

## **Completion Report: Foundation PSA**

### **Dissociation in Children & Adolescents: Assessment & Treatment**

#### **Training Completed on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2019**

My name is Nicola Emsley and I am a fully insured, state registered freelance Dramatherapist based in West Yorkshire. I am also trained to use *EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing)* in my practice and am a member of the *Health and Care Professions Council, British Association of Dramatherapists and EMDR Association UK & Ireland.*

I specialise in working with children, young people and families who have experienced attachment disruption and trauma. The majority of children that I offer therapy to present with complex trauma related symptoms and high levels of dissociation. 'Dissociation in children and adolescents is still often missed where in reality thousands of children are suffering from the aftereffects of complex trauma. This adversely affects their sense of self, their cognitive functioning, as well as all their interpersonal relationships. Complex behaviours are often resistant to mainstream therapy.' (Marks, R. [www.bitcd.org](http://www.bitcd.org))

The training that I received funding towards was *Dissociation in Children & Adolescents: Assessment & Treatment* with training provider BICTD. This is an online hybrid training course which can be completed between 12-18 months and requires approximately 7 hours study a month or around 2 hours a week. There is also a monthly case consultation which allows for peer supervision and feedback from trainer Rene Marks. Upon completion of the course, a certificate is awarded in collaboration with the European Society for Trauma and Dissociation UK (ESTD-UK) and First-Person Plural (FPP) that can count toward CPD points as well as evidence of having been trained in this particular field.

The training begins with an exploration of attachment theory and principles and the impact of attachment disruption on children and young people. The material then moves on to explore trauma and trauma related symptoms and to introduce the concept of dissociation with an overview of dissociative symptoms and common misdiagnoses.

There are PDF articles available for download and recommended chapters for reading that offer a range of theoretical models of understanding dissociation including contributions from Bessel Van Der Kolk, Fran Waters, First Person Plural and Arriane Struik. There are also interviews with/case studies provided by Joy Silberg. This wide range of theories and models allows the participant to expand their understanding of the various ways in which dissociation can manifest and present in children and encourages an integrative way of working.

At the end of each module, you are asked to submit a brief assignment outlining a case you are working with and the way in which you have implemented your learning. During a live online consultation as part of a group with other trainees, you can then access supervision directly from Rene Marks and explore how the theory relates to your practice. Rene offers new insights and perspectives based on her extensive knowledge and experience and guides participant's cases in a creative and supportive way.

Numerous practical and ethical issues are explored throughout the training, including how to work with children who may be lacking an external attachment figure and how to gauge when your client may be ready to move onto the trauma processing phase of therapy.

Rene offers case studies that give insight into different ways to help children and adolescents process the trauma memories held by dissociative parts and move towards an integrated sense of self. She also presents ways to manage controlling behaviour in the therapy space, help parents understand dissociation and to work with perpetrator introjects which can present as violent, oppositional and rejecting to the therapist/therapy.

The training finishes with two archive days at BICTD where participants explore clinical material in more detail and the practical application of assessment and treatment.

This training has been highly relevant to my practice and has enabled me to assess and treat dissociative clients with more confidence and an increased knowledge of relevant tools, theories and strategies. Exploring specific cases with guidance from Rene has allowed me to help my client's progress and healing and has enabled me to educate key people in their world so they better understand how to respond to dissociation in a supportive and constructive manner.