



Certificate in Integrative Counselling  
with a Christian Perspective  
2026

Student Handbook

<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>Page</b>
Introduction	3
Dates and Venue	4
Course Tutors	5
Fees	6
Course Overview	7
Course Requirements	11
Assignment – Daily Personal Journal	12
Assignment – Book Review	14
Practising Listening Skills	16
Progression to the Diploma in Counselling	18

## **Introduction and welcome to the Certificate in Counselling with a Christian Perspective**

Welcome to the Vital Pathways Training Certificate in Counselling with a Christian perspective. This handbook will provide you with the information that you need to complete the course.

This Certificate course provides an introduction to counselling and aims to integrate counselling and psychological theory with biblical truths, spiritual development, and matters relating to Christian ministry.

The face-to-face elements will be taught by Lynn Millar, Laura Wylie and Jo Turner alongside their team of core tutors and guest speakers.

This Certificate offers integrative and dialogical approaches to counselling and aims to empower and equip people working within any helping role. It also meets the Certificate requirements for application to the Vital Pathways Training Diploma in Integrative Counselling with a Christian Perspective, a professionally validated Diploma that enables students to work as counsellors.

This 6-week programme will be delivered face-to-face within a group setting and will consist of engagement with relevant theory, practical application, personal reflection and self-development opportunities, large and small group discussions and practice of key counselling skills in triads. Each morning will start with worship, prayer and bible teaching

relevant to the psychological theory or topic explored throughout the day. Students are introduced to common psychological issues presented by clients or service users and will learn how to work with these using key counselling and communication skills, working in a way that is both ethical and professional.

On completion of this Certificate, students should feel more confident in supportive roles, demonstrate greater self-awareness in their relationships with others, and have an enhanced understanding of mental health issues, together with improved communication through key counselling skills.

### **Dates**

This Certificate course will be delivered over 3 weekends (one weekend per month) from 9:30am-4pm. The dates are as follows:

Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> and Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2026

Friday 6<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2026

Friday 4<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2026

### **Venue**

St Mungo's Ministry Centre,

46B Bavelaw Road,

Balerno,

Edinburgh

EH14 7AE

## Course Tutors

### Course Director - Scotland

**Lynn Millar** has been counselling since 2010 and has been Director of Counselling in the Wellness Centre, St Mungo's church, in Balerno overseeing a team of counsellors and supervisors. She has an MSc in Counselling Studies and Post Graduate Certificates in Supervision, Working with Children and Working with Couples. She is an accredited counsellor with BACP and COSCA. A qualified teacher and an accredited COSCA trainer, Lynn has been involved in training counsellors and delivering a wide range of CPD events in Edinburgh.



### Course Director – N Ireland

**Laura Wylie** is CEO of Links Counselling Service where she has built up a thriving community counselling service which has 8 centres across Northern Ireland and a team of counsellors working in over 30 schools. Laura qualified as a counsellor in 2009 and has added to her experience throughout the years, obtaining an MSc in Pluralistic Psychotherapy, Ad.Dip in Person Centred Counselling, Ad.Dip in Supervision, Dip. in working therapeutically with children and young people and a Dip. in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. Laura is a BACP accredited counsellor and supervisor with a passion for making counselling accessible to all members of our diverse communities.



### Course Tutor

**Jo Turner** is the practice manager of Life & Soul Counselling in Glasgow. Her passions lie in nurturing growth, resilience and effective communication both within teams and individuals.

As well as her therapeutic work, she is involved in training and mentoring counsellors. Her

background includes a BSc (Hons) in Physiotherapy, a Diploma in Integrative Counselling and a MSc in Counselling Studies. She is a registered member of the BACP.



### Fees

To secure your place on this Certificate course a deposit of £50 is required. This will be taken off the course fee.

The course fee is **£650**. Please pay the remaining amount of **£600** by bank transfer before the start of the course using the following details:

Account Name: Vital Pathways Training Ltd

Account Number: 70345450

Sort Code: 82-11-07

*It may also be possible to pay the remaining amount in instalments.*

## **Course Overview**

On this Vital Pathways Training Certificate in counselling with a Christian perspective students will expect to gain the following:

- Counselling Skills to use in helping roles
- Self-development opportunities
- A rationale of how to integrate the Christian Worldview with key counselling theories
- A safe community of learning to share experiences, learn new skills and grow in mutual understanding
- An understanding of mental health and how to be an effective helper
- A prerequisite for those wishing to pursue further study to become a counsellor and obtaining the Diploma in Integrative Counselling with a Christian Perspective

This course will also be beneficial for church leaders and those in pastoral care, equipping church ministries to support people more effectively.

## **Course Content**

Content is delivered in a didactic style, integrating interactive and experiential elements with taught theory. Classes will begin with worship and bible teaching relevant to the daily topic. Skills will be demonstrated by tutors and practised in triads by students. All students are encouraged

to hold a safe learning space for each other, developing peer support and promoting growth environment.

### Course Outline

	Content
<b>Day 1</b> <i>2<sup>nd</sup> October 2026</i>	<p><b>Foundations of counselling from a Christian Worldview</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to the outline and structure of the Certificate</li> <li>• Biblical understanding of suffering and the call to counsel</li> <li>• What is counselling from a Christian perspective? How it differs from secular counselling.</li> <li>• The image of God in humanity</li> <li>• Relationships – how we relate to self, others and God</li> </ul> <p><b>Skills Training:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to active listening and building rapport.</li> <li>• Observing verbal and nonverbal cues.</li> </ul>
<b>Day 2</b> <i>3<sup>rd</sup> October 2026</i>	<p><b>The heart of listening - listening as a Christlike ministry</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theological foundations of listening</li> <li>• Barriers to effective listening: Assumptions, distractions, and impatience</li> <li>• Recognising and managing personal biases</li> <li>• 5 levels of communication</li> <li>• Values</li> </ul> <p><b>Skills Training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Validation and reflection</li> <li>• Listening with the whole body</li> </ul>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Day 3</b> <i>6<sup>th</sup> November 2026</i></p>	<p><b>Understanding and stewarding emotions - emotions as a gift and challenge from God</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploring the role of emotions in human experience: created by God, corrupted by sin, redeemed in Christ.</li> <li>• Emotions as agents for change</li> <li>• Emotional intelligence</li> <li>• Emotionally healthy spirituality</li> <li>• Anger and Vulnerability</li> <li>• Understanding defences and wounds</li> <li>• Emotionally Focused Therapy - EFT</li> </ul> <p><b>Skills Training:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotionally attuned listening</li> <li>• Helping people articulate emotions</li> <li>• Empathising and reflecting</li> <li>• Guiding clients to see emotions as signals, not dictators.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Day 4</b> <i>7<sup>th</sup> November 2026</i></p>	<p><b>Cultivating Hope - leading others to hope</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding resilience and hope from a psychological perspective</li> <li>• Basic introduction of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) techniques</li> <li>• Challenging unhelpful thoughts.</li> <li>• The power of Scripture in reframing thoughts and renewing the mind (Romans 12:2).</li> <li>• Co-regulation – spiritual disciplines</li> </ul> <p><b>Skills Training:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying distorted thinking patterns (e.g., catastrophising, all-or-nothing thinking).</li> <li>• Helping clients develop achievable goals.</li> </ul>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Day 5</b> <i>4<sup>th</sup> December 2026</i></p>	<p><b>Boundaries, confidentiality, and duality - practising wisdom in relationships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principles for setting healthy boundaries in counselling and ministry.</li> <li>• Confidentiality: The importance of trust and when disclosure is necessary (e.g., safeguarding).</li> <li>• Ethical dilemmas in counselling and in the church: navigating duality, authority and boundaries.</li> </ul> <p><b>Skills Training:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using a given scenario - role-play boundary-setting conversations.</li> <li>• Recognising signs of over-identification or emotional enmeshment.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Day 6</b> <i>5<sup>th</sup> December 2026</i></p>	<p><b>Moving forward - serving others with Christlike love</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrating skills and biblical principles into a cohesive helping framework.</li> <li>• Understanding the role of self-care in sustaining a counselling ministry.</li> <li>• Introduction to Glasser’s choice theory – Quality world, basic needs</li> <li>• Knowing your limits: When to refer to professionals or specialists.</li> <li>• Endings and new beginnings</li> </ul> <p><b>Skills Training:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practise beginning, middle and end of a counselling session.</li> <li>• Open ended questions</li> <li>• Group discussion on lessons learned and key takeaways.</li> </ul>

## Course requirements

Students are required to attend 90% of the face-to-face course. You are expected to spend some time reading students notes, as well as wider reading around topics presented through this course. Additionally, students are asked to keep a learning journal detailing challenges, insights, and areas of self-discovery throughout the course. A certificate is issued on completion of all course requirements.

## Assessment requirements

- Minimum course attendance of 90%
- Completion of weekly personal learning journal
- 1 book review (approx. 1500 words +/- 10%)

There are no grades given to the above assessments. Instead, your work will be given a 'pass' or 'not yet a pass' in response to your work. If you receive a 'not yet a pass', you will be given feedback and guidelines as to ways of working towards achieving a 'pass'.

*\*Your book review may be used as an additional rationale for students wishing to progress onto the Vital Pathways Training Diploma in cases where spaces are limited and selective criteria for acceptance is invoked.*

## Assignments

### 1. Daily Personal Journal

**As an integral part of your learning journey, all students are required keep a monthly learning journal. This is a short reflection of your personal process regarding the themes discussed throughout the weekend.** A journal entry should be 1000 words (+/-10%).

Your journal will also act as a record of your attendance on the certificate.

Your written process can be as personal as you choose. It will be kept confidential and will be read only by your tutor and deleted afterwards.

#### **Some suggestions for your learning journal:**

1. If you are finding it difficult to start writing your journal, it can often help to begin with thinking about images, metaphors or feelings that you are experiencing at the moment.

2. It can be useful to think about what has happened during the day in terms of a topic that resonated with you. You could write about what happened during an episode, what you felt about it, what significance it had for other people and so on.

3. You may wish to write about how your relationships with other course members develop throughout the duration of the course.

4. Most important of all is to write about yourself, what you are feeling and thinking, what learning takes place for you and how you may have contributed to the course.

5. Included in this will be your reflections on your relationship with God and how you are connecting with God throughout the course content.

**Below are some questions to help guide you on writing your journal:**

1. What were the significant episodes for me today?
2. What demands were made on me as a participant and how did I meet them?
3. What feelings do I recollect and what were they linked to?
4. What questions am I asking?
5. What significant things am I learning?
6. How has my learning today shaped my understanding?
7. How might I implement this learning in practice with others?
8. Other observations about participants, other tutors, content and myself.

## 2. Book review

**Pick one book from the list below and write a 1500-word (+/- 10%) synopsis of your learning from the book and your personal reflections on it.**

### Book list

- Barton, R. H. (2022). *Embracing rhythms of work and rest: From Sabbath to Sabbatical and Back Again*. InterVarsity Press.
- Barton, R. H. (2021). *Invitation to solitude and silence: Experiencing God's Transforming Presence*.
- Brown, B. (2013). *Daring greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*. Penguin UK.
- Brown, B. (2015). *Rising strong*. Random House.
- Clinton, T. (2009). *Caring for people God's way: Personal and Emotional Issues, Addictions, Grief, and Trauma*. Thomas Nelson.
- Cloud, H., & Townsend, J. (2002). *Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No, to Take Control of Your Life*. Zondervan.
- Collins, G. R. (1988). *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*. W Publishing Group.
- Comer, J. M. (2019). *The ruthless elimination of hurry: How to stay emotionally healthy and spiritually alive in the chaos of the modern world*. Hachette UK.
- Dweck, C. (2019). *Mindset: Changing the way you think Updated Ed (Sc)*.

- Haidt, J. (2024). *The anxious generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*. Allen Lane.
- Leaf, C. (2013). *Switch on your brain: The Key to Peak Happiness, Thinking, and Health*. Baker Books.
- McLeod, J. (1998). *An introduction to counselling*.
- Sandberg, S., & Grant, A. (2017). *Option B: Facing Adversity, Building Resilience, and Finding Joy*. Random House.
- Scazzero, P. (2017). *Emotionally healthy spirituality: It's Impossible to Be Spiritually Mature, While Remaining Emotionally Immature*.
- Smith, J. (2022). *Why has nobody told me this before?* Penguin UK.
- Tan, S. (2011). *Counseling and psychotherapy: A Christian Perspective*. Baker Academic.

*This is not an exhaustive list. If you want to read a book that you feel is relevant to counselling, self-awareness, self/spiritual development, you can speak to your tutor who will advise you.*

### Overview of the assignment

This assignment gives you the opportunity to read a book related to the course content that particularly interests you. It also encourages you to think about the material in a critical and reflective way.

You are required to include your personal reflections and explain how the book has influenced your understanding of counselling.

Your review should include a brief description of the book's content and some comments on its approach and then write how you have been personally impacted by the book and the learning you have received from

it. While writing your review, you may find it helpful to consider the following questions.

- Why have you chosen this book?
- How far and in what way does it fit with your own experience?
- Does it reflect a view of counselling practice as you would like to see it?
- Does it discuss concepts that are unfamiliar to you at this stage?
- Would you recommend others to read it? Why?
- What is your critique of the content?

Your essay should be typed using Times New Roman font, size 12, and with 1.5-line spacing. Include the book reference (**Author's last name, first initial, name of book, year published, publisher**)

e.g. **Tan, S.-Y. (2011). *Counselling and psychotherapy: A Christian perspective*. Baker Academic**

### **Practising Listening Skills**

To practise listening skills, you will be split into groups of three (triads). At times a tutor will join the triad and will give feedback and comments that will help you to develop your skills.

Triads are intended to consolidate and expand your learning in the areas of knowledge, skills and self-awareness. The main aim of the triad is to help you to develop your listening skills. They should help you to develop a sense of the structure of a counselling session and to explore the beginning, middle and end phases of a counselling session. The triads are intended to deepen your understanding of the counselling process with particular emphasis on the processes of challenge and change.

### The roles of triad members

**Listener:** Will practise listening skills and skilled questioning, demonstrate core conditions, and be able to facilitate a counselling session to include moving between the beginning, middle and ending phases of a session.

**Speaker (client):** Will practise either role playing bringing an issue of concern to discuss or will bring a personal matter within the boundaries of this group, to share and explore.

**Observer:** Will practise giving feedback regarding the process, with understanding of the effect of challenging and immediacy without lapsing into criticism.

### Learning outcomes of triads

The triads will allow integrated practice of counselling skills throughout the course.

1. Participants will begin to recognise the characteristics and task of first meetings as follows:
  - Beginning the relationship
  - Establishing boundaries

- Getting to know the client and his /her issues.
  - Assessing the appropriateness of counselling for the client
  - Agreeing elements in the contract
  - Have an initial understanding of how ‘middles’ may be considered different from ‘beginnings’ and ‘endings’ in the counselling process.
2. Participants will begin to understand the concepts of “change” in the context of the counselling process and what facilitates and inhibits it.
  3. Participants will begin to understand and reflect upon some of the issues and Implications emerging from ‘endings’ in the counselling process.
  4. Participants will have practised creating and maintaining a helping relationship characterised by a counselling approach.

### **Progression onto the Diploma in Integrative Counselling with a Christian perspective**

At the end of the ‘Certificate’ course, if you have attended 90% of the course and completed the assessments successfully, you will receive a Vital Pathways Training Certificate in Counselling with a Christian Perspective. This certificate includes 36 hours of tutor-led teaching, plus 6 hours journaling and 8 hours reading and completing one assignment, totalling 50 hours overall.

You may wish to stop your counselling training at this point. **Please note that this course does not qualify you to become or practise as a**

**counsellor.** This is an introductory course, designed to give you an impression of what counselling is and how to be a more effective listener and helper. The skills you learn on this course will be transferable to aid a variety of helping roles, including pastoral care. If you wish to proceed in further training to become a counsellor, you can apply for the Vital Pathways Diploma in Scotland or Ireland. For more information or to apply, visit the following websites:

Scotland: [vitalpathwaystraining.com](http://vitalpathwaystraining.com)

Ireland: [connexionstraining.com](http://connexionstraining.com)

For any further information, or to speak to the Course Director, please contact Lynn Millar at [lynn@vitalpathwaystraining.com](mailto:lynn@vitalpathwaystraining.com) or call 07887867776.