

Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy – Level 1 (July 2013)

I recently completed Level 1 training in Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP), which was very kindly funded by the Foundation for Professionals in Services for Adolescents.

DDP is a psychological intervention for children and adolescents who have experienced developmental trauma. It is based on attachment theory and findings from neuropsychological research and incorporates principles of treatments that address trauma. I currently work with 0-18 year-old children in a specialist CAMHS setting in North Wales and we receive a disproportionately high number of referrals for 'looked after children' (due to the high number of residential care homes in the area). These children often have highly complex needs (e.g. relationship difficulties, emotional and behavioural dysregulation) and DDP offers a treatment approach for working with the child and their family.

The four day training was facilitated by Julie Hudson and Alison Keith. There were 30 attendees; the majority of which were social workers. The training started with an overview of the theoretical foundations of DDP and an introduction to 'PACE' (playfulness, acceptance, curiosity, empathy); an 'attitude' of interacting that aims to develop relationships and resolve trauma. The core components of DDP were introduced in day 2, which included the principles of affective-reflective dialogue, interactive repair and construction of a narrative. The remainder of the training focused on the practicalities of the approach and the challenges of working with/parenting this client group. The training was delivered through presentations, discussion, videotape of sessions, role-play and handouts.

To date my work with parents has generally been informed by behavioural principles. Whilst this approach is effective for the majority of families I see, it does not meet the needs of a small group of children referred to our service. The children in this group have all experienced some kind of attachment disruption. They are often not living with their birth parents but this is not always the case. The training has provided me with the knowledge and skills to start to support not only these families but also my colleagues and professionals in the wider community who work with this client group. It would not have been possible to go on this training without the support of the Foundation for Professionals in Services for Adolescents. Thank you.

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