



Heart Wood Training Certificate Course 2024
Delivered by Rab Erskine and Chip Ponsford

6 residential weekends throughout Spring, Summer and Autumn 2024
100 CPD hours

In 2024, Heart Wood will begin offering a CPD training course for qualified (humanistic in orientation) practitioners who are keen to gain experience and knowledge of working with individuals and groups outside the counselling room, based in natural surroundings.

Any course offering this level of training, needs to be robust enough to be valuable and sufficiently professional in its depth and breadth. We believe we have such a course and are now ready to start offering it out to counsellors and therapists.

Heart Wood has learned an enormous amount from working with individuals and groups since 2018. Rab has been developing this approach since the mid 1980's and is a certified trainer with the Pre-Therapy International Network. Chip has been working outside the counselling room in natural settings, with clients experiencing levels of contact impairment, since 2010 and is member of the Pre-Therapy International Network. Both Chip and Rab are very keen to share their experiences and learnings during this training.

In 2021, Heart Wood offered a series of three CPD weekends for individuals who were based geographically close enough and interested in working for Heart Wood. Five practitioners attended with three completing the weekends and have since worked alongside Lead Facilitators Chip and Rab in delivering group counselling in a nature setting for people with complex and enduring poor mental health.

This initial phase of training offered us an opportunity to gain a better understanding of:

- the extra training needed,
- the experience and support required
- the additional learning input that is necessary to work competently in a natural outdoor environment with individuals and groups

Working to support the three facilitators we presently have in our team, we were able to identify how much energy and commitment it has required and how complicated it has felt, for the new facilitators to develop the necessary level of competence and confidence as they have experienced the enormity of the differences in terms of exposure, different way of contracting, different way of holding and engaging that working with groups for Heart Wood demands compared to the one hour per week, one to one, indoor model of offering therapeutic engagement.

The time needed to pick up the basics of the approach and begin to orientate to the 'way of being', alongside the very different working context needs a thorough course.



There are several primary areas of learning which will be offered during this training:

- Introducing the skills and physical experiences of working in a natural context,
- holding the wider and much more exposing therapeutic connection,
- learning the necessary tasks and way of responding to an activity-orientated group,
- working in a very non-directive, contact orientated way.

Pre-Therapy Extended Certificate

Working with 'Contact' is something that the Pre-Therapy International Network (PTIN) has been developing and publishing material on, for over forty years and recently has begun to create dialogues which begin to describe how this model works with clients who would be described as 'high end, grey zone functioning.' In 2008 PTIN developed a document detailing the 'Essential standards for training in Pre-Therapy and contact work'.

The Training Certificate has the capacity to incorporate a minimum of 6 days of input in Contact work, that will deepen the learning of the participants, by implementing the "Extended Certificate in Pre-Therapy (Contact Reflections)".

Course participants wanting to receive the "Extended Certificate in Pre-Therapy" will need to be able to meet the requirements of the Pre-Therapy training component, which is to have clients available, who meet the criteria of having some level of 'contact' related difficulties, to offer sessions to. This would allow the participants to practice at least twice between each Training Certificate weekend.