Level 4 Diploma in Restorative Practice

Jemma Jewkes
HMP Gloucester

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've had to set deadlines to make sure the candidates start and get it done so there has been some organisational and motivational support needed, but once I'd done that they [the candidates] got on with it and delivered to a high standard."

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**

Jemma is a prison officer and the Restorative Justice co-ordinator for Gloucester. Her role involves the day-to-day management of the Restorative Justice project in the prison, development of projects across the county, and the supervision of volunteers involved in the project. After hearing about the Diploma from the Restorative Justice Council, Jemma was keen for HMP Gloucester to become involved in the roll out.

Jemma has trained to become an assessor for the Diploma and has worked with eight candidates who are working towards the Diploma. All eight candidates are volunteers who carry out restorative processes, including conferencing, within the prison or the local community. The volunteers identify cases, complete face-to-face assessments and preparation, facilitate conferences and follow-up any outcomes agreed.

Jemma initially worked with two candidates. This gave her the opportunity to learn and practice assessment processes. She then was more confident to work with a larger number of candidates.

Restorative Justice Council

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Jemma sees two key benefits of the Diploma: career progression for volunteers and that the Diploma gives a badge of professionalism. She says:

> *"it was all about them evidencing what they were doing. It was important to enable our volunteers to formally demonstrate their competence and for us to show to other agencies how skilled the volunteers are. This would give them both work experience and a qualification which would help them if they were looking for future employment."*

Jemma is extremely positive about the Diploma and its potential benefits. It operates as a baseline for skills competency and is assessed to a very high standard. However, she is cautious about the potential cost to organisations.

Good Practice

Jemma attended an initial meeting run by Bristol Youth Offending Team (the assessment centre) for all assessors and candidates. She found this really useful as it was a chance for everyone to get together and gave her the opportunity to ask questions about areas she was unsure of.

Her experience of working with candidates has been very good. The candidates have also been supportive as Jemma works towards her assessor qualification.

Whilst Jemma has had some queries about how much evidence is required for the Diploma, she points out that the volunteers could find evidence for the Diploma through the restorative activities they regularly carry out.

Jemma has noted that there areas where the Diploma experience can be improved, for example, guidance is required to understand the Diploma process. A step-by-step guide with a clear definition of roles would be useful.

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**