

7. Singing and playing music with people who have complex and profound learning disability

Learners can interact and explore in the way they choose to.

They can engage with attractive and attention holding activities and items.

They can enjoy social play in an established structure. They can have fun being part of a larger group, or with just one other person.

They can interact through their preferred sensory channels.

They can be exactly who they are in that setting and still receive warm, positive feedback and reward.

Props, instruments and noisemakers can be adapted to learners' physical skills.

The basic premise is that learners want to communicate – singing and playing music gives them something to communicate about at their level of skill.

It is both experiential and aesthetic.

It is a platform for exploration and play.

It enables learners to 'have a good time'.

There is an innate need and response to rhythm. This is 'hard wired' into humans and is an important component of early mother child interactions. Research evidence points to improved mental health when people have opportunities to be rhythmic. It is soothing and calming. It has the power to make us feel safe and secure – or sometimes energised. Most people experience a huge variety of rhythm in everyday life e.g. walking, working, dancing, tapping. Other learners might need to be supported in this. Singing times allow learners to be rhythmic in their own way as well as joining in the group rhythms.

All learners need to receive stimulation of the aesthetic senses via channels that are open and pleasant. Singing and playing music are perfect for this.

Singing, vocalising and music are wonderful ways of being with another person socially, but without the need for reciprocal speech and conversation. It uses the tools of verbal interaction without needing high level language skills.