

BAMT Guidance for Music Therapists working alongside COVID-19

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With thanks to

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 Version 5: 20th September 2021. THIS IS A WORKING DOCUMENT AND WILL BE REVIEWED REGULARLY.
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Introduction

This set of guidelines aims to support music therapists working as freelancers or private practitioners, and employed music therapists who may appreciate additional help alongside their employer guidelines. This is a live document which will be updated regularly until further notice, as public advice changes.

These guidelines aim to support music therapists returning to work in an environment which may be much changed as a result of restrictions due to COVID-19. These guidelines do not replace the advice you will receive from your employer and/or the host venue where your sessions are due to take place; rather, this document should work as a companion piece to the advice you have already received. When in doubt, please refer to your employer and/or host venue guidelines first.

This is not an exhaustive set of guidelines, neither does BAMT oblige music therapists to work exactly in the methods outlined; rather, this document may provide you with useful information about some questions you may have about your work during this time of uncertainty.

BAMT is not a regulating body. Any guidance from the [HCPC](#) takes precedence over guidance from BAMT, and this guidance would be amended to become in line with HCPC guidance should there be any differences.

Using Clinical Judgement

As every music therapy setting is unique, it is not possible for BAMT to create guidance that will cover every eventuality in the workplace. The onus is on each music therapist as an individual, highly qualified and experienced professional to use these guidelines along with their best clinical judgement, the needs of the employer/host venue, government guidelines and regularly reviewed risk assessments to make decisions about how work is ultimately carried out. This will remain the case however much BAMT's guidelines continue to be reviewed and updated. BAMT encourages every music therapist to use these guidelines to aid your existing clinical expertise and ability to run your practice.

Returning to Work (with particular thanks to Nordoff Robbins, Cambridge Music Services and Suffolk Music Therapy Services)

Therapy is allowed to continue face-to-face under current guidelines (September 2021) - see the end of the section "Where and when you can meet in larger groups" [here](#).

Before you return to work on-site, you may wish to consider the following:

- Ensuring you have received in writing confirmation from your partner organisation that they require your return

- Ensuring you have received from your partner organisation an outline of all relevant risk assessments and Covid-19 infection risk procedures/PPE measures which are applicable to music therapists' working practice, and that reasonable steps have been taken to minimise all risks.
- Confirming in writing that you have read and understood all policies sent to you and that you accept the risks.

As guidelines change, you and your partner organisation may need to repeatedly complete risk assessments per workplace and/or per service user, depending on your particular circumstances.

Safeguarding Policy

In the first instance, you will need to follow the processes outlined in your partner organisation's safeguarding policy. Make sure you have read it and have a copy of it.

You may wish to consider, especially if you are a freelancer or a service provider, how your safeguarding policy fits with your partner organisation's safeguarding policy, and what processes you have outlined to ensure that where there are any discrepancies, or in the unlikely absence of a safeguarding policy in a partner organisation, steps have been taken to clarify the process for reporting safeguarding concerns. You may also wish to consider updating your policy in line with new online or outdoor therapy concerns or requirements.

Types of Music Therapy (with particular thanks to Suffolk Music Therapy)

If you are able or are obliged to work in person, you may wish to consider two options:

1. Face to face sessions
2. Outdoor music therapy

Both types will be covered below in this document.

Face to face sessions

Space for sessions

In order to adhere to current social distancing guidelines, your partner organisation must provide a space where you can work at a safe distance from your client(s), by at least 2 metres. You should also consider adequate ventilation in your working environment as an important precaution.

Pre-session triage

If possible, you should contact your client (or your client's parent or carer if your client is under 18) on the day of the session to check whether they are well and that they or any members of their household are not displaying symptoms of COVID-19.

PPE

It is imperative that you follow your partner organisation's guidance regarding the level of PPE needed and the circumstances where PPE would be required. The types of workplace are so varied for music therapists that the requirements will also necessarily be varied, in a way that is difficult to offer clear information on in this document.

Your partner organisation should, in most cases, provide you with PPE if you have been requested to come into work. You may wish to also consider obtaining your own personal supply of masks, disposable gloves etc to ensure your own feelings of security.

Make sure you are familiar with the latest Government recommendations regarding how long PPE should be worn for and under what circumstances it should be changed. Make sure you know also how to don and doff PPE correctly. If you are completing non-clinical tasks within your setting, you may need to use multiple masks.

Depending on your setting, your clients may also be required to wear PPE, e.g. in a healthcare setting. Ensure you know your partner organisation's stipulations regarding PPE for clients.

Outdoor music therapy (with particular thanks to Suffolk Music Therapy Services)

If music therapy cannot be delivered online, or delivered safely face to face in an enclosed environment, you may wish to consider outdoor music therapy sessions. Some examples of this may be in the garden of a care home, or in the garden of a private residence if music therapy might usually take place in the home. This will require careful risk assessment, with consideration of at least the following:

- Appropriate levels of confidentiality
- Access to the space, both for the client and the music therapist
- Who will set up and clear away the outdoor music space
- Health and safety, especially slips, trips and falls, and boundaries
- How the weather might disrupt an outdoor session
- Record keeping, recording the session, and how records can be kept safe in this new environment

Cleaning and instrument hygiene (with particular thanks to Sue Pratt, Adrienne Freeman, Suffolk Music Therapy Services, Music Therapy Service at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and Nordoff Robbins)

Therapists, clients, carers and families all have a responsibility to declare any potential exposure to COVID19 or if they have any symptoms. You may wish to consider declaring this in writing, with signatures.

Hand washing

Hand washing remains one of the most effective ways of curbing the spread of all strains of COVID-19. Please ensure your hands are clean before and after each session. Depending on your client(s), you may also wish to offer supervised hand washing before and after sessions, or suggest a member of support staff carries this out. Observe client actions during sessions - some clients may find it difficult not to touch their face, for instance, which would render prior hand washing ineffective.

Cleaning instruments

BAMT recommend disinfecting musical instruments before and after each session. Seek general infection control advice as for particularly effective products to use when cleaning instruments, and refer to your partner organisation's guidance regarding cleaning products for your working environment.

Separate instruments that have been cleaned and those that have not. A sticker system may be useful for clarity.

You may wish to consider displaying a cleaning chart clearly on a wall, capturing daily, weekly, monthly and annual cleaning tasks, with signatures and dates as proof that these have been carried out.

Cleaning the room in between sessions

Your partner organisation should take overall responsibility for room hygiene, including mopping floors and cleaning walls. In between sessions, however, ensure any chairs and surfaces that have been touched have been wiped down. Cleaning and disinfecting products should be available for you to wipe over the chairs and surfaces used in the room during the day, and you will need to ensure you also have pairs of disposable gloves to do this. Please note that if the cleaning product does not contain disinfectant or bleach then it will be necessary to wipe over with disinfectant after cleaning with a detergent.

It is also important that your partner organisation has antibacterial gel and wipes that can be used during and between sessions where needed. It is also necessary that there are clear and safe places to dispose of cleaning products (disposable cloths and wipes etc). This should be in

a bin bag that can be tied and safely disposed of after use. Cleaning products should be stored safely, away from children.

A note on singing and blown instruments

The [PERFORM study](#), which investigates the spread of COVID-19 through aerosol droplets, has reported several major findings, two of which are directly relevant to music therapists:

- Singing produces a similar amount of aerosols to speaking at a similar volume
- Playing a wind instrument produces about the same amount of aerosol as breathing

Based on this study, BAMT would now recommend that if you are satisfied that you, your patient(s) and your employer or partner organisation are comfortable with singing or using blown instruments, and that you are satisfied the risk has been assessed and mitigated as much as possible, then you may wish to consider using both singing and blown instruments as part of your clinical work.

You may wish to include the following considerations as part of your decision making (the wording below is based on previous versions of the Government guidance above::

- The size of the space
- The levels of ventilation within the space
- The positioning of singers within the space
- The effectiveness of any booths, barriers or screens in use
- The use of fixed teams to reduce contacts

You may feel it appropriate to take steps to limit particularly loud singing, cheering or shouting as part of your work. You may wish to allocate particular blown instruments for yourself or particular individual/group patients, separating them out accordingly.

The Government guidance does not make any particular recommendations in terms of PPE, i.e. there is no directive as to whether to wear masks or visors when singing or using blown instruments. The research does not, at the time of writing, provide any definitive answers. Therefore, your clinical judgement combined with the needs of your employer or partner organisation, perhaps combined with a risk assessment, will determine the levels of PPE used during sessions and in what situations.

Higher-risk or more vulnerable clients (with particular thanks to Nordoff Robbins)

Some service users you work with may require additional support in order to attend a session or may display behaviours that increase risk (e.g. spitting, or seeking close proximity or physical touch). You will need to carry out risk assessments for these clients so that you can make an

informed decision with your partner organisation as to whether work should be resumed with these clients at this current time, and if so, how these risks are to be managed safely.

Further considerations on returning to work (with particular thanks to Suffolk Music Therapy Services)

Record keeping

This still needs to be maintained within the HCPC code of professional ethics.

Wellbeing

Music therapists may feel higher levels of stress in the workplace, especially in the current circumstances. As well as supervision and personal therapy, consider new peer support opportunities you may not have utilised previously. This might take the form of group support, or through a buddy system where there is someone for you to contact at the beginning and end of each day for a check-in and check-out. It may be possible to set this up in your team, or with another therapist if you are working freelance or otherwise outside of a team.

Sickness

Should you become sick, you will need to know the process if you display COVID-19 symptoms, what to do if you have been in contact with a client displaying COVID-19 symptoms and how you should report this. Check your contract regarding your sick pay policy and follow the guidelines outlined in your contract.

Membership of unions and other support networks

Organisations such as the Musicians Union, the Incorporated Society of Musicians, Unite, Unison, the Federation of Small Businesses and many others provide support, legal advice, insurance and other benefits to their members. You may wish to consider a membership with such an organisation to receive support and benefits especially at this time.

Resources (with particular thanks to Cambridgeshire Music)

Anna Freud Centre resources

<https://www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/resources/>

BAMEd Schools and COVID-19: guidance for Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) staff and their employers in school settings

<https://www.cambslearntogether.co.uk/asset-library/Corona-Virus-Schools/BAMEd-Network-Schools-and-Covid-19-guidance-for-BAME-staff-and-their-employers-2.pdf>

Creative Education eLearning courses

<https://elearning.creativeeducation.co.uk/available-courses/>

Oxfordshire Hospital School - "From COVID-19 to the classroom" support pack

<https://ohs.oxon.sch.uk/from-covid-19-back-to-the-classroom/>

Suffolk Learning NFST Psychology in Schools support pack

<https://www.suffolklearning.co.uk/3-11-learning-teaching/special-education/senco/resources-from-psychology-and-therapeutic-services-and-the-specialist-education-services/nsft-psychology-in-schools-support-pack>

With thanks to

Adrienne Freeman, Andrew Langford, BAMT Board of Trustees, Cambridgeshire Music, Music Therapy Service at Chelsea & Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Chiltern Music Therapy, Chroma, Jonathan Cousins-Booth, Music as Therapy International, Music Therapy Bedfordshire, Music Therapy Lambeth, MusicSpace, Nordoff Robbins, North London Music Therapy, Suffolk Music Therapy