

Sensory Attachment Intervention

I have a BSc (Hons) Degree in Occupational Therapy. I currently work as an Occupational Therapist for an Inpatient CAMHS Service. Within our service we have three wards, an 8 bedded Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU), a 12 bedded General Adolescent Unit (GAU) and a 12 bedded Specialist Eating Disorder Unit (SEDU) for 13–18-year-olds. I currently work on the specialist eating disorder unit.

I am very appreciative of the funding I received from The Foundation for Professionals in Services to Adolescents (FPSA). I was able to complete the six full day Sensory Attachment Intervention for Adults and Adolescents. The course was hosted virtually due to COVID-19 restrictions and was split over two x3 day blocks. I completed this on February 9th, 10th, 11th and 23rd, 24th, 25th February 2022 a total of 45 hours.

I received a certificate from this which states ‘completion of this course enables the individual to state they are using sensory attachment intervention techniques in their practice. They are qualified to carry out the Just Right State Programme with adolescents and adults.’ Further training would be required for the SAI level one certification.

The course was open to occupational therapists and physiotherapists working in LAC, CAMHS and Forensic Settings. It was facilitated by Eadaoin Bhreathnach and Chris West. The training introduced Sensory Attachment Intervention (SAI) and trained therapists in the use of the Just Right State Programme for Adults and Adolescents and in the use of the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) Profile Questionnaire.

The Just Right State focuses on developing the capacity for self-regulation, co regulation and reflective functioning. It was developed for individuals who struggled to participate in intervention programmes because of their incapacity to regulate their emotional states. The Just Right State Programme can be used with individuals, groups or families.

The Autonomic Nervous System Profile Questionnaire is a self-report questionnaire that looks at indicators of stress, survival behaviour responses and self-regulating behaviours. It is an exploratory tool for use with individuals to help formulate their regulating needs.

From attending this course, I feel it has made a big difference to my understanding of both sensory and attachment principles and how I can consider this as part of my assessment and intervention process. I feel it will impact the work I do with young people, their families and the teams working with these individuals. I would recommend the training to others working in CAMHS settings but would suggest they are mindful of their own understanding of sensory processing before attending this course as there were times when I felt having attended sensory integration level one training prior to this would have helped my understanding.

I left the training feeling enthused and wanting to put some of these principles into practice. I have already made some changes to previous practice and ward practices based on this. I think it is great that myself and colleagues received funding to all attend this training so we can think about how we implement this as a service as a whole. We hope to be able to embed this learning into practice and look at how we offer the Just Right Programme to the staffing team as well as adapting this for the young people we work with.