

## **Counselling and Psychotherapy MSc Salford (Year 1) 9/2017-5/2018**

### **Introduction**

I would firstly like to thank the FPSA for their invaluable support towards financing the first year of above BACP professionally accredited postgraduate programme in Psychotherapy, which would have been largely impossible without the crucial backing of the organisation. The course has so far both greatly enriched my understanding of contemporary approaches to providing psychological therapies and hugely expanded my own practical / applied skills as a Mental Health Practitioner working within a frontline service supporting young people.

The funding has also allowed me to complete the crucial first stage of my professional training and development towards finally becoming an accredited therapist. Year 1 of the programme has so far comprised of an intensive roster of academic lectures offering an advanced overview of theoretical approaches to therapeutic practice, intensive skills practice groups and personal development tutorials stretching over two challenging semesters. The second semester of the programme, has focused on Cognitive Behavioural Approaches to understanding and treating common mental health disorders for a range of client groups. Alongside the academic / taught component of the programme, I have also undertaken a supervised placement providing counselling to young people across a range of educational settings. This has allowed me to consolidate, practice and apply my developing therapeutic skills in the direct service of young people with a range of multiple complex needs.

### **Rationale for undertaking the course:**

There is a strong evidence base for the use of direct therapeutic support / treatment for young people, particularly within an early interventionist framework as a means of promoting positive mental health results and preventing further escalation in symptoms or personal distress. My own personal rationale for embarking on the above programme can be summed up in the following points:

- To greatly develop upon my existing experience as qualified Social Worker and experienced Mental Health Practitioner in specifically working therapeutically with young people and supporting clients with more complex needs.
- To complete the first stage of becoming an accredited counsellor, with the express aim of specialising in early intervention trauma care for young people both online and within a face to face setting.
- My final aim is to grow as a frontline practitioner and learn a range of new practical or 'hands on skills' in supporting young people within two frontline services.

### **Reflection on the course (benefits):**

In terms of the positive impact on my own professional development as a Mental Health Practitioner after embarking on the course and the direct benefit for the young people that I support, I can offer the following observations;

- The programme has provided an enriching environment to gain practical skills in the assessment and treatment of mental health difficulties in young people
- It's also facilitated my own personal development and self understanding as a trainee counsellor which is a crucial step in being able to offer a safe therapeutic environment for young people to recover or thrive

- In terms of my own current / ongoing professional practice the programme has deepened my understanding around conducting clinical formulations, developing person centred interventions and understanding in greater depth various psychological models / approaches to understanding the root causes of mental health difficulties in young people.
- I have also witnessed firsthand the positive impact on my client work, particularly in being able to bring a wealth of knowledge and techniques, including Cognitive Behavioural therapy to sessions. This has been further evidenced by better recorded outcomes from young people and more positive end of session feedback during my sessions.
- The course has also allowed me to broaden my current clinical role and enabled me to take the lead position on Solution Focused interventions at Xenzone. This is a brief evidence-based intervention ideal for young people with low to medium psychosocial needs and is particularly useful for treating anxiety-based disorders.

To some up, I believe the first year of my masters' programme has provided a nourishing learning environment for my professional development as a practitioner and allowed me to take away a whole host of practical skills that have greatly benefited the young people I support in both my professional frontline roles. It's also given me the confidence to effectively apply these skills and provide a greater depth of clinical support to an increasing number of young people with complex needs.

Once again, many thanks to the FPSA for their support

David Foy

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