

Course funded – year 3, Master of Science level in family therapy and systemic practice at King’s College London. Started October 2024 and completed July 2025.

Role – CAMHS Clinical Specialist in Southwark Adolescent team

Please receive my severe thanks for your generous financial support that allowed me to continue studying towards my Family Therapy qualification. With your assistance I have been able to complete the 3rd year of 4. I have studied at King’s College London which has provided a high level of teaching and rigorous support with my clinical work and academic study. I have been taught and supported by some of the most experienced and leading family therapists and have felt my theoretical knowledge increase significantly.

I have broadened my scope of specific family interventions through teaching and clinical skills seminars. I feel confident using the ABTF (attachment-based family therapy) model and understand the theory underpinning this approach. I have found this approach particularly useful for some of the teenagers I worked with where there have been ruptures in their attachment relationships due to their family’s experience of hardship or trauma. Having the clinical skills to address the relationships in this way has supported me to address severe difficulties for young people in my service. Likewise, I have also developed skills using NVR (non-violent resistance training) approaches which have come in useful for nearly every family I have worked with in CAMHS. For parents of teenagers these strategies and techniques serve a useful way of managing ongoing distress in their sons/daughters’ behaviour and in their responses to them.

I have particularly enjoyed working in a training clinic (at Lambeth CAMHS) with a team of 3 fellow trainees and our supervisor. I have learnt so much through the reflecting team approach and holding multiple (sometimes different) perspectives at the same time. It has developed my critical analysis skills and supported me to think more creatively or “outside the box” when working with high-risk adolescents and their families. I have found in my day-to-day work in CAMHS an increased ability to think from different perspectives and create more tailored formulation and plans using the systemic approach.

For my dissertation research project, which I have been supported to plan throughout the year, I will interview families of teenagers who have engaged in serious self-harm/suicidal behaviour. I will look at how family therapy is able to work alongside families in high-risk situations as well as consider what elements of family dynamics may increase safety in response to such an event. I hope that my project will contribute to my service’s understanding of working with young people and the approaches that have proven clinical success in terms of risk outcomes. I will consider how factors like race, culture and religion may play a part in a family’s beliefs around teenager suicide and how this influences their responses and how they work with CAMHS.

Thanks to my systemic training over the past 2 years, which has been supported by the FPSA, I have moved up a banding in my CAMHS service and now hold greater responsibility for therapy and as well as for more junior staff. I am enjoying contributing to wider MDT discussions through the lens of systemic family therapy and using my professional and academic knowledge to support colleagues from other disciplines. Without my training in this course this would not be possible. I am now taking many families from our family therapy waitlist and thus contributing positively to the overall flow of the team and reducing waitlists for young people seeking help from CAMHS. All in all, the course has improved all aspects of my clinical work with teenagers and supported me in becoming a more capable mental health clinician.