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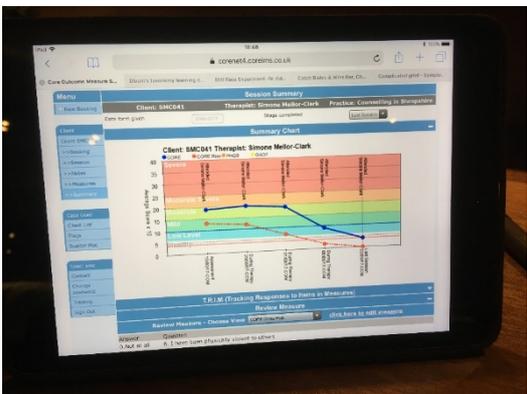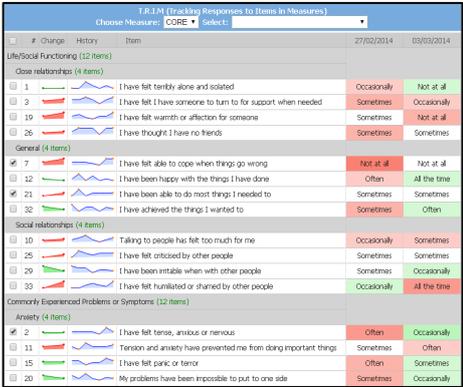. *Research & Development*

ACTO CORE-Net Pilot

Going Forward

Background

- Following exploratory discussions between ACTO representatives and CORE IMS, a small group of online therapists were invited to trial CORE Net for free as part of a Learning Collaborative project funded by the Artemis Trust and run jointly by Birmingham City University (BCU) and CORE IMS (BCU's Industry Partner). The offer entailed using a standard version of CORE Net configured for a collaborative (action) learning project prioritising both high quality data and data utilisation for service quality development. The title of the project is SILC (Service Improvement Learning Collaborative) and further details can be found in the Appendix herein and at www.silcuk.org

- In practice, using SILC CORE Net entailed: (a) therapists completing the CORE Therapy Assessment Form (for all new clients); (b) their clients being invited to complete a CORE Measure at each therapy session; (c) therapists discussing clients responses in real-time and sharing feedback tools designed to maximise the clarity of therapeutic progress (see below); (d) therapists completing the CORE End of Therapy Form for all clients having final sessions during the pilot; and (e) all therapists committing to complete the CORE forms fully and accurately and inviting clients to complete CORE measures prior to each online therapy session.

- SILC CORE Net training was provided on-line by Simone and John Mellor-Clark (SILC Project Leads) and consisted of demonstration followed by practice tasks and feedback.

Fig 1: Examples of clinical feedback tools in SILC CORE Net

| A training example of a CORE Tracking Graph displayed on a laptop screen to represent client feedback | A training example of the TRIM tool designed to communicate positive (green) and negative (red) change on question items between sessions |

Association for Counselling and Therapy Online

Mid-way Findings

- Since 15th May 2018, a total of six ACTO therapists have been using CORE Net with a variety of clients; some recruited for the purposes of the pilot; others were existing clients invited into the pilot. The four-month pilot is due to finish by the 15th September 2018. There will then be a two-month reflective evaluation process which will include both analysis of the CORE Net data and experiential feedback from clients, therapists and their supervisors.

- Although July is only the mid-way in the pilot, early indications are that the pilot has been very successful in a number of ways:

    o Clients seem to have engaged well with their invitations to complete CORE Measures. To date there have been no refusals for completing the tools – despite the measurement frequency being sessional.
    o Therapists report finding the information from the clients using CORE very useful in the therapy sessions themselves; clients engage with discussions about this material and therapists report finding these discussions important for the management and containment of clients' symptoms.
    o One aspect that many of the pilot therapists have found in reflecting on the change in client responses at each session is that the symptoms reported by the clients improve rapidly. This has then enabled an in-depth exploration within the online therapy sessions of the underlying causes of these symptoms – supporting the generally-held psychotherapeutic view that treating the causes not the symptoms are the longer-term goals.

- The pilot therapists are reporting that using CORE Net around online therapy and counselling has a number of benefits:

    o It's easy to use
    o The goal of collecting high quality data seems a key motivational target for maximising therapist engagement
    o The ability to monitor risk and functioning of clients when working remotely has significant clinical value
    o Realtime evidence of the containment of symptoms is reassuring and reinforcing for both client and therapists
    o Sessional measurement facilitates on-going evaluation of the therapy process itself to help inform adjustments

- The Therapists have found that training in using the SILC CORE Net has been essential so that there is an understood and common pathway to high quality data. This has added importance, given that some of the therapists already use CORE forms in their services, but in a way that does not always provide high quality data. Training to use CORE Net on the SILC site also ensures that online therapists and counsellors from different modalities are using CORE-Net in a mutual way, whilst respecting different ways of working therapeutically.

- We acknowledge that most of us found the initial CORE Net training and need for rigor in completing the Therapy Assessment & End of Therpay Forms rather challenging and were not always clear on the importance of high quality data(HQD).In hindsight we understand this better now. We

understand that participating in a Collaborative Learning project like SILC brings a common (high) quality data standard that not only provides pride in accurate form filling – but is essential for valid and reliable future analysis and reporting.

ACTO and CORE Net Going Forward

- ACTO would like to explore further the adoption of CORE Net as potential best practice for its members.

- ACTO currently has 191 members, 4 being organisational members and 144 being Professional members with 44 student members. It is a growing organisation, and with its relationship to online training providers involved, together with our organisational members, each representing a high level of governance (in line with the ACTO ethos) within their organisation, such as apps ORCHA, Dr Julian etc, there is a likelihood of continual, and possibly rapid, growth.

- ACTO recognises that not all members will wish to take up the offer to use CORE Net, but the expectation is that many will. With the evaluation written up from the Pilot providing expected positive outcomes, this may also increase the uptake of members wishing to use CORE Net.

- Using CORE Net will provide a research base for the evaluation of the efficacy of online therapy, including future studies to investigate the effectiveness of different formats of online work: audio, webcam, email, live chat and virtual reality. ACTO would become the matching organisation between researchers and potential research projects with the use of CORE data forming an important part of this.

- ACTO also expect CORE Net to be a safeguarding tool, which has particular importance when working with young people. Future projects include the development of digital services in school settings and CORE Net will enable the monitoring of the CYP whilst working with them remotely. Data from CORE Net, especially the flag system in TRIM, can then be used to liaise with the safeguarding teams within the school's pastoral care.

Using SILC site Going Forward: Questions & Answers

Using the SILC CORE Net site in the pilot has provided a basis for a full empirical and experiential evaluation of using this type of outcomes management and feedback system when working online with clients. As CORE IMS have offered ACTO members continued access to CORE Net following the pilot we raised a number of questions to John Mellor-Clark (Strategic Lead for SILC and Managing Director of CORE IMS) and present these as a Q & A as follows:

- Q. Could ACTO have a continued involvement in the SILC Project going forward?

- A. The SILC Project was itself a pilot to explore barriers and resolutions for improved data quality and subsequent data utilisation for service quality development. Ahead of the planned dissemination conference on September 4th we've had confirmation of a further years funding to

help scale the initiative and develop is as a self-funded learning collaborative and potential Diploma in both Service Quality Development & Personal Deliberate Practice. SILC is therefore in an advantageous position of being able to work with ACTO to create a workable partnership moving forward to maximise the benefit of outcomes data to ACTO as an organisation and ACTO members as individual therapists.

- Q. What will be cost of ACTO's continued access to CORE Net if we go forward with it?

  A. SILC CORE Net is a specific configuration of CORE Net that's designed to help services evolve their use and utilisation of CORE Net data in a structured and supported learning framework. The costs of providing SILC CORE Net to ACTO as an organisation are currently projected to be £2000 (+VAT) for 12 months – currently independent of therapist and client volume and throughput. This cost model would allow one organisational representative to attend our SILC Residential Meetings (4 per annum starting Jan 2019) and to receive monthly online coaching from a member of the SILC Support Team (perhaps Simone).

  Alternatively, CORE Net could be provided as a typical commercial from CORE IMS which would allow a more optimum configuration to best match the specific characteristics of online therapy. The commercial costs of CORE Net are £2500 + VAT for set-up and £3 to £4 per new client (cost dependent on annual client throughout).

  Finally, a blended option may be to have a CORE Net site configured to more precisely meet the needs of ACTO therapists and then have a member join SILC to support their colleagues (see further detail later in final Q&A).

- Q. Where ACTO members also have membership of other online organisations (e.g. Dr Julian) how would this work?

  A. SILC CORE Net and CORE Net each provide subsite data fields to help facilitate the filtering of data for reporting. As a consequence, ACTO members who were providers to Dr Julian could easily sub-categorise their clients as Dr Julian clients and reports could be prepared by the SILC/CORE Team on Dr Julian profiles. The same would be true of any other sub-category of data from ACTO members.

- How would you recommend we train and support ACTO therapists if we decided to increase the number of members using CORE Net?

  A. All services using CORE Net either through SILC or CORE IMS have trained their practitioners using traditional cascade methods supported by the on-line training tools provided from within CORE Net. If ACTO chose to continue with SILC CORE Net then we are planning the release of new training material for the launch of SILC Phase II in January 2019.

- Simone has provided excellent support throughout the pilot and ACTO would wish to continue to cover her consultancy costs in a retainer. How much would this be?

  A. Simone is an invaluable SILC Team member and Customer Account Manager for CORE IMS. If ACTO continued with their SILC membership they would have access to her as a SILC Team coach both at the Residential Meetings and for monthly coaching sessions to support emprirical and clinical issues.

- Can there be a training period on the SILC CORE Net site as we used in the pilot where they are monitored by the trainer to ensure high quality data before activation, say for one month after the first training workshop?

  A. This is standard SILC and CORE IMS practice with CORE Net implementation. However, data quality targets are only mandated and managed in the SILC Project. For commercial customers of CORE IMS managers are encouraged to manage data quality – but they are not managed for their capacity or competence.

- Will SILC be able to accommodate 187 individual members and further growth? Is there a limit on numbers?

  A. If ACTO were to become a Phase II SILC (member) service each ACTO representative enrolling on the SILC Course would share their learning with their organisation. Typically, we'd imagine that one SILC member could support up to perhaps 30 colleagues. Thus the next step for ACTO may be to recruit up to 30 ACTO colleagues to become the next phase pilot members from January 2019 when SILC II launches.

- Is there a time frame on access to SILC?

  A. Given the new funding, the current ACTO members could continue on SILC CORE Net until December fee-free. Thereafter – access to CORE Net will depend on the preferred pathway (e.g. SILC or CORE IMS)

- Can the SILC site include a sub-menu that requires indication of the format of a particular session; webcam, audio, live chat, email, virtual reality?

  A. This is a simple future configuration option

- Can the SILC site have forms for YP turned on in the ACTO areas and also possible ARM forms etc.? The evaluation with the pilot therapists may inform which areas need to be included, is there room in the agreement for these recommendations following the pilot evaluation?

  A. CORE Net has up to 30 measures available to users. Currently ACTO has all measurement options available to SILC Members. Future measures can be negotiated for inclusion.

- Whilst we have used SILC for the ACTO pilot, we are unclear about many of the alternative sites that use CORE-Net and whether SILC has been chosen because it has been easy for us to manage on the pilot or if there is another site that may be suitable. What are the benefits of using SILC as opposed to other options?

  A. It's imagined that the optimisation of CORE Net for use by online therapists will be an evolving journey that may ultimately benefit from innovative customisation rather than configuration. As a consequence, my personal advice for ACTO if it wants to invest in growing a practice-based evidence-base would be to invest in a customised configuration of CORE Net that's scalable and nominate one person to attend the SILC 2019 course as the organisations CORE Net lead. This will save the initial annual license costs of CORE Net (£3 to £4 per client dependent on volume) and grown an in-house CORE Net Expert. One financial model to support such a pathway may be

for ACTO to invest in the CORE Net configuration and charge members an annual fee of £100 for the use of CORE Net which will create a budget to pay for the nominated lead's attendance on the SILC course and most of their out of pocket expenses.

Questions necessary for the drawing up a formal Agreement document between ACTO and CORE-IMS for using SILC CORE Net

- Training costs: There are several options here and it should be recognised that there will be an initial bulge in numbers requiring training amongst existing ACTO professional members; thereafter, it will be training new members. 1. Each ACTO professional member bears the cost of initial training which if in groups of 20 would amount to £35 each. 2. ACTO explore the option of providing funding along with a funding partner to cover the initial bulge in training requirements.

- Who would be responsible for the administration of the ACTO/ SILC site? When individual members have completed training who will have the necessary permissions to adopt the member onto the site? What is the likely cost of this and who is responsible to cover these costs? The site will require on-going management; who will be responsible for this and how will this be funded?

- Can ACTO advertise access to SILC as part of their membership package of benefits?

Appendix on SILC

From the SILC website at: http://silcuk.org/

About SILC

SILC has been created to provide voluntary sector counselling and psychotherapy services using CORE the opportunity to learn, share and connect with one another and pool their skills and experience for mutual benefit.

About the SILC Initiative

SILC will provide a structured programme of learning designed to assess and explore best practice to help resource improvements in service delivery across all member services.

Membership

All members will benefit greatly from each SILC membership category. Associate and Beneficent Members will share access to a wide range of resources, have considerable opportunities for networking with other members and enjoy structured learning from external experts. Full Collaborative Members will be selected to take part in a unique and innovative pilot project for improving service provision.

Timeline

The SILC initiative started with infrastructure and team development in 2015, culminating in the selection of a pilot group of collaborative learners in March 2017.

During the first phase of the programme, pilot group sites are exploring and sharing their experiences of service quality development by focusing on 4 key areas: Data Quality, DNAs, Unplanned Endings and Improvement and Recovery. These services are producing enhanced service delivery methods and developing the outcome management techniques to define a model of best practice.

Associate and Beneficent Members are invited to take part in a series of learning modules and consultation process relating to improving service performance.