

Msc Psychological Therapies, Practice and Research

I am an integrative counsellor based in a secondary school supporting young people from the age of 11-16 years and their families. As part of my continuing professional development, I have just completed the first year of the two-year qualifying part time MSc course in Systemic Psychotherapy at Exeter University. The kind generosity of the funding from the Foundation PSA has meant that I have been able to continue with the 3rd year of this 4-year training course, with the aim to qualify as a practicing Family & Systemic Psychotherapist. This financial support means that I can continue to work outside of the NHS in third sector agencies that are able to provide both early intervention and services for young people and families who do not meet the threshold for referrals into the community CAMHS services.

Teaching on the course has been a combination of face to face and online teaching days. The theoretical orientation of the course takes an integrative perspective and interweaves this with evidence-based practice. The course takes a both/and position with exploring the different schools within systemic practice and thinking and how systemic therapy sits within the wider context of other psychotherapy modalities. As part of the training, there is a clinical placement and this has helped to develop learning within a community CAMHS team. The course encourages as a trainee systemic psychotherapist, the development of the personal and professional self through reflective practice and systemic consultations. There is much emphasis on anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice.

The course has also challenged me to think about the kind of therapist that I would like to be once I complete my training and become an accredited UKCP psychotherapist. Alongside this, the course has supported learning and development of new systemic skills and technique's. Especially strengthening skills in hypothesising and having the confidence to share these ideas with the families that I work with on the clinical placement. It is also challenging my thinking about how I can be an activist within the wider community and take a stance on acts of resistance against social injustices. Themes covered on the course have also helped to extend my reflective thinking around contexts of power, privilege and ethics and these ideas are navigated both personally and professionally.

The course is also encouraging me to develop as a systemic researcher in relation to the curiosities that may emerge both from the clinical work that I do and the questions that I may formulate from the different academic papers that have piqued my interest from the reading list. I would recommend this course for those who are new to and/or feel daunted about taking the first steps in developing the skills to be a systemic researcher and taking on the challenge of a research topic. Every aspect of the course develops and builds up a foundation of skills to undertake the research in the final year of the MSc. We are encouraged to find our own gaps in the research and to add our voice to the growing evidence base in the field of systemic psychotherapy. All of these experiences would not be possible without the support of the Foundation PSA – thank you!