

Guidelines for parents and carers

What happens in a music therapy session?

It may just look like fun with instruments, or similar to other musical activities. There is a great deal more to music therapy than just fun and improvising. We engage your child in a number of ways including musical play, singing and using the instruments and music-making as a vehicle for imaginative development and role play. We are all different in our styles of work although we all use music in some of these ways.

How is therapy different from school or a music lesson?

The therapist probably won't seem to direct/give instructions in the way teachers often do. She will observe your child's natural skills and development while engaging your child in musical play and music-making. After 3-5 weeks of assessing your child, she will start to think about how to develop the sessions to address your child's needs best.

What do parents/carers do during a session?

Children need time during which they are not evaluated in a subjective way (praised/encouraged/discouraged/admonished). They need to be able to explore the room, the instruments and the possibilities on their own terms and in their own time. Music therapy provides this in many ways.

If your child is very young and unhappy to be left, you will be asked just to observe quietly and not interrupt the session. Some venues are easier to work in than others - this will depend on the location. All children need to gradually learn to trust in new relationships if they are to negotiate school and the world outside home successfully so learning to leave you and build a relationship with the therapist is important for their development. The child's best interests always need to be taken into account when making a decision about this - but even if your child is happy to remain with the therapist you do need to remain on the premises at all times.

What about distressed/angry/"badly behaved" children?

All behaviour, whether good or not in a parent's eyes, is communication and we, as therapists, are trying to develop the relationship so that we can understand how it feels to be in your child's shoes (empathy). They may feel frustrated, angry or sad sometimes and we need to understand how that feels for them. Please don't worry about this - it is natural and we are not judging them, or you! We work alongside them in music to enable them to communicate their feelings. This includes helping them to find a means of channelling aggressive and destructive behaviour to enable a happier school experience.

How long does each session last?

The maximum clinical time will not be longer than 30 minutes - very young children may take time to build up to this length of session. It is not uncommon for a young child to tolerate only a short time in a very new environment and we need to allow children to develop trust in new relationships - try not to insist on a child remaining in a session, or returning to it if they are clearly upset. They need to feel in control and free to choose. Over time your child will become familiar with the room and the therapist and may well feel happy to remain for longer.

What does the fee cover?

Unlike with music lessons or other activities, the fee covers more than the active clinical time. It covers your child's session, feedback time with you, detailed note writing that the therapist does after each session, report writing and discussing issues which may arise in clinical supervision.

How long will therapy last?

After 3-5 weeks of assessment a decision is taken whether or not to continue. The building of a therapeutic relationship does take time and it would be normal for a child to come to music therapy for around a year - often longer.

How will therapy be reviewed?

We provide regular reports for you and other professionals working with your child. We will review therapy with you - either through weekly feedback or through a separate meeting/phone call. This depends on each individual situation.

Do you keep in touch with my child's school?

Yes. We will give feedback/reports to your child's school and other professionals involved with him/her. We will attend review/CAF/EHCP meetings when we are invited/able to.

Can I get help with fees?

For information about this please visit: <http://www.hertsmusicservice.org.uk/parents-music-therapy>.