

Training Evaluation Report – Theraplay Level 1

Title: TheraplayLevel One and Group Theraplay

Venue: Online 2 days/in person 3 days at the Family Place, Droitwich.

Date: 23/24th April (online) 29 April-1 May (in person)

Length: 5 days 32.5 hours

Trainer: Emily Barnbrook & Josie Hewitt

Certification: TheraplayLevel One and Group Theraplay

Applicant relevant qualifications: Cert. in counselling skills, MA in Music Therapy

Applicant Professional Role: Music Therapist, HCPC Registered

Summary of the training

I applied for funding to undertake Level 1 Theraplay training to strengthen my support for the families and young people I work with, many of whom experienced developmental trauma in early childhood.

Theraplay is a child-and-parent therapy model that seeks to build secure attachment, self-esteem and trust through playful, structured interactions. It supports therapists to work effectively with children, young people and their families, bringing together theory and research from developmental trauma, attachment theory, intersubjectivity, polyvagal theory and child development to provide a therapeutic approach focused on strengthening parent-child relationships and supporting trauma resolution.

The training presented four core dimensions—Structure, Engagement, Nurture and Challenge—which provide an organizing framework for the therapist's work and showed how these are applied through playful activities that promote safety, social engagement, co-regulation, connection and positive parent-child experiences. The course combined theory, demonstrations, video clips and experiential practice.

The Group training demonstrated how interventions may be adapted for a range of group settings, including helping young people develop social skills, cooperation and emotional resilience.

My experience of the training

The theoretical framework of my training was delivered online and was led by Josie Hewitt. It introduced the key concepts underpinning the Theraplay approach, including PACE, attachment theory and safety, polyvagal theory, intersubjectivity and attunement, reciprocal relationships, and the parent's role in supporting their child.

The in-person part of the course was facilitated by both Josie and Emily. Their relational, inclusive approach engaged the group and ensured that everyone's voice was valued and included in discussion. Their flexible style helped create a sense of safety and belonging, encouraging open dialogue, reflection and active participation. The course leaders used carefully selected recorded case studies, observed practice and experiential role play to reinforce the teaching and create a rich learning environment.

The video examples of practitioners working with individual children and their parents helped bring the theoretical principles to life and offered a clearer understanding of the approach in

practice. The role plays gave us opportunities to practise techniques and apply them to our own casework. For me, one of the most valuable aspects of the training was the chance to reflect on my practice and personal experiences and integrate these into the learning process. Learning alongside colleagues from a range of professional backgrounds, I was struck to see how widely the approach can be applied. I gained a great deal from the small-group work and from sharing individual experiences and insights.

After six years of working with young people, I am convinced of the importance of involving parents and caregivers in the therapeutic process. Children cannot be treated in isolation: successful therapy depends on the relationships they develop with both their therapist and caregivers. The therapist's role is to help parents understand their child's needs and respond in ways that promote security. This training focuses on helping therapists to support both parents and children within the therapeutic process to achieve stronger long-term outcomes for the child and family.

Since completing Level 1 training, I have started integrating Theraplay principles and activities into my therapeutic work with adopted children and young people, and I hope to progress to Level 2 to further develop my skills. I am very grateful to FPSA for funding this valuable and transformative training.