Arts therapies in adult mental health services

Information for service users and carers
What are arts therapies?

Arts therapies are forms of psychological treatment using a medium such as music, art or dance and movement to help you express yourself without necessarily using words - although talking is still important. The aim is to help deal with difficult feelings through self reflection and understanding.

Arts therapists are trained to help you explore and manage thoughts and feelings through the process of creating art and through the relationship with the therapist and/or group. You don't need artistic skills - the emphasis is on personal growth and change while working at your own pace.

We work in adult inpatient and community mental health settings, offering both group and individual sessions.
How can arts therapies help?

Evidence shows that arts therapies can help you with a range of problems including depression, anxiety, bereavement, eating, personality and mood disorders and psychosis. Arts therapies are recommended in the updated National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) Guideline for Schizophrenia (2009) for treatment both in the acute phase and during recovery.

Arts therapies have been shown to help people gain self-awareness, manage symptoms, improve communication with others, release tension, increase concentration and self-confidence and reduce feelings of isolation and exclusion.

Are there any risks or side effects?

We hope that working with an arts therapist will help you with your problems and to understand yourself more, but especially at the beginning of therapy you may feel unsettled. This is because strong emotions may come up which may feel uncomfortable. Our therapists are aware of this, although it’s important to tell your therapist if you feel things are not going well, so that you can try to work things out together. In group therapy, again especially at the beginning, it is not uncommon to experience strong feelings about other people in the group, including the therapist. The therapist is trained to helped you explore these feelings and to increase your understanding of yourself and your relationships.
Who can benefit from arts therapies?

People from a variety of different backgrounds and with a wide range of emotional and psychological difficulties can find the arts therapies helpful.

Arts therapists are well trained to work with people who may find it easier to manage their symptoms indirectly. The arts therapies give you the chance to express and explore your experiences with the help of a trained therapist.

On the wards arts therapists mostly run open groups, which are available to all patients. Referrals are needed to attend community arts therapies groups/individual sessions, which have a limited number of places for longer term work. Individual sessions can also be considered on the inpatient wards.

Taking part may help you to work in your own way - this means you don't have to talk about your feelings and experiences, until, and unless, you feel able to.
What happens in arts therapies sessions?

**Music therapy** offers instruments from different cultures, which you can play with or without previous experience. The therapist does not teach music but rather will encourage you to improvise in a free or structured way according to your needs. You and the therapist make music together and the therapist is trained to respond to your music, tuning into the feelings expressed. There is space in the session to talk and reflect about what may emerge through the music, and on the way you relate musically, as this can shed light on how you relate in other areas of your life.

**Art therapy** uses art as the main way of communicating. We encourage you to use art to express and explore your thoughts and feelings. You can talk and reflect on the artwork with the therapist and/or group in every session. The art therapist will encourage you to explore your imagery and relationships with others, which can help you to understand your difficult feelings and ways of relating. During a course of therapy the artwork is left in the care of the art therapist and is stored confidentially between sessions.
What happens in arts therapies sessions?

Dance movement therapy encourages you to use everyday movements, improvised dance and natural rhythms to communicate and make personal statements about what you are thinking and feeling. Later you may be able to put this into words. In time, you could explore your movements as a way of linking body awareness with your emotions. Through shared movement and ideas, you may become aware of, and even change, the way you relate to others.

For all of the arts therapies, it is important that sessions happen in the same place at the same time each week. This consistency is an important part of therapy as is regular attendance, time keeping and confidentiality.

Arts therapists are trained at Masters level and are state registered practitioners. Further information can be found by contacting:

- Association of Professional Music Therapists, 24-27 White Lion Street, London N1 9PD. Tel: 020 7837 6100, email: APMToffice@aol.com
- The British Association of Art Therapists, 24-27 White Lion Street, London N1 9PD. Tel: 020 7686 4216, email:info@baat.org
- Association for Dance Movement Psychotherapy UK, 32 Meadfoot Lane, Torquay, Devon, TG1 2B. Tel: 01803 402142, email: admin@admt.org.uk.
Further information

General enquiries

Alice Jackson
Head of Arts Therapies, Lambeth, South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust.

Arts Therapies Department
Reay House
Lambeth Hospital
108 Landor Road
London
SW9 9ND

Tel: 020 3228 6371
email: alice.jackson@slam.nhs.uk
Options available

If you’d like a large print, audio, Braille or a translated version of this leaflet then please ask us.

Useful contact details

SLaM Switchboard: 020 3228 6000
SLaM 24hr Information Line - Advice on how to access SLaM Services: 0800 731 2864
Contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) for help, advice and information:

T: 0800 731 2864
W: www.pals.slam.nhs.uk
E: pals@slam.nhs.uk

Complaints

If you are not happy about something but not sure if you want to make a formal complaint you can speak to a member of staff directly. Alternatively you can contact the PALS Office on freephone 0800 731 2864. If you decide you want to make a formal complaint this can be done by contacting the Complaints Department:

Complaints Department, Maudsley Hospital,
Denmark Hill, London SE5 8AZ

T: (020) 3228 2444/2499
E: complaints@slam.nhs.uk
W: www.slam.nhs.uk

www.tfl.gov.uk/journeyplanner

For the quickest way to plan your journey anywhere in greater London use journey planner:

020 7222 1234 (24hrs)