

# The British Association for Music Therapy becomes a National Member of the Dementia Action Alliance

July 2014

The British Association for Music Therapy has made a public pledge to help transform the quality of life for people with dementia and their family and carers by becoming a National Member of the Dementia Action Alliance. Alongside other organisations such as Age UK, Department of Health, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, the College of Occupational Therapists, and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, BAMT is committed to supporting those with dementia and those that care for them. With 800,000 people currently living with dementia in the UK, this number is predicted to reach over one million by 2025.

Music has the power to evoke memories, empower, and for those with dementia, it has the ability to bring people in to the here and now, even when words aren't possible.

Many people with dementia experience extreme isolation due to loss of language skills. Music therapy can help to break down this isolation as it provides opportunities for non-verbal communication and interaction.

Music therapy works towards the same goals as those established in Person Centre Care, supporting individual wellbeing and personhood. It helps to create a sense of belonging through engagement, as well as a sense of feeling valued and understood.

Donald Wetherick, Chair of the British Association for Music Therapy says:

*"BAMT is delighted to join the Dementia Action Alliance and we look forward to working with the Alliance to improve care for people affected by dementia. Music therapists have been making a positive difference to the lives of people with dementia for many years, and I am pleased and proud to see this being recognised in recent research such as that with MHA, and in the Government's Dementia Action Strategy."*

Sarah Tilsed, Engagement Officer for the Dementia Action Alliance says:

*"The Dementia Action Alliance warmly welcomes the British Association of Music Therapy (BAMT) as its latest member. We've seen first-hand the important role music can play in improving the well-being of people with dementia and connecting them and their carers to the wider community. We look forward to working with BAMT to support their work in this area."*

As part of BAMT's commitment to support the Alliance, it pledges to engage in collaboration and partnerships with other service providers, stakeholders and relevant bodies to help raise awareness around the effectiveness of music therapy in meeting the seven outcomes outlined in the National Dementia Declaration, as well as supporting further research into music therapy and dementia.

To follow BAMT online, find us on Facebook and Twitter [@musictherapyuk](#)

For more information about music therapy, please visit [www.bamt.org](http://www.bamt.org)

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## Notes to Editors

### 1. Research

In the UK, music therapists are well known for working people with dementia and those that care for them. Music therapy has been recommended as a psychosocial intervention in the UK National Dementia Strategy (Department of Health, 2009) with recent studies showing that music therapy increases well-being both during and after music therapy sessions. Qualitative results from a study conducted by Methodist Homes in collaboration with Anglia Ruskin University show that care staff reported positive effects on residents' symptoms and functioning as a result of the music therapy programme. This supports the most recent published study carried out in Scandinavia (Ridder et al, 2013) demonstrating that music therapy reduces agitation and the need for medication for dementia in residential homes after only six weeks of individual music therapy. This is positive confirmation of the power of music therapy to help people with dementia.

### 2. British Association for Music Therapy (BAMT)

The British Association for Music Therapy is the national body representing music therapists and music therapy in the UK. With just over 700 state registered music therapists belonging to BAMT, a significant number can be found working across the UK in dementia services, supporting people with dementia and those who care for them.

### 3. Dementia Action Alliance

The Dementia Action Alliance is a movement with one simple aim: to bring about a society-wide response to dementia. It encourages and supports communities and organisations across England to take practical actions to enable people to live well with dementia and reduce the risk of costly crisis intervention.

There are 800,000 people living with dementia in the UK. It costs the UK economy £23 billion a year and can ruin the lives of people living with it and those that care for them.

The Dementia Action Alliance is supported by a Secretariat funded through voluntary financial and in kind contributions from members. It is hosted by the Alzheimer's Society and works to a programme agreed by the whole membership and people living with dementia and their carers who attend our sessions.

To find out more or to become a member of the Dementia Action Alliance, please visit [www.dementiaaction.org.uk](http://www.dementiaaction.org.uk)

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### 4. Methodist Homes Association ([www.mha.org.uk](http://www.mha.org.uk))

Research undertaken on behalf of MHA suggests music therapy is doubling the well-being of people with dementia at its care homes. The trial, carried out by Prof. Helen Odell-Miller of Anglia Ruskin University, suggests that music therapy has a dramatic effect on well-being and lessens the incident of anxiety and challenging behaviours.

For more information, please contact Prof. Helen Odell-Miller [helen.odell-miller@anglia.ac.uk](mailto:helen.odell-miller@anglia.ac.uk)

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