

I'd like to thank FPSA for the financial support given for me to continue with my professional training. I would not have been able to commit to the training without this help and I'm very grateful for the opportunity.

1. I received funding towards the Intermediate Level Course in Systemic Practice 2016/2017 at the University of Leeds. The course was accredited by the Institute of Family Therapy. I have now received my certificate. The course took place at the University of Leeds in the Leeds Institute of Health Sciences. The course took place over a year between September 2016 and June 2017 on Wednesday evenings in term time.

2. I completed the training on the 21st June 2017

3. My name is Joel McKay-Smith, I have an undergraduate degree in Sociology from the University of Sheffield completed in 2006. I have a Masters in Social Work from the University of Sussex completed in 2010. I have an advanced certificate in Systemic Practice completed in 2015 through my employers (Hammersmith and Fulham) in partnership with the Institute of Family Therapy, this course allowed me to follow on to complete the intermediate course. My experience is in children and families social work in fostering and adoption and more recently for the last 4 years in local authority statutory child protection work. I am a social worker in Rotherham Borough Council in a locality team. This means I work with vulnerable children and families who need additional support through Child In Need plans, or who are in need of protection through Child Protection Plans. I often work with complex families facing difficult problems which often have been experienced through generations. The most crucial aspect of my work relates to trying to bring change to lives where children are at risk. Use of systemic ideas are crucial to explore hypothesis, generate ideas, and to understand techniques for how to explore issues and patterns in family networks. This training was crucial to develop and improve my skills in this area.

4. This course builds on the knowledge and use of theory and practice in Systemic Family Therapy achieved on the foundation level courses. It concentrates on the development of therapeutic skills with families, couples and individuals and focuses on the application of systemic ideas in participants' work contexts. The training programme includes lectures, workshops, small group work, practice exercises and role play. Course members are expected to present case material for consultation regularly in tutor groups. Systemic thinking and practice consider the client in context of his or her past and present family, or other organisations or systems which they might be a part of. Issues are seen as created and maintained by patterns of inter-relationships, rather than caused in a linear way. Systemic work focuses on communication and behaviour patterns. Issues are viewed from a life cycle or historical perspective. Resources for effective change are embedded within the context of every individual. The systemic approach helps in understanding how individuals' symptoms are related to the context in which they live. The significance of the processes within families is stressed and the wider social processes which impinge on families are also explored. It emphasises integration of the range of

models that have evolved within systemic theorising including structural, strategic, trans-generational, cognitive-behavioural, and attachment ideas. It takes the perspective that relationships reflect the experiences of the particular individuals over their respective life cycles but that these relationships are themselves continually evolving and do so within a wider social system.

5. I have massively enjoyed this training which has spurred me on and equipped me to continue with children and families social work. I feel strongly that systemic practice skills allow me to explore the issues facing adolescents and children with their families in a more useful way, avoiding blame and 'linear' ideas about causality, and instead looking towards the impact of context and inter-relationships on individuals, as well as understanding patterns and scripts about families which may be having an impact on a child. I intend to continue with systemic practice training into the MSC if this is an option for me later in my career, but for the moment I have enhanced my practice and ability to support families in complex situations. I would encourage other children and families social workers to consider this training.