

## **ISPCC Childline Volunteer Experience**

I am a male volunteer based in the Castlebar unit and I have been involved in various volunteering roles over the last 18 years.

I enjoy interacting with people and my volunteering experiences have ranged from supporting young children to young adults to elderly people.

I was looking to find a new volunteering role where I could support individuals on a one-to-one basis but where I was also part of an overall team.

I discovered that Childline was having an information night and decided to go along. I was immediately impressed with the people in the unit in terms of their sincerity, enthusiasm and integrity.

I decided to take part in the training program and my initial impressions were strengthened and reinforced.

The attention to detail and professionalism throughout the training is very impressive. The participation of existing Childline volunteers presenting different modules of the course added to the sense of team spirit within the service. This ensures that the service provided to the young people using the service is, professional and consistent across all the shifts within the unit and indeed the country.

Another particularly important and necessary element is the ongoing training and supervision that is carried out by all the volunteers. This contributes towards maintaining the high standards provided and ensures that all the volunteers are given the appropriate level of support and knowledge to manage the varied and challenging issues impacting on the lives of young people today.

### **My experience in Childline**

I started my training in March 2017 and found it to be an experience that invoked a number of feelings for me – these included nervousness, anticipation, joy, sadness and then ultimately fulfilment.

Our group was a mixed bag of ages and experiences and we seemed to gel from the beginning. It was obvious that we were all a bit out of our depth at the beginning, but we gradually began to gain confidence within ourselves.

It is safe to say that we probably learned as much about ourselves as we did about the Childline service during the training sessions, and that is always a good thing.

The sessions made us reflect on ourselves and had the effect of making us want to laugh at times and cry at other times. All too soon the group training sessions were over, and we were on the phones – first listening and then being supervised. What an experience this was.

The strength of the team as a whole and the individuals within the unit came shining through and brought us all through this vital and somewhat nerve-wracking part of the final training.

In our unit, we actively encourage everyone, regardless of experience or length of time trained, to ask questions and seek help when a call or online chat is particularly challenging or new to a person.

We all seem to develop a third ear that can unconsciously pick up when another team member may need help or support. The saying that '**everyday is a learning day**' is very much true here in Childline.

I am so glad that I have been able to be a part of the Childline service. I hope that I have been able to give some of the benefits that I have received during my time here to the young people that I have the privilege to listen to every week.

If I was to make one change to the Childline Service, it would be to have more men please as we are very much in the minority – I am not sure why this is, but a bit more of a gender balance would be good!!