

Music Therapy Charity – Final report

Title of project	The use of Group vocal improvisation as a music therapy technique in a mental health setting
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Study aims, planned length of the project and actual length of the project by the end of the project.	<p>This PhD study aimed to explore the affordances of group vocal improvisation (GVI) as a music therapy technique in an adult mental health setting. The clinical part of the study was planned lasted a year (recruitment and data collection) whilst the overall study's duration was of 4 years (including literature review, methodological design, NHS ethics approval, clinical implementation, data analysis and write up).</p>
Research questions/objective, methodology, supervision of the research, numbers of participants, summary of analysis of results and main findings/outcomes. Include supervision of the research.	<p>Three different research questions looked at the interactions, therapeutic processes and change mechanisms of using GVI in a closed music therapy group. This was compared to the use of instrumental improvisation in a similar group. In total, the study had 10 participants, divided into 2 groups of 5.</p> <p>Interaction analysis of sessions' recordings, descriptive statistics of self-report standardized questionnaires and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of post therapy interviews, were used as the methods to explore different aspects of the work. Both groups were clinically successful and there was only one participant who dropped out. The main findings pointed out some important similarities, which helped to evidence that working with GVI is still largely comparable to other professionally established music therapy techniques (such as group improvisation through the use of instruments), whilst also highlighting certain subtle but important differences which influenced the structure of the sessions, the role of the therapist and the experience of the participants.</p> <p>The main innovations provided by GVI were a greater emphasis on embodiment and greater flexibility of interventions given the possibility of using words in the music. However, the GVI group also evidenced issues around feelings of exposure and a need to introduce participants to certain activities in a more gradual and directive way than in the instrumental group.</p> <p>This study was supervised by two music therapists (Dr Stuart Wood and Ann Sloboda), two music psychologists (Dr Karen Wise and Professor John Sloboda) and a group psychotherapist (Nick Barwick).</p>
Summary of benefits to participants, the profession, to you, to your organization, and plans/summary of dissemination/publications so far if relevant.	<p>Participants provided overall positive feedback about their experience of the groups. They also valued positively the experience of being involved in research and being able to contribute to research in music therapy that may in some way benefit other service users in the future.</p>

For me this was a crucial opportunity to both learn about research in music therapy and get a more in depth understanding of service users' experiences. It was very valuable to be able to explore vocal work in this client group, where further interventions might be able to emerge in the future, promoting the health and wellbeing benefits of singing and of music therapy. Increasing the research profile of music therapy is also a key aim of both my academic and my clinical institutions and this study has significantly contributed to this.

I have been invited to present the findings of this study at the British Association for Music Therapy Conference in Belfast (April 2020), at the World Congress of Music Therapy in Pretoria, South Africa (July 2020), and at a public Research Works Event at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (June 2020). I also plan to submit publications for peer reviewed journals soon about these findings.

Finance: provide a breakdown of how the funds were allocated and spent, as well as the public benefit. Please make clear the overall funding of the project, if there were multiple funders, then greater detail for the MTC's Small Grant and spending of this.

The MT Charity funding covered about half of the costs of the clinical work. There was also a fee waiver awarded by the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and university fees funding from the Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust.

Future plans for research linked to this small project.

I plan to apply for funding for developing and evaluating a GVI intervention for perinatal mental health in the near future.