

John Woolner



I am a qualified social worker and UKCP registered couple and family psychotherapist (MSc Institute of Family Therapy 2000).

Since leaving the Exeter Adult Mental Health team in 2003 - where I had worked for ten years as an Approved Social Worker - I have had experience of working as an adult protection officer for Devon County Council, chairing adult protection meetings; counseled men who have experienced sexual abuse for Avon Sexual Abuse Centre in Bristol; worked for a GP practice as a family therapist seeing families where children present with behavioral/emotional difficulties in East Devon; as a family therapist on an eating disorders unit in Exeter; and as a couple and family therapist within a psychotherapy department for adults presenting with mental health difficulties. The employment in the psychotherapy department included training junior doctors in the use of a systemic approach.

I am currently employed part time as a systemic psychotherapist by the Devon Partnership Trust in Adult Mental health Services; as a specialist lay member on Mental Health Review Tribunals across the South West, employed by the Ministry of Justice; and as a trainer working on behalf of Frontline (a charity with a mission to transform the lives of vulnerable children by recruiting and developing outstanding individuals to be leaders in social work and broader society) and Collective Space (offering training programmes to social workers at all stages of their systemic social work development journey). I have particularly valued bringing my skills and knowledge to this training, such as how to achieve a balance between working therapeutically, and the need to address risk and safety. I also run a private practice.

I have supervised, provided training for, and facilitated away days for various organizations - such as Action against Domestic Violence and Abuse, Force Cancer, and Family Matters.

I currently supervise a number of couple counselors and family therapists on a private basis, together with two school counselors.

Training Day in Systemic Conversations and Assessment of Risk.

The aim of this day will be to explore how systemic conversations impact on assessment of clinical risk. The content will include:

- ❖ Milan and Post-Milan principles of hypothesising, circularity and neutrality/curiosity.
- ❖ The use of circular and reflexive questions in practice, with a live demonstration.
- ❖ Barry Mason's concept of 'safe uncertainty' and how this can help in risk assessment.
- ❖ First vs second order change, with case examples.
- ❖ Language and Mental Health, and its impact on risk assessment.
- ❖ Mental Health, power, and permission seeking practice.
- ❖ Assessment of clinical risk; balancing the need to be risk averse with the need to take therapeutic risks.
- ❖ Application of the ideas to participants own case work.