**Music Therapy Charity Bursary**

**Final Report – Anna Tyrrell**

I am just finishing my MMT (NR): Music, Health Society and would like to update the Music Therapy Charity on the ways in which their generous bursary has enabled me to complete my studies.

Completing my Master’s degree in music therapy is the fulfilment of over 25 years’ ambition to work in the field. I had first heard of music therapy whilst at secondary school, as it came up as my top match on a careers questionnaire. I had never heard of music therapy so I set out to investigate what it was all about, and it piqued my interest. Having completed my BSc (Hons) in Music at City University in 1998, where I had studied a module in music therapy with Gary Ansdell, I moved abroad in order to broaden my life experience. This culminated in me pursuing a career as a music teacher, both in Spain and back in the UK although the desire to pursue music therapy studies remained with me. Just over two years ago, I made the decision to leave my permanent, full-time teaching post in order to train as a music therapist. Thanks to the generosity of the Music Therapy Charity, the financial impact of this decision has been lessened. I have had to work very hard, but have never missed a submission deadline, and my attendance record has been very high.

My studies coincided with a difficult period of health which made travelling from my home in Bournemouth to my training base in Manchester more difficult. The bursary enabled me to purchase flights and hotel accommodation when I needed to stay nearer to the RNCM. In addition, the bursary supplemented the casual earnings I made from supply teaching, and gave me flexibility over when to work, especially near exams or submission deadlines.

As a requirement of my course, I have attended personal supportive therapy. The bursary allowed to me pay for weekly counselling sessions, which I have continued beyond the statutory 30 sessions, as I found them so helpful in working through the issues arising during my training. This has enabled me to learn a tremendous amount about myself and how to better relate to others within a therapeutic relationship.

Another experience which was incredibly valuable for me was the opportunity to visit Poland in November 2016, to attend some classes on the Music Therapy training programme in Katowice. In addition to networking with colleagues from Poland, and learning about their studies, I had the opportunity to participate in a special performance for some music therapy groups at a public concert, and additionally to shadow some music therapists in their work with Looked After Children and Elderly clients. This was a thoroughly enriching experience as it was so interesting to compare similarities and differences in approach between our training course and the one in Katowice. Once again, the bursary money enabled me to pay for my flights and living expenses for the trip.

During my training, I have undertaken music therapy placements on a weekly basis in four different settings, enabling me to gain experience with children and adults. I have worked with clients with both learning disabilities and mental health conditions.

The first of these was in a specialist 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 by setting up a group of 4 pre-school children. I also contributed to the termly reports of some of the children and liaised with speech and language therapists and class tutors. In addition to this, I contributed to the wider musical life of the school by performing at the school Christmas Fayre and accompanying primary pupils, staff and parents in their Christmas carol concert.

My second placement was in an acute Eating Disorders Unit in a psychiatric hospital. Although I was only there for 8 weeks I was able to carry out small group sessions, and contribute to MDT meetings by sharing the information I had gained from these. I also started running a staff choir. In discussion with tutors and my placement supporter, it was agreed that I would transfer my placement to a less acute setting.

I began my third placement in March 2016 at a day centre for adults with learning disabilities and a range of mental health conditions. I ran two large groups of up to 15 clients, one for adults with moderate to severe learning disabilities and mental health conditions, and the other for adults with profound and multiple learning disabilities. In addition, I ran several smaller groups for clients with moderate learning disabilities and mental health conditions. I also ran 1:1 sessions with clients living with visual impairments, autism, profound and multiple disabilities and following stroke. As part of my placement, I carried out a service evaluation, which I was able to present to the manager at its conclusion. I liaised very closely with support staff in arranging a performance in the coffee bar for one of my groups, playing for service users and guests at the Summer Fayre, leading service users and staff in Christmas carol singing, and accompanying several clients in a Talent Show.

I am currently on my fourth placement in a dementia care home for adults with Alzheimer’s Disease, Frontal Lobe Dementia and Korsakoff’s Dementia. I carry out 1:1 sessions in communal lounges as well as at the bedside of more frail residents. I also work with closed groups in a sensory room and lead open groups in lounges where care staff and visiting relatives are also invited to participate. I have run several singalongs for residents and their partners and have also presented my work to the Activities Coordinator as well as a family member of one of the residents I work with.

In all my placements, I have been commended by my placement supporters and other colleagues on my organisational skills and my ability to work independently, as well as my flexibility when collaborating with other members of a team.

I applied for a job on the Nordoff Robbins graduate employment scheme in April 2017, and was successfully appointed to the Nordoff Robbins South West regional team. I am incredibly excited about this, as I feel it is pioneering work in my local area, where there are currently no other Nordoff Robbins music therapists living. Although the precise details of my employment placements are still being finalised, I know I will have the opportunity to work with adults with learning disabilities in a variety of day centres, as well as work with child and adolescent refugees and unaccompanied minors. I am also hopeful to work with some elderly clients with dementia, as I have really engaged well with this client group on my current placement. I have made tentative links with my local university’s Ageing and Dementia Research Centre, asking for their guidance in selecting appropriate literature for my final presentation for assessment of practice. I would be extremely interested in further developing links with them as I begin to practise as a qualified music therapist from September.

In line with HCPC guidance, I have attended 30 hours of counselling during my training, which have helped my development as a music therapist. I have gained useful insights into how I process the work with my clients. Once again, the generous bursary of the Music Therapy Charity has been invaluable in meeting some of the cost of attending these counselling sessions. In addition, I undertook qualitative research into the importance of self-care for music therapists, based on learning more about this practise through my counselling.

I would like to thank 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, with a view to being able to help other trainees myself, one day.

Kind regards,

Anna Tyrrell