

Participant information sheet

How do trainee counsellors with ADHD construct their professional identity through their experience of counselling training?

Thank you for showing an interest in participating in this research study. Before you agree, it is important that you understand why the research is being carried out and what your participation would involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the research?

The focus of the research is on trainee counsellors with ADHD and their experience of the training process in relation to their emerging professional identity. The research will take a qualitative, experiential approach, using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. Beyond the definition, ADHD is a lived experience that can have wide-reaching impact across someone's life. In counselling training, this is significant, because trainees are not only immersed in seeking to understand, empathise with, and support others, but also fully committed to understanding themselves through reflective practice and self-reflection. Counselling training emphasises not just learning about theory and practice – what counsellors do – but who the practitioner is and who they are becoming.

The aim of this study is to shed light specifically on how ADHD impacts a trainee's evolving self-concept and their emerging identity as a therapist. Emphasis will be given to how ADHD is experienced in interpersonal and cultural contexts of training. This will include relationships with tutors, peers, placement staff, supervisors, as well as experiences of self-disclosure, acceptance, misunderstanding, and perceptions of inclusivity. The study will explore the trainee's experience of navigating multiple roles and responsibilities as part of their emerging identity, considering the multi-layered training and requirements as a context in which ADHD is lived and negotiated – as a student, practitioner, supervisee, self-reflective individual, and researcher. The focus is on the trainee in development and their growth across multiple identities.

My hope is that this research will speak into conversations about professional identity from a neurodivergent perspective, promoting a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of becoming a counsellor and finding a place within an established professional community.

What will participation involve?

If you agree to take part, you will be asked to complete a separate participant consent form, including WAC research data policy, which will be emailed to you.

In order to take part, you must either have an ADHD diagnosis or be awaiting an ADHD diagnosis. You must be working towards qualification at professional standards Level 4 or above, and on an integrative counselling training course, and in the UK. Your training course could be online but must involve face-to-face learning and interaction with peers. You must also be in personal therapy, working in a placement setting, and undergoing supervision as part of that. As the research population is trainee counsellors, as a participant you must adhere to a reciprocal ethical code of conduct by belonging to a professional organisation with its own code of ethics (e.g., BACP; ACC).

You must be over 18 years, and can be any age or stage in life, gender, race, religion, faith, culture, or ethnicity. Specifically concerning gender, to ensure representativeness and promote inclusive practice, I am encouraging participants from a range of gender identities.

Demographic information

You will be asked to provide the following.

- **Age:** Indicate which age bracket you belong to (18–39, 40–65, 65+).
- **Gender:** Self-identify your gender.
- **Location:** Indicate which region of the UK or Ireland you are living and training in.
- **Ethnicity:** Self-identify your ethnicity.
- **Training information:** Provide details about your counselling training, including course, institution, stage, and level. You will also confirm that you are in personal therapy, supervision, and on placement, and that your course meets UK professional accreditation standards (BACP, CPCAB, ACC).

Participation schedule

You will take part in an online interview via Zoom. The interview will be video, but you can choose audio if that is your preferred format – there will be opportunity to specify this before and during the interview if necessary. The interview will be recorded and transcribed for analysis. You will have opportunity to review the transcription, which will be sent to you within one week of the interview taking place, to confirm that the data is accurate before analysis takes place. Transcriptions and any data collected will be stored securely. You may withdraw from the research at any point. Separate information will be sent to you in a participant consent form, including WAC research data policy, further detailing your right to withdraw.

Your taking part will be safe and confidential

Your privacy and safety are important and will be respected at all times throughout the research process. You will not be identified by the data collected, on any written material resulting from the data collection, or in any write-up of the research. You will also be asked to choose a pseudonym to protect your identity and maintain anonymity.

You can expect to be fully informed before starting the research and debriefed following the ending of research to explore any questions and/or concerns. Contact numbers for supporting organisations will be provided in a participant debriefing form emailed to you straight after the interview, should you wish to seek any additional support following the research.

If you are interested, and for further information, please contact Paulina Chapman at Paulina.chapman@waverleyabbeycollege.ac.uk by 9 October 2026.

I would love to hear from you!