Master of Arts in Creative Psychotherapy and Play Therapy

This is the first accredited programme of its kind here in Ireland to offer a comprehensive, experiential training in Play Therapy as part of a fully professionally recognised MA qualification as a Psychotherapist with a major emphasis on the practice of Play Therapy. Our focus on younger clients is unique in a humanistic and integrative psychotherapy training, as is our intense focus on utilising creative, action methods that bring neuroscientific learning and interpersonal neurobiological concepts into the heart of developmentally appropriate clinical practice. Our MA graduates are ideally placed to work as psychotherapists with children and young people presenting with emotional difficulties that may be mild or severe in nature. Having achieved the dual qualifications, they practice as psychotherapists specialising in play therapy. This course incorporates both professional and academic training. Graduates of the four-year programme are eligible for professional accreditation as a psychotherapist and play therapist with the Irish Association for Play Therapy and Psychotherapy (IAPTP). The MA is awarded by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). The MA has also been awarded course recognition by the European Association for Psychotherapy (EAP) for core psychotherapy training courses. The course is also a recognised course of the Irish Association for Play Therapy and Psychotherapy (IAPTP) and by the European Association for Integrative Psychotherapy (EAIP). Graduates are eligible to be awarded the European Certificate in Integrative Psychotherapy.

The **Children's Therapy Centre** (CTC) is the longest established and foremost provider of professional play therapy and humanistic & integrative child psychotherapy training and CPD courses in Ireland and has been delivering specialised training since the 90's. We have approved quality assurance standards with QQI and we are a registered third level educational institute. We are also an APT approved provider of play therapy training – the only one approved to deliver training in Ireland. In addition, CTC is recognised as a European Accredited Psychotherapy Training Institute (EAPTI) by the EAP and our course is also recognised by the European Association of Integrative Psychotherapy making MA graduates immediately eligible to receive the European Certificate in Psychotherapy.

QQI replaced the National Qualification Authority of Ireland (NQAI), The Further Education and Training Awards Council of Ireland (FETAC), and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) in November 2012. It also took over functions of the Irish Universities Quality Board.

See Paris Goodyear-Brown's Ted Talk on Play Therapy to see how play therapy as practiced by psychotherapists with a specialisation in play therapy can help children who have been traumatised.

Introduction to the course

This is a four-year part-time experiential and eclectic child and adolescent psychotherapy training with theoretical, practical and skills development components. It is made up of two distinct stages: the first two years comprise the play therapy programme and forms the basis for the final two-year component which leads to the psychotherapy award. All 4 years are structured in a way that builds on prior learning so as to develop the necessary personal characteristics, skills and competence and acquire the depth and breath of knowledge that is core to the formation of a psychotherapist. There are clear distinctions between the professional roles of play therapists and psychotherapists, mainly linked to the fact that psychotherapists are mental health professionals. The title of psychotherapist is one of the protected titles currently in the process of becoming subject to CORU regulation and practitioner registration.

We utilise role-play, small and large group work, lectures, presentations, discussions, creative activities, etc. This course is designed for mature students who wish to engage in training in the use of creative interventions and approaches, therapeutic play, play therapy, child psychotherapy, counselling and psychotherapy. Great emphasis is put on personal development and experiential learning, skills development, supervised clinical practice, utilising action methods, active imagination, and on working in accordance with a clear theoretical framework. Core play therapy, counselling and psychotherapy trainers, and clinical supervisors, all meet the required standards for professional and academic training. Course content pays particular attention to humanistic and integrative approaches, the psychotherapy process with children and adolescents, neurobiology, and to trauma issues. Neurobiologically informed psychotherapists take a neuroscientific perspective and are mindful of the biology of attachment and arousal. Such knowledge is used to inform clinical decision-making. In addition to ongoing clinical training, a research project with relevance to the field of psychotherapy is completed in the final year.

Play therapy is a developmentally sensitive therapeutic modality in which a trained play therapist uses the therapeutic powers of play to help children prevent or resolve psychosocial difficulties and achieve optimal growth and development. Play therapy is relationship based – the power of the therapy comes from the strength of the relationship between the Play Therapist and the child.

> "*Children must be approached and understood from a developmental perspective. They must not be viewed as miniature adults. Their world is one of concrete realities and their experiences are often communicated through play. Unlike adults whose natural medium of communication is verbalization, the natural medium of communication for children is play activity*. (Landreth, 1991)

Play therapists use approaches, interventions, media, and activities that are appropriate to the age and developmental stage of the client. Play permits the child to communicate with adults nonverbally, symbolically, and in an action-oriented manner.

When the practitioner does not hold a separate mental health qualification to practice as a psychotherapist, play therapy is practiced as a non-mental health profession often in the context of another professional career (e.g. teacher, social worker, childcare). The play therapist may provide services for typically developing children and clients who do not have clinical issues: they may work with children with mild adjustment issues or those struggling with developmental challenges. The aim is to promote emotional wellbeing and assist the child, including those facing adversity (e.g. stressful events including e.g. hospitalisation, parental separation, bereavement, or single incident trauma in previously well-adjusted children) to master developmental milestones and develop emotional literacy and resiliency.

Play therapists who are also psychotherapists (i.e. on completion of the full MA) are mental health professionals and, in addition to the developmental and therapeutic services offered by play therapists, are involved in providing psychological treatment to clients with complex emotional needs and issues. In addition to the benefits identified above, the aim of the intervention can also include the resolution of particular psychological and/or psychiatric issues that compromise the child's healthy interactions with the world. This includes children and adolescents who have experienced adversity, experience chronic distress, and who may struggle with emotional, psychological, or mental

health related difficulties. This practice is designed to help facilitate personal growth, alleviate distress and overcome emotional and behavioural problems. It is concerned with resolving issues, building resources, repairing damage and restoring (or enabling for the first time) positive mental health. It plays a significant role in reorganising the personality and helping those who have experienced developmental trauma that has interrupted or distorted development to enable and maximise their true potential. Such psychotherapists are qualified to work with children across the spectrum of need including those with significant clinical issues, e.g. disrupted and disorganised attachments, histories of neglect, experiences of physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and those whose development has been distorted by living in situations of chronic distress, unpredictability and lack of supportive, attuned caregiving.

Counselling in Action ©

This course focuses extensively on the play therapy process and the therapeutic relationship as part of the healing intervention for children and adolescents who have experienced difficult life events or who are compromised in reaching their full potential. In addition, it takes a systemic approach, looking at the needs of young clients within their family and the broader needs of the family also. Therefore, in addition to client-centred play therapy, psychotherapy, and creative arts approaches, we include training on the counselling skills that are essential if one is to work successfully with the child within their family.

We utilise humanistic and integrative models that incorporate the use of non-directive and focused approaches as indicated, to respond to the changing needs of the specific client as they present to us in therapy. Students will also become proficient in the use of therapeutic activities and interventions utilising play and the creative arts to enrich their therapy practice.

Unique Features of this training programme

Our training programme is very unusual in that it qualifies graduates to work as humanistic and integrative child and adolescent psychotherapists, and as play therapists. While many courses address working with adult clients, our focus on younger clients is unique in a humanistic and integrative psychotherapy training, as is our intense focus on the use of play and creative therapies. Many of our trainees are attracted to our course specifically because of these two factors. Our experience has been that there is a lot of interest in training in the field of play therapy as part of psychotherapy training and that many graduates from the social sciences are interested in pursuing a career as a psychotherapist to work with children and adolescents.

Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Play Therapy (60 level 9 credit embedded award)

This embedded award is not offered outside of the MA. All training requirements are met on completion of the 3rd year of the MA. The professional body (Irish Association for Play Therapy and Psychotherapy) that recognises this course as part of the criteria to become professionally accredited, has the most stringent standards for this work, greatly exceeding the training hours requirements of other play therapy professional bodies around the world. CTC has an extensive focus on the therapy process itself, intensive supervision by core trainers (fully accredited psychotherapists) and we consider a broad range of human development theories, neurobiology perspectives, models of play therapy and psychotherapy, developmentally appropriate counselling skills (for children and adults), clinical and professional practice issues etc. We have ensured that our learning outcomes encompass all the benchmark criteria that have been agreed as being necessary in educating competent play

therapists. While play therapists most commonly work with children under 14 years of age, they may also work with older adolescents and adults using creative approaches rooted in play. Play therapy is a developmental counselling approach in which the therapist takes the client's age and stage of development into account in all aspects of their work. The play process is central to the therapy which relies on its' specific therapeutic powers as the agents of change in facilitating the client to prevent or resolve psychosocial difficulties and achieve optimal growth and development.

Upon entering 3rd year, graduates of the Postgraduate Diploma stage of the programme become eligible for pre-accredited membership of the Irish Association for Play Therapy and Psychotherapy (IAPTP) and on completion of the year will fully meet the training requirements for play therapy practice.

Master of Arts in Creative Psychotherapy and Play Therapy - additional 60 Level 9 credits.

The whole ethos of the programme, and its content, aims, methodologies, learning outcomes, philosophy etc. is humanistic and integrative in nature. Our focus is on utilising creative, action methods that bring interpersonal neurobiological concepts into the heart of developmentally appropriate clinical practice with children and adolescents. The core model of psychotherapy that we teach is Client Centred, and we compare and contrast this with other models (e.g. Psychoanalytic, Cognitive Behavioural) within the programme. In addition, we integrate the use of the expressive arts therapies and play therapy to equip learners to provide a creative psychotherapy practice. Supervised practice, and theoretical content, relate to working on a deep psychotherapeutic level with clients of diverse ages, and with complex needs, while making extensive use of creative psychotherapeutic approaches. Each learner is facilitated in developing their own individual practice style based on the integration of theories that allows them to be most authentic in their work.

Course content pays particular attention to the humanistic and integrative approach, the psychotherapy process with adolescents, neurobiology, and to trauma issues, in the 3rd year of the programme. In addition to ongoing clinical training, a research project with relevance to the field of psychotherapy is completed in the final year.

The four-year programme has been designed to match the criteria of the European Certificate of Psychotherapy (ECP) for core psychotherapy training courses. Graduates of the four-year programme are eligible for professional accreditation as a psychotherapist and the course is a recognised course of the Irish Association for Play Therapy and Psychotherapy (IAPTP).

Subject Strands

The core programme is built around three subject strands that build up over the course. These 3 strands are:

1. Reflective Practice
2. Developing Clinical Skills
3. Theoretical Studies

Subjects in the **Play Therapy Postgraduate Diploma** (years 1 and 2) are:

- Psychotherapeutic Experience: The Internal Working Model,
- Play & Expressive Arts: Theory and Practice
- Human Development including Play

- Psychotherapeutic Experience: Exploring Patterns and Relationships
- Integrative Psychotherapy and the Play Therapy Process
- Play Therapy and Counselling: Supervised Practicum
- A Comparative Analysis of Psychotherapy and Play Therapy Models
- Considering Systems and Environments in Child & Adolescent Therapy

Subjects in the 2nd half of the **MA Creative Psychotherapy and Play Therapy** (years 3 and 4) are:

- Neurobiologically Informed Therapeutic Use of Self
- Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy Practice
- Trauma Informed Psychotherapy
- Creative Psychotherapy
- Research Methods and Dissertation

Year 1
This focuses on developing non-directive, client-centred, play and counselling skills, a working knowledge of child development, play, relevant psychological theories and safe working practices; developing a therapeutic relationship; using therapeutic play to facilitate children in developing psychological resilience and reaching their potential (developing self-confidence, self-esteem, and a strong sense of personal identity); and to intervene with clients with a range of particular needs. It has a specific focus on the personal development of the course participants to ensure development of self-awareness, growing maturity, and the development of basic counselling and listening skills. Trainees engage in a practicum to develop observational skills, and practice facilitating creative play sessions. The focus on child observation builds a foundation for developing research skills, and the myriad of approaches to therapeutic play-based interventions builds skills in assessment and programme planning. In this year there are a mixture of 2, 3 and 4-day modules based around weekends as far as possible.

Year 2
This focuses on training participants to work as play therapists with a range of clients with mild and moderate emotional problems. The initial focus is on training as a Client Centred Play Therapist, then on integrating non-directive approaches with more focused interventions to assist clients to develop healthy coping skills. We introduce a variety of models of psychotherapy and play therapy, their origins, their underlying personality theories and philosophies, and practice issues. This year also covers counselling skills in more depth, developing a systemic and professional framework, working with parents and carers as 'secondary clients', and involves many personal development workshops utilising creative and play media and approaches. Participants are introduced to the use of creative therapy with clients of all ages; working with clients who present with specific emotional and/or behavioural difficulties (e.g. bereavement, parental separation) and/or disorders. Participants engage in Clinical Practice with children and their families, a proportion of which is clinically supervised by CTC assigned supervisors. There is a focus on developing skills in linking theory and practice including understanding themes in play, conceptualizing the therapy process with young clients, reading play as the language of the child and facilitating developmentally appropriate creative therapy sessions. In this year there are a mixture of 1, 2 and 3-day modules based around weekends as far as possible.

Year 3

This focuses on developing a deeper understanding of the psychotherapy process, coupled with developing skills and a knowledge base to work with clients, including adolescents, with more challenging issues and complex life histories. IAPTP training requirements for pre-accreditation are met during this year. Emphasis is given to utilising the mediums of play and creative media, supported by talk therapy, for clients who present with attachment disorders and/or have experienced child abuse and/or neglect. Continuing personal development (using the creative therapies) facilitates participants to process personal issues. Input is also given regarding sandtray therapy and integrative approaches in clinical practise, as well as further insight into other relevant approaches to psychotherapy, theories of change and human development. A neurobiological perspective is maintained to enhance intuitive practice, making therapeutic use of self, and clinical decision-making. We place very high emphasis on the integration of theory and practice and developing advanced skills in conceptualising the therapy process. Supervised clinical practice continues over the full year with clients of diverse ages, with diverse issues, and in diverse settings.

In this year there are a mixture of 1, 2 and 3-day modules.

Year 4

A significant focus in the professional training element of fourth year is on developing the skills, knowledge and competencies to practice safely and ethically as a psychotherapist with a diversity of clients with complex and multifaceted needs. A special focus on working with clients who have experienced sexual abuse is introduced. Trainees continue to engage in clinical practice throughout the year and will attend regular supervision sessions with assigned supervisors. These sessions incorporate a significant training element and both challenge and support trainees in making links between theory and practice

Supervised practice, and theoretical content, relate to working on a deep psychotherapeutic level with clients of diverse ages, and with complex needs, while making extensive use of creative approaches.

In the MA research methods blended learning component students are introduced systematically to the range of research methods used in psychotherapy and will complete a research dissertation. Particular emphasis is given to formulating appropriate questions, objectivity, reliability, techniques used in research projects that are most relevant to practitioner researchers, ethical considerations, analysing data and presenting findings.

Personal Therapy

Each trainee must participate in Individual Therapy Sessions, a minimum of 30 per year, with an accredited psychotherapist (generally IAHIP), of their own choosing, scheduled at own convenience, over the duration of the course. The experience of being a client is vital to developing an understanding of the therapy process in an experiential way and facilitates the self-exploration and development of increased self-awareness that is central to the practice of therapy. The cost of these sessions is not included in the course fee and will be negotiated between the trainee and the therapist of their choosing. Group psychotherapy sessions take place during course time. There is no additional cost for these sessions.

Over the 4 years therapeutic/personal development sessions including both group and individual therapy sessions span 180 hours. Further personal reflective activities bring these hours up to 250.

There are opportunities for personal development in the course itself and through workshops, experiential activities and relationships within the group. All personal therapy requirements must be met as a condition of graduation.

Clinical Practice and Supervision

CTC take a careful and sequential approach to clinical practice: for safety reasons there are many carefully monitored stages before the work with clients will reach the level of psychotherapy. Trainees will begin by engaging in child observation sessions, then therapeutic play sessions, then play therapy sessions with children and adolescents, intake, review and support session with parents and relevant adults, as they progress through the training and are assessed as being ready to engage in increasingly complex clinical work and psychotherapy practice. Some clinical supervision (during the academic year) is included in course fee; additional privately funded supervision is also required both during the course itself and the pre-accreditation period.

Professional Training Assessment Components:

- Self, peer, trainer and supervisor assessment.
- Self-awareness, maturity, and ability to work with group dynamics.
- Satisfactory participation, development and demonstration of appropriate skills and competencies in relation to each module.
- Completion of course requirements and assignments to acceptable standard
- Satisfactory completion of supervised clinical practice and personal therapy. Completion of all required hours must be logged and confirmed.
- Satisfactory attendance and timekeeping. Full attendance is a requirement and is monitored. Should exceptional circumstances made attendance unavoidable for a training day/s, alternative attendance will generally be required to make up the required training hours.

Our Psychotherapy Award

This is a four-year course. The QQI award for those completing the 4 years is an MA in Creative Psychotherapy and Play Therapy. As the QQI award is set at level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications entry is restricted to applicants who have already completed a suitable undergraduate degree. Entry to year 3 is restricted to holders of IAPTP recognised Play Therapy course qualification, or to holders of an alternative Postgraduate Diploma in Play Therapy plus the IAPTP Statement of Equivalence to IAPTP Approved Play Therapy Training, which entails additional conversion training to meet IAPTP criteria.

Registering for the QQI award: Direct Entry to year 1

For admission to the M.A. in Creative Psychotherapy and Play Therapy, entrants will normally:

- Have a 2.2 or higher in a relevant undergraduate (generally a level 8) degree (for example, though not exhaustively, social science, social care, psychology, nursing, community development, education, counselling, psychotherapy etc.) or equivalent
- Have at least two years full-time relevant professional experience (for example, social care, education, childcare, social work, counsellor/creative arts therapist) working with children.
- Be able to demonstrate maturity, personal readiness and suitability for psychotherapy training including commitment to personal & professional development and a willingness to engage in a self-reflective process that includes personal therapy

- Have participated in relevant foundation level training (generally over 30 hours face-to-face live online or in person) in therapeutic play or play therapy. Ideal foundation training courses are the Therapeutic Play Skills Certificate and/or the Nature Based Therapeutic Play Certificate and most successful applicants will have completed one or both of these courses. The Principles of Art Therapy Certificate course is another good foundation level training course. CPD in play, creative arts and counselling skills are also useful.
- Successfully undertake a selection interview.
- Commit to full attendance for all 4 years of the course.

Registering for the QQI award: Indirect Entry

A small number of applicants, with **extensive relevant professional experience (generally 10 years or more in a professional role)**, who do not have honours on a suitable level 8 degree may be eligible for entry to year 1 of the academic programme via Recognition of Prior Learning (e.g. completion of training that is at a lower academic level than is generally required). Such applicants must demonstrate, and provide evidence to attest to their acquisition of suitable level 8 learning outcomes in a relevant area and will generally hold a full level 7 degree in a relevant area.

Processing Applications

Please complete the application form in full on our website www.childrenstherapycentre.ie. Please follow all instructions provided there when completing the application.

Your application will not be processed unless we have all relevant documentation and the required processing fee. If you have any queries, please email CTCMAapplications@gmail.com

We accept applications throughout the year. The formal processing of applications takes place in November of the year preceding entry e.g. the processing of applications for the MA beginning in 2027 takes place in November 2026. Applicants are advised to apply as early as possible and definitely before the end of November of the year preceding entry. Applications for 2027 intakes need to be submitted before the 30th of November 2026. Applications will only be processed if all required documentation has been submitted and the application fee has been paid. Please ensure that you take care completing the application form itself, answer each question in full.

The first stage of our MA application process involves a thorough review of the application form and all associated documents. The applications are reviewed in relation to the minimum entry level requirements. A short list of applicants is then selected for interview. Interviews take place in January – interviews include a live online zoom session and an in-person interview in our Limerick training centre. When all places have been allocated the intake for the year will close and subsequent applications will be held for the following year.

Applicants are advised that there is tough competition for entry to this course due to the number of high calibre applicants.

Venue

The venues for most of the on-site training days are 1) Ballymore, (near Moate) Co. Westmeath, and 2) Limerick. We have fully equipped and resourced training centres in both counties. Some modules may also be delivered at alternative locations. Library facilities are available.

Trainees complete their clinical practice (from 2nd year onwards) in their own area. These begin with play therapy and progress to psychotherapy practice during year 3. Fortnightly supervision sessions take place at a variety of locations around the country, travel is required to attend supervision.

Fees

The annual course fee in 2027 will be €4900. This includes individual learner protection insurance cover for every student as is now required to meet QQI and legal requirements. Year 2 will be approx 5000, and years 3 and 4 are estimated to be in the region of €5100-€5200. Annual fees include full access to our libraries (online and in both centres) and the online portal. Where necessary, trainees are facilitated in making a payment plan to suit individual circumstances rather than being required to pay for the year in advance, although the full fee is due from each person who starts on the course. An additional fee for academic registration and certification with QQI is currently set by QQI at €200 for each Level 9 award (Postgraduate Diploma (2nd yr) and MA (4th yr). Also budget for private personal therapy and clinical supervision costs as described above. Factor in travel and local accommodation (if required) costs also.

Course fees are eligible for tax relief under section 473A, Taxes Consolidation Act, 1997. Details available from Revenue (Revenue Leaflet IT 1 'Tax Credits, Rates and Reliefs' and IT 31 'Tax Relief for Tuition Fees in respect of Third Level education) or from www.revenue.ie.

2026-2027 MA Dates (2027-2028 MA Dates will be similar)

There are two intakes each year. The course runs for the full day on each date. A similar schedule of dates are set each year. The following dates are provisional and subject to change. The location in brackets after each date identifies the location for that module.

Year 1 Group 1 2026 -2027

3rd – 6th July (Limerick), 22nd - 23rdAug (Westmeath), 12th – 14th September (Limerick), 10th – 11th October (Westmeath), 28th - 29th - November (Limerick), 30th Jan-1st Feb (Ballymore), 5th – 7th March (Limerick), 24th – 25th April (Limerick)

Year 1 Group 2 2026-2027

28th – 31st Aug (Limerick), 26th – 27th Sep (Westmeath), 17th – 19th Oct (Limerick), 21st -22nd November (Westmeath), 16th - 17th Jan (Limerick), 20th – 22nd Feb (Westmeath), 2nd – 4th April (Limerick), 15th – 16th May (Westmeath)

Year 2 Group 1 2026-2027

4th – 6th Sep (Limerick), 3rd - 4th Oct (Online), 7th - 9th Nov (Limerick), 5th – 7th Dec (Westmeath), Dec-Jan (Self Directed Study), 13th - 14th Feb (Westmeath), 13th–15th March (Westmeath), 10th April (Online), 16th – 18th April (Westmeath), 8th-10th May (Westmeath)

Year 2 Group 2 2026-2027

18th – 20th Sep (Limerick), 10th-11th Oct (Online), 14th-16th Nov (Limerick), 12th-14th Dec (Westmeath), Dec/Jan – Feb (Self Directed Study), 27th - 28th Feb (Westmeath), 3rd – 5th April (Westmeath), 10th April (Online), 23rd -25th April (Westmeath), 22nd -24th May (Westmeath).

Year 3 Group 1 2026-2027
11th – 13th Sep (Westmeath), 2nd - 4th Oct (Limerick, 2.5 Days), 23rd Oct (Online: 6pm-9pm), 7th-9th Nov (Westmeath), 29th Nov (Online), 12th-14th Dec (Limerick), 16th-18th Jan (Westmeath), 20th - 21stFeb (Limerick), 19th – 21st March (Westmeath), 8th – 9th May (Limerick), 5th June (Westmeath), 12th June (Online).

Year 3 Group 2 2026-2027
18th-20th Sep (Westmeath), 9th- 11th Oct (Limerick, 2.5 Days), 23rd Oct (Online: 6pm-9pm), 14th – 16th Nov (Westmeath), 29th Nov (Online), 8th – 10th Jan (Westmeath), 6th- 8th Feb (Westmeath), 13th – 14th March (Limerick), 9th – 11th April (Westmeath), 22nd - 23rd May (Limerick), 6th June (Westmeath), 12th June (Online).

Year 4 Group 1 2026-2027
15th – 16th Aug (Online), 11th - 13th Sept (SDL & Online), 25th – 27th Sept (SDL & Online), 16th – 18th Oct (SDL and Online), 31st Oct – 1st Nov (GP_Westmeath), 23rd – 25th Jan (Westmeath LC & EMcD), 5th- 7th March (SDL & Online), 10th April (Online)

Year 4 Group 2 2026-2027
15th – 16th Aug (Online), 11th - 13th Sept (SDL & Online), 25th – 27th Sept (SDL & Online), 16th – 18th Oct (SDL and Online), 28th-29th Nov (GP_Westmeath), 30th Jan – 1st Feb (Limerick LC & EMcD), 5th – 7th March (SDL & Online), 10th April (Online)

SDL are Self-Directed Learning Days; they are not trainer led days. Students engage in self-directed study during these days.

Peer group meetings, personal therapy, clinical practice, and clinical supervision sessions take place between the modules listed above. There is also an online learning site for each group plus online courses. An online site for Academic Writing support is also provided and students may book in for scheduled tutorial sessions.

See www.childrenstherapycentre.ie for details of upcoming course dates as they are set.

Safety Provisions
It will be necessary for participants be vetted by An Garda Siochana and to be covered by professional insurance cover prior to undertaking direct work with children. To be eligible for professional insurance cover, as required, (details available), each participant must be a member of the Irish Association for Play Therapy and Psychotherapy and act in accordance with their Code of Ethics (www.iaptp.ie). Trainees must secure Garda vetting through the IAPTP who will share the outcome with CTC as per our quality assurance agreement.

Programme Aims and Objectives

We are committed to training leading practitioners who are professionally competent in the expanding field of psychotherapy and who will have a specialisation in the use of play and creative approaches. As the longest established and foremost provider of this training in Ireland we have a responsibility to respond to the needs of the sector and to the increasing demand for training of prospective students and the continuing professional development of graduates and allied professionals.

This 4 year course is based on three constructs of learning – theoretical, experiential and clinical, which form a central core of learning defined as 'professional practice' worked from a belief in the creative and therapeutic potential of relationships and play mediums. These three areas embody key features of knowledge, skills and competence in the professional practice of play therapy and psychotherapy. We see learning as involving three complimentary, interlinked and interweaving strands of skills, theory and personal development that cannot totally be separated into component parts – for us, the whole is definitely more than the sum of the parts! In putting this into practice we place a high emphasis on experiential learning while ensuring that the emphasis on academic learning is simultaneously maintained.

Programme Aims: Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Play Therapy

- To develop the learners' understanding of the principles underlying play therapy and psychotherapy and develop skills in utilizing play and creative mediums in their work with appropriate clients throughout the lifespan.
- Provide learners with knowledge, skills and competence to initiate and manage the professional delivery of play therapy and associated counselling services and practice in compliance with a relevant professional code of ethics.
- Equip learners to demonstrate the expertise to work therapeutically with a wide range of individuals and groups within a variety of clinical, community and/or educational settings.

Programme Aims: MA Creative Psychotherapy and Play Therapy

Includes the aims of the interim award (Postgraduate Diploma in Play Therapy) plus the following:

- Build on prior clinical training and supervised practice to equip the learner to extend their client base, which may already include children, adolescents and adults, to include practice with more complex referral issues including trauma.
- Provide learners with the knowledge, skills and competence to initiate and manage the professional delivery of creative psychotherapy services and implement new models of practice through an advanced ability to compare and critique a range of models and integrate relevant theory and clinical practice.
- Critically evaluate and reflect on the effectiveness of their practice, including the relevance of their own personal process within the therapeutic relationship.

- Provide learners with opportunities for personal development that will facilitate increased self-awareness, and an understanding of the process of healing through the medium of person-centred and humanistic and integrative psychotherapies utilising creative mediums.
- To enable learners to carry out, analyse and present research with relevance to the field of psychotherapy.

Objectives

- To develop the trainees' person-centred counselling skills, enhance the ability to develop therapeutic relationships, and become skilled in responding therapeutically to the client's play, words, and non-verbal communications.
- To introduce the trainees to a range of models of psychotherapy and play therapy, and the use of expressive arts in the therapeutic and developmental process.
- To develop the trainees' understanding of the principles underlying play therapy and psychotherapy and develop skills in utilising play and creative mediums including music, movement, storytelling, symbolism, metaphor, art, drama, and sand play in their work.
- To facilitate the personal and professional development of the trainees both through the group process and by providing other opportunities for increased self-awareness and growth in maturity.
- To develop the trainees' ability to assess the client's therapeutic needs and provide appropriate services and/or refer onwards as appropriate.
- To equip trainees with clinical skills to engage confidently in child and adolescent psychotherapy sessions, utilising play therapy and the creative arts, and in support sessions with their adult carers.
- To facilitate trainees in understanding and critically reflecting on lifespan development, psychotherapy, and associated relevant theoretical frameworks, including newly emerging knowledge, to enable the use of theory to inform professional practice.
- To enable each trainee to discover the integration of theoretical frameworks and practice models that works best for them as a therapist in enabling them to be authentic in their relationships with clients.
- To raise the trainees' awareness of the relevant current legal and ethical frameworks.
- To facilitate trainees in developing an understanding of the relevant research issues and methods.

We aim to provide trainees with opportunities for personal development that will facilitate increased self-awareness, and an understanding of the process of healing through the medium of person-centred and humanistic and integrative psychotherapies utilising creative mediums. This will assist each trainee in the integration of any unresolved issues, facilitating emotional development and the attainment of greater maturity, thus preparing them to provide safety and containment in therapeutic relationships with children, adolescents, and adults. In combination with our focus on safe working practices, ethical considerations and skills development, this will contribute to providing a secure foundation for therapeutic work with clients of all ages.

We pay particular attention to working in respectful, non-intrusive ways that respect the clients' potential to direct their own healing, at their own pace, within a therapeutic environment and within the context of a therapeutic relationship with a congruent, accepting, non-judgemental, therapist. The utilisation of play and creative approaches is seen as central in activating true creativity and spontaneity – the freedom to be oneself.

Play Therapy, Counselling and Psychotherapy Context

The Practice of Counselling and Psychotherapy in Ireland

Counselling and psychotherapy remain self-regulating professions in Ireland although moves towards statutory regulation are under way and are welcomed. On 30th August 2016 the Minister for Health, Mr Simon Harris TD, made an announcement formally proposing the designation (under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005) of two professions (counsellor and psychotherapist) each with its own register, under a single registration board, to be regulated by CORU. Both professions are included as currently in the "Pre-Designation Phase" in the 5-year Strategy published by CORU on 26th January 2017. The registration board was set up in 2019 and is tasked with setting the approved qualifications for future practitioners and the grand-parenting requirements for current practitioners.

Professional Psychotherapy Bodies set rigorous standards for training courses, tutor student contact hours, skills training, theoretical study, clinical supervision, and personal development groupwork. In addition, students must attend individual therapy over the duration of their training and students should be assessed individually prior to undertaking client work. Core Trainers and Clinical Supervisors must meet specified criteria. Some psychotherapy professional bodies are currently moving from the accreditation of training programmes, that currently require further experience as a trainee therapist prior to accreditation as a psychotherapist, to the accreditation of four year integrated training programmes that have no additional requirements for registration, in accordance with the EAP position.

CTC is committed to providing training of the highest professional and ethical standards. In addition to gaining a play therapy qualification graduates of this training will also be eligible for certification and accreditation as a Psychotherapist with the IAPTP: Irish Association for Play Therapy and Psychotherapy (www.iaptp.ie) as this is a recognised course of this professional body.

Play Therapy and Psychotherapy in Ireland

The Irish Association for Play Therapy and Psychotherapy (IAPTP) set training and accreditation criteria for play therapy and psychotherapy in Ireland and maintain a register of qualified and accredited practitioners. As yet, there have been no moves for the statutory registration of play therapists in Ireland. Graduates of the four-year programme are eligible for professional accreditation as a play therapist and a psychotherapist. CTC is also recognised as a European Accredited Psychotherapy Training Institute (EAPTI) by the EAP.

Professional Bodies and Awarding Bodies

The **Irish Association for Play Therapy and Psychotherapy,** established since 2006, is the professional body that recognises this course. The mission of IAPTP is to act as a self-regulating professional body for play therapists and psychotherapists in Ireland and to protect clients, their families, and the profession itself, by setting stringent training and accreditation standards, ethical frameworks, and supportive policy and procedures. This body has set very stringent standards for this work, including a requirement for a minimum of 300 tutor student contact hours – greatly exceeding the training hours requirements of other play therapy professional bodies around the world (150 required by the Association for Play Therapy, 200 by the British Association for Play Therapy, and by Play Therapy International). IAPTP have identified and documented the benchmark criteria that are necessary for

the safe and effective practice of play therapists and psychotherapists. They require applicant training organisations to demonstrate that their training meets their required standards and equips graduates for professional practice. CTC is the only organisation thus far to have achieved course recognition with the IAPTP.

The MA has also been awarded course recognition by the European Association for Psychotherapy (EAP) for core psychotherapy training courses. The course is also a recognised course of the Irish Association for Play Therapy and Psychotherapy (IAPTP) and by the European Association for Integrative Psychotherapy (EAIP). Graduates are eligible to be awarded the European Certificate in Integrative Psychotherapy.

The **Children's Therapy Centre** (CTC) is the longest established and foremost provider of professional play therapy and humanistic & integrative child psychotherapy training and CPD courses in Ireland and has been delivering specialised training since the 90's. FETAC and HETAC both approved our quality assurance standards. We are a registered third level educational institute. We have also satisfied all the requirements of the Association for Play Therapy (United States) for recognition as a Type 1 Approved Provider of Play Therapy Continuing education (APT Approved Provider 11-294).

QQI replaced the National Qualification Authority of Ireland (NQAI), The Further Education and Training Awards Council of Ireland (FETAC), and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) in November 2012. It also took over functions of the Irish Universities Quality Board. QQI has assumed all the functions of these four bodies. The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) provides the mechanism for recognising education and training in Ireland and provides a framework for assessing standards and progression options at each of the 10 levels. In general, access to training at any level is restricted to those who have successfully completed training at the preceding level (e.g. entry to a level 9 course is only open to those already holding a level 8 award). Higher level awards are equivalent to university qualifications and are recognised in 47 countries. Graduates receive a copy of their Diploma Supplement along with their parchment to make award identification outside Ireland easier.

Employment Potential

Employment potential for child and adolescent psychotherapists specialising in play therapy has been and continues to be excellent. It is best for those with relevant primary training and work experience. Psychotherapists and play therapists who trained at CTC are currently employed in a range of Child and Family Centre's, The CARI Foundation, Hospitals, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Teams and Community Care Teams throughout the HSE, Statutory and Private Residential Care services, Primary and Secondary Schools, Special Schools, Voluntary Bodies, Family Resource Centre's and with many other services. Many of our graduates are also self-employed and work with clients of diverse ages and with diverse clinical issues.

Further Details and information on other courses from: ctccourseinfo@gmail.com
www.childrenstherapycentre.ie **Facebook**: http://on.fb.me/CTC-facebook

Association for Play Therapy (APT) Approved Provider 11-294