

From: British Association for Music Therapy

To: Education Select Committee, House of Commons

Re: Pre-Legislative Scrutiny: SEN reforms

Date: 10 October 2012

Executive Summary

The British Association for Music Therapy (BAMT) welcomes the government's concern for children and young people with special needs as shown in its current draft legislation. BAMT is the professional body representing HCPC registered music therapists in the UK. We are one of the Arts Therapies. Our professional members work day by day with some of the most vulnerable children and young people with special needs, many of whom will be affected by the proposed changes in legislation.

Music therapy is not primarily an educational intervention. Rather, it supports access to education, for example by addressing communication/ interaction difficulties, providing emotional and psychological support, and raising self-esteem, social engagement and creativity. It is widely used in early years provision, autism and communication disorders, PMLD settings and for children with emotional disorders.

National provision is through a mixture of local authority, health service and third sector providers. A survey undertaken by BAMT in 2011 showed that over 40% of music therapy provision for children (0-19) was through education or local authority services, which shows the importance of educational services as points of access for children to services that support their educational opportunities and wellbeing in general. This reality lies behind many of the specific points made below.

We understand the new legislation as intended to make it easier for children and young people to access the help they need, and for this support to be coordinated locally across educational, health and social care providers. We broadly welcome the proposals and hope the responses to specific points below can be considered by the Committee.

Responses to Specific Questions

- 1) *Whether it would be appropriate to move away from "special educational needs" and use the term "learning difficulties and/or disabilities" instead in the new system?*

We are concerned that both the suggested definitions of need focus on learning or education rather than the overall needs of the child. We would welcome the most general terminology possible to allow the inclusion of children and young people on the basis of overall need, including psychological and social needs, rather than specific learning difficulties or disabilities.

- 2) No comment.

- 3) *Should the scope of the integrated provision requirement be extended to all children and young people, including those with special educational needs?*

Further to point 1) we would therefore welcome the extension of the integrated provision requirement to all children and young people. Definitions or diagnoses of what counts as educational need or a learning disability should not inhibit the provision of services to a child in need.

- 4) No comment.

- 5) *Do the provisions for 19 to 25 year olds provide a suitable balance between rights, protections and flexibility?*

Further to point 3) we would emphasise the continuing needs of many vulnerable children beyond age 19. We would therefore welcome a responsibility on Local Authorities for young people 19-25 regardless of whether they are in education, together with a responsibility to manage transitions in support provision in the best interests of the person.

- 6) *Do the provisions achieve the aim of integrated planning and assessment across agencies?*

We believe that integration of services should be extended to include local voluntary and charitable services as well as statutory agencies. Approximately 30% of music therapy provision for children is through the third sector and these

services are often small. Yet appropriate early support from such agencies may prevent difficulties escalating at a later stage. A responsibility on Local Authorities to communicate with these services could facilitate greater and smoother integration of services as well as earlier access to support. Also, it should be made explicit that Direct Payments to parents/guardians can be used to access such psychological or other support (including music or other arts therapies) where this can support the child's overall wellbeing. As with Speech and Language Therapy, music therapy can be considered as educational provision where it supports access to education or addresses needs relevant to educational achievement.

7) *How could the power given to the Secretary of State to make regulations with regard to the practicalities of the assessment and planning process be best utilised to achieve the aim of integrated support?*

We believe that the most effective assessment will be that which involves those most closely involved with the child. This should include parents/guardians. Professional music therapists can also make a useful contribution to assessment of a child's needs, and often work regularly with a child over a period of time rather than for occasional treatment only. Therefore we would suggest that where a music therapist is working with a child, or can offer assessment, they should be involved in the assessment process.

8) , 9), 10) No comment.

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