CERTIFICATE IN COUNSELLING SKILLS

FULL YEAR

HANDBOOK

GCS TRAINING

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ABOUT GCS TRAINING

The Gloucestershire Counselling Service (GCS) was established in 1980 and is the major provider of counselling training services in Gloucestershire. GCS is accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). All counsellors at GCS adhere to and work within the BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions.

GCS has two principal objectives:

- To provide high quality professional counselling at affordable cost to the community of Gloucestershire and its surrounds.
- To provide a programme of professional training in counselling.

Our Counselling Service offers a broad range of direct counselling services in a variety of settings. These services include:

- Adult Counselling Service: Offering confidential counselling to individual adults experiencing personal, emotional, or psychological difficulties. Diploma trainees are offered a placement within our Adult Counselling Service.
- The Child and Family Counselling Service: Counselling for families, children and young people who are experiencing difficulties.
- School Counselling Service: Counselling on school sites for individual pupils.

Our Training Department offers several training programmes. In addition to our introductory trainings in listening and counselling skills, we provide a comprehensive training programme for psychodynamic counsellors. Our training pathway comprises this Certificate, our three-year Diploma in Psychodynamic Counselling and an additional post-diploma programme for counsellors seeking professional registration with organisations such as BACP and BPC.

We also offer training in supervision for qualified practitioners.

COURSE DETAILS

WHO IS THE COURSE FOR?

The certificate year provides a valuable basic training in counselling, techniques with its roots in psychodynamic theory, both for those whose work or voluntary activities involve listening and counselling skills and also for those who may wish to pursue a professional counselling qualification. This year is designed to enhance these skills, develop ways of understanding patterns of human growth and behaviour and increase self-awareness.

COURSE DURATION

The course consists of thirty 3½-hour sessions during the academic year from September to July. Each of the terms consists of 10 sessions which are held at the same time and place each week with breaks for Christmas, Easter and half-terms, plus attendance is required at one Saturday workshop each term. (Please see term dates and venue details)

ELIGIBILITY AND BENEFITS

At the end of the year a Certificate in Counselling Skills is awarded, subject to satisfactory assessment. This certificate is evidence of competence in basic counselling techniques and is an essential entry requirement to the Diploma in Psychodynamic Counselling at GCS, for which there are further selection procedures. This Certificate is also recognised as the basic entry qualification to Diploma training at other training providers throughout the UK. The certificate is not a licence to practice as a counsellor.

TEACHING MATERIAL

All handouts and teaching material will be emailed to you the day before your seminars by the training team, we ask that you print these off or bring an electronic device to access them during the seminars.

COURSE DETAILS - CONTINUED

SEMINARS

Each 3½-hour session will consist of:

1½-hour seminar, led by a Seminar Tutor. In this session there will be theoretical and practical topics covering counselling skills and attitudes. A programme will be given to you at the beginning of each term.

30 minute break (shorter break in Cheltenham)

1½-hour experiential (self-awareness) group held by a group facilitator.
The experiential group provides an environment for the development of self-awareness through interaction with others in the group. The purpose of the group is to explore what is of concern to individual members and the group as a whole in the 'here and now'. It is part of the group's task to identify these concerns and discover how to work with them with the help of the facilitator. This work provides a source of learning about oneself and about group dynamics. The work of the group and the material revealed by individuals is confidential to the group unless there is a risk to self or others.

SATURDAY WORKSHOPS

The Saturday workshops are an integral part of the course and focus on developing counselling techniques and basic listening skills through experiential learning. You will be working in small groups with a tutor. The tutor will offer support and feedback during skills practice throughout the day. The workshops will take place at the main GCS premises in Stroud and trainees will have the opportunity to experience working in a quieter environment within individual counselling rooms.

Attendance is required at 1 Saturday workshop each term. We will allocate your dates at the start of the academic year. It is emphasised that because the Saturday workshops are experiential, it will not be possible to catch up on sessions missed.

Full Workshop Dates
Workshop 1
21st November 2026
Workshop 2
27th February 2027
Workshop 3
19th June 2027

INDICATIVE SEMINAR CONTENT

TERM 1

Counselling skills and the working alliance:

- Listening skills
- Empathic responses
- Non-verbal ways of communicating
- Providing boundaries: the counselling contract
- The working alliance
- Counselling skills practice

TERM 2

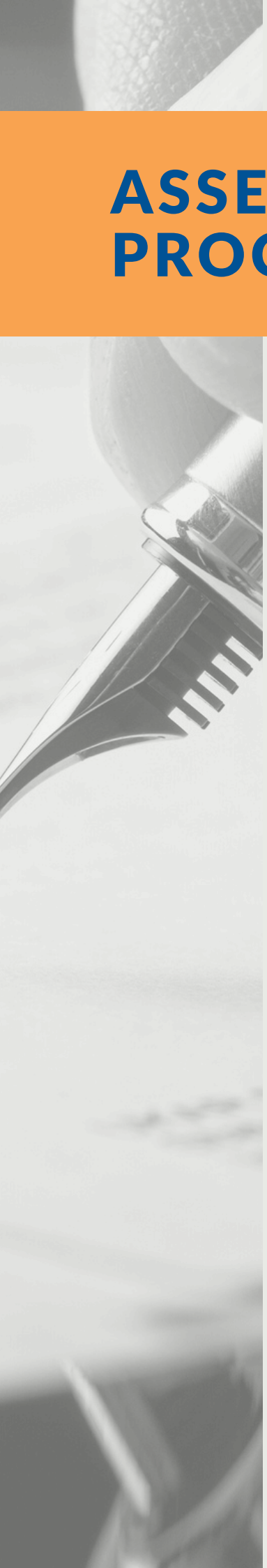
The development of personal identity:

- Birth and infancy; “good enough” mothering
- The Oedipal phase and the latency period
- Puberty and early adolescence
- Late adolescence and early adulthood; separation anxiety
- Unconscious processes and defences
- Counselling skills practice

TERM 3

Further issues of adult life and the application of counselling skills:

- Mid-life
- Old age and death
- Loss and mourning
- Defences and challenging the client
- How should counsellors and listeners look after themselves?
- Sexuality
- Families
- Endings and ending the counselling relationship
- Counselling skills practice



ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

The Certificate in Counselling Skills is awarded through a combination of attendance and the submission of written work that meets the standards expected for studying at this level.

The 'Certificate in Counselling Skills' is awarded in July of the year that the course is completed. Those who are successfully awarded will be invited to join their peers at an Awards evening held in Stroud. The Training Department will inform you of the outcome of your award during the final weeks of the course, by email.

- Confirmation of satisfactory attendance.

Attendance registers are taken at each session. It is required that students attend a minimum of 80% of the sessions. A session consists of both the seminar and experiential group. Please note the Saturday workshops count as 2 sessions.

At GCS we are aware that the demands of life mean you may not be able to attend every week. We ask that each student takes responsibility for their own attendance and notifies training by email as soon as they know they will be unable to attend a session.

- Submission of written work.

Each trainee will be required to write two short essays; 1200 words at the end of the first term and 1800 words at the end of the second term. The subjects and guidelines for completion will be given to you by the seminar tutor at the appropriate points during the first and second terms. Those whose written work does not meet the criteria will be given a chance to speak with their seminar tutor and resubmit their written work. Generative AI must not be used to write or substantially generate the content of either of the two assessed reflective essays. Trainees remain responsible for checking any information or references they use and for ensuring that their work reflects their own learning.

COURSE JOURNAL & READING LIST

COURSE JOURNAL

Each trainee is required to keep a personal journal recording their thoughts, feelings and comments covering the weekly sessions of the course. This journal is private and does not form part of the assessment process but is of great help in enabling the trainee to reflect on the course material, particularly when writing the essays.

READING LIST

A reading list will be given to you at the start of the course. It gives an indication of the books that are recommended reading. Many of the books on the reading list can be borrowed from GCS. Evidence of relevant reading will be of invaluable in constructing your essays.

In Cheltenham your Course Tutor will advise you how to access books. For Stroud trainees, the library is located in the Training room. Please use the sheet in the library to sign out and in any books that you borrow. Books should not be borrowed for more than one month at a time

All books must be returned before the last session of the course; note that books that are not returned will be invoiced for the replacement cost.

SUPPORT FOR TRAINEES

YOUR TUTORS

Your course tutors are accredited, experienced counsellors and psychotherapists. They are all in practice which enables their teaching to be firmly based on experience.

Group facilitators are responsible for the experiential group work. They are accredited and experienced group facilitators and make available to the group members their interpretation of group activity and dynamics. The group facilitators are responsible for the maintenance of boundaries appropriate to this work.

PASTORAL TUTOR

The Pastoral Tutor provides an independent, confidential source of support for trainees. They can offer a space to discuss personal challenges, the impact of training, wellbeing concerns, or any difficulties affecting your learning experience. The Pastoral Tutor is separate from assessment processes and can help trainees identify appropriate support where needed.

PERSONAL THERAPY

During the course you might wish to begin your own personal therapy. Please ask the training team or your tutor for advice, as those planning on applying for the Diploma Course need to be with an approved therapist that meets certain criteria for the training, A list of approved therapists is available.

OFFICE SUPPORT

For all practical course enquiries please contact:
training@gloscounselling.org.uk
This email address is managed by our team of Training Coordinators who will be able to deal with any practical enquires or escalate an issue if required.

TRAINING VENUES

STROUD VENUE

- Facilities for making tea and coffee during the break are available in our small kitchen. We request that hot drinks and food are not taken into the training rooms.

- At Stroud, the administrative office contains confidential information and is kept locked out of office hours. Please be mindful when visiting the Stroud building that it is a busy counselling venue and while staff will endeavour to help they may be busy with other issues. We ask that you keep noise to a minimum when in the kitchen and corridors.

- Entry to the Stroud premises is by an electronic door entry system, students attending courses at Stroud will be informed of the entry code at the first session. This code is changed periodically and you will be informed of these changes. A signing in/out folder is located at the top of the stairs. We request that you sign in and out each time you enter and leave the building to comply with Fire Regulations.

- Fire Precautions: Fire doors and a fire alarm system consisting of smoke detectors and alarm buttons protect the Stroud premises. A fire blanket and extinguisher are held in the kitchen on the first floor and extinguishers are also found on the first and second floors. Students should make themselves familiar with the location of these extinguishers and also the fire alarm buttons. Students will be informed of the procedures at the start of the course.

TRAINING VENUES

CHELTENHAM VENUE

The Cheltenham location will be **The Isbourne Centre, which is at the far end of Wolseley Terrace.**

Please go to Building 4 and ring the buzzer for access.

ADDRESS:
The Isbourne Centre, 2 Wolseley Terrace, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL50 1TH.
https://www.isbourne.org/

ONLINE DIRECTIONS:
https://w3w.co/labels.pinks.runner

Trainees attending the Cheltenham venue will be made familiar with emergency procedures at those premises during the start of the course.

DIRECTIONS - STROUD

Course Location: Alma House, 52/53 High Street, Stroud. GL5 1AP
Contact number: 01453 766 310

How to get to Stroud:

By car from
M5 - Take junction 13 and follow the signs for Stroud along the A419
M4 - Take junction 15 and follow the signs for Cirencester. Then take the A419 towards Stroud just before you get to Cirencester.

By train
The train station is conveniently located and is approximately a 5 minute walk from GCS. For further information call the National Rail Enquiry Line 08457 484950 or go to their website www.nationalrail.co.uk

GCS has the two floors above Costa Coffee which is at the Parliament Street end of the High Street.

Parking is available at the Parliament Street Car Park which is just a few minutes walk away from GCS. Alternative parking can be found at Church Street, the Station and London Road. All day parking in Stroud costs £3 and can be paid using cash, telephone payment or the MiPermit app.

Our blue door is situated in the archway directly opposite the Retreat Pub in Church Street.

COURSE DATES

TERM DATES 2026/27

AUTUMN TERM 1

START OF TERM	29TH SEPTEMBER -CHELTENHAM 30TH SEPTEMBER- STROUD
HALF TERM	26TH -30TH OCTOBER
END OF TERM	8TH DECEMBER - CHELTENHAM 9TH DECEMBER - STROUD

SPRING TERM 2

START OF TERM	12TH JANUARY -CHELTENHAM 13TH JANUARY - STROUD
HALF TERM	15TH - 19TH FEBRUARY
END OF TERM	23RD MARCH - CHELTENHAM 24TH MARCH - STROUD

SUMMER TERM 3

START OF TERM	20TH APRIL -CHELTENHAM 21ST APRIL - STROUD
HALF TERM	24TH - 28TH MAY
END OF TERM	29TH JUNE- CHELTENHAM 30TH JUNE- STROUD

SATURDAY WORKSHOP DATES

Workshop 1 21st November 2026
Workshop 2 27th February 2027
Workshop 3 19th June 2027

COURSE FEES

Costs

Deposit: £250
Course fee (including deposit) for the year 2026-27 £ 1900

Conditions of acceptance
On accepting an offer of a place on the Certificate course, you will be required to pay a registration fee of £250, which is a non-returnable deposit deducted from the course fee. This is a financial contract with the Gloucestershire Counselling Service.

The balance is payable either in full at the start of the course or in termly or monthly payments by Standing Order (including a **£45** surcharge). Your fee agreement form has further details.

In the event of you not taking up an accepted place the registration fee and any other fees already paid are non-refundable.

If you withdraw from the course part way through the year, the full fees for the year are payable.

If GCS asks a student to withdraw from the course the fees paid up to and including that term are non-refundable.

In the event of a student anticipating or experiencing difficulty in meeting financial obligations to GCS, they should contact the Training Coordinators as soon as possible so that a mutually appropriate solution can be sought. An award cannot be made if there are any outstanding fees.

OTHER MATTERS

IT EQUIPMENT

GCS aims to operate an entirely paperless distribution of documentation. We use email to communicate with trainees and share training material. It is therefore important that you have access to IT, email and printing facilities, if you do not then please speak with someone in training.

COMPLAINTS

We work hard to ensure that students have a positive experience of adult learning at GCS. We aim wherever possible for issues to be addressed as locally as possible with the staff you are working directly with. However, we understand that this is not always possible and in the event of you wishing to explore a formal complaint, the training office can supply you with a copy of our Complaint's Procedure.

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OTHER MATTERS

USE OF AI

GCS recognises that Artificial Intelligence (AI), including generative AI tools such as ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot, is increasingly part of everyday life and may offer useful support for learning and communication. However, the development of critical thinking, personal reflection and independent understanding is an important part of the Certificate Course.

All assessed work must represent the trainee's own thinking, reflection and understanding. Generative AI must not be used to write or substantially generate the content of either of the two assessed reflective essays. Trainees remain responsible for checking any information or references they use and for ensuring that their work reflects their own learning.

GCS may use appropriate AI-detection or authorship-checking tools when reviewing assessed work. Such tools will not be used as the sole basis for determining inappropriate AI use. Where concerns arise, a trainee may be asked to discuss their work or explain how it was produced.

PERSONAL DETAILS & EMERGENCY CONTACTS

We ask that you provide some personal details, including 2 people we can contact in case of emergency - these do not need to be your next of kin.

How do I complete the information?

The Personal Details Record Form (PDRF) is an electronic Form held on the Microsoft Forms App.

What do you do with the information I provide?

The information provided is stored within the Microsoft Forms App which is only accessible to Management Office Staff. In preparation for the new academic year, we will export all new information into an excel spreadsheet which is stored within the Management Office Staff group on Sharepoint. We do not share your information and will only use it if necessary.

What if my details change?

Please remember to let us know by email to training@gloscounselling.org.uk

Do I have to provide all the details?

No, your personal information is yours to distribute as you wish. However, please consider what information we would need should you be involved in an emergency.

PRIVACY POLICY

Introduction

At Gloucestershire Counselling Service we take the privacy and security of your person data very seriously. This privacy policy is designed to inform you about how we collect, use, share and protect your personal information when you interact with our services. Your trust is paramount, and we are committed to safeguarding your data and ensuring transparency in how we handle it.

The type of personal information we collect.

We currently collect and process the following information:

- Personal contact details such as name, title, address, telephone numbers and personal email addresses.
- Date of birth.
- Marital status and dependants.
- Next of kin and emergency contact information.
- Information about your race or ethnicity, religious beliefs and sexual orientation.
- Information about your physical and mental health, including any medical condition and medication.
- Information about your income level to establish the cost of counselling.

How we get your personal information and why we have it

Most of the personal information we process is provided to us directly by you

- In order to provide a service to you.
- We also receive personal information indirectly, from the following sources in the following scenarios:
- We are in partnership with Tacklit who host our operating system?
- We may receive information about you from third parties who are referring you to GCS in order to support you.
- We use the information that you have given us to provide a counselling service.
- We may share this information with a referrer organisation.

Under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), the lawful bases we rely on for processing this information are:

- Processing of your data is necessary for a contract we have with you and/or with a third party (as set out above) or because you have asked us to take specific steps for you before entering into a contract.
- Processing is necessary for Gloucestershire Counselling Service legitimate interests or the legitimate interests of a third party, unless there is a good reason to protect the individual's personal data which overrides those legitimate interests.

PRIVACY POLICY

How we store your personal information

Your information is held securely either within the GCS secure IT system and with our system provider or in locked filing cabinets. Access to the information is limited to staff whose job role requires access. We do not store credit/debit card details, nor do we share financial information with third parties. **We keep all personal information which we hold about you for a period of seven years from the end of our service to you. We will then dispose of your information by confidentially disposing of it or deleting it from our computer server.**

Your data protection rights

Under data protection law, you have rights including:

- Your right of access - You have the right to ask us for copies of your personal information.
- Your right to rectification - You have the right to ask us to rectify personal information you think is inaccurate. You also have the right to ask us to complete information you think is incomplete.
- Your right to erasure - You have the right to ask us to erase your personal information in certain circumstances.
- Your right to restriction of processing - You have the right to ask us to restrict the processing of your personal information in certain circumstances.
- Your right to object to processing - You have the right to object to the processing of your personal information in certain circumstances.
- Your right to data portability - You have the right to ask that we transfer the personal information you gave us to another organisation, or to you, in certain circumstances.

Subject Access Request:

You are not required to pay any charge for exercising your rights. If you make a request, we have one month to respond to you. You have the right to request access to information that we hold about you. To make such a request, please contact us at sar@gloscounselling.org.uk

How to complain

If you have any concerns about our use of your personal information, you can make a complaint by emailing; complaint@gloscounselling.org.uk
Write to: Alma House, 52-53 Hight Street, Stroud, GL5 1AP

You can also complain to the ICO if you are unhappy with how we have used your data.
The ICO's address: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Cheshire, SK9 5AF
Helpline number: 0303 123 1113
ICO website: https://www.ico.org.uk