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**COMING UP TRUMPS:
A STUDENT MUSIC THERAPIST SUPPORTS
YOUNG PEOPLE WITH HIGH OR VERY HIGH
COMPLEX SPECIAL NEEDS TO DEVELOP THE
KEY COMPETENCIES**

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study aimed to discover and highlight the techniques and strategies that supported young people with high or very high complex special needs to develop the key competencies during music therapy sessions at a special school. Music therapy was carried out on an individual basis in a naturalistic manner and clinical notes were produced to record details that seemed important in each session. This data was then reviewed retrospectively in a process known as secondary analysis, employing both deductive and inductive modalities to search for and draw out links to the key competencies. A process of coding data within each key competency category revealed emerging themes and found that a number of musical, verbal and/or physical techniques and strategies supported the five key competencies during therapy. The categories, themes and codes have been defined and described with examples from the data, and a clinical vignette is included for further explanation. The data demonstrated the holistic nature of music therapy in that many techniques and strategies worked to support all five key competencies, even when the focus was a single competency. The findings are discussed with reference to, and in light of, current literature and suggested that the techniques and strategies used within my music therapy practice strongly relate to the key competencies and provide a unique context for their development. It is noted that the findings cannot be generalised to other settings and populations. However, this in-depth study may provide insight into the potential educational benefits and links between music therapy practice and the key competencies for those working with young people who have high or very high complex special needs.

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Ethical approval has been gained from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee for this research project (HEC: Southern Application – 11/41)

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