



**Prisoners Education Trust**

## **Working in Counselling: Careers**

### **Career Briefing**

#### **Introduction**

This career briefing is one of a series produced by the Prisoners Education Trust. The series aims to provide information on distance learning courses available; and suggestions on a range of career pathways prisoners may wish to consider on release. It is based on knowledge obtained from distance learning courses we have funded, together with research on a range of careers from a number of sources. A list of abbreviations is provided at the end of this briefing.

To the best of our knowledge the career briefings contain accurate and up-to-date information, but this cannot be guaranteed.

We welcome feedback from anyone who finds inaccurate or inadequate information within this briefing.

#### **What is the work like?**

- Counselling and therapy careers involve helping people with a wide range of issues such as relationships, disability, mental health, abuse, and drug & alcohol addiction. People employed in this area provide help to a range of individuals, couples, families and groups and work with people of all ages.

#### **What is the difference between counselling & psychotherapy?**

- The British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP) suggests that it is not possible to make a generally-accepted distinction. Any differences relate to the training and the setting within which individual practitioners work.

#### **What are the job opportunities?**

- There are plenty of job opportunities in this sector but the competition is strong. Many counsellors work part-time or on a voluntary basis.

## What skills & qualities will I need?

- Counsellors must be able to communicate well with people and demonstrate active listening skills and strong empathy to the needs of others. They should have a strong interest in working with and helping people with their problems and challenges, and must be understanding, supportive and non-judgemental. Working in counselling can be mentally and emotionally demanding, so they need to be prepared to cope with this as well.

## Will my criminal record make a difference?

- Some convictions become spent after a certain amount of time. There are exceptions to this depending on the sentence you were given and the area of work you want to go to do. For some careers, which involve regular contact with children under eighteen years old or vulnerable adults, employers are required by law to seek disclosure of criminal records.
- As well as undergoing a CRB check there is now a “Vetting and Barring Scheme” in place which assesses whether individuals are safe to work with children and vulnerable adults. Some offences, often sex and violence related and major drugs importation, create an autobar, which means that the person who committed such an offence is barred from ever working with these categories of persons. People with other serious offences can appeal against such a bar. So when considering your career options, remember that there are some jobs for which convictions never become spent.

### For further information contact:

NACRO - publishes a number of advice leaflets.



[www.nacro.org.uk](http://www.nacro.org.uk)

The Apex Trust - information and advice for ex-offenders looking for work



[www.apextrust.com](http://www.apextrust.com)

## What are the entry requirements?

- Many people enter counselling by gaining experience doing relevant voluntary work or enter it as a second career. It is unusual for someone to enter full-time counselling work before their mid-twenties, as life experience and maturity are crucial in this area. There may be opportunities for ex-offenders to work within prisons with voluntary organisations, helping people overcome their addictions.

## How do I train to become a counsellor / psychotherapist?

- At the moment there is no standard route for those wishing to train. Training usually takes a minimum of 3 to 4 years on a part-time basis. It is a good idea to do a taster course before making the commitment to full training. Full training would be a certificate which could lead on to a diploma. As well

as completing a course, two other criteria must be met: 450 hours of supervised practice and reflective practice (contact BACP for further information).

## How will the introduction of regulation affect the profession?

- The profession is due to be regulated by 2011. This means that only people who are registered with the regulator (the Health Professions Council) will be able to practice. The HPC will decide on the qualifications required; this information is not yet available. BACP recommend undertaking a BACP accredited course, as these courses have been through an assessment process and it is hoped that they will provide eligibility to registration with the HPC.

## What is BACP Accreditation?

- BACP Counsellor/Psychotherapist accreditation proves a measure of experience and training and is the qualification preferred by many prospective employers.

## How can I obtain BACP Accreditation?

- To obtain accreditation with BACP, a BACP approved course must be studied (these do not include distance learning courses, see below). Members of BACP are also required to have regular supervision (consultative support). For those working towards counsellor or psychotherapist accreditation, a minimum of 1.5 hours of supervision per month is required, in order to maintain accredited status.

## How can I find a good course?

- BACP has credited a number of courses which, on successful completion, fulfil the training component for Counsellor or Psychotherapist Accreditation with BACP. The course provider has to be an Organisational Member of BACP. This means that the organisation is bound by the BACP's *Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy* and subject to BACP's *Professional Conduct Procedure*.

## Can I train by studying by distance learning?

- The BACP's position on distance learning courses is as follows:  
*"While these can offer a useful introduction to the use of counselling skills and a little theory, in most cases it is unlikely that they would greatly contribute to the training element required for BACP Accreditation, as they offer little or no counselling practice under supervision and have little opportunity for observation and practice of counselling skills with feedback for both staff and fellow students, all of which are considered to be important aspects of training"*.
- Prisoners wishing to study counselling courses have no option but to take distance learning courses. Although these are not BACP accredited, completion of these courses demonstrates an amount of

knowledge and commitment. The Prisoners Education Trust has received feedback from students who have successfully found employment, (initially voluntary) having completed distance learning courses in counselling. There may also be opportunities within prison to practise counselling skills, for example as a Listener or by participating as a mentor on addiction programmes run by RAPt or similar organisations.

### **What if I just want to be a voluntary counsellor?**

- Some voluntary organisations select and train their own volunteers but they will expect a certain length of time of commitment. It may be useful for volunteers to have some basic counselling skills training before offering services.

### **How can I gain some voluntary experience?**

- While in prison it may be possible to do some voluntary work, which include the possibility of practising some of the counselling skills learned on distance learning courses. Practise will enhance the skills learned on the course. Some prisoners volunteer to advise and offer support to others, for example by working with foreign national prisoners, as a Listener; or as a peer supporter on drug / alcohol misuse programmes.

**For further information, contact:**

#### **British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy**

- BACP is a professional website. Provides information about accredited courses and providers.



BACP House, 15 St John's Business Park, Lutterworth, Leic, LE17 4HB



01455 883 300



[www.bacp.co.uk](http://www.bacp.co.uk)

#### **British Psychological Society**

- BPS provides information on accredited courses and careers.



St Andrews House, 48 Princes Road East, Leicester, LE1 7DR



0116 254 9568



[www.bps.org.uk](http://www.bps.org.uk)

#### **Counselling & Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body**

- CPCAB is a UK awarding body in counselling. It works in partnership with the OU to offer a foundation degree in counselling. (See Working in Counselling / Psychotherapy: Courses, for information).



PO Box 1768, Glastonbury, Somerset, BA6 8YP



01458 850 350



[www.cpcab.co.uk](http://www.cpcab.co.uk)

## Other career options

- There are a range of career options available which fall within the Health and Social Care field for which counselling skills would be useful. Some jobs to consider are:

### 1 Drug & Alcohol Misuse Worker

- Most drug and alcohol support organisations offer volunteering opportunities and training. As mentioned above, it may be possible to work as a mentor on misuse programmes while in prison. One distance learner student who has been working as a mentor on the RAPt drug and alcohol misusers 12 step programme commented:

*My position as peer supporter allows me to help my fellow alcoholics find recovery ... I get enormous sense of satisfaction from helping others and really proud that I'm playing an active role to combat alcoholism, a "job" I take very seriously. My biggest achievement in life (so far) is the gratitude I'm shown from those I've helped. To describe this feeling is difficult but it's one of absolute pride.*

- Most organisations offer on-the-job training for volunteers or paid staff. Training may involve short sessions on a particular aspect of the role, or the chance to gain a formal qualification such as NVQ levels 2, 3 and 4 in Health and Social Care (which contains optional units covering substance misuse).
- There might be other roles within substance misuse support work you may wish to consider. For example the Home Office employs ex-offenders to man their drug telephone helplines.

### Organisations working with drug & alcohol misuse issues

- Here is a selection of organisations that work with people with drug and alcohol problems, both within prison and in the community. Some Prisoners Education Trust funded students who have completed distance learning courses in counselling have been offered opportunities within them. They offer ex-offenders voluntary and paid work. Each organisation has its own policies on how long people have to be "clean," before being taken on in either voluntary or paid roles. Contact individual organisations to ask about their particular policy.

#### Addaction

- Addaction is a large charity with services across England and Scotland that helps individuals and families cope with the challenges of addiction.



67-69 Cowcross Street, London, EC1M 6PU



020 7251 5860



[www.addaction.org.uk](http://www.addaction.org.uk)

#### Bac-In

- Bac-In provides culturally specific support, guidance and education to African/Caribbean and South Asian drug/alcohol users and their families. It is community based in East and West Midlands.



202 Mansfield Road, Nottingham, NG1 3HX



0115 960 9597



[www.bac-in.co.uk](http://www.bac-in.co.uk)

### Compass UK

- Compass provides services to people concerned with the health and social impact of drug use.



Head Office: Langton House, 5 Priory Street, York, YO1 6ET



01904 636374



[www.compass.co.uk](http://www.compass.co.uk)

### Phoenix Futures

- Phoenix Futures provides a range of services for people with drug and alcohol problems. They work in the community, in prisons and in residential settings across England and Scotland.



3rd Floor, ASRA House, 1 Long Lane, London, SE1 4PG



020 7234 9740



[www.phoenix-futures.org.uk](http://www.phoenix-futures.org.uk)

### RAPt



Riverside House, 27-29 Vauxhall Grove, London, SW8 1SY



020 7582 4677

### Other useful contacts

- The following organisations provide useful information on this area of work.

### DrinkandDrugs Net

- This is a very useful website for people working in the area of misuse. See the Workforce Development sections for details about training courses and providers. It also gives information about jobs in this sector.



[www.DrinkandDrugs.net](http://www.DrinkandDrugs.net)

### Drugscope

- Drugscope is a charity whose aim is to inform policy development, carry out research and provide drug information.



[www.drugscope.org.uk](http://www.drugscope.org.uk)

### Alcohol Concern

- The organisation provides information, carries out research and influences policy on alcohol awareness.



[www.alcoholconcern.org.uk](http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk)

### Federation of Drug & Alcohol Professionals

- FSAP is the professional body for those working in the drug and alcohol field. The web site provides information on qualifications, professional standards and professional development for the sector. It offers a range of awards and accreditations for practitioners, counsellors and managers in this area.

 [www.fdap.org.uk](http://www.fdap.org.uk)

## 2 Residential Support Worker

- Residential support workers look after the social welfare of people in residential care. Your clients could include adults with physical or learning disabilities, mental health problems, addiction issues or other emotional or social needs. Your daily tasks might include: assessing each resident's needs and progress; creating a safe and positive living environment; offering one-to-one counselling or leading group therapy sessions; teaching daily living skills such as budgeting, shopping and claiming benefits.
- To work as a residential support worker you usually have to have paid or voluntary experience in the social and care sector. Often employees see work and life experience as being of more value than qualifications. However you are likely to have ongoing training throughout your career, which may include in-house short courses and the chance to gain work-based qualification such as NVQ levels 2, 3 and 4 in Health and Social Care.

**For further information about working as a residential support worker contact:**

### Social Work and Care Careers

 0300 123 1100

 <http://www.socialworkandcare.co.uk>

### The General Social Care Council (GSCC)

- The General Social Care Council runs a register of qualified and student social workers in England. All social care workers including assistants will need to join the register and follow the GSCC Code of Practice. See the GSCC website for more information.

 2 Hay's Lane, London, SE1 2HB


 020 7397 5800

 <http://www.gsc.org.uk>

### Skills for Care (England)

- Skills for Care is the Sector Skill Council for social care in the UK. It is licensed by the government to represent the interests of the employees in the field. A very useful web site which profiles jobs by sectors and highlights required skills and knowledge.

 Albion Court, 5 Albion Place, Leeds, LS1 6JL

 0113 245 1716

 <http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk>

## Other useful career websites

- **Learn Direct**
- This is a very useful web site providing information about courses and careers including job profiles.

 <http://careeradvice.direct.gov.uk>

- **OU Careers Advisory Service**
- Another very useful web site with information and exercises on career planning, job searching strategy and much more.

 [www.open.ac.uk/careers](http://www.open.ac.uk/careers)

- **Jobs in Charities**
- Weekly updated list of jobs (and voluntary opportunities) in range of charities.

 [www.jobsincharities.co.uk](http://www.jobsincharities.co.uk)

## Appendix

- BACP British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy
- CARAT Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice and Throughcare
- CBT Cognitive Behaviour Therapy
- CRB Criminal Records Bureau
- CPCAB Counselling and Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body
- FDAP Federation of drug & Alcohol Professionals
- HPC Health Professions Council
- NACRO National Association for the Care & Resettlement of Offenders
- NVQ National Vocational Qualification
- PASRO Prisoners address substance related offences.
- RAPT Rehabilitation for Addicted Prisoners Trust

## Contact us

Prisoners Education Trust. Ground Floor, Wandle House,  
Riverside Drive, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 4BU  
Telephone: 020 8648 7760 Fax: 020 8648 7762  
[info@prisonerseducation.org.uk](mailto:info@prisonerseducation.org.uk)  
[www.prisonerseducation.org.uk](http://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk)  
CHARITY NO. 1084718 COMPANY NO. 4132595.