

Professional Diploma in Integrative Counselling and Psychological Therapy



Course Prospectus 2026



What makes us different?

- ✓ We blend practice-based learning with contemporary theoretical developments
- ✓ Our ethos reflects the pluralistic basis of First Psychology
- ✓ Our training courses are created by clinical practitioners working in the field

About First Psychology Training

First Psychology is a leading independent provider of counselling, psychological therapy/CBT and applied psychology in Scotland and Northern England. We have multiple consulting venues and work with practitioners from a range of backgrounds to offer the best possible therapeutic care to all our clients – adults, children/young people, families and businesses/organisations.

Established in 2009, we have a particular emphasis on training and development and have an internal CPD institute for practitioners, an advanced skills academy to employ and support recently qualified practitioners or those in the advanced stages of doctoral training, and a graduate programme for graduates seeking experience in the therapeutic/mental health field.

First Psychology Training was launched in 2024 to offer professional training programmes to those wishing to work in the field of counselling/psychological therapy or those who are existing practitioners wishing to update/develop skills in specific areas.

Unlike many training organisations in this area, the programmes offered by First Psychology Training have been created by clinical practitioners working in the field and represent a blend of ‘practice-based’ learning alongside contemporary theoretical developments.

Our ethos reflects the pluralistic basis of First Psychology encompassing practitioners from counselling/psychotherapy, CBT/psychological therapy and applied psychology backgrounds. All programmes reflect the breadth and innovation of this approach, integrating knowledge and ideas from different perspectives. This allows us to ensure what we offer is at the ‘cutting edge’ of contemporary developments in the field.



Professional Diploma in Integrative Counselling and Psychological Therapy

Our professional diploma in integrative counselling and psychological therapy offers a formal training that has been designed to equip students with skills and capabilities to become professional practitioners in the field. Delivered by expert practitioners, it offers a solid grounding in person-centred counselling as well as training in compassion-focused therapy (CFT) and acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT). The programme is practice-based and informed by both the counselling/psychotherapy and applied psychology/psychological therapy/CBT traditions. It has a strong grounding in research and evidence-based approaches in mental health.

Programme philosophy and approach

The programme is rooted within the person-centred approach (PCA) and person-centred therapy (PCT) and takes as its starting point a view of persons as unique, agential beings with the potential for constructive growth and change. This humanistic/existential orientation is non-pathologising, holistic and prioritises a phenomenological orientation in its approach to therapeutic practice. The emphasis in therapy is placed upon the therapeutic relationship to create the conditions within which change can be facilitated, either through the terms of the relationship itself (classical person-centred therapy) or via the use of appropriate techniques designed to facilitate emotional experiencing (process-experiential therapy)

The emphasis on relationships is fundamental to the programme and we view the personal experiences and meanings of the client as being



at the heart of the therapeutic endeavour. We build upon this through the recognition that meanings differ and people may relate to their experiences and define their needs in different ways that may also change over time. This takes us toward a pluralistic perspective, challenging meta-narrative approaches to therapy and the standardisation of one-size-fits-all assumptions. Such a perspective does not represent a disregard of our fundamental humanistic/existential values. Instead it extends these into encompassing a more active, ongoing process of exploration and transparent dialogue with clients about experiencing, their needs, and how these may best be met as part of the therapeutic endeavour. Fundamental to this is the process of psychological formulation.

We see ‘psychological formulation’ as an expansion of our underlying person-centred orientation that allows us to consider therapeutic strategies and activities that lie outwith either classical or process-experiential person-centred ways of working and/or derive from different therapeutic traditions. We think it is most fruitful to work with specific approaches that offer synergies with the person-centred approach while at the same time offering different ways of therapeutic thinking and doing as part of a collaborative therapeutic process.

Our intention is therefore integration through assimilation, maintaining our core humanistic/existential value base while at the same time presenting new and creative therapeutic opportunities in ways that offer a constructive enhancement in what we are able to offer clients.

A key approach for us in this regard is Compassion Focused Therapy (CFT). This approach represents a meshing of cognitive-behavioural and humanistic thinking in encouraging the restructuring of a client’s internal and external relational world. CFT relates well to PCTs understanding of psychological difficulties in a range of ways – philosophically and practically – while offering a range of understandings and clinical techniques that may enhance therapeutic practice in relation to various difficulties. In addition to CFT, the programme explores the



Photo: Our training room

tools and resources offered by Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), again in terms of how these may be assimilated into a coherently integrated therapeutic approach.

To reflect the different traditions, histories and professional contexts we associate with the approaches we are working with, we have termed the therapeutic orientation of the programme as ‘integrative counselling and psychological therapy’. Our emphasis is on professional training and cultivating an ability to work between different contexts and therapeutic philosophies, rather than presenting a single model of therapy as a solution to each and every problem encountered.

Programme modules

Year 1

Introduction to Person Centred Therapy (IPCT) provides a comprehensive introduction to the development and theory of person centred therapy, including its philosophical position, theory of personality and development, theory of therapy, and some contemporary developments in relation to therapeutic practice.

Understanding Therapy (UT) introduces the wider history and development of counselling and psychological therapy, including its theoretical and philosophical underpinnings, some of the developmental and personality theories that relate to it, and some of the key aspects of counselling practice.

Core Skills Practice 1 (CSP1) offers a significant and in-depth introduction to the therapeutic skills necessary to undertake counselling work in a clinical setting. The focus is on person-centred therapeutic skills, including the ability to offer empathy, unconditional positive regard, and remain congruent in the therapeutic encounter.

Managing Therapeutic Relationships 1 (MTR1) provides a framework for developing the skills involved in the establishment, maintenance, and ending of an effective and ethical counselling relationship. This includes a focus on assessment and contracting, building an effective therapeutic alliance, managing ruptures, understanding boundaries, and conducting endings. These skills are explored in an applied way and with reference to working with common mental health presentations.

Contemporary Approaches in Mental Health 1 (CAMH1) explores the wider context of counselling practice, including a focus on the contemporary mental health context, critical perspectives, power, anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice, and the role of evidence and research in supporting good practice.

Personal and Professional Development 1 (PPD1) is designed to support students to develop self-understanding, and support personal reflection and growth as part of their progression towards professional practice. It also focuses on the integration of personal management skills and professional behaviours, as part of becoming a practitioner with an ethical base and the ability to reflect on self in a fluid and open way.

Year 2

Integration in Therapy (IT) focuses on the philosophical basis and models of integration, the history and development of Compassion-Focused Therapy, and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, and their integration into a core person-centred model. This includes their theoretical and philosophical underpinnings, some of the developmental and personality theories that relate to them, and some of the key ways in which therapeutic interventions are created and delivered.

Core Skills Practice 2 (CSP2) offers an introduction to the integration of additional therapeutic skills to enhance counselling work in a clinical setting. The focus is on Compassion-Focused Therapy and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, and the experiential and behavioural interventions these models offer.

Managing Therapeutic Relationships 2 (MTR2) provides a continued framework for developing the skills involved in the establishment, maintenance and ending of an effective and ethical therapeutic relationship. These skills are explored in an applied way and with reference to working with common mental health presentations.

Contemporary Approaches in Mental Health 2 (CAMH2) provides a continued and advanced exploration of the wider context of counselling practice, including a continued focus on contemporary mental health contexts and critical perspectives on features of identity, difference, diversity, privilege and oppression, and the role of evidence and research in supporting good practice.



Personal and Professional Development 2 (PPD2) offers a continued focus on the integration of personal management skills and professional behaviours as part of becoming a practitioner with integrity, an ethical base, and the ability to reflect on self in a fluid and open way. There is a focus on employability and future practice.

Methods of delivery

The teaching programme is delivered via a range of interactive workshops, theory lectures, video/ audio presentations, group discussions and supervision/case analysis.

Skills training is based mainly in small groups using a triad model allowing appropriate skills development and feedback to take place.

Students will engage in group process work (large and small group) on an ongoing basis throughout the programme.

Programme duration and time commitment

The programme will be delivered on a part-time basis over two years, with students undertaking modules with a value of 60 credits per year equivalent to level SQCF 11 (postgraduate level).

The teaching programme is delivered over a 30 week 'year' from October to September:

Intensive weekend teaching

- Saturdays 9.30am-6pm and Sundays 9am-6pm in year 1 (*exact timings to be confirmed)
- Saturdays 10am-6.30pm and Sundays 9.30am-6.30pm in year 2 (*exact timings to be confirmed)
- Saturdays = 7.5 hour teaching days with an hour lunch break, Sundays = 8 hour teaching days with an hour lunch break
- Nine weekends over the year, Oct, Nov, Dec, Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, and Sep.
- Total contact hours: 139.5.

Weekly teaching (online)

- Thursdays 6.45pm-9pm (29 weeks – no Thursday evening teaching during retreat)
- Total contact hours: 72.25

Intensive retreat week (June)

- Monday-Friday 9.30am-5.30pm
- 7 hour teaching days with an hour lunch break
- Total contact hours: 35

600 hours in total per year (1200 hours for the Diploma; 120 credits), achieved via a combination of taught hours and additional independent learning. The programme has been designed to meet the requirements for BACP accreditation which necessitates a minimum of 450 hours of tutor contact time.

Clinical practice

In addition to the above, all students will be required to undertake a minimum of 100 hours of supervised clinical practice over the



Photo: First Psychology Training is nestled in the heart of Georgian Edinburgh, close to the shops and bars in bustling George Street

duration of the programme. Placements will be undertaken within First Psychology's Community Clinic or an associated clinical service.

Placement work will normally start in October of year two and be undertaken by a commitment of four hours a week (normally three to four clients) until completed. Students may be able to arrange additional and external placements should they wish to do so and provided appropriate support is provided as part of the placement arrangements.

All placement work will be subject to the contractual and supervisory requirements of First Psychology Training. Students are not permitted to undertake any placement or clinical activity unless these requirements are fully met and the placement formally agreed by the programme lead. Failure to adhere to this requirement is likely to result in termination of training.

Other requirements

Students will be required to undertake a minimum of 20 hours of personal therapy during the course of the two-year programme.



Photo: Hill Street, Edinburgh – the location of First Psychology Training

They are also expected to complete 20 hours of additional personal development activities, utilising expressive or creative methods, to assist self-development and personal reflection.

Students are also expected to attend a monthly peer support group (online) and undertake a minimum of two personal and professional tutor meetings each year (online or in-person).

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all aspects of the programme with attendance at a minimum of 80% of all taught components per module. All missed teaching must be compensated for in a manner agreed with the programme lead/module leads. Should any student attend fewer than 80% of all taught components per module they will normally be required to suspend their studies and recommence the programme in the following year.

Location

All weekend teaching will take place in our Hill Street centre in Edinburgh, which is centrally located and easy to reach by public transport.

The programme will have an intensive retreat in year 1 that students are expected to attend, and an intensive CPD week in year 2. These will be as below:

Year 1: Perthshire retreat - focusing on the integration of skills acquired over the first year of training and an exploration of personal and professional development in the context of our relationships to the natural and organic world.

Year 2: CPD week, Hill Street, Edinburgh - focusing on the integration of skills acquired over the second year of training and an exploration of personal and professional development in the context of our relationships to culture, communities and interpersonal difference.

Please note: the cost of the retreat including travel and accommodation is not included in the course fee.

Assessment

Assessment on the programme is based on coursework and reports relating to clinical activities, including placement reviews and supervisor reports. Each module has a clear assessment structure designed to ensure that competence is demonstrated in relation to the learning outcomes and at the appropriate level. Methods of assessment include essays, case studies and process reports.

There is no formal written examination although the programme team reserves the right to require an oral (viva) examination linked to any of the modules to further understand and evaluate competence.

An external examiner is involved in overseeing all assessment processes and ensuring these are delivered in a fair and robust manner. There is an independent academic appeals procedure.

Programme management

The programme is led by a programme lead who is responsible for ensuring the quality of all academic and clinical components. They are

supported by a team of tutors who will contribute towards different aspects of programme delivery (theory and practice). An education and training administrator is responsible for all programme administration.

The programme is overseen by a programme management board (PMB) which includes the programme lead, the core tutors, the external examiner, a number of specialist advisers and both the clinical director and deputy clinical director of First Psychology.

Accreditation

The programme has been designed to meet the requirements of British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) programme accreditation, which would allow all graduates to become BACP registered. An application will be made towards this once the first cohort of students has completed all elements of the programme, in line with BACP requirements. In the meantime, students are able to take the BACP Certificate of Proficiency (CoP) designed to support graduates in meeting the requirements for individual registration with the BACP. The CoP is a standardised assessment of the skills, knowledge and abilities required to be a professional counsellor or psychotherapist. This is in line with current BACP process for individuals whose training has not been undertaken on an accredited programme (see www.bacp.co.uk/membership/registered-membership/certificate-of-proficiency/). The programme will offer support to students in preparing for the BACP CoP.

Employability and outcomes

Upon completion of the programme, students will be eligible to apply for employment duties in the third sector, the NHS, occupational health services and in independent practice. Opportunities will also be available to join the First Psychology Advanced Skills Academy in an employed practitioner role.

Fees and costs

Students wishing to start the programme in 2026 will pay an annual fee of £4,500 per year (£9,000 for both years). The course fee includes all teaching, assessment, support and supervision costs (for placements set up by First Psychology).

Additional costs include: a) study materials, books and equipment, b) personal therapy costs, c) accommodation and travel for the retreat (around £300 in year one).

Ways to pay

A non-refundable deposit of £250 must be paid on acceptance of a place on the programme and this is counted towards the year-one fee.

The full fee is payable in a single instalment during enrolment, prior to the commencement of the course. More details of this will be provided at the enrolment stage.

Number of places

There are a maximum of 16 places available each year.

Entry requirements

Prospective students should have the following:

1. An honours degree (2.2 or above) in a related or appropriate discipline and/or significant and demonstrable professional experience commensurate with a graduate level qualification.
2. Prior training in counselling skills to certificate level or related skills/competencies linked to counselling or psychological therapy
3. A deep understanding of the personal and professional demands of working in the mental health field gained through previous experience in a helping role and/or through personal development activities/personal therapy.

How to apply

To apply for the programme, prospective students should complete our online application process, in which the following must be provided:

1. A CV specifying all academic qualifications and relevant professional experience.
2. A 500-word submission explaining how they meet each of the entry requirements above providing a rationale for why they have applied for this professional training programme at this time.
3. An academic or reflective essay (min 1000 words) that they have written in the last three years demonstrating their ability to meet the academic components of the programme.
4. Two references (one must be from an academic/employment background). Please note: these will need to be completed and uploaded as part of the online application.

[Please click here to start your online application process.](#)

If successful at the application stage, prospective students will be called for an interview prior to an offer on the programme being made.

Scan our QR code below to visit our website



Give us a call today on **0131 287 2655**
or visit our website at
www.firstpsychologytraining.co.uk