

Final Report to The Music Therapy Charity Ltd (SRG awarded 03/04/2017)

Revised study title

Improvised Music to Support Intensive Interaction for Children with Complex Needs: A feasibility study of brief adjunctive music therapy

Original study title

Feasibility study: 'The Effect of Improvised Music on Intensive Interaction'

Supervision

Professor Odell-Miller was already familiar with the music therapy intervention to be trialled, having been lead supervisor for my doctoral studies 2010-2013. She advised on new methodology, negotiated Anglia Ruskin University's ethical approval process, took overall responsibility on behalf of the university, created a voluntary Research Affiliate post to allow me to act as Principal Investigator and advised on early drafts of the journal article. Statistical consultation was provided by Dr Paul Kiff.

Projected time scale

8 weeks	recruiting subjects, obtaining consent, briefing staff participants
18 weeks	running sessions and gathering data
8 weeks	assessing data
18 weeks	analysing results and writing up
52 weeks	

Actual time scale

Start	24/01/2019 (first staff briefing)
Finish	16/09/20 (date article submitted to journal)
86 weeks	

Research questions

- 1) Is it feasible to run a study to evaluate the effectiveness of TSII in children with complex needs in special schools using the method trialled?
- 2) Does a brief course of TSII during a longer course of Intensive Interaction lead to an enduring enhancement in interaction between child and support worker?

Methodology

The study investigated Triadic Support for Interaction by Improvisation (TSII), an application of music therapy as a brief adjunctive therapy for children with complex needs who are receiving Intensive Interaction. A small randomised controlled trial (RCT) measured changes in child-support worker interaction between the 4th and the 12th of twelve weekly sessions of Intensive Interaction. In each of two special schools a control group of four children with complex needs received Intensive Interaction only and an experimental group of four children received twelve weekly sessions of Intensive Interaction with the addition of improvised music in sessions 5 through 8. Highly Specialised Speech and Language Therapists made blind assessments from video recordings of sessions 4 and 12 using an adaptation of an instrument developed by a National Health Service (NHS) learning disability service for tracking progress in Intensive Interaction. The ongoing child-support worker relationship was seen as the primary intervention, and time-limited TSII as an adjunct

intervention. Changes, rather than absolute levels of responsiveness, were analysed. Only advances occurring in the context of the dyadic relationship were considered, and not their potential generalisation to other relationships in wider contexts. As the sustainability of any improvements was of particular interest, children's interactions in the dyadic relationship were assessed only before and after the period of musical intervention.

Results

The experimental group at one research site showed significantly enhanced interaction ($p=0.02$). Results at the other site were inconclusive. The article now in press discusses a series of environmental and organisational differences which may account for the contrasting results, making recommendations for future studies accordingly.

Benefits

Child participants for whom Intensive Interaction might be indicated irrespective of the study received the benefits of that established intervention, for which there exists extensive evidence. Those in the experimental group on one research site who received TSII made enhanced progress in interaction.

Intensive Interaction practitioners at one site appear to have gained some enhanced skills
Music therapists briefed on the principles of TSII and delivered the intervention may have gained some enhanced skills

The music therapy profession may gain an awareness of an unfamiliar approach offering a cost-effective brief therapy approach to children with complex needs, depending on the dissemination of results.

Dissemination

The study has been accepted for publication in JBMT

A proposal has been submitted to the European Music Therapy Congress 2022.

Funding

Matching funding from one school was agreed but not required and can therefore be carried forward to a future study. The unusually economical financing of the study is explained in the covering letter and evidenced in the attached accounts.

Further research

A study of similar size and design is planned, in which the optimum environmental conditions for TSII to be effective will be assured for all participants.

The author expresses his sincere thanks to the Music Therapy Charity for making the study possible.

John Strange