, train and support intake workers to ensure robust and sustainable SSW processes. The following guidelines are for clinicians and non-clinicians.

General Tasks for Intake or Duty Workers

As the first point of contact for all clients, the intake worker plays a really important role at a time when people have taken the first and largest step in seeking help. It is not an easy thing to explain Single Session Work, but the most important points to get across to the clients are:

1. that their worker (i.e. counsellor, therapist, etc.) will try and get as much done in the first session as possible.
2. that this is a really useful way for workers to understand better what clients want and need.
3. that about half the time, clients come back, while the rest are happy with one session. Both outcomes are OK.
4. that the 'door is open' for clients to re-contact at any time.

It is not the intake worker’s job to decide which clients are likely to do well with only one session. This is notoriously difficult to predict. What is much more important is that clients understand that all the usual services that an agency offers will be available to them and that the decision about what is needed will be made by worker and client together at the follow-up phone call.

Specific SSW Steps for Intake or Duty Workers

1. Perform your usual steps to assess client eligibility.
2. Determine what service is required.
3. If counselling is required, explain the SSW procedures and choices.
4. Create a 'no-failure' context ......

"Single Session service means a longer-than-normal session in which the worker does their very best to be as helpful as possible to you at the time, then follows up by phone after the session to decide together with you what you need from that point on.

At this point you have three choices:

- You may want a second 'Single Session', in which case the appointment can be made at this phone call.
- You may have decided that you need ongoing help, in which case you will be placed on our waiting list.
- You may decide that you don’t need any further help at this time, knowing that you can contact the centre again at any time in the future.

About half our clients find that just one or two sessions, with a follow-up phone call, is all they need. Others become clear that they need more - either way is fine. This decision is made by you along with your worker."

5. Explain the 'open door policy'.

“We have an open door policy, which means you can re-contact our service at any time. At any stage in this process you can ask to be placed on our waiting list for ongoing assistance.”


“I can give you a date and time for the single session and it will be with (name of worker).”

7. Explain the Pre-SSW Client Questionnaire (Fill it in over the phone if necessary).

“In order to maximise the time you have with the worker, I’ll send you a questionnaire. It just asks you what you want the worker to focus on. Please fill it out and bring it to the session.

Some people don’t feel comfortable filling out forms. So, if you’d rather, I can ask the worker to contact you and get the information, or we can fill it in now over the phone.”

8. Post the Initial Letter to Client outlining the process, confirming the session time and date and the name of the worker, and include the Pre-SSW Client Questionnaire.

“I will send you a letter confirming your session details along with the questionnaire.”

9. Ask the client if they have any questions or concerns.

10. Notify the referrer (if other than the client), and send the Letter to Referrer to explain the SSW process.

“We have a policy of notifying referring professionals that we have followed up their referral request. Is it OK with you if we notify them that we have booked you in for a session and to let them know about SSW?”

11. Give intake forms to the worker and provide client details, session time and date.

12. Complete other required tasks (e.g. risk assessment, room bookings).

Note: All of the Intake forms, as well as a helpful Intake Flowchart, can be purchased from The Bouverie Centre. Click here for further.
Single Session Work Process: The Session

What Helps Make the Most of Each Encounter?

Preparing for SSW improves outcomes by around 10%.
Let clients know that one session may be enough and hence you will be trying to get as much out of the session as possible. Invite the client to do the same. Reassure clients that extra sessions are available if needed. This works best if it is done at the first point of call (intake).

Prioritise and focus.
Ask and explore what your client wants from each encounter. Don't assume!
Be guided by the principle of putting the most essential goal first.
'Cut to the chase.'
Create a context for mutual honesty and directness - whilst supporting with warmth and care.

Make time your friend.
Explicitly negotiate the time available for a session and be respectfully upfront about what time is left throughout the session. This will ensure clients know what time they have left to talk about what is most important to them.

Check in to avoid therapeutic drift.
Asking if the work is on track a few times during a session is the simplest way to be responsive to clients and to avoid covering unnecessary territory.

Clinical Guidelines

Provide feedback and share your thoughts.
Clients often want to know what counsellors are thinking. Consider sharing your thoughts in a direct but tentative way.

Keep an open mind and an open door.
Approach each encounter 'as if' it may be the last - whilst being open to the possibility of ongoing work. Research suggests that in services employing a SSW approach 30-50% of clients will find one session sufficient. This also means 50% or more will want to attend more than one session.

How to Survive Single Session Work!

Aim for a 'personal fit'.
There are many ways to conduct SSW. Adapt your current skills - don't replace them. Work to your strengths and use all your skills; simply use your skills as if each session may be the last.

Remember SSW is not a single session cure.
In successful SSW, the worker and client both make the most of each session rather than solve every problem the client has. Don't try to do it all in one session.

Create a no-failure context for yourself.
Research and clinical experience indicate it is extremely difficult to predict who will only attend one session and who will attend more. Don't try to anticipate who will be suitable for a single session.

Plan for sustainability.
Take advantage of training, supervision, co-work and peer review. Encourage your organisation to develop policy and structures to maintain SSW vibrancy. Without all of these elements, your work is likely to return to previous approaches, even if clients like what you do. Further clinical guidelines, including specific questions to try, are provided in The Bouverie Centre’s training workbooks Single Session Work, Levels 1 and Level 2.

**Session structure:** Moshe Talmon’s Step-by-Step breakdown of the SST process (London Workshop, 1996)

**Before you start**
- Find out what clients have accomplished on their own.
- Find out who or what may serve as natural healers (e.g. time, a friend).

**Opening moves**
- Introduce the possibility of taking care of business today.
- Find out how and how soon the client expects to take care of the problem.
- Rule out contraindications for SSW (e.g. risk issues).

**Middle phases**
- Operate with a partial knowledge of client’s history.
- Look for a focus.
- Shift from the expected exploration of past pathological events to search for strength, hope and unutilised resources and solutions.
- Test potential solutions and client’s motivation to accept and/or implement them.

**Late phases**
- Get to the bottom-line and last-minute issues with enough time to work on them.
- Use time-outs and consultations.

**Concluding message**
- Understand the pain.
- Reframe the problem.
- Underline the existing resources and solutions which may help in the future.
- Suggest solutions.
- Leave the door open for contact in the future.

**Follow-up phone call**
- Book a time for the call to find out how things are going.

**Session paperwork**
All of the forms which are perused or used during the session can be purchased from The Bouverie Centre.
Single Session Work Process: Follow up

How are you going and where to from here?

The follow-up phone call is not left to chance, but is booked in at the end of the session. Some workers and clients may feel confident waiting a few weeks to speak; other times, it may seem that a call in a day or two would be more appropriate and helpful.

The follow-up phone call is a chance for both worker and client to assess, collaboratively, whether and in what way the session was useful, and where to go from here. Once again, any decision is fine and should be made with the clients' needs and best interests at heart. Needing another session (or even longer-term work) is not a sign of failure on anyone's part.

Once the caller (which should, ideally, be the worker who conducted the session) gets past the basic 'hi, how are you going?' phase of the call, we have some forms which may help as a guide to gaining useful information, to help decide what is the best way forward.

All of the Follow-Up Phone Call forms can be downloaded from the Resources section of these webpages. Those include the SSW Phone Follow-Up Form, SSW Evaluation Letter and Form, and a Post-SSW Client Questionnaire.

Who to call when you have seen multiple clients

What if your clients were a family of six? The worker would be wise to negotiate at the end of session about who would appreciate a call and who would prefer not to get one. In some cases, it may seem appropriate and even necessary to follow up with every person who attended the session; in other cases, one person may be elected to represent a couple's or a family's interests on their behalf.