

MSc Systemic Psychotherapy course year 2 of 2 at the Birmingham Children's and Women's Hospital

I am a Counsellor/Psychotherapist and a Director for an organisation providing Counselling/Therapeutic services for children and young people in Nottingham/shire.

I received funding from Foundation PSA for the MSc Systemic Psychotherapy course year 2 of 2 at the Birmingham Children's and Women's Hospital. This course involved weekly taught days, weekly clinical placement, and independent study across the year September 2023 to July 2024. This course year covered direct and indirect supervision of clinical practice, the study of generating and amplifying change, integrating personal and professional into an ethical practice, Therapy, Supervision and CPD in systemic practice, implications and application to professional and work settings and sessions devoted to personal and professional development (PPD); this is in line with the accrediting body AFT (Association of Family Therapy).

Receiving this funding has enabled me to enhance my practice and develop my work with families. I have been able to develop my self-reflexivity and relational reflexivity, helping me to think about my intentionality when asking reflexive questions, relational interviewing and using systemic models/interventions/techniques; using the feedback from the family so that therapeutic potential is maximised. I have also developed my knowledge and skills in my 'use of self' (personal and professional) in practice, taking and inviting families into different positions to open possibilities for different perspectives, meaning and change. For example, using various action techniques, creativity and imagination to explore family narratives and therapist-family narratives, acknowledging the influence my joining the family has on the system and change, going towards difficult conversations and emotions in a tentative way using relational reflexivity and respect for each family member. This course also helped me to develop a further awareness of cultural influences on families, myself and therefore the therapeutic relationship. How I can co-create a culture for change with the families and consider issues of ethics, prejudice, and power. I have developed the confidence to take relational risks with families, and my colleagues, towards straying patterns of 'stuckness' across systems. Continuing to work in a reflecting team on the clinical placement has been a significant learning curve, whilst it has been a challenge, it has also been a rich experience of sharing reflections, exploring social differences, learning, and sharing ideas both for the families and for my team. Working within an inpatient setting on placement, I have developed experience of working within a busy MDT team, managing risks associated with children's complex mental health needs, working in a highly distressing environment and developing systemic formulations towards family and professional goals.

Working with the wider system has been less common in my practice in previous years, so to invite family members into counselling with their child or young person (where the child or young person was referred alone as 'the problem') has been a development from the course and my learning. The child's therapeutic experience and development has been enhanced by doing this, the results have been positive for both the child and the parents/carers. I have also been able to further reflect on my position and influence within my organisation, because of this we have developed systems that promote more multi-agency working and support for

the family of the child or young person attending counselling. This is a positive move for my organisation and the clients we support. This course has continued to develop my self-reflexivity and tools pertaining to ethical issues and working with social differences that I come across in my day-to-day practice. The developments are also reflected in my supervision of staff providing therapeutic interventions for children and young people, and consulting using systemic ideas with professionals offering interventions to young people and their families in the community, and within our local authority. I have also used systemic techniques/models that are adapted to the increasing referrals of children and young people experiencing both mental health conditions and neurodiversity. I feel more confident to support children who experience developmental trauma, attachment needs and other complex mental health conditions, along with their families.

I would highly recommend this course to those who would like to develop their systemic ideas/practice to effectively implement them into practice for better outcomes for the complex needs of the children/young people they work with.

I would like to thank FPSA for their support, as without this I would not have been able to complete the course.