

# Heavy Metal Therapy

Heavy Metal and Mental Health



## Heavy Metal Therapy

Community Interest Company, Wakefield.

[Heavy Metal Therapy](https://www.heavymetaltherapy.co.uk/)

### What is Heavy Metal Therapy about?

Heavy Metal Therapy is a **mental health peer support resource** for members of the **heavy metal and alternative music communities**. Its collection of **stories, blogs, worksheets, and playlists** are all **co-produced by people with lived experience** can be accessed online through a dedicated webpage or via social media.

Kate Quinn, one of four directors of Heavy Metal Therapy, has helped facilitate a number of in **person and online support groups** in Wakefield, Castleford, and Leeds as well **events across the country in health settings, alternative markets and gigs**, sharing resources and running events such as metal yoga **targeted at community wellbeing**. Kate is also keen to engage with academia and is often **involved in research on the relationship between mental wellbeing and extreme music**.

### How is the initiative funded?

The project has been successful with some **small grant awards such as the National Lottery Community Fund, Metal for Good, and Creative Minds**. Accessing recurring funding has been difficult. Heavy Metal Therapy takes donations and also sells merchandise. Occasionally Kate is able to generate income by getting paid for speaking or training. Being unable to secure enough funding at times to keep core operations running, means that the **organisation is now at a point where growth is limited by funding opportunities**.

*"There is enough work to employ paid peer support workers, but cannot expand in this way due to lack of monies"*

### What aspects of health does the initiative address?

Heavy Metal Therapy addresses **mental health and social isolation**.

### Who are the beneficiaries of the initiative?

Mainly **adults in the alternative music community**. Heavy Metal Therapy's social media following is roughly 50/50 men and women. However, there are more male than female contributors and volunteers. Many of Heavy Metal Therapy's followers identify as **neurodivergent and have mental health challenges of some kind**.

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## How do you demonstrate impact and success?

Due to the nature of the project, Heavy Mental Therapy presents challenges in measuring impact and success. However, existing testimonials and a participant survey from last year provide valuable insights into the project's positive benefits. Social media engagement metrics and website traffic also demonstrate measurable indicators of reach and interest.

*"It can be hard to measure due to the nature of the work"*

Kate is keen to understand the impacts of the project further, and is currently in the process of seeking ethical approval for a research study to evaluate the role of peer support groups for participants and facilitators on mental wellbeing.

## What key learnings have emerged from the initiative and how are these informing your practice?

Heavy Mental Therapy has experienced most success with getting a team of very committed volunteers from the community who keep the project running. Engaging and supporting them has been more effective than seeking any industry or 'celebrity' endorsement/engagement. Success in the media and on social media is very difficult to obtain without significant financial investment and/or connections, so it has been better to 'push it where it moves' and focus on those who are interested. This has been particularly in health and research settings, more so than in music contexts (e.g. lots of festivals are tied into significant commercial advertising arrangements, which means that stalls and posters are not viable).

*"When someone expresses an interest in becoming involved it is important to be responsive or they lose momentum"*

Volunteers do need a lot of support. To manage this Heavy Metal Therapy have embedded supervision and mentorship into all of their processes. An on-boarding policy and procedure is now in place to ensure that the process is timely and moves people through the necessary requirements.

Three years of regular posting, consistent content and being responsive to queries has been key to Heavy Mental Therapy's established social media following and relationship building with organisations. Although many similar initiatives have been set up in that time, they have unfortunately been unable to sustain. Heavy Mental Therapy have moved in the direction that the community have requested, in that sense, it is truly co-produced. This has meant that focus has often pivoted areas and ideas that were not always anticipated (e.g Merchandise, more content on neurodiversity).

## How is the initiative ensuring long-term sustainability?

*"This is a bit of a challenge. We have not expanded into things that will involve recurring costs - in short, we can run it on a shoestring, which means that we can keep it going."*

*If we had an ongoing funding stream this would make things more sustainable. We have developed a number of partnerships with other organisations and have been accepted onto the 'adventure' programme, which helps local businesses to grow. We work with a local organisation that has helped us to register as a Community Interest Company and with funding opportunities."*



# Testimonials

*"HMT is dispelling the falsehood that certain types of music are toxic, in this case specifically heavy metal. They then go a step further and utilize science/ evidence based information to help their followers understand the dynamics of mental health and self care and how they can utilize their musical preferences with those concepts"*

*"I have never felt like I belong as much as I do in the Mental Health Moshpit [HMT facebook group]. You don't know how much this means to some of us... or maybe you do..."*

*"Your playlists are like prescriptions that make me feel able to process feelings and then move through them"*

*"On the days when my depression is so bad I can't talk to anyone, HMT helps lift my spirits and know that I am not alone in my struggle"*

*"I'm a counsellor and I love what you are doing for the mental health of metalheads!. Belonging is such a huge part of feeling cared for, and we know the metal community is excellent at uniting people. Connecting through a shared adoration of music and being able to open up about mental health concerns means a high likelihood of finding others who feel like you do, decreasing some of the isolation that can make things like anxiety and depression so much worse. Its great that you encourage using music as a tool that members can use in any way they find useful. Keep up the amazing work!"*

To find out more about Heavy Metal Therapy visit [Heavy Metal Therapy](https://www.heavymetaltherapy.co.uk).



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