



Music Therapy Week June 2015

17 July 2015

Roundtable debate on music therapy and dementia moves towards
developing a national strategy –
'music therapy should be a standard part of care'

Leaders from dementia organizations, academics, researchers and practitioners representing over thirty organizations came together in Portcullis House to debate how access to music therapy can be improved for people with dementia during Music Therapy Week. Organized by the British Association for Music Therapy, the meeting was the first step towards developing a national strategy to enable better access to music therapy for people with dementia.

Prof. Helen Odell-Miller, Director of the Music Therapy Research Centre, Anglia Ruskin University, opened with meeting with powerful research findings on the impact music therapy can have for people with dementia. The research demonstrated a two-fold increase in well-being scores after five months of twice-weekly music therapy sessions, and the scores were sustained after the therapy had ceased. Negative behaviours, such as anxiety halved in three months and continued to fall beyond therapy. The research also highlighted positive benefits for staff who reported that watching videos of music therapy sessions gave them better insight into residents' histories and cognitive functioning, and helped them to improve their communication with them. Prof. Odell-Miller called for an increase in funding for further research into the impact of music therapy for people with dementia and for those who care for them.

The debate also highlighted the challenge to care posed by the expected £22bn cuts to services during this parliament. However, this did not deter the enthusiasm to support an increase in music therapy provision, with Heema Shukla, Consultant in Public Health, Public Health England recommending the founding of a working group to develop a national framework for music therapy provision across primary, secondary and tertiary levels of public health care. This proposal was enthusiastically endorsed, and Shelagh Morris OBE, Deputy Chief Allied Health Professions Officer, NHS England emphasized the importance of partnership working as a really valuable model as a way of drawing together leaders in this field.

Liz Jones, Head of Policy and Research at MHA stated that MHA was absolutely convinced by the range of benefits of music therapy; their plan is to quadruple the number of music therapy sessions they provide over the next ten years, going from 14,500 sessions per year now to 58,000 sessions per year by 2025. Her vision is for music therapy to become a standard part of care for those with dementia.

The meeting took place during Music Therapy Week, a week dedicated to raising awareness about music therapy and the impact it can have in improving the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in our communities across the UK. Sports Minister and Co-Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Dementia, Tracey Crouch MP sponsored the meeting along with Debbie Abrahams, Labour MP and Vice Chair for the APPG on Dementia who opened the meeting. Jane Ellison MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health has asked to be involved in future developments.

ENDS

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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. 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](#)

3. Benefitting the residents of Methodists Homes for the Aged through Music Therapy

More information about the research undertaken by Anglia Ruskin University on behalf of Methodist Homes Association can be found [here](#)

3. Music Therapy and Dementia Care in the 21st Century Conference

Professor Helen Odell-Miller chairs 'Music Therapy and Dementia Care in the 21st Century', a conference in collaboration with Methodist Homes Association and BAMT, which will take place 4 – 6 September 2015, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge. For more information and to book your place, please [click here](#)

4. 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.