Southwest
Psychotherapy & Counselling
Alliance

Certificate in Therapeutic Relationship Information

Training in Counselling and Psychotherapy

Integrative training with a relational Transactional Analysis focus

2026–27

Southwest Psychotherapy & Counselling Alliance

www.swpcalliance.co.uk

Contents

Page 3. Welcome

Page 4. Our approach

Page 5. Certificate courses (Level 4)

Page 7. How to apply

Page 8. Dates, fees and contact

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in training with Southwest Psychotherapy & Counselling Alliance (Southwest Alliance). We offer a staged route into counselling and psychotherapy, from a two-day introduction through to professional qualification and registration.

Southwest Alliance continues and develops a longstanding programme of counselling and psychotherapy training previously based at Iron Mill College in Exeter and Poole. The Transactional Analysis (TA) and psychotherapy trainings were founded by Julie Hewson in the early 1980s and continued with Briony Nicholls and Karen Minikin from 2012. Our current team brings that continuity of experience together with the opportunity to shape a distinct learning community with its own identity, governance and values.

Psychotherapy training is demanding as well as rewarding. It brings together academic learning, experiential participation, personal reflection, supervised clinical practice and personal therapy. We aim to offer a learning environment that is both stimulating and supportive, where challenge is held alongside respect, curiosity, dialogue and professional responsibility.

Whether you are curious about TA for your own development, want to use it in your current work, or are considering a career as a counsellor or psychotherapist, this prospectus explains the options and how to take your first step.

All of our psychotherapy training is UKCP accredited and meets the UKCP Standards in Education and Training.

UKCP
UK Council for Psychotherapy

Our approach

Relational, integrative and grounded in Transactional Analysis

Transactional Analysis, founded by Eric Berne, developed from psychoanalytic roots while seeking a more open, collaborative and accessible way of understanding psychological life and change. Its emphasis on contracts, understandable language and the active participation of the client remains central to our teaching.

Our psychotherapy training is integrative, with a strong foundation in contemporary relational TA and psychodynamic thinking. As training progresses, students engage with attachment, transference and countertransference, developmental and trauma-informed perspectives, and relational and intersubjective theories.

Thinking about people in context

We place relationship at the heart of psychotherapy and of training. We encourage students to think interpersonally and systemically, and to understand psychological experience in relation to personal history and to social, cultural, economic and political contexts. This includes critical attention to power, privilege, oppression and marginalisation, and to the ways professional knowledge is constructed.

An adult learning community

Our groups are no larger than 12, and students bring substantial life experience, professional knowledge and different social locations to the room. Learning takes place through teaching, reading, discussion, skills practice, reflection, supervision, feedback and attention to group process. We value:

- respect for difference and plurality
- curiosity rather than premature certainty
- the capacity to give and receive thoughtful feedback
- responsibility for one's own learning and professional conduct
- willingness to remain in dialogue when perspectives differ.

Certificate courses (Level 4)

Our Certificate courses are year-long trainings in their own right, suitable for personal and professional development and for anyone wishing to apply psychological ideas in their work. They are entry routes to our Diploma training at Levels 5–7.

Certificate in the Therapeutic Relationship, (TA Focus)

This course offers a foundation in TA and integrative approaches, with experiential learning and counselling/psychotherapy skills. It is particularly suited to those wishing to continue into integrative counselling and/or psychotherapy training. The programme covers the key areas of therapeutic relating, including:

- fundamentals of therapeutic relating
- child development and personal history
- parental introjects, social influences and culture
- scripts: personal, cultural and organisational
- time structuring and attachment theory
- schools of TA, paradigms and endings
- TA and group dynamics
- skills practice in counselling and psychotherapy
- options weekend and a placement intensive to prepare for clinical work.

How you are assessed

- two written assignments of 3,000 words
- a 20-minute end-of-year presentation on an aspect of theory that speaks to you personally
- two individual tutorials, usually online
- a personal learning journal
- at least 80% attendance, including the first and last weekends.

Personal therapy is recommended, rather than required, during the Certificate year.

> **Format:** 10 weekends, September to July
> **Times:** Saturdays 09:30–16:30; Sundays 09:30–16:00
> **Venue:** Wellington or Exeter
> **Next start:** September 2027
> **Fee:** £2,900

Who the Certificate courses are for

The Certificates are open to people interested in psychological ideas in their work, study or personal life. To join, you will need to:

- complete a TA101 or Integrative 101 (ideally before starting, or during the Certificate year)
- show a capacity to engage with psychological theories
- show a capacity for self-awareness and reflection
- be motivated to learn in a group
- have some relevant life experience.

Completing a Certificate does not in itself qualify you to practise. For students who wish to go on to a voluntary counselling placement, the tutor provides a reference confirming they have demonstrated the necessary skills.

How to apply

1. **Start with a short course.** We recommend attending a TA101 or Integrative 101 first. This helps you decide whether you would like to train further with us.
2. **Apply online.** Complete the application form on our website. Your personal statement should outline your reasons for training and your hopes for the future. You will also be asked for two referees, one of whom should know you in a professional capacity.
3. **Interview.** If there seems to be a good fit between your aspirations and our training, we will invite you to an interview, in person or online, usually with two members of our team. Selection is a two-way process: it is a chance for you to ask questions as well as for us to get to know you.
4. **Offer.** Successful applicants are offered a place subject to satisfactory references.

Applications normally close three weeks before the course start date.

Recognition of prior learning

If you have already completed relevant training elsewhere, such as a TA Foundation course, a counselling diploma or a related professional qualification, you may be able to join at a later stage. We will ask for evidence such as syllabi, marked work and feedback, attendance records, clinical hours and references, and will consider the level, content, relevance and recency of your learning. Where there are gaps, we aim to offer a developmental pathway towards qualifying.

Dates, fees and contact

Course	Next start	Fee
TA101	January 2027	£195
Certificate in the Therapeutic Relationship, (TA Focus)	September 2027	£2,900
Advanced Diploma in Psychotherapy	September 2027	£3,300

Fees cover tuition. Students also need to budget for personal therapy, supervision, professional memberships and any placement costs.

Get in touch

We are happy to talk with you about which course might suit you, or about joining at a later stage.

Southwest Psychotherapy & Counselling Alliance

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Email: admin@swpcalliance.co.uk

Information in this prospectus is correct at the time of publication and may be updated. Full requirements are set out in our General Handbook and year-specific learning guides.