

THE ROLE OF MUSIC FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA: THE EVIDENCE BASE

Supporting Health and Social Care Professionals Across the UK



Outlining the research which underpins the National Dementia Strategy recommendation for music therapy as a psychosocial intervention; giving us confidence that engaging carers in music based interventions can help them to better understand residents.

“...Music therapy is one of just two forms of [non-pharmacological] intervention for which there is convincing evidence of effectiveness in reducing the behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia.” Commission on Dementia and Music, 2018



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The Music Therapy Evidence Base

Music therapy can be very helpful for people living with dementia and often focuses on the use of music as a means to alleviate behavioural symptoms (such as agitation and anxiety), emotional well-being and the reduction of depressive symptoms.

In the UK music therapy has been recommended as a psychosocial intervention in the National Dementia Strategy. There is also much neurological research which supports the value of music therapy for people living with dementia. Supporting all of the above is a wealth of clinical research evidencing the ways in which music therapy can help people living with dementia, including:

- Reducing depression, stress, anxiety and blood pressure levels
- Decreasing agitated and aggressive behaviours
- Reducing the use of medication
- Eliciting positive changes in mood and emotional states
- Contributing to, maintaining or rehabilitating functional cognitive and sensory abilities
- Aiding recall
- Improve speech and language skills
- Enhancing socio-emotional experiences
- Increasing motivation and stimulate interest in activities
- Providing meaningful time spent together in a positive, creative way
- Improve quality of life

References: Ahessy (2016); Altenmueller (2014); Ashida (2000); Baker & Ballantyne (2013); Brotons & Pickett-Cooper (1996); Brotons et al. (1997); Brotons & Koger (2000); Brotons & Marti (2003); Bruer et al. (2007); Ceccato et al. (2012); Cevasco & Grant (2003); Chan et al. (2012); Cheong et al (2016); Choi et al. (2009); Chou & Lin (2012); Chu et al. (2014); Clair (1996); Clark et al. (1998); Clément et al. (2012); Cooke et al. (2010); Creech et al. (2013); Cuddy & Duffin (2005); Cuddy et al (2017); Department of Health (2009); Devereaux (1997); Elliott & Gardner (2016); Erkkilä et al. (2011); Fachner et al. (2012); Fang et al (2017); Giovagnoli et al (2018); Gerdner (2000 & 2005); Gök Ugur et al (2017); Gold (2013); Gómez Gallego & Gómez García (2017); Gomez-Romero (2017); Gopi & Preetha (2016); Greenyer (2003); Groene (1993); Guétin et al. (2009 & 2013); Han et al. (2010); Hanser & Thompson (1994); Holmes et al. (2006); Hong & Choi (2011); Hsieh et al. (2011); Hailstone et al. (2009); Hsu et al. (2015); Hulme et al. (2009); Janata (2012); Johnson et al. (2012); Koelsch (2012); Kreutz (2004); Kumar et al. (1999); Lakshmi & Sharma (2018); Ledger & Baker (2007); Lin et al. (2011); Lipe (1995); Lord & Garner (1993); Moussard et al. (2012); Park & Pringle-Specht (2009); Peck et al (2016); Pedersen et al (2017); Pongan et al (2017); Quah & Lee (2017); Raglio et al. (2010 & 2008); Ragneskog et al. (2001); Ray & Mittelman (2017); Resano et al. (2011); Reuer et al. (2011); Ridder et al. (2013); Salimpoor et al. (2011); Sari & Rekawati (2019); Särkämö et al. (2012); Sawami et al (2017); Sun (2012); Sung & Chang (2005); Sung et al. (2006a&b; 2008 & 2012); Svansdottir & Snaedal (2006); Svansdottir et al. (2013); Thomas et al (2017); Ueda et al (2013); Van der Steen (2018); Wang et al (2017); Xu et al (2017); Zhang et al (2017); Zhao et al (2016); Details available on request



“ ...music can act as a supportive tool, rather than as a burdensome addition to existing workloads. ”

The Commission on Dementia and Music



In 2017 our Director, Alexia Quin, was invited to join the world's first Commission on Dementia and Music. The ILCUK/Utley Foundation Commission scrutinised the evidence and practice in order to understand what music means for people with dementia, and to explore the current and potential role of music-based interventions in the prevention, treatment, care of and quality of life for people with dementia.

The Commission's report explained how music can provide a true lifeline for people living with dementia, even in the most challenging of times. They concluded that service commissioners must take music-based interventions for people with dementia seriously when planning both preventative and dementia care services.

Music as Therapy International's Approach

Music as Therapy International has been delivering skill-sharing projects internationally for over twenty years. We have been working with vulnerable people in the UK in 2016. Providing introductory training to practitioners working with people living with dementia is one of our priority areas, and our approach has been shortlisted for an *Advancing Healthcare Award*.

Drawing on the core principles of music therapy, we provide training to staff working in care settings, equipping them with new techniques to support residents on a day-to-day basis. This is by way of targeted musical activities which allow service users to advance toward social and emotional goals, while enhancing the quality of relationships between all participants.

We are currently collecting evidence to quantify the impact of our training for practitioners and the people they work with. We already have a wealth of qualitative evidence demonstrating the difference our approach to using music with people living with dementia can make.

Qualitative Evidence Overleaf...

Qualitative Evidence from our Dementia Partners

“ I imagined the music would be based on memories and nostalgia, but have found it helps communication... I have enjoyed seeing the smiling and happiness on the resident's faces.. [I've discovered how] music can improve people's confidence and how sound is so important from the earliest parts of life right up to the end of life.”
Care giver, Gill

"It's a real eye opener.. Downstairs, people are able to hide more behind social conversation, but [in my music group] I can really see how they are." **Care giver, Paula**

"The training has increased our confidence in the way we can now set up a small group and explore different ways for service users to participate in musical activities."
Care giver, Mary

"[The highlight of the project was] seeing the benefit of the deepened connections, especially with those with dementia. ... [I learnt] that even those with advanced dementia can connect with the staff on a one-to-one level through music...[And] in staff there was a greater ability to work with those who show challenging behaviours, and their ability to calm a situation through movement." **Care giver, Abbeyfield Residential Home**

"Working with Music as Therapy International has given us new insights and skills to enhance the experience of our service users. The course has proven to be very beneficial to our practice as we can now explore a variety of musical activities and not just hand out musical instruments and song sheets." **Care giver, Haviland House**

"The change in tempo and level of sound in musical activities has meant service users have had to concentrate and focus on such tasks. There has been a visible sense of achievement and satisfaction when the activity is completed. As everyone is absorbed with following the musical activity it releases them for a moment in time from the frustrations of memory loss and associated difficulties that may hamper and frustrate them in their daily activities of living." **Music Therapist, Hazel Child**

"It releases so much, the music. At home I get so (hunches shoulders) tight and stressed but doing the music session lets it out. ” **Person living with dementia**

To find out more about meaningful music for your service users or to discuss training for your staff, please contact:

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