

Level 4 Diploma in Restorative Practice

Thames Valley Restorative Justice Service

In August 2010 the Level 4 Diploma in Restorative Practice went live. Skills for Justice secured funding from the Children's Workforce Development Council and the Restorative Justice Council (RJC) for an initial roll out of the Diploma. The qualification is targeted at individuals who use restorative processes either as a volunteer, on a full-time basis or as part of their role in a range of settings. These include justice, in the community, in schools, in health and in the workplace. The Diploma gives formal recognition to those who deliver a range of specialist skills to sometimes vulnerable groups of people, such as victims, offenders and young people. The initial roll out project involved several organisations across four localities in Bristol, Norfolk, Thames Valley and Kent.



GEOFF EMERSON TRAINEE ASSESSOR

Issue

Until 2010 there was no nationally recognised qualification for individuals who work within the restorative practice field. The qualification is recognised by the RJC as a benchmark of good practice.

Solution

The Level 4 Diploma in Restorative Practice is one way of professionalising the field. The Diploma will be one entry route onto the new voluntary Register for restorative practitioners, operated by the RJC. Further information about the Register can be found at www.restorativejustice.org.uk

This case study focuses on the Thames Valley Restorative Justice Service which is part of Thames Valley Probation. The Service was set up in 2005 to provide restorative justice in cases involving adult offenders at any stage of the criminal justice system. Several candidates and trainee assessors who work for the Service either on a temporary or full-time basis have been involved in the project. Thames Valley Probation acted as the assessment centre.

The Diploma was seen as a positive move within the Restorative Justice Service in terms of the formal recognition of skills. Helen Leney, one of the candidates, comments:

"Restorative justice as a whole I think it is quite difficult work and I think people need a minimum level of training and expertise and before they can be judged as fully competent so I think an award or an accreditation is absolutely vital."

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Assessing the Diploma

The experience of the assessment process has been mixed. Helen's assessor was also based within the Service which she felt was a real advantage as they both trusted each other's restorative practice experience. The range of ways in which the Diploma is assessed, such as through observation or professional discussion, suited Helen's working pattern. She says:

"I have used a range of [assessment] methods and feel that this range was good in that it allowed me to carry out my normal job without having to set things up. The range of evidencing methods reflects the diverse nature of my working pattern."

Geoff Emerson, one of the trainee assessors for the project, stresses the importance of good induction for the assessor training programme. High quality induction for candidates was also highlighted by Helen. Geoff initially thought that the assessment process was complex and difficult to understand. His experience also emphasises the importance of assessor standardisation meetings which give everyone the opportunity to discuss the difficult areas and tease out what is required. Meeting with other assessors is essential as a support mechanism for sharing good practice.

"It's quite useful to say I have done this Diploma in restorative practice as a form of recognition. The way it has worked out its training in itself and it makes me think about my work as a whole in restorative practice."

SHANTI PRABHA

TRAINEE ASSESSOR AND DIPLOMA CANDIDATE

Benefits for Thames Valley Restorative Justice Service

- **For the candidates** – Helen believes that the value of the Diploma has been in making her question and evaluate what she is doing.
- **On a team level** – Carrying out a shared learning activity has developed the team's ability to observe practice and share feedback in a constructive way. The experience of the Diploma has also led to consistency of practice.
- **For the organisation** – Geoff identifies one of the benefits of the Diploma for the Service is that it has helped to develop a sense that Thames Valley is a leader in the field. The organisation also feels that it has greater confidence to question its own practice and make use of constructive feedback.

Key to the success of the Diploma is management buy-in for its introduction and this was certainly the case in Thames Valley. Support for candidates and trainee assessors throughout the Diploma process is essential.

Information about the Diploma

The Level 4 Diploma in Restorative Practice is offered by City and Guilds www.cityandguilds.com/uk-home.html and is a competency based qualification. This means the Diploma assesses practitioners' skills and knowledge in carrying out restorative processes using evidence from working/volunteering. The Diploma consists of five units – four mandatory and one optional from a pool of six. The mandatory units cover core restorative processes including assessing the circumstances of an incident, preparing participants, carrying out direct and indirect processes and evaluation. The Diploma will take between six and nine months to complete.

For further information about the Level 4 Diploma in Restorative Practice, please contact Skills for Justice on info@skillsforjustice.com or **0114 261 1499**