

Training Officer and Post Adoption Support Worker.

Details of Training

I received funding to attend a Theraplay Level 1 course held at St Andrew's Town Hotel in Droitwich on the 11th, 12th, 13th and 14th November 2024 from 9:00 am – 5:00 pm (32 hours). The trainers were Dr. Emily Barnbrook and Dr. Josie Hewitt and I was awarded a Level One certificate in Theraplay at the end of the course.

Brief Summary of Training

Theraplay is an approach that works to strengthen and, in some cases, reestablish the connection between parent and child / young person. It is modelled on available, sensitive and responsive parenting; the kind that leads to secure attachment and essentially involves emotionally attuned, interactive, physical play. The goals are to enhance attachment, trust, self esteem and joyful engagement as well as empowering parents and caregivers to continue this after the intervention has ended. Although modelled on how parents would interact with younger children, the approach is suitable for adolescents as it can meet unmet needs from earlier in their lives and can target their developmental age rather than their chronological age.

Over the four days, Emily and Josie took us through the theoretical underpinnings of Theraplay as well as its four dimensions. They shared with us a number of activities from these four dimensions and gave us the opportunity to practice using them within group work. We explored the structure of a Theraplay intervention from start to finish, and also covered how to handle resistance from young person or caregiver. Finally, we looked at how the approach can be adapted to meet sensory needs, different developmental ages as well as neurodiversity.

My Experience of the Training

I found this training really interesting and feel that it will have a big impact on my work with young people and their families. I found the learning around the importance of touch to be really staggering and am glad that I can add this into my work. Although less focused on 'talking' and more focused on 'doing' and being present in the moment, I can see how this approach can be complimented by talking interventions or used before to prepare young people and their families for more verbal / cognitive interventions.

An unexpected benefit of this training was that many of the skills that I gained during my teaching career meant that I had a head start in planning and delivering a Theraplay session. Whilst I am still developing my attunement to the young people I work with and hence being able to respond most helpfully in the moment, I feel that I will be able to implement the skills that I have learnt on this course on small introductory scale immediately. I also really valued the opportunity to train in person and gain fresh perspectives from my colleagues who came from a variety of professions and backgrounds.

I have only been back at work one day since attending this training, and already I have updated the training material across a number of courses that we use with parents of teens to reflect my learning from the course so that the impact can be felt more widely than just with the people I work with.

I would whole heartedly recommend this training to anyone working with young people who have experienced developmental trauma or working with their parents / carers and I am thankful to the FPSA for providing the funding that allowed me to attend this training and develop my practice.