

Dramathery - Profession specific descriptor for registered professionals

Dramatherapists work across a wide range of settings, using a non-direct psychological approach and at times, non-verbal to support people to communicate, make change and improve mental and physical well-being. Although any population can benefit from dramathery interventions it can be particularly beneficial when working with people who have psychosis, Autism, learning disabilities, dementia, physical/sexual abuse, PTSD and mental illness. Dramatherapists are both clinicians and artists, who draw on their knowledge of theatre and therapy to use as mediums for psychological therapy. Dramatherapists can be found in many varying settings such as schools, in-patient, community mental health teams, social care, secure care, prisons and the voluntary sector where they can influence the health and wellbeing of individuals, carers and their teams. Dramatherapists have a range of transferrable skills which can be activated in leadership roles, public health and research.

Wider Determinants

Dramatherapists work across a range of sectors, including housing, education, the charity sector, mental health, and various community-based settings. Through working in this diverse range of sectors, Dramatherapists work across organisations to improve the lives of people of all ages using services. For example, dramatherapists have led on developing transition groups in line with policy changes, for people with learning disabilities leaving hospital after long-term admissions. The Get Going group was developed to help support inpatients make the transition back to their community. The group allows individuals to discuss the community they will be moving into whilst providing them with social links which they can use as they make that transition into an independent life.

Dramatherapists can promote wider health education and improve health literacy through their work. One example of this is through the running of book groups for people with learning disabilities, using Books Beyond Words, which tell stories through pictures and role-play. This programme gives participants a better understanding of how to access healthcare services they may require, what to expect while they are there, and encourages greater engagement with necessary routine health checks.

Dramatherapists often support staff, such as nurses, students and support workers in supervision, training and de-briefs. The inclusion of support workers in Dramathery sessions alongside people with learning difficulties has proven advantageous. It enables support workers to develop friendships and greater social interactions for themselves and the people with learning disabilities through the use of play, story-telling and communication which improves their relationships.

Dramatherapists are adaptable and creative, an example of this is the role of Dramatherapists working with individuals with learning difficulties where iPads were provided to allow individuals to join sessions from home during the pandemic. In addition to participating in the programme, people with learning difficulties further developed their digital literacy which enabled them to maintain social links with their friends and family at other times.

Dramatherapists are involved with wider policy and guideline development. They are represented on the learning disability senate, contribute to national and NICE guidelines where relevant and develop and support patient and public involvement groups with initiatives such as performance-based story telling of lived experiences. By sharing evidence to guide the policies for groups that they work with,

for example, policies about the emotional wellbeing of young people in education dramatherapists actively make changes around policy and practice for the vulnerable groups they work with. Dramatherapists can also take on the role of social prescribing. Examples of this include supporting individuals with severe mental illness to be discharged from inpatient settings. Working one to one to identify where and how individuals might access wider support following discharge and actively signposting people through their knowledge of local social groups, to support individuals further.

Health Improvement

Dramatherapists have a role that includes making referrals to other Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) or health services to ensure that service users receive the health and care that they need. Working across a range of settings, Dramatherapists working in hospitals may have access to several community activities or recovery colleges to which they can signpost their service users as they transition into community living.

Dramatherapists may include diagnostic screening as part of their work with service users, for example, Autism or anxiety disorders such as obsessive-compulsive disorder screening, to ensure that they can access appropriate healthcare and support to meet their needs and promote good health and quality of life.

Dramatherapists have a social prescribing mindset and in addition to signposting to clinical services, they will also socially prescribe to community groups that are available in the local area to help address social isolation or other non-medical concerns.

Population Healthcare

Dramatherapists can work with vulnerable populations, for example, people with learning disabilities, or inpatients on psychiatric wards, who may not have the language/communication to express how they're feeling, and through therapy can support them to share their thoughts and feelings with others. They can provide psychological therapy and social interventions to support people who may find it difficult to access other forms of therapy.

Dramatherapists can work in prisons, conducting group therapy to support offenders in learning social skills such as empathy and understanding the impact of their offending. They can also work with individuals who experience long term illnesses or disabilities to support them with their condition and with the impact of their long-term rehabilitation.

Dramatherapy is well suited to working with children and young people due to the use of play, performance, role play and story-telling. Dramatherapists can play a key role in child and adolescent mental health services working with education provision, including education for fostered and adopted children or children with special guardianship orders. Dramatherapists often work in schools with children who are adopted and/or those who are struggling with social, emotional, and mental health wellbeing.

Health Protection

Dramatherapy can promote a greater understanding and practice of social skills such empathy, friendship building, turn-taking etc. which can support people in interacting with society, promoting health and wellbeing through social interactions (reduction of loneliness), relationships, and integration with their community.

During the pandemic, Dramatherapists used Books Beyond Words to discuss COVID-19 and the vaccine with service users to explain the situation to people with learning difficulties.

Dramatherapy - Wider Reading and Case Study Examples

Health Protection	Wider Determinants <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Get Going Group: dramatherapy for people with learning disabilities and mental ill health• Books beyond words
Population Healthcare	Health Improvement