

Preparing For Your Project

A Guide for Managers



Key to preparing for your project is deciding who to train and to think through the practicalities of their involvement. The introductory training project is just the starting point for you and your staff. What do you want its legacy to be? Selecting the right staff for training and clearing space for them to participate fully during the project is crucial to this.

“ The highlight for me is to see the way in which staff have taken on board their training, developed it and made it their own. ”

Music Therapist



music as therapy
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Staff Availability



It may sound obvious, but the staff you choose to participate in this project need to be available to work with the music therapist throughout its delivery! During the project they will need time to participate in a regular group or individual music session alongside identified service users, and have time to discuss it with the therapist afterwards (away from service users). As a manager, your support is very important: Staff may need your help to step away from their wider responsibilities to join sessions with the music therapist.

Weekly participation enables staff to build musical relationships with your service users, to experience process and witness progress. You may find it helpful to consider the following questions:

- What are the basic parameters of their role? Are they currently working directly with service users and will this continue?
- Can their working hours and local ratios allow participation at the same time each week during the project delivery? Will you need to adjust roles?
- Do participating staff have annual leave booked or are there any events in the centre's timetable or calendar which may interrupt regular participation?
- What is needed so staff have time to reflect on the music session with the therapist, away from the service users?
- Beyond the staff themselves, who else needs to know about the project and the staff's involvement to minimise risks to their participation?
- Will participating staff have time and appropriate opportunities to put their new skills into practice and continue to use music after the project ends?

“ The staff involved have put their learning into practice developing their confidence and seeing a really significant impact on the children.”

Nursery Manager

“ The staff are keen to keep the sessions going but do need prompting to do so in a timely way as this could be delayed due to other pressures; once started the enthusiasm is really maintained. ”

Care Home Manager

Personal Qualities

Undertaking our training has a huge impact for staff, as well as service users. Our projects serve to boost confidence, develop responsibilities and can even strengthen participants' commitment to their work. They encourage people to develop empathetic relationships, to think differently about behaviour and to discover new modes of communication. We build on participants' intuitive skills, as well as introduce new ideas.



Still, working with music is not for everyone. It is not uncommon for participating staff to drop out of a project. Considering the following questions can help mitigate this risk:

- Are they open to new experiences?
- Have they expressed interest in training or professional development opportunities?
- What type of relationships do they form with service users?
- Are they creative, playful and/or do they have a personal interest in music?
- Do they have leadership skills to maintain space for music sessions after the project ends?
- Do they have good peer relationships?
- Are they reliable?

These qualities are all desirable, but an introductory training project can also be an opportunity for the development of a new or less strong individual. If this is why a particular member of staff is joining the project it is helpful for us to know in advance.

“ Staff look to me for guidance and provision of a role model. ”

Care Practitioner

100% of staff and managers recognised their confidence had increased as a result of the music training.

UK Sustainability Review Report, Music as Therapy International

“ I have always used music with the children, but this course not only has given me confidence but has enlightened me to realise the power of music to help children. ”

Early Years Practitioner

Additional Considerations

Before a project starts it is helpful for nominated members of staff to know:

- Why they have been chosen
- What the project will entail
- When the project will start and how long it will last
- What has been put in place to enable their full participation
- They are not expected to be a musician and they will not become a music therapist

It can be helpful to explain your expectations from their participation, during and beyond the project itself. It can also be reassuring for staff to know the music therapist will be available to discuss any concerns throughout the project and for support and guidance after the project ends, if desired.

Securing the Long-Term Impact of your Project

Over the years, our Partners from diverse settings across the UK have helped us to better understand how the impact of our projects can be sustained locally.

They have warned us of common challenges which can make it difficult to keep music going after a project ends:

- Time pressures
- Disruptions
- Not enough trained staff
- The difficulty of working with unhelpful colleagues
- Lack of confidence
- Lack of time for planning

With these in mind, our Partners tell us it's important to consider:

- A well-established consistent routine, in terms of time and space
- Scheduling staff rotas
- Enthusiasm of Practitioners and enjoyment of session participants
- Good understanding of what they are doing and why (including identified aims)
- Understanding of the work among the wider staff group
- Ongoing support and relevant CPD opportunities

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

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