

Certificate in creative counselling skills for adolescents

Thanks to the generous grant awarded by the FPSA, I was able to complete the above training course, which is for qualified therapists wishing to work creatively with young people. I currently work as a play therapist in a special school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH), with pupils aged 6-16. Although confident that my modality was the most appropriate therapy for many of my clients, I felt that some of the older clients needed something more but wasn't confident that my current skills were enough. I applied for the grant originally in 2019 and was awarded it, but the course didn't go ahead due to low numbers. The FPSA kindly agreed to find the course starting in September 2020 without expecting me to reapply.

The training was run by the Apple Tree Centre in Sheffield. It took place over 5 weekends, roughly once a month. Originally it was intended to be held face to face, and at points we were hopeful that this would be the case, but in the end Covid restrictions meant all the weekends were conducted online. Although I was apprehensive about how the experiential aspects of the course would work online, I was pleasantly surprised. The training was a good mix of theory and practise in small groups. Subjects covered included the adolescent brain, child development, gender and sexuality, ASD and therapeutic life story work. For some of the topics, expert visiting trainers were invited to lead, which was very valuable. There were lots of opportunities to ask questions and to link the theory to our practical work. Those of us in the group were a mix of play therapists and adult counsellors, so there was lots of learning from each other.

In order to be awarded the certificate, I had to write a case study outlining my work with one client aged 11-16, which I have done. I also had to complete 50 supervised hours of work with this client group. The trainers were very flexible with deadlines which was very helpful, as my work was delayed due to school lockdowns.

Following my completion of the course, I now feel more equipped to work with older clients with SEMH difficulties at school. I have learned to adapt my core training for this client group and am able to offer a wider range of tools that suit these clients. Many of the clients I work with have traumatic life histories and/or ASD diagnosis', so the therapeutic life story work and ASD modules of the course have been particularly helpful. I am very grateful to the FPSA for supporting me to undertake this training as I am certain I wouldn't have been able to do so without their support.