

The Norwich Centre



Post-Graduate Diploma in Counselling

Brochure

2026 - 2028

bacp | Accredited
Course

Diploma in Counselling

The Norwich Centre's diploma course is designed to offer training of sufficient duration and depth to equip the successful course member to practice professionally in the role of counsellor, in both face-to-face and online/telephone therapy. The Norwich Centre is proud to be able to offer this BACP accredited course to successful applicants.

The course programme is designed to provide the breadth and depth of knowledge, skills and personal development in the key areas of counselling theory, skills and experience, underpinned by personal development. It also explores spiritual and existential dimensions of counselling.

The course is based on the original training course offered by PCT Britain, which provided the basis for the well-known training courses at the University of East Anglia and the University of Strathclyde. In offering this training, The Norwich Centre is building on its historical involvement in high quality professional person-centred training.

Sandra Lee, the Course Director, will be leading the course. She undertook her training with The Norwich Centre and therefore has experience of all aspects of the course directly. She has been a trainer on the Diploma in Counselling for six years and, prior to that, was a trainer on other Norwich Centre courses. Sandra has her own private practice as both a supervisor and counsellor. Her supervision training was led by experts in the field, Robin Shohet and Joan Wilmot. Sandra is trained in working online and by telephone and has much experience practicing in these mediums.

Person-Centred Counselling

The theoretical model of the course is the person-centred approach. Person-centred or client-centred counselling, developed by the late Carl Rogers and his associates during the past sixty years, is characterised by certain beliefs and attitudes which serve to distinguish it from both the analytical and cognitive/behavioural traditions. The person-centred philosophy takes an optimistic view of human nature. The therapist is viewed as a person whose essential skill lies in the ability to create a particular kind of therapeutic relationship within which the client is enabled to find his or her own resources for moving towards a more satisfying way of being. The counsellor's task is to offer a relationship which by its quality of respect, understanding and openness makes possible for the client a new appraisal of self and an opportunity for change and development. In order to engage in such work, the practitioner needs to develop the capacity to identify and let go of prejudices and other attitudes which can undermine the growth of clients through the blatant or covert abuse of personal power and the withholding of mutuality.

The Norwich Centre Post-Graduate Diploma builds on the work of Professor Brian Thorne, co-founder of The Norwich Centre, exploring the implications of person-centred theory and practice for spiritual understanding and development.

The person-centred focus will be reflected, not only in the content of the course but where possible in the assessment processes. Staff members will aim to provide a supportive environment which is nonetheless challenging and both emotionally and intellectually demanding.

Course Membership

This course is designed for people from Britain and overseas wishing to train and practice as person-centred counsellors in face-to-face, online and telephone practice. Applicants should have completed training in counselling at Introduction and/or Certificate level, or have equivalent experience or training in a related role. Applicants must also have had prior experience of person-centred training specifically. The reason for this is that the teaching style and arenas on the course are unlike most educational settings, with a focus on facilitation of knowledge within the group and from the tutor team, as opposed to the 'teacher-student' approach in mainstream education. It is also important to have some experience of working in a helping role using counselling skills. Overseas applicants for whom English is not a first language must have an IELTS score of at least 7 or can demonstrate speaking, reading and writing skills to this level.

Aims of the Course

The central aim of the course is to provide training which enables students to become reflective practitioners who have studied counselling and themselves in sufficient depth to enter with confidence into counselling relationships with adult and late-adolescent clients in person and online/by telephone.

Integral to this principal aim are the following:

- Achieving a clear theoretical understanding of personality and of the processes implicit in the person-centred approach and the ways these relate to other major therapeutic approaches.
- Developing the attitudes and skills involved in creating the therapeutic conditions and facilitating the therapeutic process in counselling relationships with a range of clientele via in person, online and telephone work.
- Learning to use the supervisory relationship with a personal supervisor and supervision group (in person and online/telephone) in a way that both safeguards the client and also fosters the counsellor's professional development.
- Furthering personal development in all course contexts so that attitudes and values are confronted which inhibit the course member's functioning as a counsellor. The enhancement of self-esteem and the development of self-acceptance is seen as central in the trainee's development of confidence in their therapeutic use of the self.

- Attaining sufficient confidence through counselling practice to work in both long-term and short-term counselling relationships in face-to-face, online and telephone counselling settings.

Gaining an understanding of spiritual development and the spiritual dimensions in counselling relationships. By spiritual we do not mean any particular religion or belief but the transcendental aspects to our relating and our presence in the world.

Structure of Course

(Maximum 24 members)

This is a two-year part-time course. The course begins in September of Year 1 with a five-day full time intensive week. The remainder of Year 1 consists of 11 weekends, and a five-day full time intensive week in July. Year 2 begins the following September, and consists of 11 weekends, and a final five-day full time intensive week in July (see website for dates when they are confirmed).

Intensive weeks are Monday – Friday 9am - 5pm

Weekends are 7pm – 9 pm Friday, and 9.00am – 4.30pm Saturday and Sunday.

Attendance at all sessions is necessary for your own personal learning and development. In very exceptional circumstances, absence may be authorised.

Time commitment

In addition to the time commitment detailed above, you will need to allow a **minimum** of one day per week for private study, and at least one day per week for your placement (see below). You will also need to allow time for meeting with your study group and for individual supervision. We would suggest that you will struggle to complete this course alongside full-time work. This course requires self-responsibility as you will need to allow time to explore all aspects and topics covered in further detail outside of course weekends and intensive weeks. Whilst having private therapy is not a requirement of the course, we would encourage you that you may find this particularly helpful alongside the training. Equally having had the experience of a counselling relationship as a client will be a useful learning element to your development.

Counselling Practice

It is necessary that you undertake a minimum of 150 contact hours with clients, a maximum 30% of which must be conducted online or by telephone. Initially you will begin with two or three clients building to a *maximum* of eight over the period of the course. In order to meet the requirement of 150 hours of clinical practice you should work up to at least 5 sessions per week. Counselling practice normally begins towards the end of term 2, subject to the tutor team's agreement that the trainee is ready to start working with clients.

You will produce a 'Readiness to Practice' statement assessing your readiness to see clients in person and online/by telephone.

Members of the course will need to go through an application process to obtain a placement position. Whilst we will always make sure there are enough placement vacancies, we cannot guarantee any students application process will be successful within a specific organisation.

Important things to note: There will be placement opportunities within The Norwich Centre and within other approved external organisations. Tutors will support you through the placement process and with the Readiness to Practice process prior to starting placement. However, the placement application process for students is direct with placement providers and is not influenced by the tutor team.

Arrangements for Individual Supervision

Individual Supervision must begin at the same time as, or prior to, counselling placements. You are required to meet at least fortnightly with your individual supervisor. The exact amount of supervision you need will be based on at least one hour per eight client hours, and any specific requirements your placement may have. The cost of individual supervision varies and you are advised to discuss this with potential supervisors. Supervision hours will need to be made up of a blend of online and face-to-face sessions, with no more than 30% of the hours being completed online/by telephone.

Course Content

A weekend will include work in small groups in group supervision and skills practice as well as time in the larger group discussing theory, attending lectures and exploring aspects of personal and professional development. The four core issues of theory, skills, personal development and supervision will be fully integrated wherever possible. The core theoretical content of the course is summarised below but it should be remembered that, while some of this material will be presented through formal theory sessions, much will be integrated into counselling skills workshops and supervision groups. All aspects of the course listed below will cover relevant issues relating to face-to-face therapy and online/telephone therapy so that trainees gain the necessary competencies to work with clients in these various ways.

The Person-Centred Approach

Theory:

- The development and maintenance of the self and the self-concept
- Configurations of the self
- The actualizing tendency
- Self-actualization
- Conditions of worth
- The creation of disturbance
- The locus of evaluation
- Defence, distortion, denial
- Organismic valuing process
- Person-centred perspectives on psychopathology
- Objective and subjective reality (phenomenology)
- Shame and guilt
- Appropriate and inappropriate guilt
- Personality change
- Adjusting to transitions
- The nature of prejudice
- The power of role in determining behaviour
- The development of spiritual awareness
- The social construction of reality
- The centrality of the client's own experiencing

The Therapeutic Conditions:

- The creation of a therapeutic environment in face to face, online and telephone settings, including the potential impacts (challenging and fruitful) of each format
- The definition of empathy and exploration of its boundaries
- Levels of empathy
- Blocks to empathy
- Development of the imagination
- Idiosyncratic empathy responses
- Releasing empathic sensitivity
- The definition of unconditional positive regard and exploration of its boundaries
- Personal limits to acceptance
- The definition of congruence and exploration of its boundaries
- Intuition
- The quality of presence
- Adapting to different client needs
- The spiritual dimension
- The client's personal language
- Uncovering prejudice
- Attitudes to birth, death, sexuality and spirituality
- Barriers to self-acceptance
- The achievement of self-acceptance
- Releasing congruence

The Therapeutic Process:

- The therapeutic climate including focus on the relevance of each mode of working (face to face, online and telephone)
- Stages within the therapeutic process
- The relationship between counsellor and client
- Beginnings/middles/endings/referrals
- The working alliance
- Structuring the therapeutic context
- Therapeutic contracts/reviews
- The counsellor in the process of counselling
- Issues of equality, equity and power and how these change, including access to technology (or not) for online/telephone therapy
- Counsellor's self-disclosure
- Beyond the counselling hour/extended counselling sessions/can clients become friends? – Ethical dilemmas
- Client and counsellor dependency
- Interaction of client and counsellor pathologies
- Therapeutic 'stuckness'
- Blocks to the therapeutic process
- 'Intimacy' and 'mutuality', including the 'Disinhibition Effect' (Suler, 2004)
- Working with profoundly disturbed clients
- Transcendental experience
- Working with configurations of the self

Key Concepts from other Approaches:

- Other counselling approaches compared and contrasted
- Basic concepts of psychodynamic counselling, and cognitive behavioural therapy

Professional Issues in Counselling (covering all modes of working – in person, online/telephone):

- Social and political aspects of counselling
- Working in institutional settings
- Issues of race, culture, disability, faith, class, gender and sexual orientation
- Confidentiality
- Counsellor under-involvement
- Counsellor over-involvement
- The BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions
- Counselling and the law
- Liaising with other agencies and helping professionals
- The research background to counselling
- Current issues in counselling
- Accreditation and registration
- The person-centred approach to supervision
- Group processes and dynamics
- 'Contracts' for groups
- Working with particular client issues

Learning Approaches

The course is structured to provide a variety of different learning environments in order to enable course members to develop their skills and knowledge, and self-awareness.

Unstructured large group work is a particular characteristic of person-centred training and is often referred to as community time. This is a whole group activity during which group members, seated in a large circle, are invited to experience self and other within interaction, encounter and communication as it arises. Whilst potentially providing the most opportunity for growth and learning, Community time can also be a space where group decisions are made, aspects of theory explored or concerns raised. From the outset, however, the large group will be the community group where course members confront challenges which are often more demanding than those offered in small groups. The capacity to stay in touch with feelings and to articulate them and the courage to remain congruent in the face of large group pressure are but two of the desirable outcomes which trainees can hope for as a result of their work in the community group.

Skills development will usually take the form of group work or, occasionally, triad work (one speaker, one listener and observer(s)). Other teaching methods to facilitate this learning will include role play and interpersonal process recall. Video and audio recordings will be used to aid reflection and understanding, and monitor and analyse interactions. The aim is to develop a facilitative way of listening that embodies Rogers' core conditions through the appropriate giving and receiving of peer and tutor feedback.

Theory will be presented in a variety of ways, including experiential work alongside more traditional methods, such as lectures and presentations.

Supervision groups: these groups will meet regularly to explore client work, personal issues which are relevant to the counselling activity and to integrate theory, skills and personal development with practice.

Study groups: these groups are designed to take the best possible advantage of the varied backgrounds and academic experience of trainees. Consisting of around 4 members, they will have the initial task of 'nurturing' each member in relation to academic study. Course staff will act as consultants to the groups if requested.

Personal development groups: a person-centred training attaches great importance to personal development. The objective is for the participants to work on aspects of their personal development that are important to their professional effectiveness. These groups are intended to help trainees develop an awareness of their own strengths and vulnerabilities, and to provide a brave setting for personal change which will enable trainees to work more effectively with clients.

The first week of the course will be designed to introduce members to a number of these varied learning approaches so that from the outset trainees will have the opportunity to experience something of the demanding intellectual, emotional and social challenges which counsellor training presents.

Supervision

Supervision in some therapeutic traditions is an activity which focuses almost exclusively on the work with clients currently being undertaken by the supervisee. This is not the case in the person-centred tradition. The counsellor is encouraged to use the supervision relationship not only to explore work in progress but also those issues of personal concern which impact upon the development of personal effectiveness and well-being. In person-centred counselling the state of being of the supervisee is not only a legitimate but an essential part of the agenda in supervision.

In addition to this, every course member is required to have individual supervision while counselling practice is taking place. The cost of individual supervision is not included in the course fee but will be negotiated with individual supervisors. Individual supervision is not a substitute for personal therapy and separate arrangements should be made for this if it becomes desirable. Individual supervisors may be selected from a list approved by the course and will be conducted in a blend of online and face-to-face sessions to give experience of receiving sessions in ways you will be delivering them to clients. (No more than 30% of total individual supervision hours may be conducted online or by telephone). The contract formed between a course member and the individual supervisor will enable supervisors to confirm with the Course Director that the necessary frequency of supervision is being provided.

Self-Directed Learning and External Constraints

The person-centred approach is committed to affording individuals the opportunity for directing their own learning within the context of a learning community where the needs of each individual are respected and acknowledged. The Diploma Course is designed to facilitate the development of each individual trainee and the staff share the commitment to creating an environment where individual needs and preferences can be met. Trainees are encouraged to make full use of the course community meetings to comment on their course experience and to make known special needs and interests which may then be incorporated into the programme where possible. There will be sessions during the intensive weeks which are termed 'Community Design Time' – in these sessions, trainees are encouraged to identify areas of interest or learning which they can address during these 'open' periods. It may be, for example, that some trainees have specific knowledge on an area of interest to other trainees, in which case they may offer a session to facilitate learning in this area. Or, if possible, it may be that the staff can arrange for a speaker to offer a session relating to a specific topic. Please bear in mind that this will depend on speaker availability and time frames. These sessions have also been used for creative projects for the community, self-care and celebration when the course is reaching completion.

Assessment

It is a basic assumption of the course that counselling training must assist the course participant to become as fully functioning as possible as a person in the counselling role. To this end it is of critical importance that the trainee develop the capacity to be self-reflective and to acquire the skills necessary for rigorous and continuous self-assessment and self-appraisal. Such skills will include, for example:

- An ability to remain in touch with one's own experiencing while engaging fully with others.
- An awareness of introjected beliefs about the self and others and how these influence perception and behaviour.
- An awareness of the ways in which personal prejudices influence judgement and behaviour
- An ability to develop personal learning goals.
- A willingness to examine, critically and systematically, personal relationships and attitudes.
- A confidence to tolerate and learn from having assumptions and attitudes challenged by others.
- An acceptance of responsibility for one's own behaviour and learning.
- The capacity to appraise self openly and to use the products of consultation with others as an essential part of self-assessment.

The centrality of the development of self-assessment skills for the counselling practitioner underpins the assessment procedures of the course as a whole. The course community will establish an assessment discourse in the context of which participants will experience tutor assessment, peer assessment and the constant challenge of self-assessment. This self-assessment focus will be balanced with a more mainstream form of assessment whereby tutors will mark assignments based on competencies demonstrated and criteria that need to be covered.

The supervision and skills practice groups on the course provide regular opportunities for the course members' continuous self-assessment and for tutor and peer assessment. In addition, there are five varied assignments designed to offer feedback to the course member. These will include two essays: a case study exploring the therapeutic process; an exploration of person-centred personality theory. The other assignments involve producing a video tape of skills practice sessions and two audio recordings of actual counselling work. The video tape and audio recordings will be accompanied by written analyses. All these assignments may be subject to peer assessment as well as to tutor assessment and should reach an agreed standard. These assignments will assess both counselling delivered in person and online/telephone. Tutors will mark these assignments based on whether or not they hit the criteria detailed in the course handbook. If the first submission of an assignment has not hit all of the criteria, it will be referred back to the trainee so that they can build on the submitted assignment. This will be resubmitted for the tutor to remark. Referred assignments must be resubmitted within 15 working days.

The process of self-appraisal will be further strengthened by the requirement on all course members to keep a personal journal of their learning on the course. This journal will be detailed and highly personalised with specific attention being given to the central six areas of the training.

The Self-Appraisal Statement

This statement is a detailed account of the course member's appraisal of their performance on the course, strengths and weaknesses, plans for future professional development, judgement of competencies in different working contexts and via face-to-face therapy as well as online/telephone, and an overall summative judgement on the appropriateness of receiving the Diploma at this time or deferring it until further objectives can be met. The journal will be of considerable value when reviewing the experience of the course.

In compiling the self-appraisal statement students are asked to consider the six central areas of the training and to assess whether or not they have achieved an acceptable standard in each area. The staff team will provide guidelines outlining appropriate criteria for establishing satisfactory progress in each area.

The process of self-appraisal culminating in the appraisal statement will involve the course member in obligatory consultations with the course staff, other participants, the individual supervisor and clients. It is a rigorous and demanding process which is designed to be fully in harmony with the person-centred approach to education.

Progress Difficulties

If, at any time during the course, staff have persistent doubts about the participation or practice of a course member or if they have received complaints about these, they have a responsibility to discuss these with the trainee and to consider the possibility of further action.

Where staff have serious doubts about a course member's professional suitability or capacity to complete the course successfully, they will, whenever possible, express this to the trainee before the end of the first term's training and a planned approach will be agreed.

External Examiner

An External Examiner will be appointed who holds a senior position in the field of counsellor education. The External Examiner's task is to monitor the progress of the course, to offer consultative support to the staff and to review the work of course members and the course assessment procedures.

Course Fee

Course fees are due at the start of each of the two years, but may be paid in one payment.

The fee for the course for 2026 – 2028 is £8,400, so you will be due to pay £4,200 at the beginning of each of the two years. The first payment of half of the total course fees secures your place and would be due four weeks before the commencement of the course. This does not include the cost of individual supervision.

NB Course fees can be paid by instalment in exceptional circumstances, but this would need to be negotiated with the Course Director.

Please refer to the Diploma refund policy which will be e-mailed during the application process.

Course Dates

2026	Intensive week 1	14 th – 18 th Sept
	Weekend 1	25 th – 27 th Sept
	Weekend 2	23 rd -25 th Oct
	Weekend 3	13 th – 15 th Nov
	Weekend 4	4 th - 6 th Dec
2027	Weekend 5	15 th – 17 th Jan
	Weekend 6	12 th – 14 th Feb
	Weekend 7	12 th – 14 th Mar
	Weekend 8	9 th – 11 th Apr
	Weekend 9	7 th – 9 th May
	Weekend 10	4 th – 6 th June
	Weekend 11	2 nd - 4 th July
2027	Intensive week 2	12 th – 16 th July
	Weekend 1	10 th – 12 th Sept
	Weekend 2	8 th - 10 th Oct
	Weekend 3	5 th – 7 th Nov
	Weekend 4	3 rd – 5 th Dec
2028	Weekend 5	14 th – 16 th Jan
	Weekend 6	11 th – 13 th Feb
	Weekend 7	10 th -12 th Mar
	Weekend 8	7 th – 9 th Apr
	Weekend 9	12 th – 14 th May
	Weekend 10	2 nd – 4 th June
	Weekend 11	30 th June – 2 nd July
	Final intensive week	10 th – 14 th July

The dates above are the confirmed dates for 2026 – 2028 Diploma Course. Whilst we don't anticipate any changes we would be in contact if unforeseen circumstances forced us to have to change venue, timings or in very rare circumstances a weekend date.

Selection

Applications are welcomed from interested people regardless of race, religion, disability, gender, gender identity or sexual orientation. The course will make every effort to support any additional needs or disabilities and this will be explored at the beginning of the course to adapt where necessary. Applicants will normally be expected to be graduates but those with other professional qualifications or who can demonstrate appropriate academic skills will be considered. In the selection process the staff will be particularly concerned with the following questions:

- Does the applicant have prior counselling/professional listening experience or of work in a facilitative role? Such experience demonstrates that the applicant has tested their capacity and ability and is sure that the counselling role is appropriate. It is very rare to take people on a Diploma course who do not have such previous counselling or listening experience.
- Has the applicant undertaken previous counselling or counselling skills training? It is essential for the applicant to have had significant prior experience of counselling training before embarking on such a substantial course. A Certificate in Counselling Skills, for example, is an excellent preparation for a Diploma training.
- Does the applicant have a genuine interest and understanding of the Person-centred approach and how this is reflected in the style of training? This course prides itself on the incorporation of person-centred theory and self-directed learning. There is an emphasis on self-responsibility, alongside the significant focus on personal development which includes reflection and consideration of issues of equality, diversion and inclusion. The large group work encourages engagement with in the moment experiencing, exploring unconscious bias and development of the core conditions. This is all integrated with the development of clinical skills and supervision.
- Has the applicant undertaken some personal development work, either through personal counselling and/or group work? Has the applicant explored issues of privilege, oppression and unconscious bias?
- Does the applicant wish to qualify as a counsellor or is he/she interested chiefly in the personal growth which the course can provide? This is a core selection issue. While personal development is an integral part of counsellor training, selectors will wish to ensure that this is not the primary motivation of the applicant.
- Will the applicant be able to meet the academic challenges of the course? Although this is a course which considers the practical to be as important as the theoretical, it is nonetheless necessary for selectors to feel confident that course members will be able to cope with the rigorous academic work appropriate to a post-graduate Diploma.

- Does the applicant have a genuine interest in spirituality and a preparedness to engage in the exploration of a range of spiritual traditions and existential perspectives?
- Does the applicant have a personality which is appropriate for person-centred counselling? The question of personality is of crucial importance in determining suitability for the role of counsellor. One question which will always be in the mind of selectors is: would this person be able to appropriately handle their own personal power in the counselling role and have awareness of how their own identity might impact the therapeutic process?
- Does the applicant have the capacity within their current life demands to embark and successfully complete the course?

Selection will take place on the basis of a completed application form, two references and an in-depth interview. It is a strong preference that applicants from overseas be interviewed face to face. Failing this, the applicant will be offered a telephone interview at their expense.

Preparatory Work for the Course

In preparation for the course, participants are asked to read the following books:

Mearns, D. McLeod, J and Thorne, B. (2013) *Person-centred Counselling in Action* (Fourth Edition) London: Sage
 Rogers, C. (any editions) *Client Centered Therapy or On Becoming a Person* (Various publishers)
 Thorne, B. Sanders, P. (2012) *Carl Rogers. (Third Edition)* London: Sage
 Mearns, D. (1998) *Person-centred Counselling Training*. Sage
 Axline, V. (any edition) *Dibs: In Search of Self*. Pelican

The primary aim at the outset of the course will be to focus on the present functioning of the course members as helpers. This process will begin with members writing 'autobiographies' tracing their development and including their own account of strengths and weaknesses and how these have come about. Part of the early work of the course will involve presenting and exploring these autobiographies with a tutor and other trainees.

Applications

Applications are invited for the course commencing in September 2026. The closing date is 12th July 2026, or earlier if the course is full. Interviews will take place from November 2025 and places will be offered to suitable applicants following interview.

Application forms may be downloaded from www.norwichcentre.org Go to the courses page of the website where you will find links to the appropriate documents.

Or email training@norwichcentre.org

Phone 01603 617709

In producing this brochure, we are grateful for permission to draw on material from the original course brochures of PCT Britain.

Disclaimer:

We have taken great care in compiling the information contained in this brochure, ensuring it is accurate at the time of going to press. However, the provision of courses, facilities and other arrangements described in the brochure are regularly reviewed and may be subject to change without notice. Any changes will be incorporated in subsequent editions. This brochure does not form part of any contract between any person and The Norwich Centre.

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