

Evidence Brief: Art Therapy

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Produced by the HEE Knowledge Management team Evidence Briefs offer a quick overview of the published reports, research, and evidence on a workforce-related topic.

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- [Complete Evidence Brief list – link for HEE staff](#)
- [Complete Evidence Brief list – link for External staff](#)

Key publications – the big picture

[Code of Ethics](#), British Association of Art Therapists, 2022
We have issued this Code of Ethics with the aim of providing its members with the fundamental principles, standards and guidelines for good practice. This is to support them in their work, as well as to inform and protect members of the public using their services.

[New report shows arts and health roles within the NHS improve patient and staff wellbeing](#), 2022, NHS Confederation
The 'Arts and Health Coordinator Capacity Building Programme' introduced and developed arts and health coordinator roles in all seven health boards in Wales.

[The Allied Health Professions \(AHPs\) Strategy for England](#), NHS England, 2022
This strategy is a catalyst for change. Wherever you work, every member of our AHP community has a part in realising our collective ambitions through its delivery. I therefore encourage you to take a moment to consider how the AHP community can enable the change required to deliver future care today.

[NHS Long Term Plan: Mental Health](#), NHS England
The NHS Long Term Plan (LTP) makes a renewed commitment that mental health services will grow faster than the overall NHS budget with a ringfenced investment worth at least £2.3 billion a year for mental health services by 2023/24.

[Enhancing the Healing Environment](#), The King's Fund
The Enhancing the Healing Environment (EHE) programme has encouraged and enabled nurse-led teams to work in partnership with patients to improve the environment in which they deliver care.

HEE Star

More resources and tools are available in the **Improving Patient Enablement and Continuity of Care** section of the [HEE Star](#).

Statistics

[HCPC Diversity Data Report 2021: arts therapists](#)

- Arts therapists reported the highest rates of disability amongst all the registrant titles.
- The percentage of arts therapists identifying as Spiritual was much higher than in other professions.
- Arts therapists reported the highest levels of at least one secondary work setting amongst all HCPC professions (65%).
- Arts therapists had the lowest proportion of full-time workers (31%).
- Arts therapists had the highest proportion of independently educated registrants, joint with physiotherapists (22%).

HEE National Data Programme

HEE staff can look at the [National Data Warehouse \(NDL\)](#) SharePoint site to find out more about datasets and Tableau products.

Published Peer Reviewed Research

Leadership, coaching and education

[Signature Pedagogies for Art Therapy Education: A Delphi Study](#), 2020 *Abstract only**

A sample of 18 art therapy educators reached consensus on three common teaching methods and pedagogical worldview deemed essential to the education of art therapists: (a) experiential teaching and learning using art materials, (b) practicum/internship placements, and (c) art-based experiential learning.

[Influence of Art Therapy Students' Art Practice on Their Professional Identity and Career Commitment](#), 2020 *Abstract only**

The regression analysis results showed that art practice and study period significantly influenced career commitment, and art practice and age influenced professional identity. This study provides empirical evidence to support that art therapy students' art practice can have a significant effect on their professional growth.

[A Feasibility Study Of Administering The Electronic Research And Development Culture Index To The Multidisciplinary Workforce In A UK Teaching Hospital](#) 2019 *Abstract only**

This is the first study to assess the feasibility of assessing the strength of an organization's multidisciplinary workforce research and development (R&D) culture by surveying that workforce using the eR&DCI. We converted the index to "Online Surveys" and successfully administered it to the entire multidisciplinary workforce in the Children's Hospital.

[Outpatient Group Art Therapy in a Psychiatry Residency Program](#), 2019 *Abstract only**

This article describes a collaborative educational program for psychiatry residents who co-lead art therapy groups with a licensed art therapist in an adult outpatient clinic.

[Art Therapy, Community Building, Activism, and Outcomes](#), 2018 *Abstract only**

In summary, students gained research knowledge and skills particularly in program evaluation, a form of outcomes-based research, and they learned about agencies in greater depth than they would ordinarily have learned in experiences like internship.

[Facilitative Leadership: A Framework for the Creative Arts Therapies](#), 2017 *Abstract only**

We propose a leadership framework for the creative art therapies (CATs) as a means to affect the sociopolitical contexts of our clinical and scholarly practices. The new model of facilitative leadership includes 3 aspects: developing the self, developing others, and envisioning a creative and just future.

Community, primary, secondary, and tertiary care

[Expanding arts therapies provision: a pilot project in Older Adult Mental Health Services, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board](#), 2021 *Abstract only**

The aim of the report is to summarise the progress made during a six-month pilot project expanding arts therapies provision from an inpatient service to community services, in a National Health Service health board's Older Adult Mental Health Services, in response to the need for direct therapy with older adults who have severe cognitive impairment and communication difficulties arising from dementia and/or complex mental health difficulties.

[What makes us the same? What makes us different?](#)

[Development of a shared model and manual of group therapy practice across art therapy, dance movement therapy and music therapy within community mental health care](#), 2021

Arts-based and consensus methods were used to develop practice principles, which were expanded through workshops with arts therapists working in mental health services. A model, manual, training and adherence guide were produced, which incorporated role-play and video-based reflection.

[Art Therapy in the Digital World: An Integrative Review of Current Practice and Future Directions](#), 2021

The review documents growing research illustrating increased use of digital technology by art therapists for both online delivery and digital art making. Potentially immense opportunities that technology brings for art therapy should be considered alongside limitations and challenges of clinical, pragmatic and ethical nature.

[‘Reflecting or frozen?’ The impact of Covid-19 on art therapists working with people with a learning disability](#), 2020 *Abstract only**

Stimulated by the national restrictions imposed due to the pandemic, art therapy practice changed at an unprecedented pace. Online art therapy for people with a learning disability may provide a viable alternative to face-to-face art therapy.

[Developing an online art therapy group for learning disabled young adults using WhatsApp](#), 2020 *Abstract only**

The use of online art therapy in an accessible format enables the group to continue accessing support during the pandemic. The variety of communication methods available on WhatsApp allows participants to remain included.

[Aesthetic presence: The role of the arts in the education of creative arts therapists in the classroom and online](#), 2020

This article introduces the concept of aesthetic presence within the Community of Inquiry pedagogical model in line with values espoused within a Universal Design for Learning framework.

[Practices and challenges in implementing art therapy in the school system](#), 2018 *Abstract only**

The findings highlight specific gaps between art therapy practices and field training, and the reality of the education system. These suggest changes that could be made as regards the training of school art therapists, that should be broadened to varied modalities and the construction of therapeutic models applicable to the educational setting, including the adoption of more short-term therapeutic approaches.

[How Art Therapists Observe Mental Health Using Formal Elements in Art Products: Structure and Variation as Indicators for Balance and Adaptability](#), 2018

In this qualitative study using Constructivist Grounded Theory, eight art therapists were interviewed in-depth to identify which formal elements they observe, how they describe mental health and how they associate formal elements with mental health.

[UK art therapy practice-based guidelines for children and adults with learning disabilities](#), 2017 *Abstract only**

Ten overarching guideline recommendations for clinical practice were identified, namely ‘working relationships’, ‘communication’, ‘support networks’, ‘managing risk and vulnerability’, ‘establishing therapy agreements’, ‘assessment, formulation, and therapeutic goals’, ‘working creatively and flexibly’, ‘working psychotherapeutically’, ‘monitoring progress’ and ‘professional responsibilities and self-care’.

[Art therapy for people with non-psychotic mental disorders](#), 2015

From the limited available evidence, art therapy was associated with positive effects when compared with a control in a number of studies in patients with different clinical profiles, and it was reported to be an acceptable treatment and was associated with a number of benefits. Art therapy appeared to be cost-effective compared with wait-list but further studies are needed to confirm this finding as well as evidence to inform future cost-effective analyses of art therapy versus other treatments.

Role progression and development

[Pathways to developing a career in art therapy](#), 2022

Basic career information on characteristics/dispositions of a successful art therapist, common types of work settings, job titles along the continuum of care, and projected job growth of the profession are included.

[Relationship between labour force satisfaction, wages and retention within the UK National Health Service: a systematic review of the literature](#), 2022

This review highlighted how multiple factors influence NHS labour force retention. Pay was found to influence satisfaction, which in turn affected retention. An increase in wages alone is unlikely to be sufficient to ameliorate the concerns of NHS workers.

[Enablers and barriers to progressing a clinical academic career in nursing, midwifery and allied health professions: A cross-sectional survey](#), 2021 *Abstract only**

Nearly three quarters pursuing a clinical academic career indicated 'clearer career paths' and 'greater integration across clinical and academic departments' were desirable. Most

common barriers related to research roles, availability of positions and funding.

[The impact of NHS change processes on art therapists working in LD services](#), 2019 *Abstract only**

Organisational sources of satisfaction and stress within NHS LD services were identified, and employment issues for art therapists became apparent in relation to job insecurity, within the depressed employment market.

[The professional identity, career commitment and subjective well-being of art therapy students](#), 2019

First, correlation analysis results showed that professional identity is interrelated with career commitment and subjective well-being. Second, the results of regression analysis indicated that career commitment and subjective well-being were significant predictors of professional identity.

[The Art Therapy Working Alliance Inventory: the development of a measure](#), 2018 *Abstract only**

Exploratory factor analysis revealed three main factors: perceiving the art medium as an effective therapeutic tool (Art Task); the affective and explorative experience during art-making (Art Experience); and, acceptance of the art therapist's interventions in the art medium (Art Therapist Acceptance).

Workforce perspectives and mental health

[Therapist and client experiences of art therapy in relation to psychosis: a thematic analysis](#), 2022

This study explored the processes of art therapy from the viewpoint of both service users and art therapists. The results suggest artmaking offers people the opportunity to communicate their experiences within the artwork. This can

start conversations, which may be particularly helpful when words are difficult, and provides people with an opportunity to shift how they view their artwork and themselves.

[Joining the workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic: views of Allied Health Profession students, 2022 Abstract only*](#)

Although the transition from student to practitioner continues to be a stressful period, only a minority of participants reported COVID-19 as an explicit stressor. However, as the effects of COVID-19 continue to evolve in the United Kingdom, universities and healthcare trusts must ensure adequate supports are in place for recent graduates navigating this transition during a healthcare crisis.

[Wellbeing and coping of UK nurses, midwives and allied health professionals during COVID-19-a cross-sectional study, 2022 Abstract only*](#)

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant effect on psychological wellbeing and quality of working life which decreased while the use of negative coping and burnout of these healthcare professionals increased.

[Art therapists' perceptions of what happens when they create art alongside their clients in the practice of group therapy, 2020](#)

The outcomes suggest that creating art alongside clients affects four interrelated aspects of group art therapy: (a) developing an egalitarian group environment, (b) expressing authentic leadership, (c) augmenting therapist presence, and (d) boosting group member engagement.

[Online art therapy practice and client safety: a UK-wide survey in times of COVID-19, 2020 Abstract only*](#)

A snap shot of art therapists' responses to a need to adapt their practice due to the pandemic is presented, including

approaches to working with technology and strategies that therapists employed to ensure their clients' and own safety.

[Creative Arts Therapy as a Potential Intervention to Prevent Burnout and Build Resilience in Health Care Professionals, 2020 Abstract only*](#)

Through nonverbal interventions, creative arts therapy can help people access, explore, and share authentic emotion in visual, musical, physical, or written form. By reconstructing meaning through transformative methods, participants may confront, reflect, and better cope with traumatic experiences while catalyzing social support networks and deepening relational bonds in the workplace.

[Art Therapy in Pandemics: Lessons for COVID-19, 2020 Abstract only*](#)

Art therapists can support recommended public health psychosocial guidelines by disseminating information, promoting expression and inspiration, challenging stigma, modulating media input, securing family connections, monitoring secondary traumatic stress, developing coping and resilience, maintaining relationships, and amplifying hope.

[Navigating Loss Through Creativity: Influences of Bereavement on Creativity and Professional Practice in Art Therapy, 2019 Abstract only*](#)

This study revealed that visual art making could help art therapists develop self-knowledge and personal understanding regarding their own grief experiences that can lead to improved competence in the therapeutic care of others.

[Creative Arts Therapists Report Lower Collective Self-Esteem but Higher Job Satisfaction Than Other Professionals, 2019 Abstract only*](#)

Results confirmed that creative arts therapists reported significantly lower professional CSE but higher job satisfaction compared to the group of psychologists and social workers.

[Subjective Experience of Art Therapists in the Treatment of Bereaved Clients](#), 2019 *Abstract only**

The findings describe how art therapists use the creative process, honor imagery, and determine their interventions to effectively work with clients coping with grief.

[Effectiveness of Art Therapy With Adult Clients in 2018—What Progress Has Been Made?](#) 2018

This paper presents the latest 27 studies in the field that examine the effectiveness of art therapy with adult clients and divides them into seven clinical categories: cancer patients, clients coping with a variety of medical conditions, mental health clients, clients coping with trauma, prison inmates, the elderly, and clients who have not been diagnosed with specific issues but face ongoing daily challenges.

Diversity and inclusion

[“Raising the curtain on the equality theatre”: a study of recruitment to first healthcare job post-qualification in the UK National Health Service](#), 2022

The Healthcare Workforce Equity + Diversity Lens we have developed can help to ‘raise the curtain on the equality theatre’ and inform more inclusive approaches to recruitment such as contextualised recruitment or effective allyship between employers and universities.

[Equality and diversity British Association of Art Therapists](#), 2022

As part of our commitment to creating a more diverse and inclusive culture, we are committed to taking action. In 2022, we

developed and adopted an Equality Equity Diversity and Inclusion [Strategy](#) and [Policy](#).

[Art Therapy Students of Color: The Experience of Seven Graduate Students](#), 2021 *Abstract only**

Narratives and strategies support published best-practices as participants identified limited course content relative to the contributions of pioneers of color, uneven exposure to course content designed to increase racial/cultural self-awareness, and preparation for cross-cultural interactions.

[Relational Social Justice Ethics for Art Therapists](#), 2019 *Abstract only**

Relational social justice integrates psychological theories and practices with political and social change paradigms to situate relationships as central to ethical decision making.

Competency Frameworks

[The standards of proficiency for arts therapists](#) (HCPC)

In August 2022, we updated our standards of proficiency for the first time since 2015. The changes, which will come into effect on 1 September 2023, have been made following an extensive period of engagement with a wide range of stakeholders.

[AHP Support Worker Competency, Education and Career Development Framework](#)

This framework enables employers, networks, integrated care systems (ICSs) and services effectively plan, develop, and deploy their AHP support workforce. It provides guidance on training, education and competencies for AHP support workers and demonstrates a clear pathway for recruitment and progression, with common and transferrable skills across eight domains.

[Development of a digital competency framework for UK Allied Health Professionals](#), 2020

This framework has been developed to support the enhancement of digital competence (knowledge and skills associated with digital technology in practice) for all allied health professions from band 3 to band 9. It is intended to be a developmental and supportive tool that can enable all staff to meet their digital potential.

***Help accessing articles or papers**

Where a report/ journal article or resource is freely available the link has been provided. If an NHS OpenAthens account is required this has been indicated. It has also been highlighted if only the abstract is available. If you do not have an OpenAthens account you can self-register here.

If you need help accessing an article, or have any other questions, contact the Knowledge Management team for support KnowledgeManagement@hee.nhs.uk