

I am hugely appreciative of the funding from The Foundation for Professionals in Services to Adolescents (FPSA) to be able to complete Level 1 Sensory Attachment Intervention Course.

I am a Clinical Specialist Occupational Therapist working in a community specialist child and adolescent mental health team (CAMHS) and a Mental Health Practitioner working in a CAMHS Assertive Outreach Team. During this work, I experienced rising number of young people who struggle to regulate their emotions and behaviour and then often appeared to be self-regulating using sensory stimulus, which changed in presence of their primary care givers.

I attended the 7-day, Level 1 Sensory Attachment Intervention Course in 4 parts. The first 2 days in September 2018 with a further 2 days in October 2018 and 1 day in between meeting with a study group to discuss and further clinically understand a case study to present at the last 2 days in January 2019.

‘Sensory Attachment Intervention (SAI) is an integrative approach for assessing and treating children, young people and adults who have suffered abuse or severe neglect. Negative experiences in the womb and in early childhood impact on our capacity to cope with stress throughout life. There is a tendency to either: flee and fight, freeze and dissociate, or fluctuate between these stress states when there is a hint or a reminder of traumatic events’ (<https://www.sensoryattachmentintervention.com>).

Eadaoin Bhreathnach helpful explains through their website, www.sensoryattachmentintervention.com, that sensory attachment integration ‘recognizes the need to target the areas of the brain that are the source of the dysfunction. The first requirement is to establish regulation of arousal states i.e. to shift from the Autonomic Nervous System bias of either freeze dissociation or flight fight responses. It then focuses on facilitating modulation of the body senses through the just right combination of up regulating and down regulating experiences. This in turn enables higher level sensory, emotional and cognitive functioning’.

This course enabled me to explore and understand the relationship between sensory and attachment behaviours; treat sensory processing disorders; adapt sensory processing interventions for young people with experience of trauma and attachment strategies that impact occupational participation. This involved understanding new tools of clinical profiling and assessment tools such as the sensory attachment and child development questionnaire.

Following completion of Level 1 Sensory Attachment Intervention my occupational therapy work is informed with Sensory Attachment Intervention principles. In addition, I am working hard to complete a Case Study based on a client that I am working with to gain certification in being able to use Sensory Attachment Integration approaches with young people.

The ability to complete this course was such an invaluable learning opportunity in both my clinical skills and clinical reasoning to understand the occupational needs and opportunities for young people. This will no doubt improve the clinical offer to young people requiring the use of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

Thank you so much to The Foundation for Professionals in Services to Adolescents (FPSA) for the ability to study and add to my clinical work.