

## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPING YOUR COUNSELLING PRIOR TO APPLYING FOR THE POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA IN COUNSELLING**

### **\* Counselling practice:**

You can gain experience of developing your counselling skills by working as a volunteer for a voluntary agency offering support or befriending services. This will normally require you to make a commitment of time to the agency and to undergo their own form of training. Agencies are understandably reluctant to permit well-meaning but untrained volunteers to learn their skills on the public. Agencies are also wary of providing a counselling placement for counselling students who do not offer something to the organisation in return in terms of commitment and service. If you are planning to use your counselling agency as your intended placement on Diploma level training, it is worth checking out its suitability in advance with the course tutors - some forms of counselling, such as telephone or group counselling, may be very useful experience, but not valid for training placement purposes at Diploma level.

### **\* Personal therapy:**

Many courses at Diploma level, including the **Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling at Manchester University**, have a formal requirement for students to undertake some personal therapy as a client, in order to address personal issues and to gain experience of being in the client role. One way of using time before applying for a Diploma in Counselling is to have some personal therapy, either as a paying client, or from an agency providing a counselling service. Evidence of having used your own counselling in a positive way will normally be counted as evidence of motivation and commitment to your own personal development when being interviewed for a Diploma in Counselling course.

### **\* Personal Development:**

In addition to, or as an alternative to, personal therapy, it may be worth considering joining a Personal Development Group. You will have experienced some aspects of this in your Certificate in Counselling Skills course, i.e. being part of a group with a facilitator, where the purpose of the group is to examine relationships between participants and to explore and express current feelings in a safe setting. Some Personal Development Groups are run as separate groups, i.e. not simply as part of a Certificate course, and are advertised in the specialist counselling press. Having taken part in such a group, and being able to reflect on the personal learning you have derived from this, will be a positive asset in making an application for Diploma courses, as this type of group is a standard part of training in almost all Diploma level training.

### **\* Supervision:**

Supervised counselling practice is an essential aspect of training on a Diploma course. If you are using counselling skills in your paid employment, or as work for a voluntary agency, then gaining experience of appropriate professional supervision by an experienced, qualified supervisor will be a valuable preparation for the Diploma, as well as aiding and supporting your own practice. Supervision is a highly skilled and focused exploration of your counselling work, carried out on a contractual basis, with a counselling supervisor who is not your line manager, to avoid confusion of roles, and enable freer discussion of counselling issues. Applicants with prior experience of supervision will find this strengthens their position in applying for Diploma level training courses.

### **\* Academic study:**

For mature students who have much to offer in terms of life experience, but who may have been out of formal academic study for some time, it is worth considering brief 'Return to study' courses as building a bridge towards making a Diploma application. Relevant courses may include psychology, social studies, study skills and word-processing skills, as well as courses in counselling skills or workshops on counselling skills and personal development.

**\* Prior training in counselling skills:**

The Diploma in Counselling is an entry-level professional qualification for persons wishing to work as a counsellor in voluntary or paid employment, or to use therapeutic skills as an enhanced aspect of their primary role as teacher, nurse, social worker etc. Training in counselling is widely seen within the profession as consisting of four levels:

- **Introductory courses in counselling skills and concepts** (25 hours approximately, often over a period of 10 – 12 weeks)
- **Certificate level courses in counselling skills and concepts:** usually offered as a one year part-time course, with one weekend residential, covering theory of counselling, skills practice, personal development, experience of group work; courses last between 120 and 150 hours.
- **Diploma in Counselling:** one year full time or two years part-time, consisting of 300 – 400 class contact hours (see attached sheet for information on **PostGraduate Diploma in Counselling at Manchester University**).
- **Post-qualifying training:** this may include postgraduate modules on theory and practice of counselling, or specialist issues and approaches, which are part of
  - a formal qualification, such as the **MA in Counselling Studies at Manchester University**
  - evidence of Continuing Professional Development
  - a portfolio of training hours required for individual accreditation with professional bodies such as British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, or British Psychological Society (see below)

**For details of courses at Introductory and Certificate level contact:**

City College, Manchester 957 1763  
MANCAT 953 5995  
North Trafford College 886 7070  
Person Centred Counselling Services 877 9877  
Salford College 886 5556  
Stockport College 958 3101

BACP website: [www.bacp.co.uk](http://www.bacp.co.uk) or phone: 0870 443 5252

**\* Individual Accreditation with professional bodies:**

Completion of the requirements for the **PostGraduate Diploma in Counselling at Manchester University** make a substantial contribution to preparing students for individual accreditation with the British Association for Counselling and/or, in the case of appropriate BPS membership, with the British Psychological Society. Individual accreditation or eligibility for accreditation is increasingly becoming a minimum requirement for employment in counselling. The **PostGraduate Diploma in Counselling at Manchester University** is a course validated by the BACP, geared to encouraging students to apply for BACP individual accreditation after qualifying. It also has a route for psychology graduates to follow in order to meet the separate and distinct requirements for individual BPS accreditation.

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