**The Music Therapy Charity Report – August 2019**

**A Survey of Preferences for the Arts Therapies**

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Study aims

To explore the following research questions:

* How many people have heard of the arts therapies in the general population and in mental health care, and would they like to take part in them?
* Which of the four arts modalities would they most and least like to take part in and why?
* Which characteristics are related to preferences in each group?

Length of project

Original: Feb 2019 – Jul 2019

New: Feb 2019 – Oct 2020

Progress so far:

The study started in February 2019 and has been running for 6 months. The original recruitment target of 200 participants has been reached. However, thanks to the small grant from The Music Therapy Charity, this study was eligible to be adopted onto the Clinical Research Network portfolio. This means that the study can be expanded to other NHS Trusts within the UK.

The plan is to engage four other mental health Trusts in the UK, and ask them to recruit a further 200 participants each (100 from mental health services and 100 from the general population). This would mean that the survey would have a total sample of 1000. We plan to extend the recruitment period for just over a year, ending in October 2020.

Some initial analysis of the data has been undertaken. 204 participants took part in the survey, 102 from community mental health services and 102 from the general population (45 face-to-face and 57 online responses). Surprisingly, a higher number of people in the general population had heard of the arts therapies - 81% versus 74% in the mental health service user group. 68% of both groups said that they would be interesting in taking part in group arts therapies.

Participants were asked to choose their most preferred modality (out of music, art, dance-movement and drama therapy) and then their least preferred modality. Within the mental health group, music therapy was the most preferred modality (47%) and dance-movement therapy was the least preferred (38%). For the general population, art therapy was the most popular (48%) and dramatherapy was the least popular (59%).

Participants were asked to give a reason why they chose their most and least preferred modality. These answers were grouped into eight categories; creating something, expectations of helpfulness, feeling capable, social interaction, impact on mood, enjoyment, the unknown and other. Some interesting reasons included:

Most prefer music therapy: *“I’d like to play the guitar. I love music but didn’t know about music therapy. If so I would have done it before.”*

Most prefer art therapy: *“I love art and find anything I can do with my hands extremely therapeutic. I prefer individual forms of relaxation, so art appeals to my introspective nature.”*

Most prefer dance-movement therapy: *“I enjoy dancing and find it relaxing, a good way of expressing emotion, a form of escapism and its active so you feel good from the release of endorphins”*

Most prefer dramatherapy: *“It sounds interesting to interact with people you learn off other people what they’re acting and what they’re doing”*

Least prefer art therapy: *“I don’t enjoy art as a form and the idea of using it makes me stress”*

Least prefer dance-movement therapy: *“Medication make it difficult to do the dance movements”*

Least prefer dramatherapy: “*Not a fan of acting think I’d feel self conscious”*

Least prefer music therapy: *“Not up to date with the music and movements, I’m old fashioned”*

These results imply that a high number of people are interested in taking part in group arts therapies, but may have limited knowledge of what they entail. This highlights the need to find methods of informing people about the arts therapies to give realistic expectations of participation. Further analysis will be conducted to examine the statistical significance of the associations between responses.

It will be interesting to expand the survey and gain a wider range of responses from other parts of the UK. Thank you for your support with the small grant – I look forward to updating you again in 6 months.