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What is Music Therapy?

The British Association for Music Therapy gives the following definition: 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.

Music Therapists draw upon the innate qualities of music to support people of all ages and abilities and at all stages of life; from helping new born babies develop healthy bonds with their parents, to offering vital, sensitive and compassionate palliative care at the end of life.

Central to how Music Therapy works is the therapeutic relationship that is established and developed, through engagement in live musical interaction and play between a therapist and client. A wide range of musical styles and instruments can be used, including the voice, and the music is often improvised. Using music in this way enables clients to create their own unique musical language in which to explore and connect with the world and express themselves.¹

You can find it here: https://www.bamt.org/music-therapy/what-is-music-therapy







Music therapists are professional standard musicians who have undertaken additional, specialist training. They work with clients individually or in groups, using a huge variety of music. The choice of music depends on the therapist's approach, what is appropriate to the client, what the client likes, their cultural heritage etc. However, most music therapists use instruments that can be played by everyone: usually tuned and un-tuned percussion instruments, such as bells, cymbals, drums, shakers, and xylophones. Whilst pre-recorded music and songs may be used, it is most common for the therapists and clients to use the instruments themselves and to use music that is created in the moment – to improvise.

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¹ https://www.bamt.org/music-therapy/what-is-music-therapy (2022)

A Brief History and Overview

History

While music has been used for therapeutic purposes as far back as the ancient Greeks, the discipline in its current form arose in the 1940s and '50s.

In America in the 1940s, musicians were invited to a hospital for veterans of World War II and it was observed that those exposed to music regularly improved more quickly than others. Their depression lifted and their social skills improved; through music they found a safe way to express their emotions.

In England, the profession was founded by Juliette Alvin who saw the benefit of using music therapeutically with children with special needs in schools, and with adults in psychiatric hospitals. She set up the Professional Association of Music Therapy in the 1950s and the first formal training course in the 1960s.

Training

There are currently eight training courses in the UK, in London, Edinburgh, Newport, Bristol, Derby, Cambridge, Manchester, and Newcastle. All courses provide a Masters qualification, which is recognised by the Health and Care Professions Council and enables graduates to work as Music Therapists.

The content of the courses vary, but can involve placements, psychological and medical studies (e.g., child development, disabilities, psychiatric conditions), counselling skills, and musical skills. Music Therapy is also explored in theory and practice, by looking at theoretical models, different case studies and learning from others' experience.

The cost of music therapy training ranges from £8,500 to £19,000 for UK students, and from £23,563 to £38,535 for international students. There are both full time and part-time options available.

Entry requirements

These vary from course to course (see page 18). However, students are generally required to demonstrate a high level of musicianship and proficiency on at least one instrument. For many training courses, the reading of Western musical notation is <u>not</u> a requirement, and fluency within a range of musical traditions and styles is welcomed.

The following requirements are a guide:

- One Honours degree (not necessarily in music) OR comparable professional or personal experience
- High level of skill (equivalent to Grade 8 standard) on first instrument
- Usually equivalent to Grade 5 standard on a harmonic instrument
- Significant experience of relevant client groups, within a professional, voluntary, or personal capacity
- Personal skills suitable to working as a therapist

<u>Note</u>: In recent years, music therapy training courses in the UK have sought to widen accessibility and promote greater diversity amongst potential trainees, recognising that traditional entry pathways to the profession (and their associated cost) have presented a barrier to access. The BAMT's recent <u>Diversity Report</u>, (2020), provides further reading on this topic and highlights the need for significant reform within the Music Therapy profession.









Career Path Guide

Timeframe	Career path	Notes	Memberships	
		Anyone can join the British Association for Music Therapy as an individual associate. Members pay a subscription to receive information about music therapy (e.g., journals, courses, conferences).	Associate Membership with the <u>British</u> <u>Association for Music</u> <u>Therapy</u> .	
18 years+	Undergraduate degree and/or relevant work/life experience	First degree (not necessarily in music). Duration: 3-4 yrs. Job/Life experience can be accepted as a valid alternative, along with a high level of musicianship, equivalent to Grade 8 standard.		
	Client group experience	Whatever your academic background, you are expected to demonstrate significant experience of working with different client groups (e.g., physical disability, mental health, learning difficulties, autism, elderly, adults, childrenetc.) This may be acquired through paid or voluntary work, or personal experience, in the UK or abroad.		
At least 21 years old + experience	Master's degree in music therapy	In the past, there was an age requirement when applying to study a postgraduate course in Music Therapy. The age requirement has been dropped but all courses require relevant experience with client groups as well as the emotional maturity of a therapist. There are 7 approved MA or MSc courses for Music Therapy in the UK, which vary in length between 2 years (full-time) and 4 years (part-time). See page 15.	Student Membership with the British Association of Music Therapy.	
undertaken on	Professional Registration was introduced in 1999 and is only possible if you have undertaken one of the approved training courses. To work as a Music Therapist, you need to be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). HCPC Registration as a Music Therapist.			
Continuous	Continuing Professional Development (CPD)	Continuing Professional Development was introduced in 2000 and is a requirement to maintain your professional registration with the HCPC. CPD is the responsibility of the individual and you are expected to maintain your own log of learning activities to evidence you have met the HCPC COD Standards. CPD activities should include different types of learning which has been undertaken to improve the way you work and the impact of your work for your clients. You only need share evidence of your CPD activities if you are randomly selected for audit by the HCPC.	Professional Registration with the HCPC.	
Post- qualification	Career Prospects	Once qualified it is important to establish sound clinical experience. Job opportunities are advertised by the British Association of Music Therapy, as well as externally. Roles are often part-time and many therapist work in a number of different places and even combine different roles (e.g. teaching, working as a musician etc.). Salaries vary depending on geographical location and employer. Many music therapists work freelance or set up their own organisations. It is also possible to be employed by a care setting or school. If you work in the NHS you will be paid in line with their banding structure and there may be potential to progress upwards, taking on additional or wider responsibilities, subject to your skills and interest. With experience, there are opportunities to provide supervision to other music therapists, host trainee music therapists on placements, contribute to the training courses and fulfil roles with BAMT to contribute to the development of the profession. Some Music Therapists elect to take on management responsibilities alongside their clinical practice.		

Personal Accounts

The following personal accounts have been written by music therapists at various stages of their careers, providing a variety of insights into their careers and experiences of both training and practicing.



ALEXIA QUIN Qualified Music Therapist since 1998

When I was first looking into a career in music therapy, aged 13, I contacted the British Society for Music Therapy. This organisation (now the British Association of Music Therapists), which supported the development of music therapy in this country at that time, suggested I attended one of their introductory courses being held at the Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy Centre in London.

There I heard different Music therapists talk about their work and saw videos of sessions taking place. In a break I found a music therapist to talk to, who advised me to try and obtain as much experience of different client groups as I could. I then set about spending all my school and university holidays volunteering in different places: I regularly babysat for children of all different ages, in this country and abroad. I joined a student team running a holiday scheme for deprived children. I spent my school work experience week in the music department of a boarding school for children with physical disabilities. I generally mucked in in the playroom of a children's' cancer unit in a hospital.

Meanwhile I continued to develop my music. When I left school I had taken my Grade 8 flute and my Grade 7 piano exams, but I was an unconfident singer and was unsure about how to improvise. I went on to study music at Exeter University, where the degree course offered modules in Music Education, Music in Special Education, Psychology of Music, Keyboard skills and even Music Therapy. Following my degree I applied to the postgraduate Music Therapy courses. Although I was young and not entirely sure of my musicianship, I was successful in gaining a place on the part-time course at Roehampton University. My musical skills seemed to be up to scratch, but I also had a lot of experience of working with different client groups by this point as well as having read widely about music therapy and taken every possible opportunity to meet and talk to practising music therapists.

Back in 1998, when I trained, my qualification took 2 years. By the time I qualified, I had decided that I wanted to work in London with children. It took 12 months before my "ideal job" job became available and I worked in an unrelated field during this time (I was an administrator for a Chamber of Commerce!). Many jobs are part-time and mine began as one day a week.

To request the full information pack, please contact info@musicastherapy.org

We suggest a £5 donation to help us cover our costs.