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# Art Therapy

## What is Art Therapy/What do Art Therapists do?

**Art Therapy is a form of psychotherapy that uses art media as its primary mode of expression and communication.** Art Therapists work with children, young people, adults and the elderly. Clients may have a wide range of difficulties, disabilities or diagnoses. These include emotional, behavioural or mental health problems, learning or physical disabilities, life-limiting conditions, neurological conditions and physical illnesses.

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. 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.

[Watch a short video of a service user's experience of Art Therapy \(https://youtu.be/7GcK83loX4c\)](https://youtu.be/7GcK83loX4c)

## How do I train?

Applicants for Art Therapy training come from diverse backgrounds: whilst many have a formal art and design qualification, applications from professionals in the Health and Care sectors (nurses, social workers, allied health professionals, etc.) and Education are also considered providing that they can demonstrate on-going personal involvement in art-making.

The Art Therapist's work is sometimes challenging and calls for skill and sensitivity. It follows that those who wish to pursue a career in art therapy should be mature, flexible people. The training course, which combines theoretical and experimental work, is for a Postgraduate Master's degree to be completed over two years full time or three years part time. Applicants should already have a degree in art, although other graduates with experience of working in health, education or social care are sometimes considered.

## Entry Requirements

In order to practise in the UK as an Art Therapist/Art Psychotherapist (both titles are interchangeable and protected by law), it is mandatory to complete a training validated by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). All HCPC validated Art Therapy trainings are at MA or MSc level and applicants will usually need a primary degree. Approved training programmes are available at a number of establishments in the UK.

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Validated courses are in the following locations:

- Belfast
- Chester
- Derby
- Edinburgh
- Hatfield (Hertfordshire)
- London (Goldsmiths)
- London (IATE)
- London (Roehampton)
- Sheffield
- Wales (Newport)

[Read the British Association of Art Therapists information on Art Therapy \(https://www.baat.org/Assets/Docs/2020%20ART%20THERAPY%20TRAINING.pdf\)](https://www.baat.org/Assets/Docs/2020%20ART%20THERAPY%20TRAINING.pdf)

## Previous Experiences Required

Prior experience of care work is needed before training as an Art Therapist, usually a year full-time (or part-time equivalent). This does not have to be art-related but has to be a task that puts the applicant in charge in a professional capacity of the welfare of a vulnerable person (child, adult or elder). Therefore experiences such as parenthood and being a carer for a friend or family member, although valuable, do not count as work experience. The work experience can be part-time and does not have to be in a "one block" format. Applicants can go back a few years and include both paid and voluntary work.

## Career Prospects

Art Therapists need to be flexible and resourceful. Within the current context in health and social care, entrepreneurial skills are also needed: most art therapists start their career on a self-employed basis and set up art therapy provisions in a wide variety of settings. The NHS provides opportunities for Art Therapists who can work in Allied Health Professional roles working with adults and children in physical and mental health areas.

Many Art Therapists work in partnership with other professionals such as artists-in-health to develop innovative approaches to practice. Careers in Art Therapy are expanding in new areas: Art Therapy is increasingly used within mainstream education (pre-school, primary and secondary). It is also developing within museums and galleries.

[Read the British Association of Art Therapists information on Careers \(https://www.baat.org/Careers-Training/Career-Information\)](https://www.baat.org/Careers-Training/Career-Information)

## Any other relevant information

We also have a leaflet titled "FAQs/Differences amongst professions" that you may find helpful to refer to.

## Useful Organisations

The British Association of Art Therapists (BAAT) is the professional organisation for Art Therapists in the United Kingdom and has its own Code of Ethics of Professional Practice. Comprising regional groups and a European and International section, it maintains a comprehensive directory of qualified Art Therapists and works to promote Art Therapy in the UK.

[Visit the British Association of Art Therapists on Twitter \(www.baat.org https://twitter.com/baat\\_org\)](https://twitter.com/baat_org)

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In order to practise in the UK as an Art Therapist or Art Psychotherapist (both titles are protected by law), practitioners are legally bound to be registered with the HCPC. Registration with the HCPC demands high standards of education and clinical practice and ensures public protection.

[Visit the Health and Care Professionals Council website \(www.hcpc-uk.org\)](http://www.hcpc-uk.org)

The wider group of Art Therapists include Dance Movement Psychotherapy, Music Therapy and Drama Therapy:

Music Therapists - <https://www.bamt.org/>

Dance Movement Therapists - <https://admp.org.uk/>

Drama Therapists - <https://badth.org.uk/dtherapy>

