

Music therapy is an established psychological clinical intervention that uses music to support individuals affected by injury, illness, disability, or adverse life events, addressing their psychological, emotional, cognitive, physical, communication, and social needs.

We all relate to music because it connects with what it means to be human. Our bodies work to rhythms, our speech has the tones, rhythm and structure of music. Music offers a non-verbal means of communication which can prove beneficial in settings where individuals may have experienced significant trauma and struggle to find and articulate their thoughts in a regulated way.

This unique, client-led clinical intervention is accessible to everyone as no pre-existing musical skills are required. It's not about being able to play an instrument or learning musical skills. It's about making a connection and enabling people to communicate.

Northern Ireland Music Therapy Trust delivers over 6,500 hours of music therapy each year across Northern Ireland and is the primary provider of music therapy services in secure forensic settings. Music therapy is an evidence-based clinical intervention which offers a unique and effective option for users who may not want to engage in traditional talking therapies.

Contact us to find out more.



Office:
02890 814417



Email:
info@nimusictherapytrust.co.uk



Website:
www.nimusictherapytrust.co.uk

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Northern Ireland Music Therapy Trust,
Unit 4 McKibbin House, Eastbank Road,
Carryduff BT8 8BD

Charity Number - NIC104523

**Music Therapy in the
Rehabilitation of
Offenders**

Music therapy can play an important role in forensic mental health settings, including secure hospitals, custodial environments, rehabilitation services, and other specialist care settings. Delivered by a qualified music therapist, it provides a carefully structured and psychologically safe space where individuals can explore their thoughts, feelings, and experiences through music.

Music therapy may help individuals to:

- Develop emotional regulation by providing safe and creative ways to express difficult emotions, manage distress, and reduce emotional intensity.
- Improve communication, particularly when verbal expression is challenging or when trust in others has been difficult to establish.
- Increase self-awareness by encouraging reflection on thoughts, behaviours, emotional responses, and personal experiences in a supportive setting.
- Strengthen relationships through shared musical experiences that promote trust, healthy boundaries, cooperation, and positive social interaction.
- Support rehabilitation by encouraging engagement with therapeutic programmes, building motivation, and increasing participation in wider recovery goals.



For many people in forensic mental health settings, expressing emotions through words can be challenging. Music therapy offers a safe and structured way to communicate, explore feelings, and engage in the therapeutic process through music. Sessions are tailored to each individual's strengths, needs, and therapeutic goals, providing opportunities to listen, improvise, sing, write songs, or play instruments in ways that feel comfortable and meaningful.

No previous musical experience is needed. The focus is not on musical ability, but on using music as a therapeutic tool to support emotional wellbeing, self-expression, personal growth, and recovery. Through regular sessions, individuals may develop greater confidence, self-awareness, resilience, and healthier ways of relating to others, with skills that can extend beyond the therapy room into everyday life.

Working as part of a multidisciplinary team, music therapists collaborate with other professionals to support rehabilitation, helping individuals work towards positive outcomes within a safe, respectful, and recovery-focused environment.

"Building confidence, self-awareness, and healthier relationships through music therapy."



"Supporting recovery through creativity, connection, and therapeutic engagement."

