



Adam Priestley

Psychological
Trauma Therapist

Can you give us a brief outline of your work history?

My first experience in this field was as a volunteer counsellor with ChildLine. I then started my doctorate, and as a trainee psychologist, I worked for Durham University counselling service, Place2be children's services, Talkworks, and the Psychoanalytic service within Tees, Esk, and Wear trust. Once I had finished my training, I worked as a psychologist in the Adult Psychology Service in the Southern trust in Northern Ireland. I've recently started with the Regional Trauma Network (RTN) as a psychological trauma therapist.

What made you decide this career path?

I wanted to do something that helped others and would remain interesting. Once I had learned about the different avenues psychologists worked, I knew it was what I wanted to do as the variety was really appealing. I had some very passionate lecturers at Ulster University who sold me on the counselling psychology field and decided it fitted with what I wanted to do.

How did you train for this role/educational route?

I completed my undergraduate in psychology at the University of Ulster Magee. I then acquired a place on the doctorate in counselling psychology course at Teesside University.

What qualities are required for your job – both personal and professional?

I think important qualities for my role include an ability to problem solve and be flexible in your thinking and approach. It's really important to be able to connect with people and put them at ease because the nature of the content is often difficult and can be upsetting. You also need to have good boundaries and manage your work/life balance.

What does a typical day involve?

The majority of my time is client-facing, providing individual psychological therapy for those who have been impacted by the Troubles/NI conflict. I usually see three/four clients a day, and following these appointments, I complete notes and address any issues that have come from the sessions. I also attend team meetings where we, as a group, discuss the developing aspects of the service, which can mean you pick up other things to do, i.e., consultations, group work, liaising with other services and organizations. Recently, I've been part of the RTN's research sub-group, which involves working as part of a regional team to develop the research strategy for a collective of services working together.

What do you like best about your job?

I like the clinical aspects of my work the most. There is something satisfying about being a small part of people's recovery, doing my best to assist them in working through parts of their life that have had such an impact. There is nothing better than coming to the end of therapy and clients reflecting upon improvements in the quality of their life.

What advice would you give anyone thinking of doing your job?

I recommend speaking with as many different people as you can to get a true sense of the opportunities and possibilities. Psychologists work in every industry, doing many different things.