



## **MHA and music therapy**

### **What is music therapy?**

Music Therapy differs from sing-alongs or purely listening to music on headphones (though there is no doubt these are excellent palliative activities, and should be found in homes). Music Therapy is, in essence, a therapy first – albeit a therapy which is delivered via music.

It is an established psychological clinical intervention, delivered by Health and Care Professions Council (HCPS) registered music therapists, all of whom have a Master's Degree in Music Therapy.

In music therapy sessions, therapists directly interact with people living with dementia through joint music making as well as the exchange of verbal, facial, vocal and bodily expressions. Through this interaction, music therapists regulate residents' emotions to alleviate symptoms and identify their possible causes.

Additionally, during the interaction, music therapists observe the remaining cognitive functions of the residents. Therefore, music therapists' feedback can help other health professionals to make decisions on care and medication, and to continue managing symptoms in day-to-day life.

Music Therapy can have a direct, sometimes immediate effect, on the patient. Behaviours are moderated and symptoms of agitation can be greatly alleviated during therapy sessions (which usually last for 30 minutes). Anecdotal evidence shows that Music Therapy can lessen the reliance on (and intensity of) psychotropic drugs – many of which have life inhibiting side effects (such as hypertension and stroke).

### **Music therapy and MHA**

MHA is one of the major employers of music therapists specialising in dementia in the UK, employing a team of 19 therapists, headed by Chief Music Therapist Ming Hung Hsu.

MHA estimates that, of the 800 qualified music therapists working in the UK today, 130 specialise in dementia and the elderly.

Figures from Alzheimer's Research UK show that there are 850,000 people diagnosed with dementia in the UK today.

That is a ratio of one therapist to every 6,538 patients.

On average a Music Therapist can work with five people a day, four days a week, meaning only 2,400 individual sessions can happen each year.

If we assume a turnover of people every 20 weeks (20 weeks being an average therapy course length) 1,043 people receive the therapy each year.

This means that just 0.12% people living with dementia in the UK in 2016 receive Music Therapy. MHA calls this the "therapy gap".

MHA's aspirations for music therapy are that for every registered place in its residential dementia or nursing dementia care, it will offer its residents who are living with dementia:

- A 24 week course of 1:1 music therapy sessions per year – this means a total of 45,936 1:1 sessions
- A weekly group music therapy session – this means a total of 11,328 group sessions
- This combines to 57,264 music therapy sessions

### **The fundraising need**

MHA is fundraising to actively address this gap. Its music therapy service is funded through charitable donations. Funds will pay for more therapists, in order to treat more people living with dementia, and to treat them over longer periods of time.

It has three key missions in its appeal

- To hire 35 more Music Therapists for MHA by 2025 to close the gap
- To raise money to fund its own clinical research into the proved effects of Music Therapy on dementia patients and the people surrounding them
- Using the research findings and its own experiences, MHA wants to lobby the NHS to make Music Therapy a prescribed NHS therapy, benefiting from government funds to increase its reach across the UK