Level 4 Diploma in Restorative Practice

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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.

"Working towards the Diploma has reminded me of why I am so passionate about restorative justice. It has given me an excellent opportunity to self-reflect as well as question and improve my practice."

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**

Heather has both worked towards the Diploma as a candidate and trained to become an assessor. She is employed by Kent County Council's Safe Schools initiative which runs a range of programmes designed to offer support to ensure the physical and emotional well-being of children and young people. Kent Safe Schools work with schools to develop restorative approaches through direct restorative work with children and young people, training for professionals and development of school processes to support a restorative culture. Heather's role involves providing support to schools in embedding restorative approaches.

Heather has found that working towards the Diploma has increased her confidence and validated her skills. In one case, she was required to act as a facilitator for a dispute between two staff members at a school. The unit 'Facilitate participants' interaction within a restorative process', which includes skills and knowledge relating to facilitating face-to-face meetings, was very helpful and increased her confidence in this area. This helped her to tackle the problem effectively.

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Heather felt that it was difficult sometimes to be both a candidate working towards the Diploma and training as an assessor at the same time. There were occasions when she had trouble remembering which hat she had on. She thought that the trainee assessors would have benefited from more training. But overall Heather was extremely positive about her own experience with her assessor. She felt that the question and answer sessions were very helpful in the process of decision making and provided a great opportunity for self-reflection and validation of skills.

Heather's benefits of undertaking the qualification

- **On a personal level** – Heather has found that working towards the Diploma has given her the chance to reflect and improve on her performance.

- **On a team level** – Heather's increased confidence has meant that she can take the lead in embedding restorative practices into the team. It is helpful for the team to realise that the Diploma is nationally recognised and validates the importance of the work they do.

- **For the employer** – Kent Safe Schools' involvement with the Diploma has increased credibility of the work that is delivered to schools. Heather says: "In these financially difficult times, schools and agencies want assurance that they are getting not just value but quality for their money". The Diploma will provide a mark of quality that will make Heather's employer more competitive in the restorative practice training arena.

Challenges

The Diploma includes skills and knowledge relating to carrying out face-to-face meetings but in an education setting such meetings are rarely as formal as with a restorative justice conference. Heather says "... we had to think a little bit out of the box and it is certainly about being creative. It's about evidencing all the day-to-day restorative practices and demonstrating an understanding of why they are effective". Heather works restoratively when working with young people, teachers, parents and colleagues and undertaking this qualification has allowed her to truly see the benefits of working in this way.

As this project involved the first candidates working towards the Diploma, there is little guidance about what evidence is suitable. Heather felt that it would be useful to know what a completed portfolio would look like.

Outcomes

Most of Heather's restorative work is of an informal nature. The Diploma asks candidates to evidence that they are competent in facilitating more formal, complex restorative conferences. Heather found this was a very helpful exercise to sharpen her skills.

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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