

What is Art Therapy?

Art Therapy is a form of psychotherapy that uses art media as its primary mode of communication. It is particularly useful for children, adults and older people who may find verbal communication difficult for a variety of reasons, such as, age and the severity of the condition. Art Therapy benefits clients by helping them express and contain potentially disturbing issues in a way they can manage which in turn supports organisations because it can lead to better engagement and reduced conflict. Art therapy can support most life issues.

Art Therapists work with a whole spectrum of clients and within a variety of settings (NHS, private or voluntary sectors), for example: adult mental health, learning disabilities, child and family centres, palliative care, the prison service, mainstream primary and secondary schools, hospices and voluntary agencies.

Clients who are referred to an art therapist need not have previous experience or skill in art as the art therapist is not primarily concerned with making an aesthetic or diagnostic assessment of the client's image. The overall aim of its practitioners is to enable a client to effect change and growth on a personal level through the use of art materials in a safe and facilitating environment.

The relationship between the therapist and the client is of central importance, but art therapy differs from other psychological therapies in that it is a three way process between the client, the therapist and the image or artefact. Thus it offers the opportunity for expression and communication and can be particularly helpful to people who find it hard to express their thoughts and feelings verbally.

Art therapists have a considerable understanding of art processes underpinned by a sound knowledge of therapeutic practice and psychology and work with both individuals and groups. Art Therapists are registered with the Health Professions Council.