

Statement of Intent for Dramatherapy/Arts Therapy at The Royal Free Children's Hospital School

Introduction

This document aims to give an overview of the 'Where, what, why, when, who and how' of Dramatherapy is used within the RFCHS. The Ofsted framework of 2019 recognised the importance of supporting individual students with behavioural needs and with their emotional and mental wellbeing.

Dramatherapy as an Arts therapy

The Health Professions Council (HCPC) regulates the registration of the profession as Arts therapists. Under the umbrella profession of Arts therapist, the title of dramatherapist is an HCPC protected title. The HCPC describe dramatherapy as: 'a unique form of psychotherapy in which creativity, play, movement, voice, storytelling, dramatisation, and the performance arts have a central position within the therapeutic relationship'.

Sessions are not to be confused with drama teaching, outside of working to defined objectives, sessions do not have a set curriculum and respond to the emerging needs of individual pupils.

Overarching Aims

Dramatherapy within this educational context aims to complement a school culture that supports students' engagement in learning and encourages them to fulfil their educational potential whilst promoting and supporting emotional and mental health and wellbeing.

Intent

To support mental, and emotional health, and wellbeing needs of students. Sessions provide a supportive space for young people to share concerns that may inhibit their educational progress. By engaging in the process pupils may become more emotionally literate, more able to express feelings, and able to identify and pursue their own personal goals. Sessions provide opportunities for students to explore their beliefs, values, and identity to increase sense of self-esteem. Varied methods are used to explore this. Moving forward journaling may be an additional intervention that could improve the consolidation of awareness. Therapeutic sessions will work towards acknowledging an ending at Futures. Moving forward interventions such as use of a timeline can explore the hopes and aspirations of students. It is an intention of the therapeutic provision to provide equal access and support to all students in need. Moving forward the provision would benefit from having a formal informative session with students to tell students of the potential benefits of therapy.

Implementation

Therapeutic interventions respond to varying needs of students. Creative therapeutic approaches are used to support pupils to communicate their needs. Grounding exercises and relaxation techniques are used to promote self-regulatory skills. Mask making, sand tray therapy and story-making are ways to work through issues hard for some pupils to address

directly or express verbally. A further improvement would be to refer to LAMS and needs identified in EHCP plans to jointly identify and discuss aims in a transparent way with students. A person-centred approach ensures that interventions complement students understanding. Talking therapy interventions are drawn on to support students to express feelings, thoughts, and interpersonal challenges; to encourage them to find their voice and explore their choices. (The therapist is also a registered BACP counsellor). Revisiting themes, and reviewing therapy is a part of the therapists' skill set, this supports students to engage and make meanings from their experience. Psycho-education methods can be used to promote awareness of emotions and understanding of other people's feelings. Writing down relevant points or drawing could also help students to remember points. Further improvements could monitor change the use of a baseline assessment and a routine check-in could monitor mood and provide a way to observe changes over time.

Settings

Pupils are seen on a weekly basis at Futures and the CLC.

Dramatherapy support is available for two days a week.

Futures:

Pupils are seen individually in a suitable confidential space. Pupils are asked to complete an adapted LAMS form as part of an assessment to help identify social and emotional health needs alongside the pupil. Session notes are made after each session and stored safely according to GDPR guidelines. After an initial period of assessment there is an informal progress review, where it can be decided with the pupil if sessions will continue.

Method of intake for sessions:

Pupils are asked directly if they would like to attend sessions, following feedback from completed LAMS. Pupils may be seen via self-referral. Pupils may be referred to the therapist by teachers and TA's.

Therapy schedule:

Pupils are seen individually, and whenever possible at a regular time weekly during term time. Emergency sessions whilst the therapist is available may be arranged, and ad hoc sessions may be possible, time permitting.

Group sessions:

A group using drama and music to support the social and emotional needs of students takes place weekly on Tuesday mornings. All pupils are encouraged to participate. Central to the group are guiding principles of Consideration, cooperation, contribution. The group provides a space to explore social interactions and uses creative scenarios to help with observed behavioural needs. Eg taking on leadership roles in activities has encouraged self-agency and empowerment for quieter pupils. Group games have encouraged playfulness and cooperation.

Paths:

For pupils accessing a learning environment for limited periods of time, provision of an in-house source of emotional and psychological support through Arts therapy is being trialled.

Impact

Therapeutic intervention has provided a safe setting to support student wellbeing and explore obstacles to learning. Core values of Cooperation- Consideration- Contribution.

Consideration- Sessions have observed improved intrapersonal skills and raised emotional awareness as well as improvements in the ability of individuals to listen and empathise with others in their interpersonal relationships.

Contribution- On the whole there has been willingness of students to engage in creative approaches, to raise self-esteem. Participation has impacted on the confidence of students to express themselves and contribute in sessions. It is hoped that this will encourage students to raise their aspirations.

Cooperation- Progress has been observed in the capacity of students to trust and share ideas and move towards increased initiative and leadership.

Recommendations:

- Moving forward to make the sessions more accessible it is suggested a renaming of sessions as Arts therapy rather than Dramatherapy.
- To explore the potential of offering Arts therapy to young people in hospital.