Level 4 Diploma in Restorative Practice

Wendy Freshman
The Mediation 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.

"I wanted the Mediation Service to be considered as a professional organisation with fully trained staff and volunteers, or unpaid professionals."

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 informtion about the Register can be found at **www.restorativejustice.org.uk**

This case study explores Wendy's journey as a candidate working towards the Level 4 Diploma in Restorative Practice. Wendy is the Chief Executive Officer at The Mediation Service which is based in Kent. The Service provides a range of mediation services for communities in Canterbury, Thanet and East Kent. The Mediation Service works with Kent Police, the Probation Service, HM Prison Service, Youth Offending Service, local authorities and Community Safety Partnerships.

Wendy was registered as a candidate with Kent Police's assessment centre. The Kent roll out has involved several different organisations that provide restorative services. These include Kent Police, Kent Safe Schools and a range of mediation services based in the county.

Wendy stated that it is becoming increasingly difficult to secure funding and that the Diploma was ultimately viewed from a commissioning basis in terms of providing an opportunity to demonstrate the professionalism of the organisation.

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Working with the assessor
Wendy describes her experience of working with the assessor as 'excellent'. The assessor had good effective questioning techniques as well excellent knowledge and expertise in the field. He was able to help Wendy identify her client base to pinpoint evidence for her portfolio.

"It's been excellent, I must say he has been excellent, he knew his way round the portfolio better than I did."

Evidence
Wendy worked on a complex case that involved a death by a drunk driver and facilitated a face to face meeting as part of the restorative process. She used the experience of this case as evidence for the Diploma. Such serious cases where the restorative process was delivered in a prison setting are excellent examples for demonstrating competency.

Outcomes
The experience of working towards the Diploma has meant that Wendy has learnt new things in order to complete some of the units. This highlighted how important the role of the assessor is and the need for he/she to be fully competent in using restorative processes in order to carry out the role.

Wendy's benefits of undertaking the qualification

- **On a personal level** – recognition for the work she has been doing for many years and have an expert in the field to oversee her work. It has also made her self-assess her own practice.

- **On a team level** – it provides reassurance to the rest of the team that their manager has a qualification in Restorative Practice and is fully competent in what she is doing.

  "This all helps with funding bids, tendering etc, which ultimately benefits them as employees of the service."

- **For the employer** – reinforces the view that The Mediation Service is a professional organisation, capable to deliver restorative processes and with systems in place for staff and volunteers to gain a qualification.

  "For my organisation the Diploma demonstrates that I'm proficient and somebody else has looked at my practice and deemed me competent in what I do. It would be brilliant if everyone had the Diploma."

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**

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