



# MUSIC THERAPY

## at St Michael's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

BRISTOL

### What is music therapy?

Music therapy is an established psychological clinical intervention, delivered by HCPC registered music therapists to help people whose lives have been affected by injury, illness or disability through supporting their psychological, emotional, cognitive, physical, communicative and social needs. ([bamt.org](http://bamt.org))

Music therapy on the NICU is used creatively to support the communication and well being of the baby and the emotional needs of parents and care givers using sounds and music.

### Did you know?

- At just 19 weeks gestation a foetus begins to hear the world around them, and from 26 weeks they will respond to sounds with movement.
- Newborn babies become aware of the world around them using their hearing.
- Sounds which replicate a womb, for instance a regular heartbeat or watery 'in-utero' sounds, can be very reassuring for newborn babies and help them feel calm and secure.
- Recorded music can be overstimulating for newborn babies, but recordings of parental voices can be comforting.
- Babies will recognise their parents' voices compared to other adults when they are born.





# Why use music therapy with newborn babies?

Research has shown that gentle live musical interactions matched to a baby's movements or breathing rate can help to:

- Reduce stress and lower a baby's heart rate
- Improve sucking rate
- Increase periods of awake/alert states
- Support parents to bond in a creative way with their baby
- Parents and carers may find that musical interactions with their baby reduces their own stress levels

Babies are born ready to make relationships. Musical interactions can encourage early interpersonal skills like:

- Listening and concentration
- Eye contact
- Awareness of self and others
- Vocalisation
- Anticipation
- Turn-taking

## What happens in a baby's music therapy session?

- The therapist might encourage you to hum to your baby. If you are holding your baby they will feel vibrations through your chest which can be reassuring for both babies and their care givers.
- Singing your baby's name provides a personal connection. The therapist might encourage you to match the speed of your baby's breathing rate to connect your sounds with your baby.
- The music therapist may mirror any vocal sounds your baby makes and encourage you to do the same. This lets them know you are there and listening.

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