Music Therapy Charity Bursary:

To begin I would like to express my gratitude to the Music Therapy Charity Bursary for the payment I received which enabled me to complete my studies at the University of South Wales.

In my original application to the bursary fund, it was my intention to use the funding to support my attendance at the BAMT 2020 conference, scheduled to take place in Belfast. The funding received would cover the costs of travel, registration and accommodation. In addition, the funding would allow me to take time away from my self-employed work to attend the conference. However, having booked my flights and registered, the rapid development of the global pandemic halted my own and many others plans to attend the conference.

While this in itself was disappointing, the subsequent national lockdown dealt another blow when I lost the income from my self-employed work. In addition to my worries regarding this, I still had a number of weeks remaining of my music therapy training, during which time I needed to complete a critical submission. It was at this time that the bursary I had received provided me with financial support that enabled me to complete my studies. While it became essential that I secured a new income, the bursary covered my living expenses enabling me to focus on completing my music therapy training.

Although there has been a delay in completing my training, it is with great pleasure that I am able to advise that, with the financial support afforded me by the bursary, I have completed my training. While completing my training was of primary concern, the financial support offered by the bursary has provided enabled me to pursue my future goals. The first of these being an application to join a music therapy PhD programme. In affording me some financial security, it has been possible for me to take additional time to undertake the research required to complete the outline research proposal.

An unexpected benefit of the bursary came about through the time it afforded me to focus upon completing my studies. During this period, I was approached by a service looking for a newly or soon to be qualified music therapist. Had it not been for the bursary I may have missed out on this valuable opportunity, since it would have been necessary for me to take up other employment. In this service, which provides young people at risk of family breakdown, with an opportunity to engage in music therapy, has been invaluable in providing me with an opportunity to develop my skills as a music therapist.

Upon receiving my bursary, I had planned to provide an account of how the bursary funds had supported me in attending the 2020 BAMT conference and how, through the opportunity afforded me, I had been able to connect with other music therapists, and learn more about the wider profession. However, had it not been for the bursary, I may not have completed my training. And so, it is with a great deal of gratitude that I thank the Music Therapy Charity for enabling me to complete my studies and to begin the next chapter of my professional development.

Paul Fernie