

Geoff Bartholomew

I was extremely grateful to receive the Music Therapy Charity's bursary for music therapy students. As a parent of two young children, lockdown has affected all areas of life but especially in reducing income I would normally expect to make from performing and working. Receiving the bursary meant that I could invest in my practice at a time when I wouldn't have been able to any other way.

I applied for the bursary in order to purchase some equipment: to help develop a self-reflective practice as part of my placement at a day centre for adults with Learning Disabilities. This was invaluable in shaping my clinical work, and also formed the basis of my final dissertation. I incorporated sampling techniques into the practice using creative apps for iPad, so it was important to be able to make high-quality recordings in order to take samples from them. The bursary allowed me to buy a handheld audio recorder, which facilitated moving creatively between placement and my home studio and extending the reflective process. I was also able to buy some more studio equipment, such as a practice amp and midi-keyboard, that has since broadened my creative process as well as feeding into clinical work and university assessments. For instance, in one module we were asked to think about the role of environment on our practice, and I was able to make recordings (on the handheld recorder) from a sound-walk in my local woods. I took these recordings home and sampled them, and combined performing with the samples - using the keyboard as a trigger - with improvised trumpet playing through guitar pedals (using the practice amp).

I'm so excited to move into professional practice, taking my developing creative and reflective approaches with me. Probably the biggest lesson I have learned is that my unique musical voice is my biggest asset; the thing that no one else can replicate. I am starting to build connections within my local area (Cumbria) and look forward to working as a music therapist in as many different contexts as I can!