

FPSA report March 2024

I attended the Joining Forces conference in February to learn more about deafness and mental health. Being a deaf professional it is very difficult to find many CPD opportunities that provide knowledge directly applicable to my work with the deaf children and the young people supported by CAMHS.

The conference lasted 3 days and covered a range of themes about mental health services, and early intervention resources that prevent language deprivation and language underdevelopment. A key message taken from the event is that parents need to acknowledge the language and communication needs of their deaf child to enable them to thrive. Mental health conditions impacted on school placements and affected the type of visual resources that could be used to support families.

Not only this, but I also learned that use of international sign language enhanced my confidence in understanding it better and that I am able to use it more in my practice as we are receiving referrals from families who have moved from and lived in different countries. Exposure to those additional signs from their everyday languages will make assessing less challenging and still complex, but with communication needs being better met. Relying solely on BSL skills, I feel, would not be meeting the needs of a range of families with different ethnicities and with a diverse range of communication abilities. It will make it easier to undertake mental health assessments and to support young people and their parents with psychoeducation.

I was able to meet a range of deaf professionals and network/engage with them to learn further what tools are available in the mental health sector for deaf people. Thank you, for giving me a chance to enhance my skills and an ability to work with complex families.