

Music Therapy Week, 22 – 28 June 2015

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Professional body urges increase in provision of music therapy for dementia

David's story - 'I feel more alive and happy after each session'

Music Therapy Week 22 – 28 June - highlights

This year's Music Therapy Week is focusing on the valuable role music therapy has to play in supporting people with dementia and those who care for them. Leading research has shown that music therapy can significantly improve and support the mood, alertness and engagement of people with dementia, can reduce the use of medication, as well as helping to manage and reduce agitation, isolation, depression and anxiety, overall supporting a better quality of life ([Ridder et al, 2013](#)). Music therapy can help people at all stages in their journey with dementia to enrich life and tap into the resources that people with dementia still have.

81-year-old David Jacques was diagnosed with both [vascular dementia](#) and [Alzheimer's disease](#) four years ago. He has progressive short-term memory loss, experiences difficulty organizing his time and sometimes gets lost.

'David came to his first music therapy session armed with books of folk songs and opera,' recalls Pemma Spencer-Chapman, a music therapist at the [Guideposts Trust Music Therapy Service](#) in Oxfordshire. 'This was unusual,' she says, 'as most clients don't have any musical training. If I played or sang the melody, David could hold the tune. He sang the melodies increasingly from memory and marveled at his brain's ability to remember them'. The brain remembers emotional experiences more easily than facts, and the emotional nature of music helps these memories come to the fore.

But it wasn't until Pemma suggested to David to improvise with his voice while she accompanied him that a real breakthrough was made, 'to my surprise, David sang not just a melody but words as well. Words and melody have come to him hand in hand,' Pemma says. 'He is surprised, pleased and empowered and I feel his identity has been strengthened in a different way, by being at the heart of the improvisation.'

'I feel more alive and happy after each session', David.

David's wife, Penny, says music therapy is now the high spot of David's week. 'I wish that this form of therapy could be available on the NHS for everyone with dementia as it is clearly so beneficial.'

Prof. Martin Green OBE, Chief Executive of Care England – the leading representative body for independent care services in England, states, 'Music therapy is intrinsic to enriching the quality of life for those with dementia. Recent research demonstrates the significant role it has to play in supporting a better quality of life, and that is because music taps into the resources that people with dementia still have, enabling them to maintain connections with loved ones and the world around them. But, the impact is wider reaching. Carers also see the impact that music therapy can have and thus helps them to better understand the people they are caring for, providing a higher quality of care.'

Over 800,000 people live with dementia in Britain and this is expected to increase to 2 million by 2050. Currently, provision of music therapy for people with dementia is uneven across the UK and those diagnosed are often not able to access it when they need to. Pemma is one of over 800 [HCPC](#) state registered [music therapists](#) who use the unique non-verbal properties of music to support people at all stages of their lives – from helping new born babies develop healthy bonds with their parents, to offering vital, sensitive and compassionate palliative care at the end of life.

Donald Wetherick, Chair of Trustees, says, 'The British Association for Music Therapy is committed to ensuring that music therapy is available to all those who can benefit. This Music Therapy Week we are focusing on people with dementia and their families. Dementia care is a growing healthcare need – it is also an area where music therapist's skills are being shown to be effective and valued. We want to see the enormous potential for music therapy in this field being realized, for the benefit of all those affected by dementia.'

Events for Music Therapy Week are taking place throughout the week from Shetland down to Truro including a parliamentary roundtable discussion sponsored by MPs Tracey Crouch and Debbie Abrahams, taster music therapy sessions, open days, exhibitions, and live improvisational gatherings.

Highlights include:

- An open community group meeting for people with dementia, their families and carers, and improvisational session and welcoming back of puffins at Simbugh Lighthouse, Shetland, Tuesday 23 June
- Open morning at the Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability, Putney, London, Wednesday 24 June
- Roundtable parliamentary discussion, 'Music therapy and dementia: enriching life when it is needed most', Portcullis House, Victoria Embankment, Thursday 25 June
- Cornish church tower bells will peal for Music Therapy Week, Saturday 27 June
- A week of instrument making, concerts and tea parties for the children and families at Rainbows Hospice in Loughborough, All week.

Find out more about what's happening during Music Therapy Week 2015, view our [MTW2015 Events Map](#).

To find out how you can get involved, please visit www.bamt.org and support the campaign online at [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) using @musictherapyuk #MTW2015 #musictherapyuk

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Notes for Editors:

1. What is music therapy?

Music therapy is an established psychological clinical intervention, which is delivered by HCPC registered music therapists to help people whose lives have been affected by injury, illness or disability through supporting their psychological, emotional, cognitive, physical, communicative and social needs.

2. What is Music Therapy Week?

Music Therapy Week, 22 – 28 June, is a week dedicated to raising awareness about how music therapy can improve the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in our communities across the UK.

For more details about Music Therapy Week 2015 and what's happening across the UK please visit www.bamt.org

Interviews with music therapists from around the country available on request.

3. Music therapy in the UK

The work of music therapists has a decisive impact on the lives of hundreds of people every day. The unique health properties of music therapy mean it has the potential to play a vital role in sustaining the health and wellbeing of our society into the future.

Priority areas of public health, care and social wellbeing, such as maximizing opportunities for vulnerable children, improvising adult mental wellbeing and caring for the growing number of people affected by dementia, are all areas where music therapy has shown it has an important contribution to make. Music therapists work across a range of health, social care and educational settings. To find out more, please visit [BAMT](#)

4. Research

[Ridder, Stige, Ovale & Gold \(2013\) Individual music therapy for agitation in dementia: an exploratory randomized controlled trial. Ageing & Mental Health Vol 17, Issue 6, pages 667 - 678](#)

5. Parliamentary Roundtable discussion

'Music therapy and dementia: enriching life when it is needed most', 9am – 12noon, Thursday 25 June, Portcullis House, Victoria Embankment, SW1A 2LW. Speakers include Prof. Helen Odell-Miller, Anglia Ruskin University, Dr. Heema Shukla, Consultant in Public Health, Public Health England, Shelagh Morris, Acting Chief Allied Health Professions Officer, NHS England, Liz Jones, Head of Policy and Research, Methodist Homes Association, Prof. Justine Schneider, University of Nottingham, Tim McLachlan, Operations Director – Greater London, Alzheimer's Society, Dr. Orii McDermott, Music therapy research assistant, University College London, Chris Wilson, music therapist, Methodist Homes Association, Pemma Spencer-Chapman, music therapist, Guideposts Trust.

To attend, please email [BAMT](#)

6. The British Association for Music Therapy (BAMT)

[BAMT](#) is the professional body for music therapy in the UK, providing both practitioners and non-practitioners with information, professional support, and training opportunities. It is also a charity committed to promoting and raising awareness of music therapy, and providing information to the general public. BAMT aims to raise awareness about the impact of music therapy, advance education in music therapy, and acts as a voice for the profession as well as for those who could benefit from music therapy.