

Training in Multifamily Group Therapy as a Treatment for Young People with Eating Disorders

11th, 12th, 13th and 14th September 2017

The training was delivered by Esther Blessitt, and Jonathon Espie, both experts in the treatment of eating disorders in adolescents. The training was of an excellent standard and the feedback from clinicians at the end of the four days was excellent.

The aims of the training were:

- To provide clinicians with an understanding of the theoretical principles underpinning effective family intervention in child and adolescent eating disorders
- To help clinicians to develop specific skills to engage and intervene with families where a child or adolescent has an eating disorder
- To explore ways in which systemic family therapy and individual therapy skills can be combined with knowledge about eating disorders, nutrition and the medical risk associated with eating disorders in the context of a team
- To ensure that clinicians are competent and effective in the application of MFT treatment in their own service settings
- To ensure participants develop networks of professional support in running multi-family groups
- To improve engagement and clinical outcomes for young people and their families through the use of MFT in addition to single family-therapy treatment

Subsequently, we together with other clinicians, ran a multifamily group therapy for eating disorders at their service, Eist Linn, in Cork, Ireland. Six families attended the group, with parents, young people with Anorexia, and siblings all participating. Follow up days were held at 3 later points in the year. Feedback at the end of the therapy was very positive.

Evaluation indicates that the multifamily group therapy programme is associated with empowerment and enablement, improved family communication, externalisation of the disorder, acquisition of new skills to fight anorexia and patient satisfaction. It has provided a useful step down and alternative for some families to inpatient care.

As individual clinicians and as a service we are very grateful for the funding we received from the Foundation for Professionals in Services to Adolescents which has allowed us to deliver an intensive outpatient treatment to young people and families which has been very well received and which we believe has likely resulted in cost savings in reducing need for inpatient admissions. We plan to continue to offer MFGT regularly at our service.