

AN INSPECTOR CALLS – ON RESIDENTIAL REHAB

The Centre for Addiction Treatment Studies opened in April to meet the needs of a field where demand for counselling skills is escalating quicker than the development of skills. Deirdre Boyd got a preview of its curriculum.

Working in collaboration with the University of Bath, Clouds' professional education, training and research department was the first UK charity to offer a 'foundation degree' course in addictions counselling, and the first to offer a BSc (Hons) in addictions counselling as a top-up to the foundation degree. Now part of Action on Addiction, the courses have developed to the extent that a dedicated building in which to teach them has been acquired. It officially opened its doors in April as the Centre for Addiction Treatment Studies.

"Research has shown that a persons' chance of recovery is greatly improved when staff are well trained and knowledgeable about addiction issues. Arming counsellors with these skills will help us achieve our vision of people free from addiction," explained joint CEOs Nick Barton and Lesley King-Lewis.

Students and training faculty transitioned smoothly to the new centre, remaining under the direction of Tim Leighton, so that the first wave of students has now graduated from the BSc (Honours) degree.

"Why accept a workforce which is not properly trained? We must foster senior workers, including by making available degrees for senior practitioners," Leighton (*photo above*) enthused.

CURRICULUM.

The foundation degree at the Centre for Addiction Treatment Studies – CATS – combines classroom education with work placements. Graduates should emerge with knowledge and skills to enable them to work in a variety of addiction-treatment settings.

"It is specifically about counselling, be it substance users or their families," said Leighton. "The curriculum of professional development must be of the quality now expected in psychology or social work."

The CATS 'foundation degree' is not the same as the familiar phrase 'foundation course'. The latter is usually seen as a route into university but the foundation degree is a "fully pukka"



university degree, the only difference to standard ones being that it is shorter and combines academic with work-based learning.

The foundation degree takes two years of study full time or four years part time. It can be topped up to a BSc Hons by adding another year full time or two years part time study.

"If all your study is part time, it can take six years, which is quite long," Leighton said. "So we are developing more user-friendly pathways for people with experience, awarding credits for prior learning and experience. These will still be more degree than 'grandparenting' in nature. Some people with expertise could enter halfway through the foundation degree or go straight into the Honours one."

He is also planning 'standalone' units for professional education. For example, one training module could be cognitive behavioural therapy.

The curriculum is constantly evolving because "new evidence of what works is emerging all the time," Leighton stated.

So what does the training cover? It is in three stages, the first of which is divided into 10 units.

Unit 1: Context of alcohol in society, problems and responses.

Units 2-3: Using your skills in an addiction-counselling context. Time-limited counselling. How to work with other professionals, and how to work in groups.

Unit 4: Diversity.

Unit 5: Harm reduction.

Unit 6: Assessment and treatment planning.

Unit 7: 12 steps and social support.

Unit 8: Importance of group therapy.

Units 9-10: Work placements.

The second stage of training is a "hybrid". It first covers therapeutic tools such as motivational interviewing, cognitive therapy, relapse prevention, dual diagnosis and family systems. It is followed by work-based learning.

In the third and final stage, students must prepare a client case study, bringing together all the above. For example, they must link each of their own remarks to the client to the relevant therapeutic method.

The Honours degree develops MI, CT and group therapies. Students start to rate each other rather than themselves. They learn research methods and undertake a research project, usually qualitative. They are introduced to management issues, such as finance and recruitment – which gives them insight and understanding of their employers' management and funding issues. They are also given coaching for interviews.

STAFF

Tim Leighton is director of CATS and Derrick Anderson is deputy director. The senior tutor is Trevor Smith, complemented by tutors Devin Ashwood, Lorraine Parry and Ursula Sunderland. Administrators are Carol Driver and Patsy Ford.

WHO STUDIES?

Treatment centres use CATS in two ways: they can accept students as work placements in their

Learning to help people recover from addiction/dependency: full-time year-2 and part-time year-4 students. They were photographed on their last training day on 6 March so were filled with excitement, relief – and a bit of anxiety as they complete the last of their assignments. Left to right are: Rachel Smalley, Gemma Fairfield, Wyn Owen, Vanessa Beckford, Mark Cuss (behind pillar), Jo Banks, tutor Trevor Smith, Jill Yeo, Nick Frankel, Sean Jeffreys, Sharon Truscott, deputy director Derrick Anderson, Jax Beatty, Rosie Byrne, CEO Nick Barton (behind Byrne), tutor Lorraine Parry, Janet Dawes, Shay Macaulley, Gez Entwistle, administrator Carol Driver and Patrick Douglas-Hamilton.



organisation, and they can send existing staff to study part time.

Depending on schedules, you will see at the centre a mix of first- to fourth-year students, and those on newly-created shorter courses. Most attendees are new, entry-level students but more senior people, such as doctors, are arriving.

FACILITIES.

The Centre for Addiction Treatment Studies has three classrooms, well supplied with audio-visual equipment for interactive teaching, including digital video cameras, audio recording equipment, VCRs and DVD players and LCD projectors. In the courses on counselling skills, for instance, students can create and critique DVD recordings of their performance, to assess and improve their skills.

There are six computers with internet access for students' use, and a reprographics service, including photocopying and laser printing. Wireless broadband is also in the classroom and other study areas. There is a library with multiple copies of key texts and several hundred books which can be loaned to students in residence.

There are 14 bedrooms for students, all with broadband – these are available at the best rate I have seen. There is also a large kitchen.

Warminster station is a few minutes away by car, and CATS staff can pick arriving passengers from the station, by advance arrangement.

The Centre for Addiction Treatment Studies is at the Manor House Ash Walk BA12 8PY.

STUDY TIPS FROM STUDENTS AT THE END OF THEIR SECOND FULL-TIME YEAR, FOURTH PART-TIME YEAR AND HONOURS FULL- AND PART-TIME YEARS

“After all this time and angst looking for a magical system, I have arrived at embracing this one:

1. Quickly scan ‘to do’ list – assignments due in etc. Don’t worry about finding the optimal one task; just pick one that needs doing, for which I have the energy and interest at that time; take no more than five minutes to decide.
2. Stick with that task until 100% complete – ignore children and friends (joke, well...)
3. Return to step 1 and repeat.
4. Keep a flow of action going and the load stays lighter, stop and I’m in trouble. Too much pondering and planning gets me nowhere.

Shame I worked this out at the end of my course!”

Jax, full-time FD year-2 student

“What has helped me is planning-in a whole day or weekend when I can put my whole attention to an assignment. When I’ve done this on starting a new assignment, it has allowed me to get a good grasp on the topic, then do smaller bite-sizes of work. Also, having a reward is important, so I plan time to do something I enjoy – such as going to the gym, having a sauna or going for a meal

– when I’ve stuck to my schedule and met the target I set for myself. Finally, I worked in close partnership with my tutor, more so last year when I was struggling to motivate myself. He taught me to focus on one topic at a time, plan ahead, set realistic deadlines and praise my efforts.”

Vanessa, part-time FD year-4 student

“Two thirds of work is to begin it.”

Wyn, full-time FD year-2 student

“I spent so much time and energy thinking and worrying about studying that I didn’t actually get around to doing any studying! My tip is to stop thinking about it and just do it.”

Jo, full-time FD year-2 student

“If you’ve got a 2,000-word essay and three-week deadline, do 200 words a night and you’ll finish with a week plus to spare.”

Steve, Honours student)

“Try not to get behind with assignments – plan your work and then work your plan. View all experiences that don’t go well as an opportunity to learn and develop.”

David, Honours student