

Report in relation to the Foundation level qualification I have now achieved in Theraplay as a result of funding provided by The Foundation for Professionals in Services for Adolescents.

The purpose of this report is to express my appreciation for the generous funding you have provided to enable me to complete Level 1 of the Theraplay Practicum. I began working towards this qualification in May 2015 and completed it in February 2016.

Theraplay

Theraplay is a relationship focused parent-child therapy. It aims to promote secure and positive attachments between a child and their carer(s). Theraplay offers a carer and child the opportunity to engage in activities, games and interactions that aim to develop specific dimensions within their relationships. The 4 dimensions focused on within Theraplay are;

Structure; Supporting the carer to implement and maintain limits, order and direction and supporting the child to accept these.

Engagement; Supporting the carer to attune to and engage the child, supporting the child to respond and accept the carers attuned attempts to engage

Challenge; Supporting carers to use challenge appropriately (considering emotional development and expectations) and supporting the child to participate in activities that support and encourage their efforts to advance developmentally.

Nurture; Supporting carers to offer nurture and supporting the child to accept the carer's attention, soothing and care giving.

Process of completion of qualification

Upon receiving funding for up to level 1 of the Theraplay practicum from FPSA in early 2015, I was able to complete an application to the Theraplay Institute to ascertain a place on the practicum qualification. As part of the application I had to submit 2 videos of me practicing Theraplay and a thorough analysis of each of the videos. In July 2015 I was accepted on to the training and was assigned a UK based supervisor. Over the last 9 months I have had 8 supervision sessions with my supervisor which has enabled me to reach the point of passing Level 1. Each supervision session involved watching a video recording of one of my Theraplay sessions with a child and carer I am currently working with through my role as a clinician within a CAMHS team for looked after and adopted children. Supervision offered me time and space to reflect on the sessions to consider how they were being experienced by all involved, the progress being made and how to continue to move forward. It offered me opportunity to explore challenges and support carers and children through difficult emotional experiences. My supervisor offered me ideas and suggestions to improve my practice which I continue to refer back to at times of challenge.

Value of the qualification for my role

The supervision sessions I have had have undoubtedly supported my development and skills in using Theraplay as a therapeutic intervention which has been to the benefit of several families that I have worked with. It has stretched my reflection and analytic skills to a degree that has enabled me to adjust my approach to facilitate more effective results. Through practising Theraplay I have been able to support attachment relationships between children in care and their carers which has resulted in children feeling more secure within their relationships and therefore more emotionally settled. It has also supported the development of a more positive sense of identity for many children – the belief that they are competent, fun to be with, cared for and important. This has supported the self-esteem and confidence of many children and has facilitated the development of resilience within children to manage the challenges of life without such high levels of distress. Theraplay sessions have also given me the opportunity to support carers to gain skills and confidence in caring for and responding to their children (during times of challenge) to support the stability of the placements.

Having developed such skills in reflecting/analysing on the use of Theraplay (through supervision) has also been beneficial for colleagues both in my team and in other services that work alongside my team. I have been able to support colleagues to think about their approach/work within Theraplay and informally support them with children/families they have been working with.

Overall, the development of these skills is proving beneficial in several areas of practice – not only in Theraplay sessions themselves but also in the way I understand children and their patterns of relating and attachment strategies.

I am eager now to progress onto the next stage of the practicum to further progress my skills in this model of intervention. Thank you again for supporting such a fantastic learning opportunity – I feel extremely lucky to have had your support.

March 2016