



## *Professional Profiles*

# Psychological Professions Network

North East and Yorkshire

# Professional Profile



Dr Phil Arthington  
Clinical Psychologist & Systemic Family  
Therapist  
Leeds Perinatal Mental Health Service

What led you to train as a family therapist?

Like many family therapists, I grew up with personal experiences that led me to appreciate the influence that family relationships can have on mental wellbeing.

When I started working in adult mental health services as a clinical psychologist, I noticed how my individual therapy clients would often be talking about their close relationships and it seemed a missed opportunity that those important people were not taking part in our work.

Once the idea of relationships as central to being human crystallised, it became a natural step to undertake training in family therapy to allow me to work with couples, families and networks of relationships.

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What qualifications/ training did you complete to do this role?

After completing my clinical psychology doctorate, I undertook training in systemic practice. This is a two year, part-time training that is divided into a Foundation level and an Intermediate level and is ideal for psychological practitioners who wish to develop skills in working with families as part of their current role.

I then went on to study on the MSc Systemic Family Therapy. This is a further two year training programme which includes joining a weekly family therapy clinic with the support of a team of colleagues and live supervision. This was an intensive training experience and I found that having colleagues observing my practice and regularly giving me direct feedback made a huge difference in developing my practice.

Completing this training allowed me to register with the UKCP as a Family and Systemic Psychotherapist. I later completed further training in systemic supervision, which has been particularly useful in my current role which has an emphasis on supporting colleagues in their work with service users and their families.

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What are your hopes/expectations for the profession?

Systemic family therapists are highly skilled at working with complex situations in families as well as with teams and organisations. However, I think that the profession could do better at promoting the contribution that family therapists can make, particularly outside child and adolescent mental health services. Often, professionals consider family therapy when other support has been unsuccessful, and I would like to see more services recognise the value that including family members in their work from the outset can have.

As society, culture and family life changes, family therapy changes with it. A lot of work has been taking place to develop the degree to which the profession is inclusive and reflects the diversity of people we work with, and I expect to see improved equity of access to training to follow from this. I also expect to see the continuation of a trend for systemic therapists to move out of the traditional clinic setting and into community settings where people live; and to continue to expand beyond working with the 'nuclear family' to wider social networks and groups of people with shared lived experiences.