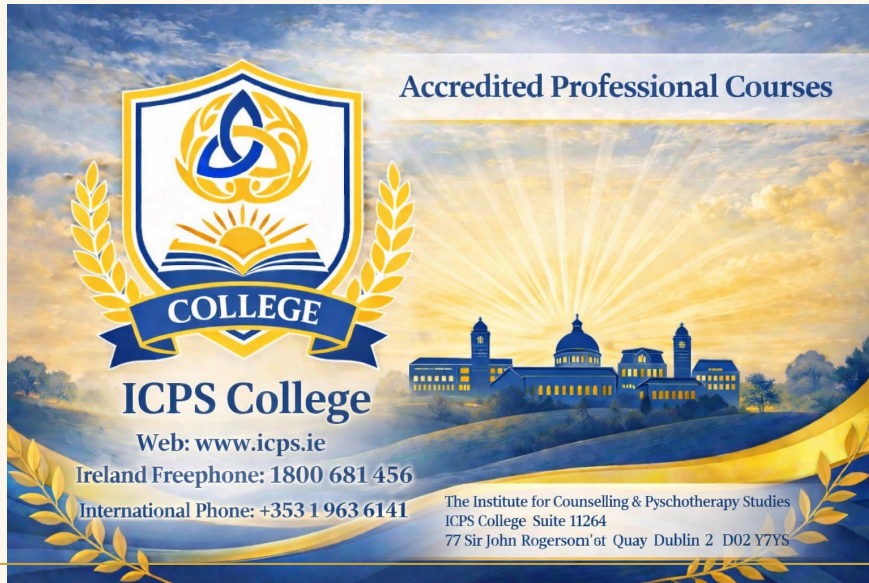


PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMA • 60 CPD POINTS • CPD STANDARDS OFFICE • PDCD1110

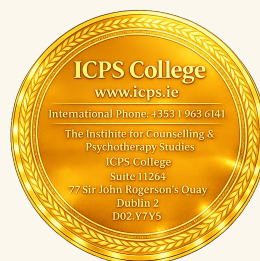


# Domestic Violence & Sexual Abuse

*Professional Diploma • 60 hours • 60 CPD points*

**The Institute for Counselling & Psychotherapy Studies**  
*ICPS College, Dublin*

<b>DOCUMENT TYPE</b>	Professional Diploma · Course Brochure
<b>INSTITUTION</b>	ICPS College
<b>PROVIDER NO.</b>	PDCD1110 · CPD Standards Office
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<b>EDITION</b>	2026 — 2030



DUBLIN • IRELAND

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# Welcome to ICPS College

Welcome to the Institute for Counselling & Psychotherapy Studies, known as ICPS College, and to the prospectus for our Professional Diploma in Domestic Violence & Sexual Abuse. This brochure has been prepared for practitioners and learners who wish to develop the conceptual, clinical and ethical foundations required to engage effectively with the complex presentations that arise in this field, and who require a programme of study that is academically rigorous, ethically anchored, and grounded in contemporary trauma-informed practice.

ICPS College operates from Suite 11264, 77 Sir John Rogerson's Quay, Dublin 2, in the heart of the Republic of Ireland's capital city. We deliver a portfolio of accredited Professional Diplomas, Certificates and Continuing Professional Development programmes spanning counselling, psychotherapy, psychology, psychoanalysis and supervisory practice. Our programmes are accredited by the CPD Standards Office under Provider Number PDCD1110 and recognised under the Provider of Training Excellence framework operated by the Professional Development Consortium, with professional alignment to the Irish Counselling and Psychotherapy Association (ICPA).

Domestic violence, coercive control, sexual abuse and related forms of interpersonal harm sit at the most demanding edge of the helping professions. Practitioners working in this area are entrusted with profoundly vulnerable, often crisis-laden material, and the integrity of that trust depends on the integrity of the practitioner's formation. The Professional Diploma at ICPS College is constructed to honour that responsibility, equipping the learner with the frameworks and applied competencies required for safe, ethical and trauma-informed engagement.



Whether you are an accredited counsellor or psychotherapist extending your scope of practice, a senior practitioner in nursing, social work, psychology or allied health whose role brings you into contact with people impacted by abuse, a frontline support worker, an advocate, or a member of the public who holds an active interest in safe and competent practice in this area, we welcome your interest. The pages that follow describe the programme in detail, set out the curriculum and assessment architecture, and explain the student-support infrastructure that surrounds every learner at ICPS College.

# Programme at a Glance



## Key Information

<b>Award</b>	Professional Diploma in Domestic Violence & Sexual Abuse
<b>Format</b>	Live online lecturer-led classes via secure video conferencing
<b>Total Programme</b>	60 hours • 60 CPD points
<b>Mode</b>	Live synchronous, with self-directed study and reflective work
<b>Entry Requirements</b>	Open access • College discretion in admissions
<b>Delivery Language</b>	English
<b>Award Issued By</b>	ICPS College, accredited by the CPD Standards Office
<b>Provider Number</b>	PDCD1110 • CPD Standards Office
<b>Professional Alignment</b>	Irish Counselling & Psychotherapy Association (ICPA)

## Course Accreditation

- ◆ Professional Development Consortium
- ◆ Provider of Training Excellence
- ◆ CPD Standards Office (Provider Number PDCD1110)
- ◆ Irish Counselling & Psychotherapy Association (ICPA) alignment

Each of the accreditation frameworks listed above represents an independent verification of the College's commitment to quality, ethics and academic integrity (CPD Standards Office, 2024). The dual recognition as a CPD Provider and a Provider of Training Excellence reflects a sustained pattern of curriculum design, learner support and quality assurance that goes beyond the baseline requirements of CPD accreditation (Professional Development





Consortium [PDC], 2024). Together these frameworks situate this Professional Diploma within an externally validated educational architecture that learners, employers and accrediting professional bodies can rely upon (Higher Education Authority [HEA], 2023).

## Why This Diploma Matters

Domestic violence, coercive control, intimate partner violence and sexual abuse are among the most prevalent and most under-recognised public-health issues of contemporary Irish society (Women’s Aid, 2024; Central Statistics Office [CSO], 2023). Practitioners across counselling, psychotherapy, psychology, nursing, medicine, social care and allied health encounter affected individuals routinely, often without explicit disclosure and frequently without specialist training in how to respond (Department of Justice, 2022). The consequences of an unprepared response — well-intentioned but technically unsafe — can include re-traumatisation, disengagement from services, escalation of risk and the entrenchment of shame (Herman, 2015; Courtois & Ford, 2020).

The contemporary literature is consistent: the helping professions have a duty to develop practitioner competence in this area, both as an educational matter and as a matter of public protection (van der Kolk, 2014; Stark, 2007). Professional bodies including the Irish Counselling and Psychotherapy Association articulate ethical expectations regarding scope of practice, confidentiality, mandatory reporting and the management of disclosures within their codes of ethics (ICPA, 2024). The Children First Act 2015 imposes specific statutory obligations regarding the protection of children that practitioners must understand and discharge competently (Government of Ireland, 2015). The General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018 frame the lawful handling of sensitive disclosure material (European Parliament and Council, 2016; Government of Ireland, 2018).

A defining ethical principle is reinforced throughout the diploma: **responsibility for abuse never lies with the affected individual**. The practitioner’s role is to support, validate, contain and signpost, without



replicating the dynamics of control or shame that characterise abusive relationships (Herman, 2015; Stark, 2007). This commitment is operationalised across the curriculum, in the language of formulation, in intervention design, and in the conduct expectations placed on every learner.



Beyond the protective and educational rationale, this diploma equips practitioners to recognise the broader social and intersectional realities that shape the experience of abuse — gendered patterns of harm, the impact of poverty, the specific vulnerabilities of children, older adults, men, LGBTQ+ communities, migrant and minoritised communities, and people with disabilities (Sue & Sue, 2016; Hook et al., 2017). Cultural humility is integrated throughout, recognising that competent practice requires ongoing reflection on the practitioner’s own assumptions and lenses rather than a finite set of techniques (Hook et al., 2017).

## About ICPS College

The Institute for Counselling & Psychotherapy Studies, trading as ICPS College, is an Irish provider of accredited Professional Diplomas, Certificates and Continuing Professional Development programmes in counselling, psychotherapy, psychology and psychoanalysis (ICPA, 2024). Operating from Dublin 2, the College has built a portfolio of more than thirty specialist programmes delivered via live online synchronous classes, supporting practitioners across Ireland, the United Kingdom and internationally (CPD Standards Office, 2024).

The College's identity is shaped by three interlocking commitments. The first is academic rigour: every programme integrates contemporary theory, research and applied skills, and is subject to internal moderation and external accreditation (HEA, 2023). The second is accessibility: the College operates an open-access enrolment policy for the majority of programmes and a live online delivery model that reduces geographical, financial and logistical barriers to participation (Knowles et al., 2015). The third is professional alignment: the College's curriculum is informed by the ethical codes and CPD expectations of the Irish and international counselling and psychotherapy bodies (BACP, 2018; ICPA, 2024).

ICPS College holds dual recognition through the Professional Development Consortium and the CPD Standards Office, registered under Provider Number PDCD1110 (CPD Standards Office, 2024). Dual accreditation requires comprehensive evaluation of programme quality, governance structures, ethical frameworks, learner-support systems, assessment methodologies and internal quality-assurance procedures, and represents a significant external validation of the College's educational architecture (PDC, 2024).



Our delivery model is explicitly synchronous: live online classes are conducted via secure video conferencing platforms, preserving real-time peer interaction, role-play opportunities, group dynamics and direct tutor presence (Means et al., 2014). The College does not operate a purely asynchronous self-paced model, because the development of trauma-sensitive competencies is understood to require relational immediacy and the capacity for in-the-moment feedback (Hawkins & McMahan, 2020). Recordings are made available where appropriate to support reflective revisitation of core teaching content.

# Aims, Objectives & Learning Outcomes

## Programme Aims



The overarching aim of the Professional Diploma in Domestic Violence & Sexual Abuse is to equip learners with the conceptual, clinical and ethical foundations required to engage effectively with the complex presentations that arise in this field. The programme is designed to advance practitioner competence across diverse therapeutic specialisms, integrating academic depth with applied clinical relevance. It supports learners to develop the reflective, ethical and trauma-informed dispositions necessary for sustained, safe practice with vulnerable people (Herman, 2015; Courtois & Ford, 2020).

## Programme Objectives

On completion of the diploma, the programme intends that learners will have developed a robust understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence and sexual abuse; an evidence-informed grasp of trauma responses, complex trauma and the neurobiology of abuse-related distress; the ability to undertake initial assessment, formulation and intervention planning in a manner that prioritises safety; the reflective capacity to manage their own counter-transference, vicarious trauma and emotional self-regulation; and the ethical clarity to navigate confidentiality, disclosure obligations, multi-agency working and the limits of their own scope of practice (van der Kolk, 2014; Stark, 2007; ICPA, 2024).

## Learning Outcomes

On successful completion, learners will be able to:

- 
- 
- ◆ Demonstrate critical understanding of the dynamics, prevalence and impact of domestic violence, coercive control, sexual abuse and related forms of interpersonal harm in contemporary Irish society
  - ◆ Apply evidence-informed trauma frameworks, including post-traumatic stress, complex trauma and developmental trauma, to the formulation of presenting concerns
  - ◆ Conduct safe, ethical and confidential initial conversations with people who have experienced abuse, including disclosure response, validation, containment and onward signposting
  - ◆ Recognise and manage indicators of ongoing risk to self and others, including escalation patterns, and apply appropriate safety planning principles in collaboration with the affected person
  - ◆ Integrate principles of unconditional positive regard, empathy, non-judgement and non-discrimination into all aspects of supportive and clinical engagement
  - ◆ Reflect critically on personal responses, counter-transference, vicarious trauma and self-care needs, and engage in supervision in a manner consistent with professional ethics
  - ◆ Demonstrate ethical awareness of the boundaries of one's own scope of practice, including when and how to refer to specialist services, statutory agencies and multi-disciplinary teams
  - ◆ Apply the foundational ethical principle that responsibility for abuse never lies with the affected individual, in language, formulation and intervention design

# Curriculum & Module Structure

The 60-hour curriculum is delivered across an integrated sequence of ten modules designed to build foundational understanding before progressing to advanced clinical application. The structure is calibrated so that learners encounter conceptual frameworks and ethical foundations before being asked to engage with the most demanding clinical material (Knowles et al., 2015; Mezirow, 2000).

## Module 1 — Foundations

Defining domestic violence, coercive control, intimate partner violence, sexual abuse, sexual violence and related categories of interpersonal harm; prevalence, public health framing and the contemporary Irish context (Stark, 2007; Women's Aid, 2024; CSO, 2023).



## Module 2 — Theoretical Frameworks

Power-and-control dynamics, attachment perspectives, feminist and intersectional analyses, trauma theory, polyvagal and neurobiological perspectives, and the limits of any single explanatory model (Stark, 2007; van der Kolk, 2014; Porges, 2011; Sue & Sue, 2016).

## Module 3 — The Lived Experience of Abuse

Understanding the cycle of abuse, the dynamics of leaving and returning, the psychology of coercive control, the role of shame, isolation, financial control, technology-facilitated abuse and post-separation abuse (Stark, 2007; Walker, 2017).

## Module 4 — Disclosure and First Response



Receiving disclosure with safety, validation and containment; avoiding re-traumatisation in the first conversation; documentation; the ethical primacy of the affected person's autonomy; and the principle that responsibility for abuse never lies with the person who experienced it (Herman, 2015; ICPA, 2024).

## **Module 5 — Assessment, Formulation and Risk**

Structured initial assessment, recognition of escalation indicators, lethality factors, child-protection considerations, safety planning principles, and the ethics of risk communication (Government of Ireland, 2015; Bond, 2015).

# Curriculum (continued)

## Module 6 — Trauma-Informed Intervention Skills

Stabilisation, grounding, window-of-tolerance work, somatic awareness, and the staged model of trauma recovery; the importance of sequencing and pacing in survivor-centred work (Herman, 2015; van der Kolk, 2014; Courtois & Ford, 2020).

## Module 7 — Working with Sexual Abuse and Sexual Violence

Adult disclosure of childhood sexual abuse; recent and historic sexual violence; intersection with shame and bodily experience; ethical considerations regarding memory, narrative and disclosure (Herman, 2015; Courtois & Ford, 2020).



## Module 8 — Specific Populations and Intersectional Considerations

Working with children and adolescents, older adults, men experiencing abuse, LGBTQ+ communities, migrant and minoritised communities, and people with disabilities; cultural humility throughout (Sue & Sue, 2016; Hook et al., 2017).

## Module 9 — Ethics, Confidentiality, Disclosure and Multi-Agency Working

Professional ethical codes, GDPR, child-protection reporting, working with An Garda Síochána, women's refuges, sexual assault treatment units, and statutory and voluntary services (ICPA, 2024; Government of Ireland, 2015; European Parliament and Council, 2016).

## Module 10 — The Practitioner



Vicarious trauma, secondary traumatic stress, burnout, supervision, self-care, scope-of-practice awareness and the formation of a sustainable professional identity in this area of work (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995; Skovholt & Trötter-Mathison, 2016; Hawkins & McMahon, 2020).

### **Reflective Practice as a Unifying Methodology**

Reflective practice runs as a unifying thread across all ten modules. Learners are asked to examine their own assumptions, cultural lenses, counter-transference responses and ethical reasoning in relation to each clinical encounter (Schön, 1983; Bolton & Delderfield, 2018; Brookfield, 2017). Reflective journals, self-reflection activities and observed practice sessions are integrated into the programme rather than treated as optional add-ons. This integration is consistent with leading thinking in counsellor education and is a defining feature of the ICPS pedagogical model (Kolb, 2015).

# Delivery, Assessment & Certification

## Delivery Methods

Courses may be delivered through live online classes via secure video conferencing platforms, blended formats, self-directed study, practical workshops, group work and, where applicable, supervised practice. The institute's explicit synchronous live online format preserves much of what is essential to counsellor training, including real-time class discussion, live role-play, group dynamics and direct tutor presence in the moment (Means et al., 2014; Hawkins & McMahon, 2020).

Class hours are scheduled in advance and communicated to enrolled learners. Where operational circumstances necessitate change — including instructor illness, facility unavailability, weather disruption, public health emergencies, technological issues or accreditation changes — ICPS College commits to give as much advance notice as practicable, with at least seven days where circumstances permit. Course rescheduling does not entitle a student to a refund; the institute commits to working with students to accommodate them on rescheduled dates or alternative cohorts where possible.

## Assessment Methodology

Assessment is multi-modal, consistent with best practice in adult professional education, where competence must be demonstrated across knowledge, skill and reflective dimensions (Falender & Shafranske, 2021). Methods used across the programme may include written assignments, case studies, practical demonstrations, oral presentations, examinations, reflective journals, portfolio development and observed practice sessions. Each assessment is designed to evidence integration of theory, applied skill and ethical reasoning rather than recall of content alone.

## Progression and Certification

Certificates of completion are issued only to students who have met all academic requirements, fulfilled attendance obligations and settled all financial obligations to the College. Attendance is treated not merely as a formality but as an essential component of professional training, in recognition that students learn from peer interaction and group processes as well as from instructors. Repeated lateness, poor attendance, unexplained absences or failure to engage meaningfully may be treated as misconduct.

ICPS College reserves the right to withhold certification if there are outstanding concerns about a student's fitness to practise, professional conduct or suitability for work in the mental health field, regardless of academic performance. This fitness-to-practise provision aligns ICPS College with the wider professional posture taken by clinical training programmes internationally and represents a significant safeguard for the public interest, particularly relevant given the sensitive subject matter of this diploma (Carroll & Shaw, 2013; ICPA, 2024).

## CPD Recognition

On successful completion, learners receive 60 CPD points formally recognised by the CPD Standards Office under Provider Number PDCD1110 (CPD Standards Office, 2024). These structured CPD allocations support practitioners in evidencing their continuing professional development to professional bodies, including the Irish Counselling & Psychotherapy Association (ICPA) and equivalent bodies (ICPA, 2024).

# Student Support at ICPS College

The College recognises that this diploma is emotionally demanding and that high-quality student support is integral to the success of any programme dealing with traumatic material (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995; Tinto, 2012). The Professional Diploma is therefore surrounded by a comprehensive support architecture designed to attend to the learner's academic, technical, professional and personal needs.

## Academic and Tutorial Support

Each cohort is led by experienced lecturers with substantial clinical and teaching backgrounds and active engagement with the contemporary trauma literature (Falender & Shafranske, 2021). Tutorial support is available throughout the programme, including office-hour sessions for individual queries, group consultation slots, and structured feedback on formative assignments. Learners are encouraged to engage early and often with their tutors, and to bring emerging questions, dilemmas and applied challenges into the tutorial space (Brookfield, 2017).

## Pastoral and Wellbeing Support

ICPS College offers pastoral support that recognises the emotional dimensions of advanced training in this field. Course content includes engagement with traumatic material, including disclosure narratives, abuse dynamics and the lived experience of harm. Learners are encouraged to attend personal therapy or supervision while undertaking the programme and to engage in active self-care (Skovholt & Trötter-Mathison, 2016). The institute may, in cases of demonstrated risk to a learner's wellbeing or to the wellbeing of others within the learning environment, recommend a deferral or invite the learner into a supportive conversation regarding fitness to engage with the



material at the present time.

### **Technical and Accessibility Support**

The College's administrative team provides technical onboarding for the secure video conferencing platform, asynchronous learning environment and assignment-submission systems. Reasonable accommodations are made for learners with documented learning differences or disabilities, in line with Irish equality and accessibility legislation (Government of Ireland, 2018). Learners are encouraged to disclose support needs at enrolment so that adjustments can be put in place from the commencement of study.

### **Library, Reading and Research Support**

Each module is supported by a structured reading list drawn from the contemporary trauma and abuse literature, and the College provides guidance on accessing peer-reviewed journals, professional-body publications and key reference texts (Herman, 2015; van der Kolk, 2014; Stark, 2007). Learners pursuing further academic study are supported through tutorials on academic writing, referencing and the construction of literature reviews (Wallace & Wray, 2021).

### **Peer Community and Alumni Network**

The College's deliberately small cohort sizes support the formation of a peer learning community that frequently outlasts the programme itself. The alumni network connects graduates across years and offers continuing CPD opportunities, peer-supervision groups and access to the wider ICPS College professional community (ICPA, 2024).

# Enrolment, Conduct & Safeguarding

## Enrolment Pathway



Prospective learners may enrol through the official course enrolment pathway at [www.icps.ie](http://www.icps.ie) or by contacting the institute directly by Freephone on 1800 681 456, by international telephone on +353 1 963 6141, or by email at [education@icps.ie](mailto:education@icps.ie). Office hours are 09:00 to 17:00 Monday to Friday, with out-of-hours support available via [support@icps.ie](mailto:support@icps.ie). The act of submitting an application, paying any deposit or course fees, signing any enrolment form or attending any part of a course constitutes legal acceptance of the institute's formal Terms and Conditions in their entirety.

## Fees, Deposits and Non-Refundability

Students agree to pay deposits, course fees, registration fees, examination fees, accreditation fees, materials fees and any other charges as published. Payment options include either full payment at enrolment or instalment plans where available; students on instalment plans remain liable for the full course fee regardless of continued participation. All deposits, part-payments and course fees are strictly non-refundable under any circumstances, to the maximum extent permitted by Irish law. Mandatory statutory rights under Irish consumer protection law that cannot lawfully be excluded are preserved.

Prospective students are encouraged to ask questions, seek clarification and thoroughly review all course information before enrolling. This is particularly important for advanced specialist diplomas of this kind, where the subject matter is emotionally demanding and where readiness to engage matters as much as academic preparation.

## Student Conduct and Professionalism



Students are expected to demonstrate professional behaviour and demeanour in all interactions; ethical behaviour with integrity and honesty; respect and courtesy towards others regardless of differences; unconditional positive regard and empathy; acceptance of diverse perspectives and backgrounds; a non-judgemental and non-discriminatory attitude; appropriate emotional self-management and self-awareness; maintenance of confidentiality where required; and adherence to professional boundaries (ICPA, 2024). These expectations apply on College premises, at off-site locations, in online classes, in communications with staff and fellow students, on social media and public platforms when discussing College-related matters, and during any practice placements or supervised clinical work.

Unacceptable conduct includes harassment, bullying or intimidation; discrimination based on protected characteristics; aggressive or threatening behaviour; dishonesty or academic misconduct; breach of confidentiality; inappropriate use of social media; attendance at classes while under the influence of alcohol or drugs; and any behaviour that compromises the safety or wellbeing of others. Consequences of misconduct may include verbal or written warnings, mandatory additional training or supervision, suspension from classes or placements, expulsion without refund, or referral to appropriate authorities where criminal conduct is suspected.

### **Safeguarding and Personal Wellbeing**

Given the subject matter of this diploma, particular attention is given to the personal wellbeing of learners. Learners are encouraged to attend personal therapy or supervision while undertaking the programme and to engage in active self-care. The institute may, in cases of demonstrated risk to a learner's wellbeing or to the wellbeing of others within the learning environment, recommend a deferral or invite the learner into a supportive conversation regarding fitness to engage with the material at the present time (Skovholt &

Trötter-Mathison, 2016).

## **Data Protection**

Personal data is processed in accordance with the institute's Privacy Policy and with the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 and the Data Protection Act 2018 (Ireland) (European Parliament and Council, 2016; Government of Ireland, 2018). Personal information is used for course administration, communication, assessment and certification, and for compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. Students retain rights of access, correction, deletion, restriction, portability, objection and withdrawal of consent in line with GDPR. Enquiries regarding data protection may be directed to [GDPR@icps.ie](mailto:GDPR@icps.ie).



# How to Apply & Contact the College



## Application Process

Applications are made through the College's online enrolment system at [www.icps.ie](http://www.icps.ie), supplemented by direct contact with the admissions office. The application requires confirmation of any relevant qualifications or experience, a brief statement of professional context and motivation, and acceptance of the College's Terms and Conditions and Privacy Policy. The College retains absolute discretion in admissions decisions and may, in exceptional cases, request further information or interview an applicant before confirming a place — a discretion exercised with particular care for advanced specialist diplomas of this nature.

## Contact the College

For questions about this programme, eligibility, the application process, or any aspect of the College's wider portfolio, the admissions team can be contacted as follows. Website: [www.icps.ie](http://www.icps.ie). Email: [education@icps.ie](mailto:education@icps.ie). Ireland Freephone: 1800 681 456. International: +353 1 963 6141. Office hours are 09:00 to 17:00 Monday to Friday, with out-of-hours support available via [support@icps.ie](mailto:support@icps.ie). Postal correspondence should be addressed to The Institute for Counselling & Psychotherapy Studies, ICPS College, Suite 11264, 77 Sir John Rogerson's Quay, Dublin 2, D02 Y7Y5, Ireland.

## Closing Reflection



*Responsibility for abuse never lies with the affected individual. The Professional Diploma in Domestic Violence & Sexual Abuse exists to prepare practitioners to embody this ethical principle in language, formulation and intervention design. We believe it is a worthwhile investment, both for the practitioner who undertakes the programme and for the people who will, over the years that follow, benefit from the safe, ethical and trauma-informed work that the programme makes possible.*

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