

Report for FPSA 2016-2017

I am currently working as a Trainee Family Therapist in a Tier 4 setting in a young people's service on a Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU). The PICU unit is part of a wider Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) for young people who are in an acute and distressed mental state within a larger hospital. Young people are frequently placed at a distance from their families due to limited services available nationally. Previously I worked as a mental health nurse for 10 years in different contexts (young and older services).

I received funding for the first year of the MSc in Systemic Psychotherapy at the Birmingham Training Program for Family and Systemic Psychotherapy and Systemic Practice at Parkview clinic in Birmingham which is part of Birmingham Children's Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. This course was attended weekly over an academic year and will result in the qualification as a Family Therapist at the end of the second year. The first year was completed on the 20th of July 2017. Receiving funding from FPSA has enabled me to undertake this training alongside my job and being a parent of two young children.

The first year training has been completed which combined theory, practice and research based on the themes;

Theme 1: Co-creating cultures for therapy, teamwork, and learning.

Theme 2: Problems, possibilities, resources and restraints: co-constructing contexts for practice

Theme 3: Power, prejudice and ethics in therapeutic conversations.

This involved completing assignments and research alongside supervised clinic practice on the course in the community context and in my own agency outlined above. In these contexts and learning environment the Approach, Method and Technique enabled connections to be made in the three themed modules, enabling me to work with families and systems to consider problems and restraints which are faced and work towards possibilities and resources enabling change to take place. I attended additional workshops on CMM (coordinated management of Meaning), Making personal and professional connections whilst working systemically with systems and Living with Values (ethics as embodiment).

My experience of the training has been enlightening. It has enabled me to connect with young people, their families and systems of varying degree in complexities, joining with them in their day to day dilemmas whilst holding in mind different contexts to understand and co-create meaning. These are often families described as 'hard to reach' and have negative labels attached following their involvement with services.

Understanding that, it takes a difference to make a difference, I have become increasingly aware of my role within systems. I had previously noticed the influence of and patterns of

interaction in maintaining difficulties, becoming increasingly aware of the role of the therapist noticing that everything I say and do may affect the system. Being aware of my use of self-as a therapist and my own personal and professional assumptions and influences and how these differ amongst individuals and families has enabled me to check out with clients using relational reflexivity and to adopt a different approach. This has helped me to engage and empower families from an ethical perspective. I also offer supervision to junior staff and am able to share the ideas and learning from my course.

NICE guidelines advocate family interventions with young people admitted into our service and I hope that this involvement may lead them to feel understood and recognise their own expertise and resources at that point in time hoping to enable a different trajectory in the future.

Pamela Leng

Trainee Family Therapist