

Evidence Brief: Drama 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 External staff](#)

Key publications – the big picture

[BADth Position Statement Threat to Dramatherapy, and other creative therapy courses, at Roehampton University](#), 2022, British Association of Dramatherapy

At a time when the UK has an increasing Mental Health crisis it is vital that we have the best possible services for those who need support to improve their Mental Health. It is strongly evidenced that Arts and Play Therapies can have a significant impact on the improvement of people's health, educational and social needs.

[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.

[Mental health statistics: prevalence, services and funding in England](#), 2021, UK Parliament

The [Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing in England](#) found that 1 in 6 people aged 16+ had experienced symptoms of a common mental health problem, such as depression or anxiety, in the past week. Women were more likely than men to be experiencing common mental disorders. Prevalence has increased since 1993.

[Adult Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme](#), 2021, NHS England

IAPT is widely-recognised as the most ambitious programme of talking therapies in the world and in the past year alone more than one million people accessed IAPT services for help to

overcome their depression and anxiety, and better manage their mental health.

[Therapeutic interventions after abuse and neglect](#), NICE
Abuse and neglect can have a long-lasting impact on the health and wellbeing of children and young people. It is important to know how to respond, and the evidence suggests that the following interventions may be effective for children and young people.

Case Studies

[HEE case study: Borderland Voices](#)

Although the participants preferred creative art sessions to drama-based activities, the student-produced a scheme of work for both creative writing and art sessions that incorporated elements of her drama training (Learning Areas 1, 2 and 6).

HEE Star

More resources and tools are available in the AHP Quick Reference Guides Upskilling section of the [HEE Star](#).

Alternatively, search for 'Allied Health' or 'drama therapy' in the search bar.

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

[Evaluating a specialist education programme for nurses and allied health professionals working in older people care: A qualitative analysis of motivations and impact](#), 2021 Abstract only*

Understanding the motivations to undertake a specialist gerontological programme and the impacts on practitioners and older people care and services will help inform the continuing professional development agenda for nurses and allied health professionals working in this field of practice.

[From a distance: Technology and the first low-residency drama therapy education program](#), 2020 Abstract only*

This article explores ways in which distance learning impacted this cohort in their first year of drama therapy education. Within the cohort's reflections, specific themes related to technology, cohort experience, course instruction and work-life balance are examined as well as drama therapy-specific aspects of their experience.

[Prominent themes in drama therapy effectiveness research](#), 2019 Abstract only*

Within an effectiveness context, the following themes emerged from this analysis: emotional and behavioural symptoms, social skills and social interactions, self-confidence and self-esteem, sense of self and identity, self-expression, well-being, emotional regulation, empathy, academic performance, language and linguistic performance, stigma, bodily awareness, empowerment and spontaneity.

[The user-friendliness of drama: Implications for drama therapy and psychodrama admission and training](#), 2018 Abstract only*

This article addresses the claim that drama is a user-friendly art form that can be mastered relatively intuitively with less reliance on knowledge and practice-driven skills than other artistic modalities. Attention is given to the concept that this inherent quality warrants revisiting the drama-based prerequisites for drama therapy and psychodrama training.

[The complex intersection of education and therapy in the drama therapy classroom](#), 2017

This phenomenological study sought to answer the question: What is the lived experience of drama therapy students in these experiential learning processes that evoke and utilize their personal affective material?

[Towards a drama therapy pedagogy: An a/r/tographic study using dramatic improvisation](#), 2016 Abstract only*

This article explores the role of the art form in both research and teaching practice for the delivery of an MA drama therapy program in the United Kingdom. A/r/tography as the chosen research methodology makes central the artistic process to inform teaching and research through ongoing reflexivity using dramatic improvisation. Seven phases (renderings) illustrate the development towards formulating a drama therapy pedagogy.

Community, primary, secondary and tertiary care

[Bringing creative psychotherapies to primary NHS Mental Health Services in the UK: A feasibility study on patient and staff experiences of arts for the blues workshops delivered at Improving Access to Psychological Therapies \(IAPT\) services](#), 2022

On the whole, the creative workshop was received very well, suggesting that the Arts for the Blues, a creative intervention

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rooted in primary care and shaped for people with depression and staff from IAPT services, may be a suitable psychological intervention.

[The Development and Application of Drama-Combined Nursing Educational Content for Cancer Care, 2021](#)

Using drama in nursing education for cancer patients provided an opportunity for students to imagine the clinical experiences of cancer patients, helping them to understand patients' points of view and reflect on their self-images as future nurses.

[Drama Therapy in the Context of Psychiatric Care, 2021](#)

*Abstract only**

In acute psychiatry, drama therapy may complement allopathic treatments, providing improvements in self-esteem and self-efficacy, distraction and relief from concerns and negative thoughts, insight, and social connection. In outpatient care, drama therapy increases social interaction, facilitates emotional regulation, and offers a means of rehearsing interpersonal skills.

[Understanding school-based drama therapy through the core processes: An analysis of intervention vignettes, 2021](#)

*Abstract only**

Recent scholarship into school-based drama therapy (SBDT) has largely explored individual interventions and programs. What remains less understood are broad practice trends across SBDT in North America. The current study is an investigation of descriptive intervention vignettes ($N = 49$), aggregated from a larger 2018 survey of North American drama therapists.

[Learning from support workers: Can a dramatherapy group offer a community provision to support changes in care for people with learning disabilities and mental health difficulties?, 2020](#)

*Abstract only**

Support workers valued these dramatherapy groups, recognising how the intervention enabled people with learning disabilities to develop relationships and provide easy access to mental health professionals.

[Dramatherapy group for adults living with psychosis, 2020](#)

The first group was set up in 2016- 17 in East Hertfordshire and ran for 30 weeks. In Jan 2018 we extended this to two groups, one in East Herts and one in North West Herts, both of 20 week duration, and have repeated this for 2019. The groups are for up to 6 participants and take place at the community mental health buildings. They are co-facilitated by a dramatherapist and a dramatherapy trainee.

[Assessing Drama Therapy as an Intervention for Recovering Substance Users: A Systematic Review, 2019](#)

*Abstract only**

Findings were encouraging with two studies reporting that participants maintained or improved abstinence goals, quality of life was reported to be significantly higher postintervention compared with the control group (one study), and social and occupational engagement significantly improved postintervention and was maintained at a 6-week follow-up (one study).

Role progression and development

["Migrated onto the Screen": The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the clinical practice of drama therapy, 2022](#)

*Abstract only**

We speculate that "online drama therapy" may be different from "practicing drama therapy online," wondering whether it will develop into a new brand of drama therapy, as more and more practitioners and clients "migrate onto the screen".

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[Enablers and barriers to progressing a clinical academic career in nursing, midwifery and allied health professions: A cross-sectional survey](#), 2022 Abstract only*

Lack of a clear model of career progression, at national and local level, and barriers to creating joint posts impacts on capacity of clinical academics to strengthen integration of research with practice.

[The Significance of Understanding Body Language in Depressed Patients within the Context of Creative Psychopharmacotherapy](#), 2021 Abstract only*

It is important to point out the importance of other alternative approaches in the treatment of depression when standard psychopharmacotherapy is not enough. Body language is a powerful form of non-verbal communication that provides important traces of intentions, emotions, and motivations in other people.

[A qualitative study exploring experiences and challenges of combining clinical academic training with family life](#), 2021

Although people manage to find ways to successfully combine clinical academic roles with family life, findings highlight a need to identify ways of supporting and encouraging trainees with caring responsibilities to ensure that they remain on the clinical academic pathway.

[Themes of career advancement among North American drama therapists: A secondary qualitative analysis](#), 2018 Abstract only*

Emergent broad themes include Personal Priorities or Values, Lack of Professional Recognition and Mentorship. Findings are interpreted within the context of the current state of the profession. Future directions for research and professional viability are provided.

[The user-friendliness of drama: Implications for drama therapy and psychodrama admission and training](#), 2018 Abstract only*

I suggest how drama therapy and psychodrama training programs can fulfill the requirements for in-depth knowledge of drama, theater, and/or performance that distinguishes drama-based therapies from other creative arts therapies. Suggestions for specific drama-based requirements before and during training are put forward.

Workforce perspectives and mental health

[Evaluating the effectiveness of resilience-building training within the national health service in the UK](#), 2022

The developers used knowledge and expertise in both the fields of psychology and drama-based learning to promote comprehension, retention and a capacity for using and conveying these strategies to other health-care workers.

[H.E.R.O. Unmasking: A mixed methods pilot study to explore the impact of a tele-drama therapy protocol on frontline healthcare workers during COVID-19](#), 2022

H.E.R.O. (Helping Essential workers Reclaim roles Online) Unmasking was a virtual drama therapy protocol designed to support frontline healthcare workers (re)connect to part of their humanity overshadowed by the role of the Healthcare Hero during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

Content analysis regarding students' anticipations, fears, and support needs identified the following themes: professional identity and growth; opportunities for improvement; preparedness for transition from university to the workplace, the workplace environment; COVID-19; support from lecturers; daily support within the workplace and innovative methods of support.

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

This paper compares cross-sectional data on quality of working life, wellbeing, coping and burnout of nurses, midwives and AHPs in the United Kingdom (UK) at two time points during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Six psychotherapists, six reflections, on the pandemic](#), 2021

*Abstract only**

The situation was very bad when these articles were first collected, since which the situation has worsened. Given how much rides on the available vaccines, the ancient saying, 'the darkest hour is just before dawn', rings loud.

[Relationship between labour force satisfaction, wages and retention within the UK National Health Service: a systematic review of the literature](#), 2020

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.

[Drama Therapy Counseling as Mental Health Care of College Students](#), 2019

The application of drama therapy in the education field can strengthen the function of learning in education. The learners can use the skills of roles in life, understand their own and other people's emotions, and then have a positive interaction with society.

Diversity and inclusion

[Practicing in an expanded paradigm: Case examples and ethical anchors for creative arts therapists working in community-based social justice contexts](#), 2022

This article builds on the body of knowledge that calls for an expansion of the frame of creative arts therapy practice beyond and outside the paradigms of conventional psychotherapy.

["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.

[Systemic barriers in mental health care for LGBTQI and gender nonconforming drama therapists and clients](#), 2017 *Abstract only**

Results indicate that drama therapists continue to work in predominantly heteronormative and cisgender normative spaces. They confront specific barriers to implementing supportive and affirming care for LGBTQI and GNC individuals which are especially pronounced in K-12 schools, geriatric centres and inpatient mental health settings.

[Investigating the glass escalator effect among registered drama therapists: A gender-based examination of professional trajectory](#), 2016 *Abstract only**

This research sought to identify whether the glass escalator was occurring in the profession of drama therapy. A survey asking registered drama therapists (RDTs) to identify rates of

advancement between career levels was completed by 34 per cent of those polled.

Competency Frameworks

[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