



October 2011

Connect2...Counselling

This factfile is for any adult who is considering a career as a Counsellor or Psychotherapist in Northern Ireland. Courses are offered by further education colleges, private providers and universities. Most courses are part time and many adults complete their training while working.

“Counselling and psychotherapy are umbrella terms that cover a range of talking therapies. They are delivered by trained practitioners who work with people over a short or long term to help them bring about effective change or enhance their wellbeing.” (British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy - see www.bacp.org.uk)

At present counselling is not a registered profession and there are no compulsory qualifications required to practise as a counsellor. However there are plans to introduce a voluntary registration scheme for both the UK and the Republic of Ireland by 2012. Updates are available in the news sections on the BACP and IACP (Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy) websites.

What does counselling training involve?

Training involves:

- Attending classes or lectures
- Working directly with clients and developing your skills
- Supervised practice - a suitably qualified person will monitor and assess you counselling clients

© EGSA Connecting Adults with Learning 2011

028 9024 4274

info@egsa.org.uk

<http://egsa.org.uk>

<http://facebook.com/egsani>

<http://twitter.com/egsani>

What qualifications do I need to apply for counselling training?

Entry requirements will vary depending on the course level. Short, introductory courses may have no entry requirements, while you may need further or higher education qualifications for more advanced training. You may also need to attend an interview. Contact the course provider for further details.

If you have few or no qualifications and are concerned about how you might cope with studying and writing assignments, you could start off with an Essential Skills qualification in English. Essential Skills courses are aimed at adult learners and are offered by your local college and some community groups.

What course is best for me?

I would like to develop my counselling skills, but don't want to become a counsellor.

Short, introductory courses last from a few weeks to a year and will introduce you to some of the basic principles and techniques used by counsellors. These courses may be of interest if you are already working in the the caring professions.

I have received counselling and would now like to train as a counsellor.

You could start with a short, introductory course, which could last from a few weeks to a year. This will help you decide if a counselling career is right for you. It will introduce you to some of the basic principles and techniques used by counsellors and help you become familiar with progression opportunities and the accreditation system.

I would like to work for an organisation that offers counselling services.

The majority of employers and organisations offering counselling services will only recruit counsellors who have or are working towards accredited status. See the Accreditation section for more details.

I would like to set up my own business as a private counsellor.

It is not a legal requirement to have counselling qualifications in order to practise. This may change in the future and it is strongly recommended that you work towards achieving accredited status. See the Accreditation section for more details.

Why is accreditation important?

Accreditation shows clients, employers and other practitioners that you have appropriate qualifications and work to recognised standards of professional competence. It also indicates that you will work within an agreed ethical framework and code of practice. The majority of employers and organisations offering counselling services will only recruit counsellors who have or are working towards accredited status.

How do I become accredited?

You need to choose a training pathway which is recognised by a professional body – for example **BACP** (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy) or **IACP** (Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy). You will need to complete a set number of hours in skills development, theory and a placement with supervised practise. You will also need to meet other criteria, such as membership and insurance. Becoming an accredited counsellor will generally take between 3 and 5 years.

If you are planning a career in Counselling it is important to check all the requirements for successful accreditation with the BACP or the IACP. Full details are available on their websites – see Contacts section.

Are there any BACP courses in Northern Ireland?

Three providers in Northern Ireland offer courses recognised by BACP:

- The Belfast Cognitive Therapy Centre offers a Postgraduate Diploma
- Queen’s University Belfast (QUB) offers a Certificate, Diploma and Advanced Diploma
- CPPD (Derry) offers an Advanced Diploma

Are there any IACP courses in Northern Ireland?

Courses are offered mainly in Dublin and other locations in the Republic of Ireland. See their website for details.

Can I become accredited without attending a BACP or IACP course?

You don’t need to choose a BACP or IACP course but you will need to provide detailed evidence that your choice of training meets all the criteria for accreditation purposes. Check the BACP or IACP websites for further details.

What do I need to know about contact with clients and supervised practice?

If you want to become accredited, you will need to complete a placement with supervised practise. You **must** have access to clients, in a paid or voluntary capacity, with an organisation that will support your training needs. Bear in mind that finding a placement can be difficult.

A wide range of organisations in Northern Ireland offer support services, including telephone based help lines and 1 to 1 counselling. Many of them recruit volunteers to support their work, however not all of them will be able to offer a suitable supervised placement.

You can search for organisations offering counselling services in the Yellow Pages or www.yell.com. Counselling services in Northern Ireland are listed under 'Counselling and Advice'. The organisations will offer different types of support and not all of them will be suitable for accreditation purposes. However if you are new to counselling a voluntary position may offer a useful introduction to professional issues such as confidentiality and telephone counselling skills.

You can search BACP's placement database if you are a student member but please note that it focuses on mainland UK.

The Northern Ireland Counselling Forum may be able to give advice and offer networking opportunities. Visit www.nicounsellingforum.com for details.

Can I study for Counselling qualifications from home?

Distance and online courses may be useful to build up your knowledge of counselling theory. However they offer limited opportunities to gain experience of supervision, skills practise and contact with clients. If you want to work towards accredited status, check with BACP or IACP if your choice of course would be appropriate.

When choosing to study by distance learning, it may be useful to read a booklet entitled 'A Buyer's Guide to Distance Learning', produced by the Open and Distance Learning Quality Council (ODL QC). Visit their website at www.odlqc.org.uk to download the booklet or search for course providers.

What else do I need to know before I start a counselling course?

- Think about what sort of counsellor you would like to become. There are many different approaches and specialisms. Visit the BACP and IACP websites for career related advice and information.
- Some courses will require you to have personal therapy.
- Find out about student membership of BACP or IACP – particularly if you want to work towards accreditation.
- Think about how you will pay for course fees, accreditation, membership and insurance.

Is there any financial assistance?

Check with your course provider for details of fees. If you are receiving benefits, reduced fees may be available for some courses offered by colleges. Please note that private organisations do not generally offer any reductions.

Money for Life Project

EGSA can offer advice if you are concerned about financial support and/or how it might affect any benefits you receive. For further information contact Paulette on T: 028 9024 4274 or E: moneyforlife@egsa.org.uk.

Money for Life is a unique partnership between Lloyds Banking Group, the Money Advice Service and Further Education sector partners in the four nations of the UK. EGSA is the lead partner for Northern Ireland.

We also produce a series of student finance factsheets. You can download them from our website: <http://egsa.org.uk/downloads/student-finance-factsheets/>

I'm still not sure if Counselling is right for me – where can I get further advice?

You can discuss your career and learning options with an EGSA adviser. Our services are aimed at adults and our advice is confidential and independent. Visit our website to find out more: <http://egsa.org.uk/helping-you/>, phone us on T: 028 9024 4274 or E: info@egsa.org.uk.

Useful Contacts

Further Education Colleges

Belfast Metropolitan College

www.belfastmet.ac.uk

South Eastern Regional College

www.serc.ac.uk

Southern Regional College

www.src.ac.uk

Northern Regional College

www.nrc.ac.uk

South West College

www.swc.ac.uk

North West Regional College

www.nwrc.ac.uk

Universities

Open University in Ireland

www.open.ac.uk

T: 028 9024 5025

Queen's University Belfast, School of Education

www.qub.ac.uk/schools/SchoolofEducation

T: 028 9097 3323 / 5941

University of Ulster, School of Communication

www.socsci.ulster.ac.uk/comms

T: 028 9036 6453

Other

Belfast Cognitive Therapy Centre

T: 028 9066 5570

www.belfastctcentre.com

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)

T: 0870 443 5252

www.bacp.co.uk

CPPD

T: 020 8341 4843 (London office)

www.cppd.co.uk

Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP)

T: 00 353 1 2723427

www.irish-counselling.ie

Northern Ireland Counselling Forum

www.nicounsellingforum.com

While EGSA makes every effort to ensure that the information in this factfile is correct at the time of going to print, we can't accept responsibility for any errors or omissions. Before enrolling on a course, please check full details with your choice of learning provider.

© EGSA Connecting Adults with Learning 2011