

**Course Title:** MSc in Systemic Psychotherapy  
**Venue:** University College Dublin  
**Course Length:** 4-year part-time masters. I completed Yr3 from September 2023 to May 2024.  
**Certification:** Yr1, Yr2, Yr3 complete. Enrolling for Yr4  
**Training completion:** Yr4 final year complete May 2025.

**Qualifications:** Masters in social work, Trinity College Dublin (2010). BA Arts, Trinity College Dublin (1999).  
**Work Role:** Senior Social Worker, ACTS Dublin Northeast, Tusla Child and Family Agency.

### **Summary:**

Yr3 three of the MSc in Systemic Psychotherapy focused on developing the skills, experience and theoretical integration of the students, that had started in Yr2. Students again completed 20 hours of clinically supervised therapy in our live supervision groups. Yr3 also saw students complete 65 hours of therapy on placement in the community, without live supervision. In the classroom, theory continued to be focused on and taught, with an added focus on integration of theory and practice through regular case presentations. There was an increased focus on research in Yr3, with students required to submit their research proposals for 4<sup>th</sup> yr, complete a literature review and complete applications for ethical approval.

### **Experience of the training:**

3<sup>rd</sup> year was a very busy year, but ultimately a very rewarding year. I increased my experience of providing therapy very significantly through further clinical supervision and through my 65 hours of external therapy. This year I was also able to incorporate my systemic psychotherapy skills into my role as senior social worker on a clinical Multi-Disciplinary team. My role in cases is to support and strengthen family relationships for the children we work with, and so a systemic psychotherapeutic approach has proved to be a very good fit for this work. I have been able to establish myself on our MDT as having core skills in the support of systemic family relationships and have had a number of positive outcomes with systemic psychotherapeutic work on some of my cases. This in turn has led to greater awareness within the wider professional network of the benefit of systemic family therapy for children in care and has led to an increase in referrals to our service specifically for systemic psychotherapy interventions.

3<sup>rd</sup> year saw me and my fellow students increase our experience of delivering therapy. Our clinical group observed each other during live sessions. We used reflective group discussion before and after sessions, as well as a reflecting team during each therapy session, to give each other feedback, support and guidance throughout the year. A focus this year was on integration of theory to practice, and I developed a greater ability to provide a theoretical formulation and framework for the work I was doing this year. Developing this provided me with increased confidence in my ability as a therapist in training.

This year also saw a focus on trainees developing their own therapeutic style or personality, of course within the boundaries of what is ethical, theoretically appropriate and systemic in approach. The increased amount of time and experience delivering therapy this year has helped me to foster an approach that I am comfortable with and feel is ethically appropriate for my clients. My focus is on a non-directive approach that promotes attunement to the client, awareness of the therapeutic process and self-reflexivity on the part of the therapist. It has been very rewarding to work this way this year and achieve some positive outcomes.

It has also been very rewarding to use the skills and knowledge that I am developing in the masters within my professional role also. The integration of theory and practice this year has meant a global change or development in how I think about cases, problems, MDT processes, structural issues, systemic issues. I believe this is beneficial for me professionally, as I see new ways of supporting my clients. I think this is also beneficial for the MDT and professional networks I am part of too, as I provide a new or alternative perspective that can lead to different decisions or steps being taken, and different outcomes being sought. This is a very systemic way of thinking of MDTs and professional networks, namely change in one part of the system can lead to change in all other parts. It is possible to change the outcome of a child/client by changing the goals or processes of the professional systems around them.

In conclusion, yr3 has been a profoundly influential year of professional development for me. I have completed significant integration of theory, practice, ethics, processes and approaches, and have greatly increased my experience of delivering therapy. I have also made great progress with integrating my learning into my daily practice as a social worker, and this has had very positive results professionally.

Sept 2024