

# Leeds Conservatoire

A small institution big on support



# Introductions

Josie

Holding



Occupational Therapist

- Qualified from York St John in 2022
- Worked at Leeds Conservatoire since qualifying having been offered a job after completing my final student placement with the Student Support team.
- Currently undertaking a MSc in Advancing Practice Sensory Intergration.

# An introduction to LC

- 1234 enrolled students (Undergraduate & Postgraduate)
- Conservatoire – small, specialist institution
- Traditional and non-traditional **music courses** such as Pop, Jazz, Folk, Electronic Music Production, Film Music, Music Business as well as **Performing Arts courses** such as Musical Theatre, Actor Musician, Acting
- Creative courses attract a specific type of student



- 30% of our students have declared a disability or long-term health condition
- 93% of those declarations are relating to neurodivergence and/or mental health
- Around 27% of all our students have referred into H&W service so far in academic year 24/25
- We see a big overlap between students with declared conditions, those seeking a diagnosis and the need for H&W intervention, who historically need a lot of intervention across Health and Wellbeing and Disability Support



*According to a study in 2017, two thirds of participants with a declared mental health condition thought about dropping out of higher education. This compares with one third of those who did not have a declared mental health condition.*

# Culture change – students' needs

- Post-Covid generation of students
- High numbers of referrals
- Very high numbers of neurodivergence specifically autism and ADHD and increased number of DCD/dyspraxia
- Less access to NHS support and other support agencies
- Concerns about staff burn-out
- We needed to change our approach

# Our Student Support Offer – Integrated Approach



Wellbeing  
Advice

Mental Health  
Advice

Short-term  
counselling

A&P specific  
support

Occupational  
Therapy

Performer's  
Wellbeing

# What is Occupational Therapy and how do we use it within student support

- Occupational therapy isn't just about rehabilitation of the elderly
- Allied Health Profession
- Trained in physical and mental health with a big emphasis upon functional abilities
- Practice holistically
- Meaningful, purposeful, occupation
- Using strengths to overcome difficulties
- Occupational therapy student placements
- The emergence of an Occupational Therapy Team
- Filling a gap between the Health and Wellbeing and Disability Support Team –dual trained



# Examples of our practice

- **Occupational specific assessments and models of practice:**
- Designed our own initial assessment with an emphasis on functional performance including cognitive skills, executive function, sensory processing, physical health, emotional wellbeing and 'dark occupations'
- Using checklists and resources specific to our profession
- Introduction of the Sensory Checklist
- Model of Human Occupation
- Kawa model
- Canadian Model of Occupational Performance

# Examples of our practice continued

- **Group work:**
  - Neurodivergent Network
  - Occupational Therapy for Academic Motivation (short course)
- **Practical:**
  - Onward referrals through OT assessment and report writing for MRI scans/specialist input voice scanning
  - Supporting with DSA applications
  - Sensory Room
  - Environmental adaptations

# Case Study - Sarah

## Information gathered from referral form and initial assessment

- 19 Year old Music student.
- Seeking diagnosis of ADHD, struggling with low mood, depression, anxiety, self-harming behaviours and academic motivation.
- Sarah has been struggling to food shop and will often put this off due to feeling overwhelmed. Which is greatly impacting self care and ability to focus and concentrate in studies.
- Struggling to maintain a routine which is impacting mood and relationships.
- Enjoys climbing and spending time with friends.

# Model of Human Occupation (MOHO)

- **Environment** – Sarah's first experience of living away from home, student accommodation, workplace, teaching spaces, online environment and group work
- **Volition** – Sarah's motivation is to become a musician.
- **Habituation** – Keeping in a routine with her studies, music practice, maintaining relationships with friends, climbing.
- **Performance** – Struggling with executive functioning and performing activities of daily living. Struggling with overwhelm which is inhibiting Sarah from being able to perform tasks.

# Case Study - Sarah

## Session 1

- Goal setting: long term, medium term and short term goals using a SMART format to establish what is important to Sarah. Used an occupational therapy model to construct these goals.
- Sarah wants to establish a meaningful routine, engage in purposeful activities and food shop independently. To improve self care and functional independence.
- Completed a sensory profile which showed that Sarah was becoming dysregulated shopping due to finding the sound of the supermarket overbearing. Her automatic response was to avoid which served to increase feelings of anxiety and low self esteem.

# Case Study - Sarah

## Further sessions

- Worked towards goals
- Set manageable goals using a graded approach.
- Enabled Sarah to gain independence food shopping and managing routine in creative ways eg. incorporating selfcare techniques and meaningful occupation into daily life, therefore improving mood, self esteem and confidence.
- Helped Sarah to access Right to Choose for ADHD diagnostic support.

# Where we're heading – a look into the future



- Continue to grow our unique offer
- OT students on placement
- More OT specific groups
- Improve collaboration and multi-disciplinary working between departments
- Preventative work
- Clinical research to measure our outcomes and share our clinical practice
- Waiting well service for students awaiting a disability diagnosis.

# Some real -life feedback about engaging with Occupational Therapy



- “Working with an occupational therapist has helped me to work out my goals and how to achieve them. The approach was more person-centered and I didn’t have to just fit my thoughts or feelings into a framework”
- “I really appreciated how practical working with an OT was”
- “Having someone to champion my progress, even for things that felt small, has started encouraging me to shift my mindset”
- “Working with an OT has helped me to regain control over my daily life, teaching me practical strategies to overcome challenges. I learned valuable techniques to improve my daily routine, enhance my organisation skills, and manage my emotional well-being. All of these skills had a huge impact on both my everyday life and my academic life. I’ve become so much more focused with studying and I genuinely enjoy learning again”

# Thank You

Time for questions, comments and  
feedback