



MEET THE CHAIRS ARTS THERAPIST TRAILBLAZER

We spoke with Stephen Sandford and Tim Wright who are the co-chairs of the Level 7 Arts Therapist Apprenticeship Trailblazer Group. We asked Stephen and Tim about the Trailblazer work and all the activity that has gone on over the past couple of years.

So, Stephen and Tim, please tell us a bit about your day jobs?

Tim

I am an Art Therapist and Head of art therapies for local Services at West London NHS Trust.

Stephen

I am a Music Therapist and the Professional Lead for Allied Health Professionals at East London NHS Foundation Trust.

Why did you step up to be the chair of the Arts Therapist trailblazer group?

Both

We were very aware that this apprenticeship development gave an opportunity to build our training's integration within the work place and also widen access to our professions, particularly to those from more diverse backgrounds. For over 50 years arts therapists have self-funded their training so it was too good an opportunity to miss!

“Apprenticeships open up possibilities for those who are unable to self-fund to train and develop their routes into our professions.”

Who was involved in the group?

Both

Arts Therapists work in a really wide range of settings so we had the challenge of ensuring the breadth and depth of these sectors were represented. In the end we had arts therapies leads and staff from NHS trusts, charities that employ arts therapists, private sector organisations and social enterprises. We also had range of representatives from Masters Degree level training courses across Art Therapy, Music Therapy and Dramatherapy.

Looking back, what were the challenges?

Both

Ensuring that everyone had a voice and the process was as open and transparent as possible was key.

"There were many myths (and there still are) out there around how apprenticeships might work."

It was important to ensure that the high training standards that the Health and Care Professions Council (our regulator) require were assured and built on to support future workforce development. Going back to the drawing board to re-think the criteria for what an arts therapist does in terms of the knowledge, skills and behaviours was a very stimulating challenge. It gave everyone a chance to reflect on the essence of what makes arts therapies helpful and effective for service users across the life span.

Arranging mutually convenient meeting times and getting attendance could be a challenge with such a large group, especially during the period when we were working intensely on the standard and the end point assessment. Conference calls and Skype were helpful with this alongside the careful oversight and support from Skills for Health guiding us in our learning and the process.

And what achievements are you most proud of?

Both

The trailblazer group was able to work creatively on all aspects of the apprenticeship. This standard is one of the few level 7 standards so far so we were breaking new ground for apprenticeships at postgraduate level!

Do you have any tips for other Trailblazer chairs?

Both

Don't underestimate the time it might take to get everyone together and on the same page and the energy and leadership needed to support working towards collaboration - this takes time to nurture and foster

As organisations implement the standards, what challenges do you foresee?

Both

Ensuring there is a steady pipeline of apprentices coming through the workforce across settings and not just in the NHS. We are engaged in the wider Allied Health Professions procurement being supported by Health Education England to ensure that implementation is as smooth and simple as possible.

"It's vital that arts therapists as a smaller profession have a voice in workforce development in line with, for example, the NHS Long Term Plan."

Do you have any top tips for employers considering implementing these apprenticeships?

Both

We'd encourage employers who may not have had arts therapists working within their workforce skill mix to see this standard as a new opportunity to fund training for any prospective arts therapist apprentices including those staff within their organisations.

"Through arts therapist apprenticeships employers can widen their portfolio of therapies provision and access for service users who can benefit from creative arts therapies."

The national Arts Therapies professional bodies were integral to supporting the apprenticeship standard development and trailblazer. They have always been a key source of advice and guidance to help new employers with considerations around workforce development across the wide range of areas arts therapists work:

Art Therapy

The British Association for Art Therapists:
www.baat.org

Dramatherapy

The British Association of Dramatherapists:
www.badth.org.uk

Music Therapy

The British Association for Music Therapy:
www.bamt.org

What is your organisation's approach to apprenticeships?

Both

This is new territory for the arts therapies! What we know currently from within our own NHS trusts is that priority is often being given to professions where recruitment is challenging, especially nursing roles. But opportunities exist and arts therapies need to link in with their local apprentice leads to develop their roles.

"Moving forward we are keen to explore ways that Arts Therapist apprenticeships can offer opportunities to widen and develop new roles within the workplace. We know that there is much scope for Arts Therapists to engage in health prevention, mental health and integration with physical and population health."

Which providers and EPAOs are you partnering with for the Arts Therapist apprenticeship?

Both

This is a work in progress, but we hope our existing university training course partners who supported the development of the end point assessment and were integral to the trailblazer will be involved in this new opportunity.

What steps have you taken so far to move towards setting up the Arts Therapist apprenticeship?

Both

Sharing information including with training course partners, email communication with arts therapies leads in the NHS and working on getting communications out through our professional bodies.

What are your potential apprentice numbers looking like?

Both

Scoping of the numbers is currently being done nationally with the support of Health Education England in line with Allied Health Professions apprenticeship procurement.

Do you have an agreed start date?

Both

We hope that procurement of Allied Health Profession apprenticeships, including Arts Therapists, will be taking place very soon, most likely during 2019.

What are the next steps for you?

Both

We're tempted to say – take a rest! But trailblazing needs to continue for arts therapies...

- Working with health, education and social care and arts therapies organisations to raise awareness.
- Aiming to have a full cohort of arts therapist apprentices in training to widen diversity, increase access to training and promote access to arts therapies for service users.

“Thank you to everyone who was involved in supporting the Arts Therapist apprenticeship standard development.”



Download the Arts Therapist standard and Assessment Plan [here](#).