

Music Therapy Charity Bursary

Final Report – Nicola Battistini

In July 2020 I completed my Masters in Music Therapy (Nordoff Robbins): Music, Health and Society. I would like to give the Music Therapy Charity an overview on the how their bursary has supported me with my studies.

Completing my Master's degree in music therapy has been one of my greatest achievements. During my work supporting children with autism I discovered the positive impact of music therapy and instantly, I knew that it would be my future. I decided to apply for the Masters training with Nordoff Robbins and I thought that my chances of being offered a place were low - lack of academic skills, being a self-taught musician and an English test to pass. I passed the English test and to my huge surprise and joy, I was offered a place on the course.

English is not my first language, so I had to work hard to strengthen my academic skills, my writing in particular. I took some private tuition and my ability to write essays, reports, case studies and thesis quickly improved. I am very proud of my Master's thesis mark. The bursary helped enormously with the funding of my writing tuition.

We were required to have personal supportive therapy. The Music Therapy Charity bursary allowed to me pay for weekly therapy sessions, which I have continued beyond the mandatory 30 sessions, as I found them so helpful, enabling me to learn about myself and how to better to relate to others within a therapeutic relationship.

With a group of students and the program convenor, I visited Poland in November 2018. We attended some classes on the Music Therapy training programme in Katowice and we observed music therapists in their work with looked after children and elderly clients. This was an interesting experience which gave me the chance to learn about different Music Therapy approaches. The bursary money enabled me to pay for my flights and living expenses for the trip.

Throughout my training, I have attended music therapy placements on a weekly basis in three different settings, working with children and adults.

The first was in a special needs school for children with Autism Spectrum Condition. On this placement, I was able to learn by shadowing a qualified music therapist but also had the opportunity to work with my own clients, both in 1:1 sessions and groups. I filled the termly reports for my clients and liaised with class tutors.

My second placement was a small care home for adults with mental health difficulties. I was there for a whole year, carrying out individual, small group and open group sessions. While at times challenging, it was also a highly enriching experience. During my year of work there, I was able to witness how Music Therapy can literally transform the life of disadvantaged people.

My third and last placement began in January 2020 and was at a day centre for adults with profound and multiple disabilities (PMLD). I ran two groups and three individual sessions. The work was more diverse in many aspects than my previous placements (I consider the variety of settings an important benefit of my training). It took a few weeks to adjust my approach with this client group, however, I found my days in this placement particularly rewarding. I liaised very closely with the support staff who were always present in the sessions. This exchange had two important benefits: helping me to understand my clients idiosyncratic ways of communicating and also offering the staff creative ideas to interact with the clients.

Unfortunately, due to COVID 19, my last placement had to be suspended in mid-March 2020. The training moved online. The day centre was closed down and I could not offer an online service of music therapy.

My plan is to move in the South West of the UK where the organization is aiming to expand the Music Therapy services there.

For my Master's thesis I undertook qualitative research into outcome measures of Music Therapy with adults with profound and multiple learning disabilities, exploring which music therapy outcome measures are commonly employed for adults with PMLD, studying to what extent are the most appropriate outcome measures available and the implications for this clients group the Music Therapy service. As I said before, I am proud of my piece of work and the feedback received. An immense thank you goes to The Music Therapy Charity for the bursary which enabled to afford private tuition to improve my writing.

To conclude, I would like to thank once again the Music Therapy Charity for selecting me as one of the recipients of their generous bursary. I do hope that the charity will continue to support trainee Music Therapists in the future, and I look forward to developing my practise over the coming years.

Kind regards,

Nicola Battistini