

Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Priorities forum statement

Number: 4

Subject: Music Therapy in children

Date: May 2015

Date due for review: May 2018

Guidance

The evidence base for music therapy is generally poor, due in part to the difficulties of conducting research in this area. However, a literature review (1) has found some evidence of effectiveness in certain conditions.

- In children with autism, individual music therapy can improve communication (2,3,4), development (5), and might improve behaviour and interaction (6).
- There is evidence (7) that individual music therapy can improve language, sociability and motor skills in children with Rett syndrome.
- In children with mental retardation, individual music therapy can improve certain behaviours and interaction(8,9,10) and improve picture recognition (11).

The priorities forum recognizes that music therapy can be effective in addressing particular problems in children with certain conditions. Music therapy may be provided through health services for children meeting the criteria below. The criteria are evidence-based (1) and also take into account the views of the music therapy service and referring consultants. Music therapy for children aged five and above may be provided through educational services offered by the local authority.

The Priorities Forum advises that music therapy be funded for children aged up to and including four years, resident in the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire strategic health authority area, with a diagnosis of one or more of:

- **A Pervasive Developmental Disorder (ICD 10: F84) – (includes autism, Asperger’s syndrome, Rett syndrome, atypical autism)**
- **Learning disability, with IQ less than 70 (ICD 10: F70 – F79)**

And

- **Specific problems in some or all of the areas below, that are causing functional impairment**
 - **Communication**
 - **Behaviour**
 - **Socialisation and isolation**
 - **Failure to meet developmental potential**

Referrals should only be accepted if approved by the child’s consultant, and must state the diagnosis, aim and expected outcome of the referral. Following referral, an assessment of benefit should be made by the music therapy service, and full therapy should only follow if this assessment is positive. A flowchart describing the recommended process of referral is attached.

Referrals not meeting the above criteria should only be funded in exceptional circumstances.

Human Rights and Equalities legislation has been considered in the formation of this guidance statement.

References

1. Williams, C.J. "Evidence of effectiveness of community therapy in children". Report for Hertsmere PCT, February 2004
2. Edgerton CL. The effect of improvisational music therapy on the communicative behaviors of autistic children. *Journal of Music Therapy* www;31:Spr-62.
3. Buday EM. The effects of signed and spoken words taught with music on speech and imitation by children with autism. *Journal of Music Therapy* 1995;32:189-202.
4. Brown SMK. Autism and music therapy- is change possible, and why music? *Journal of British Music Therapy* 1994;8:15-25.
5. Aldridge D, Gustroff G, Neugebauer L. A pilot study of music therapy in the treatment of children with developmental delay. *COMPLEMENT THER.MED.* 1995;3:197-205.
6. Brown SMK. Autism and music therapy- is change possible, and why music? *Journal of British Music Therapy* 1994;8:15-25.
7. Yasuhara A, Sugiyama Y. Music therapy for children with Rett syndrome. *Brain & Development* 2001;23 Suppl 1:S82-S84.
8. Bunt, L. Chapter 4, "The Islington/Haringey project". In "Music therapy and the handicapped child", PhD thesis. 168. 1985. Guildhall school of music and drama.
9. Hairston MP. Analyses of responses of mentally retarded autistic and mentally retarded nonautistic children to art therapy and music therapy. *Journal of Music Therapy* www;27:Fal-150.
10. Bunt, L. Chapter 3, "The Hammersmith Project", in "Music therapy and the handicapped child", PhD thesis. 134. 1985. Guildhall school of music and drama.
11. McQueen (1975) *BJMT* 6: 2-8 "Two controlled experiments in music therapy"

Flowchart for music therapy referrals

