

Masters in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Children, Young People and Families

Firstly I would like to sincerely thank FPSA for the funding provided which enabled me to complete the Masters year in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) for Children, Young People and Families.

The course

The course in CBT for Children, Young People and Families provides training for practitioners in outcome-based CBT interventions to promote psychological wellbeing in children and young people. I attended the course at the Anna Freud Centre, and it is accredited by University College London. It consisted of 8-12 core days throughout the year, which included professional practice tutorials, research teaching and supervision (the previous Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma years included teaching, practice and tutor group sessions on CBT evidence-based principles and approaches and disorder specific formulations and interventions). This course offered me the opportunity to enhance my skills as an Educational Psychologist in providing individual, group and systemic CBT based interventions in schools. The Masters year in particular has helped me develop and implement CBT based interventions for groups of children who have benefited from friendship and social skills development.

Course structure and content

I have completed the Postgraduate Certificate and Postgraduate Diploma years, and FPSA supported me with funding for the final Masters year.

Year 1 Certificate (60 credits)

Module 1: Introduction to CBT in context (15 credits)

Module 2: Assessment and engagement for CBT in context (15 credits)

Module 3: Basic skills (developing understanding) (15 credits)

Module 4: Basic skills (methods of change) (15 credits)

Year 2 Diploma (120 credits)

Module 5: Introduction to disorder specific approaches (15 credits)

Module 6: Disorder specific approaches (anxiety) (15 credits)

Module 7: Complex problems (15 credits)

Module 8: CBT in context (15 credits)

Year 3 Taught Masters (180 credits)

As part of the Masters year I completed a research thesis and continued to undertake CBT casework.

The benefits of the course on my professional practice and development

I feel that the course has enabled me to gain a range of opportunities to develop my competence, knowledge and theoretical understanding in the use of CBT, whilst also gaining a real understanding of both the strengths and limitations of this approach, including where there is evidence that other models are likely to be more effective than CBT. The course is very focused on how CBT might best be adapted in working with children, young people, their parents/carers and staff who work with them in schools. Crucially, it encourages an outcome-based approach in ascertaining the interventions most appropriate to promote psychological wellbeing and the best outcomes.

Over the course of my CBT training I have undertaken a range of CBT based work and I have been able to utilise my skills across a number of schools. I have achieved successful outcomes for children and young people across primary, and secondary schools, and I am beginning to support some college settings too. My work thus far has included CBT based interventions for children and young people who have experienced a range of difficulties including: extreme anxiety and panic attacks, school phobia, emotional behavioural regulation, and social difficulties. I have also had the opportunity to develop specialist CBT knowledge and experience in supporting children and young people with autism and this has highlighted the importance of using appropriate modifications and adaptations. It has been particularly important when working with children and young people in schools to work jointly with staff and parents as these collaborations have been crucial in optimising impact. I have also provided guidance and training to colleagues on the use of CBT practice in our work as Educational Psychologists, and this will continue to be a focus for our service development.

I have had the opportunity to develop CBT group-based interventions in schools. I have facilitated groups for children and young people to support their social and emotional development, self-esteem and resilience. As part of my Masters research I have had the opportunity to implement an evidence-based group based intervention to support social and friendship development for targeted groups of children, including those with high functioning autism.

My research

My research investigated the implementation and evaluation of an abridged version of the Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills® (PEERS®) Curriculum for School-Based Professionals (Laugeson, 2014). This is an evidence-based intervention derived from America, which to my knowledge had not been evaluated in the UK. In my study there were two intervention groups in separate schools and I supported school staff in training and delivery. Each group consisted of a mixture of pupils e.g. some with social difficulties, some social role models, and there was a pupil with a diagnosis of high functioning autism in each group. The preliminary results indicate some positive changes across different members of the groups. It provides some evidence to show positive impact of the intervention on social skill development, emotional wellbeing, and social inclusion of pupils with high functioning autism. I will continue to develop and support the implementation of this intervention in my specialist role as a Senior Educational Psychologist to support children and young people. Publication of this research could also support its wider implementation.

Reference

Laugeson. E. (2014). *The PEERS Curriculum for School-Based Professionals: Social Skills Training for Adolescents with Autistic Spectrum Disorder*. Routledge: New York.

Contact information

I am happy to be contacted by anyone who may be interested in this course, or my area of research and specialism. I can be contacted on lauren.taylor@enfield.gov.uk

I am very grateful to FPSA for making this opportunity possible for me, and for the CBT based work it has enabled me to do with children, young people and families within schools.

Lauren Taylor

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11.7.2016