Southwest
Psychotherapy & Counselling
Alliance

Advanced Diploma in Psychotherapy Prospectus

Training in Counselling and Psychotherapy

Integrative training with a relational Transactional Analysis focus

2026–27

Southwest Psychotherapy & Counselling Alliance

www.swpcalliance.co.uk

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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.

Your training journey at a glance

Each stage can be taken on its own or as a step towards the next. You can stop at any point with a recognised award or continue through to qualification as a counsellor and/or psychotherapist. Psychotherapy training from the start of the Advanced Diploma to qualification normally takes four – six years.

Stage	Level	What it offers	Outcome
TA101 or Integrative 101	Intro	Two-day introduction to core theory and our way of working.	TA101: internationally recognised certificate
Certificate in the Therapeutic Relationship (TA Focus)	4	A year of integrative and TA theory, experiential learning and therapeutic skills.	Level 4 Certificate; preparation for Diploma training
ADP One	5	Integrative relational training; placement, supervision and personal therapy begin.	Progression to ADP Two
ADP Two	6	Wider psychotherapy theory: attachment, neuroscience, transference and research.	Progression to ADP Three; option of Counselling Diploma
Diploma in Counselling (optional)	6	Case study and viva.	Qualified counsellor (BACP/NCPS, SCoPED Column A)
ADP Three	7	Integration of theory, clinical practice, reflexivity and professional identity.	Progression to qualification stage
Qualification / dissertation stage	7	Case study dissertation, professional requirements and viva.	Advanced Diploma; UKCP registration as a psychotherapist
CTA pathway (optional)	Intl	Additional EATA/ITAA requirements and examination.	Certified Transactional Analyst (Psychotherapy)

Advanced Diploma in Psychotherapy (Levels 5 to 7)

The Advanced Diploma in Psychotherapy (ADP) is our professional psychotherapy training. It is integrative, with a relational Transactional Analysis focus, and is designed, assessed and accredited at Level 7. Successful completion leads to registration with the UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) through Southwest Alliance as a UKCP Organisational Member.

Year	Focus
ADP One Level 5	Beginning integrative relational training alongside placement experience, supervised clinical work and personal therapy. Teaching includes different approaches in TA, psychotherapy, ethics, supervision and socio-political context.
ADP Two Level 6	The wider realm of psychotherapy theory and practice, drawing on attachment, neuroscience, transference and countertransference, and research.
ADP Three Level 7	Integration of theory, clinical practice, reflexivity, identity and professional competence.
Qualification stage	A case study dissertation (11,000 words), mental health familiarisation, a portfolio of evidence and a viva, leading to UKCP registration.

Each year is assessed through written assignments, presentations and engagement in group learning and group process, with criteria that deepen from Level 5 to Level 7. Teaching takes place over ten weekends per year.

Who the ADP is for

The ADP is open to students who have completed one of our Certificate courses, or equivalent training, and who are personally and professionally ready to begin supervised clinical practice. As well as academic potential, we look for:

Capacity	What we look for
Relational	Respectful engagement, mutual interest, openness to difference and capacity to participate in a learning group.
Reflective	Ability to notice personal process, receive feedback, reflect on experience and tolerate uncertainty.
Professional and ethical	Awareness of boundaries, responsibility, confidentiality, competence and professional standards.
Learning	Ability to engage with theory, written work, experiential learning, feedback and independent study.
Readiness for clinical practice	Capacity to work within limits, use supervision and engage safely with clients at the appropriate stage of training.

Applicants who have trained elsewhere can apply for **recognition of prior learning** (see How to apply).

Further qualifications

Diploma in Counselling (Level 6)

From the end of ADP Two, students can choose to qualify as a counsellor while continuing their psychotherapy training. We offer a **Level 6 Diploma in Counselling Using TA** or a **Level 6 Diploma in Integrative Counselling**.

- 150 supervised client hours and 80 hours of personal therapy
- a 5,000-word case study and a viva
- leads to registration as a qualified counsellor with BACP or NCPS (SCoPED Column A); BACP registration also requires the BACP Certificate of Proficiency.

Once qualified, and with the agreement of their tutor and supervisor, students may begin to build a private practice while completing their psychotherapy training.

Certified Transactional Analyst (CTA)

Certification as a Transactional Analyst in the field of psychotherapy is an internationally recognised qualification, awarded through the European or International TA Associations (EATA/ITAA). The teaching, supervision and personal development completed during the ADP cover the CTA training requirements, and the UKCP case study can form one section of the CTA written examination.

Additional requirements include 500 hours of clinical practice (including group or couples work), 250 hours of applied TA, a 24,000-word written examination and an oral examination with three recordings. Southwest Alliance supports students preparing for both UKCP registration and the CTA.

What training involves

Becoming a psychotherapist involves much more than attending teaching. Alongside the course itself, students on the Advanced Diploma commit to the following.

Requirement	What this means
Attendance	At least 80% of teaching, with particular importance on the first and last weekends of each year.
Tutorials	Two individual tutorials each year to review progress and learning.
Personal therapy	Weekly, face-to-face therapy with a suitably qualified relational therapist: at least 40 hours a year, totalling at least 160 hours by qualification.
Clinical placement	Supervised work with adult clients in an approved placement, starting gradually with one client. Students need to be seeing clients before progressing to ADP Two.
Supervision	At least fortnightly, at a minimum ratio of one hour of supervision to six client hours, including monthly supervision with a UKCP-registered psychotherapist.
Clinical hours	A minimum of 450 supervised client hours for UKCP registration (150 for the Counselling Diploma).
Membership	Student membership of Southwest Alliance, which confirms your status as a UKCP trainee. Membership of other TA and professional bodies is encouraged.

We recognise that neurodiversity, disability and other personal or contextual factors may affect how learning and assessment are accessed. Reasonable adjustments are considered individually. Please talk to us at any stage about what would help.

Our teaching team

Our tutors are experienced practitioners, supervisors and trainers. Many hold teaching and supervising qualifications in Transactional Analysis and are registered with UKCP, BACP or NCPS.

Tutor	Background
Karen Minikin	TSTA (Psychotherapy), UKCP reg., NCPS Snr Accred. Director of Southwest Alliance; co-editor of the Transactional Analysis Journal and Psychotherapy and Politics International. Supervision practice in Wellington, Somerset.
Briony Nicholls	TSTA (Psychotherapy), UKCP reg. Former Head of TA Psychotherapy at Iron Mill College. Practice in Oxford and Teignmouth.
Jane Kibblewhite	PTSTA (Psychotherapy), UKCP reg. Also an HCPC-registered occupational therapist. Practice in Bath.
Rosie Harris	PTSTA (Psychotherapy), UKCP reg. Practice in Exeter.
Victoria Strowger	PTSTA and CTA (Psychotherapy), UKCP reg. Practice in Falmouth, Cornwall.
Siân Rivers	PTSTA and CTA (Counselling and Education). Practice in Kingsbridge, Devon.
Amanda Bradley	PTSTA, UKCP reg., MSc Psychotherapy; EMDR therapist. Practice in West London.
Sally Dyer	BACP-accredited psychotherapist, supervisor and trainer.
Charlotte Lucas	TA psychotherapist, supervisor and teacher.
Nick Williams	Relational psychotherapist and supervisor, London.
Christopher Elcombe	CTA, UKCP-registered psychotherapist, London.

Full biographies are available in our General Handbook and on our website.

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

11 Fore Street, Wellington, TA21 8AA

Website: www.swpcalliance.co.uk

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.