

16th February 2011

The Association for Professionals in Services for Adolescents
The Mount Lodge, Church Street
Whitchurch, RG28 7AR

Dear Ms Thorne,

On the behalf of Childhood First, I would like to thank Association for Professionals in Services for Adolescents for their donation of £2,268.00 towards the cost of the Systemic Family Therapy Training Certificate for two of our family workers. The two staff members have successfully attained the Certificate and are now incorporating the knowledge gained into their everyday practice.

Enclosed with this letter is the evaluation report which details the activities carried out and the impacts achieved. The training has been extremely beneficial to The Family Workers, the children and families with whom they work and Childhood First as an organisation. The knowledge gained on the course has allowed the Family Workers to operate more holistically, while at the same time informing our future practice. These significant changes have highlighted the need and importance of ongoing education for our staff.

I would like to use this opportunity to invite representatives of the Association for Professionals in Services for Adolescents to Childhood First and gain a first hand perspective of the work we do. To arrange a suitable visiting time, ask any questions or request any more information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 0207 928 7388 or email a.abili@childhoodfirst.org.uk.

I would like very much to thank the Association for Professionals in Services for Adolescents towards the continuing education of our staff. I very much look forward to working with you again soon.

Yours sincerely,

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Ash Abili
Development Manager, Trusts and Foundations

Childhood First

healing hurt minds

EVALUATION REPORT “Systemic Family Therapy Training for 2 Family Placement and Support Officers”

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EVALUATION REPORT

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Introduction:

This report details the outcomes of the Systemic Family Therapy Training (SFTT) undertaken by two placement and family support officers at Childhood First, towards which the A.S.P.A. donated a total of **£2,268.00**.

Executive Summary of Project:

The aim of this project was for two family workers to undergo systemic family therapy training in order to further their professional and educational development and train towards the Postgraduate Certificate in Applied Systemic Theory Certificate Diploma at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust.

The Systemic Family Therapy Certificate is a continuing professional development opportunity for professionals in the social, health, education and other related services industries. Focusing on developing an understanding of systemic theory and its applications to professional contexts, this course aims to provide the placement workers with a deeper understanding of the issues which they deal with everyday – and provide an academic, theoretical framework for intervention. This should allow them deal with the complex issues with which they are confronted daily – ultimately benefiting the adolescents with whom they work towards achieving seamless integration within mainstream society.

Activities Undertaken:

Two family workers Ms. Laura Downs and Ms. Stephanie Berry enrolled and completed the following course, “1st year introductory course in Systemic Practice (Child Focused)” and looked at the development of Family Therapy, the types of Family Therapy and benefits thereof. The course deepened their thinking of families with whom they work and allowed them to think of the benefits, methods and consequences to families being offered therapy, especially for those families whose children’s rehabilitation occurs at home. The students also learnt various processual paradigms such as genogramic methods, and how to incorporate these paradigms into the therapeutic processes surrounding the children in our care.

Project Objectives:

The Systemic Family Therapy Course has the following learning objectives:

- Initially, this diploma will develop a theoretical framework needed to explore perspectives for professionals working with or wanting to work with individuals, couples, families, work groups and organisations. This will give participants an academic framework into which they can apply their existing skills sets.

- The course will enable participants to apply the systemic ideas learnt through the course to participants' current work practice.
- The course will enable participants to experience the application of systemic ideas in the context of their own teaching and learning.
- The course will allow participants to explore contemporary developments and practice within the area of child care and therapeutic treatment.

Main Beneficiaries:

The primary beneficiaries of this training are the two family workers whom undertook this training.

The secondary beneficiaries are the 64 children and families with whom the family workers work, over the course of 2010.

Practical Impact on Participants:

For the family workers, the training has achieved the following benefits:

- **Development of Critical, Reflective and Creativity Skills:** - The introductory course has provided additional dimensions to the therapeutic training received by the family workers from Childhood First. Complimenting the ground theories in Integrated Systemic Therapy, the introductory SFTT course has added the ability to think critically, reflexively, and creatively in its applications towards the achievement of the best possible outcomes in new ways. A practical example of this was demonstrated in the suggestion by one of the family workers – negating a decision which temporarily allowed the use of a previously restricted (to the children) area, while their common space was being renovated; calling instead for the creation of a completely new space. Her suggestion was predicated on the critical and lateral thinking learnt on the course – resulting in her correctly identifying the possible risk to the children's psyche after the renovations are completed and this area is once again restricted, as they could feel that something more has been taken away. This was something that had not previously been considered.
- **Consideration of Differing Perspectives:** - As with any specialism, IST practitioners are prone to viewing all cases through the perspective of Integrated Systemic Therapy. The SFTT has provided the family workers with the ability to view problems from different perspectives – providing greater insights and in a family setting, more readily identifying sources of distress and disruption in the children with whom we work.
- **Development of Multi-Disciplinary Skills:** - As a result of the SFTT, the family workers now possess transferrable skills that allow them to work as part of a multidisciplinary team. Because they now possess foundational knowledge in family therapy, systemic practice and child therapy, they are better able to liaise, facilitate and connect communications between

professionals in different specialties – allowing for optimum outcomes in the children in question.

- **Development of Self-Reflective Skills:** - The SFTT has enhanced the skills of self – reflection and self-evaluation in the family workers. This has allowed for better development of our out-reach programmes and the greater insight into work already performed, informs our future practice, allowing for areas of change and growth.

Project Outcomes:

This training has had the following outcomes in the children and young people with whom we work:

- As a result of the systemic training, the therapeutic treatment and care provided to the children and young people with whom the Family Workers interact, is now more multi-dimensional, increasing the methods and ways in which they can communicate their distress and gain the mental skills needed to heal from their trauma and reintegrate into society as functioning, purposeful individuals.
- A more integrated approach to their treatment, education and care has allowed the children and young people to feel more secure as the different parental and authority figures in the differing aspects of their lives deliver programmes that mirror and complement each other.
- The training has enabled the family workers better able to make informed decisions regarding children’s placements and for them to better assist in ensuring that the placement is sustainable – thus reducing the level of volatility experienced in the children’s placements.
- The Systemic Family Therapy Course has provided the Family Workers with tools that have allowed them to strengthen ties with adoption and third party placements – allowing them to translate the expertise of Childhood First into forms, packages and services useable for less specialised providers.

Conclusion:

The Systemic Family Therapy Certificate Course has been an invaluable resource, for both the Family Workers and the children with whom they work. Not only has it enabled the Family Workers to be more effective in their direct work with the children and young people, but it has also informed our working practice, through the critical thinking and self-evaluation skills learnt by the participants. As we strive to develop, grow and improve our working practice, the constructive feedback from the perspective of front line staff is essential for the continual development of the work we do. This course has highlighted the importance of continuous training as our understanding mental health issues in adolescents continues to grow and evolve.