

The funding that I gained from FPSA enabled me to study the intermediate (second year) of the Systemic thinking and practice course at Derby University. I am very thankful for this support without which I would not have been able to continue with this training. The application process was very clear. I received the money very promptly which enabled me to immerse myself in studying knowing that the monies were available.

Systemic therapy seeks to address people not only on the individual level, as had been the focus of earlier forms of therapy, but also as people in relationships, dealing with the interactions of groups and their interactional patterns and dynamics. It is particularly useful as a way of working with young people and adolescents as it focuses on the family or those who are they are in close relationships rather than seeing the young person as the one with problems. The aim of therapy is to work on the problems by encouraging the family to assist with the problem and empathise with each other. In therapy they are given the opportunity to think about each other's needs and build on their resilience's as individuals and as a group with the aim of making positive changes in their lives.

### Overview of the course

The course included building on the knowledge gained in the foundation (year one) to consider systemic models in more depth and make links to practice. Some of the models included where; narrative, strategic, solution focused and also key ideas such as hypothesising, circularity and neutrality as well as techniques such as interviewing for intervention. Guest speakers who are professionals in practice gave workshops about their areas of work; including intellectual disability, sexual abuse and marital therapy. There was also an emphasis upon research and evidence based practice and development of a critical evaluative stance to evidence. Power issues, self-reflexivity and diversity in theory and practice were considered throughout the course. Working in smaller groups for parts of study days in College enabled learning to be shared and embedded. The development of a portfolio of using systemic techniques and models in my own Agency was also an integral part of my learning to apply the approaches.

### My experience of the course

The course provided me with an opportunity to think about my current working techniques and practices and time to reflect on how to make myself more helpful and effective in my work with children and carers. I benefitted greatly from the support and encouragement of the course leaders as well as other students on the course who generously shared their skills and experiences. I have added to my existing skill set and have had the opportunity to work alongside other family therapists within the broader CAMHS as part of my training which has given me confidence and been important as part of my personal and professional development.

### How I am using the training within my team

I have increased my knowledge and have utilised different ways of working systemically both in consultations and individual work supporting both professionals and foster families to support each other and share perspectives and develop clear plans to move situations forward.

I have also supported young people in care with life story work helping them to consider their histories in ways that help them view themselves positively and empower them and are non-shaming.

I have been part of the reflecting team with experienced family therapists supporting families with a wide variety of difficulties including; bullying, eating difficulties, domestic violence and self-harm issues.

I have worked alongside foster carers and young people on using externalising techniques to think about challenging and controlling behaviour. In one case this work resulted in strengthening the relationships, building empathy as well as preventing further placement moves for the young person.

I am planning to continue to use the techniques as a way of working with adoptive families who are experiencing difficulties and offer systemic therapy as a way of working as it is not currently available within the children looked after team.

I have also shared some skills within my team during peer supervision by giving a short presentation on techniques that can be integrated within other colleagues ways of working. I continue to value the nurturing and support I have received on the course and am mindful of the increase in my own reflections on my work and self-reflexivity. Overall I have benefitted hugely in terms of my own personal and professional growth as a result of studying on this course.

The course was inspiring and I hope to be able to continue to study systemic ways of working in the future

Alex Hardy Fry

(BAHons, MADipsw)

Specialist Social Worker for Nottingham City Children Looked After Team at CAMHS