



Thomas is 7 years old and he has a spinal cord injury. He is paralysed from the neck down, and his neck is fused from C0-C5. He was referred to CHAS (Children's Hospices Across Scotland) in 2017 following a deterioration in his neurological condition. He has been living in hospital since then and he uses a ventilator.

During the Covid 19 pandemic, Thomas has been unable to leave his room or to have visitors other than his Mum. In lockdown, his mood and level of motivation had generally been low, and he experienced frequent periods of anger and frustration. He was referred to music therapy to help with social isolation and as a means to support his mental health.

His music therapy sessions took place via zoom, for 30 minutes on a weekly basis. These two clips are from Thomas' third and fourth music therapy sessions.

Thomas' music therapist Janet McLachlan from Nordoff Robbins said:

The immediacy of connection with Thomas has been remarkable and I feel this work shows that online music therapy can truly 'work' in terms of reaching out effectively to an isolated child. The music offers spontaneous, creative interaction. The sessions tap into Thomas' natural musicality, humour and his drive to be playful.

My main focus is on empowering Thomas to take the lead and – in the face of such limited life and health circumstances - to find freedom and escape through music.

Given his minimal physical movement, music therapy focuses on his vocal abilities, facial expressions and maximising his imagination. It offers him a way to find energy and power – for example, having permission to 'be loud' - and to have a meaningful impact on the world around him.

Eilidh Grant (Activities Co-ordinator from CHAS) said:

I can't believe the difference in Thomas' confidence and his mood since starting music therapy. Even the difference from the start to the end of each session is amazing. You can see that he is sometimes withdrawn or low to start with, and then he just gets carried away with the music and gives huge smiles.

On viewing the videos of Thomas' session Mum Dayna said:

Aw I love it! He looks so happy. He's benefitting so much from having the wee sessions with Janet and it's made such a difference to his mood. He really looks forward to them.

Music therapy is offered in partnership between CHAS and the music therapy charity Nordoff Robbins, and has been offered via zoom as part of the CHAS 'Virtual Hospice'.

www.chas.org.uk

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