

## **Training in IPT-A**

In January 2020, your funding enabled me to complete a 5-day training course on Interpersonal Psychotherapy for Adolescents (IPT-A) led by Dr Roslyn Law at the Anna Freud Centre in London.

IPT-A is a time-limited (12–16 sessions) individual psychotherapy for adolescents who are suffering from mild-moderate depression. It was adapted from interpersonal psychotherapy for adults, and its focus is on how relationship issues are related to the onset and ongoing occurrence of depressive symptoms.

IPT-A aims to help adolescents to recognise their emotions and think about how interpersonal events or conflicts might affect their mood. It tries to improve their communication and problem-solving skills, to reduce stress experienced in relationships, and alleviate their depression.

The beginning stages of the therapy focus on identifying a particular 'focal area' for the therapy. This is achieved by understanding the patterns in the young person's relationship network and the history of the current depressive episode. There are four possible interpersonal focal areas (complicated grief, role transition, conflict and interpersonal sensitivities) which are then addressed in the middle stages of the therapy. The ending stage consolidates the new learning and focusses on helping the young person to apply it in their life on an ongoing basis. The therapy often includes several sessions with the young person's parents, who can develop interpersonal skills of their own and support the young person in applying their own.

As a Clinical Psychologist, I was able to apply the training for use immediately in my work with children and adolescents in an NHS CAMHS.

IPT-A was particularly useful training in the current CAMHS context, where young people are typically offered 12 weeks of evidenced based therapy. Most clinicians at CAMHS are proficient in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) which addresses unhelpful thinking patterns and behaviour associated with psychological problems. But some young people do not respond to this type of therapy, or their problems are more related to the interpersonal. Training in IPT-A allowed me to offer the young people of Wandsworth an alternative evidenced based treatment.

6 months after completing the training, In July 2020, I started the process of becoming an accredited practitioner in IPT-A. The accreditation process involves undergoing weekly supervision on 4 cases. I record all sessions with young people and use these to improve my practice. Three sessions of 12 are submitted for formal review and marked according to the IPT-A guidelines. To date I have successfully passed one case and on track to pass the second.

I would like to express my gratitude to the FPSA for allowing me this fantastic training opportunity and supporting the young people of Wandsworth.