

## **Advanced Diploma in Systemic Thinking and Practice qualification**

I am a Humanistic Counsellor and a Director for an organisation providing Counselling services for children and young people in Nottingham/shire.

I received funding from Foundation PSA for the University Advanced Diploma in Systemic Thinking and Practice qualification at the University of Derby. This course involved fortnightly taught days and independent study across the year September 2019 to May 2020.

The course aims were to provide a foundation for professionals working with families with the theory and skills used in Systemic Practice. This course covered 'Reflexive Practice', 'Personal and Professional Development' and 'The Development of Systemic Thinking and Practice'; all in line with the accrediting body AFT (Association of Family Therapy).

Receiving this funding has enabled me to enhance my counselling practice and develop my work with families. I have particularly benefited from the fundamental theory behind Systemic practice in broadening my awareness as a professional to consider systems, feedback and how individual's problems exist in relation to others. In practice I have been able to notice patterns that are dysfunctional within relationships and ask questions within therapy that help the clients to notice themselves in relation to this and others. I was also captured by the Structural Family Therapy approach where the focus is looking at dysfunctional structures within families; including roles, rules, power, and boundaries, both within the immediate family, but also cross-generational and within the wider society. This was useful as my work reflects many issues like this that have a negative impact on a child or young person's mental, emotional, and physical health. I can now use this awareness and the techniques in practice to help the family system and relieve symptoms presenting in the children members of the family, i.e. challenging behaviour, anxiety, depression. I also found the dialogical approach is very similar to my current practice, however I learnt about how to use this approach with a family and reflecting teams. I also like how these approaches in their contemporary form de-pathologise clients and rather allows for change and understanding to involve important relationships like family, friends, and the wider society.

Prior to this course I did not have the confidence to invite family members into counselling with their child or young person (where the child or young person was referred alone as 'the problem'). However, I have now developed confidence to improve the child's therapeutic experience and development by doing this, the results have been positive for both the child and the parents/carers. I have also been able to reflect on my position and influence within my organisation, as a result of this we are in the process of developing systems that promote more multi-agency working and support for the family of the child or young person attending counselling than we have previously done. This is a positive move for my organisation and the clients we support. This course has continued to increase awareness and tools pertaining to ethical issues and working with social differences that I come across in my day to day practice.

I would highly recommend this course to those who would like to develop their knowledge and skills in working therapeutically to support family functioning, particularly where the children members of the family are experiencing distress due to family dysfunction.

I would like to thank FPSA for their support, as without this I would not have been able to complete the course.