

REPORT

Using Video Enhanced Reflective Practice (VERP) for the continuing professional development of a team of music therapists: Evaluation and reflections

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ABSTRACT

In 2018, six music therapists undertook a short course on Video Enhanced Reflective Practice (VERP). A group goal was co-constructed for team development as part of the project, with application for individual casework. The training course was held over two 1.5-hour sessions where the principles for developing attunement were explained, individual goals for each practitioner's development were decided upon, and casework discussion took place. The process for recording and analysing short film clips ahead of group supervision was also discussed. Target Monitoring and Evaluation (TME) was used to quantify the impact of the goals pre- and post-project. Other measures used included a self-rating scale of the Communication Principles before and after, and open ended questions on evaluation forms. TME data revealed a positive shift of 3 points for the group goal pre- and post-project, and an average shift of 3.6 points in a positive direction for individual goals. Furthermore, the self-rating scales of individual practitioners also showed increased frequency in their use of the Communication Principles in their interactions with children. This project builds on research that VERP is a professional development tool that enhances practitioner's self-belief and agency through self-awareness and knowledge of skills used in everyday clinical practice. Additionally, it provided a mechanism for a team to think and work creatively and therapeutically together.

KEYWORDS

agency,
attunement,
interaction,
empowerment,
target monitoring and
evaluation,
Video Enhanced
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BACKGROUND

Rationale for the Cambridgeshire Video Enhanced Reflective Practice (VERP) project

Video Enhanced Reflective Practice (VERP) – as highlighted by Kennedy et al. (2011) – is a methodology that is well suited for professional development and was considered to be complementary in supporting the ongoing reflective practice for music therapists post qualification. This view was taken particularly in light of Daniel Stern's (1985) model of affect attunement being common within music therapy training in the UK, which involves the use of video reflection for supervision and parent feedback. Parent feedback refers to the capacity and skill of the therapist to be able to give feedback that is supportive of a child's development to parents within the therapeutic process. As outlined by Trevarthen (1980, 1998), musicality and vitality are two essential components in the theoretical understanding of early attuned relationship between a caregiver and infant. For example, the basis of a trusted attuned relationship includes not only personal feelings within the therapist's relationship with their client, but also the dynamics of movement in the interaction (Ammaniti & Ferrari, 2013). These components are well understood and align well with the discipline of music therapy, and the VERP methodology was therefore considered to be well suited for use with this professional group, as well as the literature on the use of video feedback for adult learning. This project was commissioned to support the continuing professional development of a team of music therapists, as well as provide a mechanism for them to spend time together developing their practice and relationships with one another.

Introduction to VERP

VERP is derived from Video Interaction Guidance (VIG) and is a methodology that has a wide range of applications for professional development and practice. It uses recorded videos that participants bring in from their work – short film clips to help people understand and improve their communication with others. It has been used in a wide variety of contexts to support professional development, including perinatal and infant mental health in neonatal and health settings, nurturing relationships within schools, training teaching assistants to support children in mainstream and specialist settings, and advancing systemic change in schools. It has also been used to support staff to have better interactions with people with complex communication needs and as a leadership development tool in the banking industry, higher education, medical education, and educational psychologist trainee programmes. As far as I am aware, VERP has not been used to support the professional development of music therapists before.

The methodology specifically works to support and increase effectiveness of inter-professional or professional-pupil interaction by selecting short film clips that are used by the practitioner to illustrate their strengths and share with others in a trusted peer learning group to build confidence. It is an effective way of applying VIG to various training, team-building and professional development projects, leading to sustainable growth in communication skills in an organisation. VERP participants share videos of themselves in a work context with an Association of Video Interaction Guidance UK

(AVIG UK) accredited guider/s and are supported to reflect on what works well in terms of their attuned interactions.

VERP has been adapted from VIG in order to support professional development. VERP uses short film clips that are chosen by the group members themselves to reflect on their communication skills and consider how things can be even better (Kennedy et al., 2011). In VIG, it is the accredited guider who selects the short film clips to link to the client's helping question. VERP therefore, as a methodology, allows for more autonomy and self-directed learning, which aligns to other models of adult learning. Each member of the VERP group set their own personal goal of what they would like to achieve by the end of the VERP project.

The group sessions are led by a VERP guider who supports each member of the group to take turns in sharing their micro-analysis of video, and encourages the participants to identify further moments of attuned interactions. These group sessions typically take place every fortnight and were led by myself, in collaboration with one of the music therapist who had previously trained in VIG and had good relationships with the team. The participants of the group are encouraged to buddy up in pairs before coming to the group session to look at their selected film clips together.

The term attuned interaction comes directly from Trevarthen's view of intersubjectivity, which describes a communication episode where two or more people influence one other by being mutually receptive and sensitively responsive (Trevarthen & Aitkin, 2001). The mode of interaction

has been demonstrated by contemporary infant researchers such as Trevarthen (1979a) and is analogous to VIG's 'principles of attuned interaction and guidance.' Stern (2004) also described this mode of interaction when he used a phenomenological approach to explore what he calls 'present moments.' These 'present moments' are described as short episodes of untold emotional narratives that take place during an interaction, which is mentally grasped as it is still unfolding through non-symbolic and non-verbal processes. (Chalse, 2011, p. 245)

In other words, in any conversation, there are two equally important people where emotional dialogue is of central importance.

VERP thereby supports the professional development of colleagues through developing an understanding of what intersubjectivity looks like in action and how communication between two or more people can have an effect on each other by being mutually receptive and sensitively responsive. As highlighted above, it has been used in many professional fields as it empowers individual practitioners to find clips that are most helpful to them towards their personal goal.

Etelapelot et al. (2013) suggest that the term 'agency' tends to be associated with "active striving, taking initiative, or having an influence on one's own life situation" (p.46). Barrow and Todd (2015) have taken this idea further to suggest that

in order to address complex challenges faced by communities in the domains (and beyond) of health, education and social care we need agentic practitioners. Uncertainty in the contemporary workplace has led to a growing interest at both

an academic and policy level in agency at work. (Etelapelot et al., 2013, as cited in Barrow & Todd, 2015, pp.282-283)

Further in Chapter 23, Barrow and Todd (2011) outline the purpose of VERP as:

An alternative to instrumentalist expert-led training in the workplace, and may be used by agentic professionals to facilitate positive change in the relationships and ethos of the workplaces. VERP uses short video clips in which practitioners view positive moments of their own interactions with service users or other practitioners (for example, in a team meeting or supervision context). Through the VERP process they are guided to identify strengths in their own communication that have contributed to the positive interaction demonstrated in the video. VERP emphasizes the dyadic nature of communication. Its focus, therefore, is mutuality and attuned relationships rather than building an individual's skills base. (p. 291)

Typically, every VERP session occurs once every 2 to 4 weeks, in order to allow participants to record videos of their professional interactions. During the session, each participant shares their video clip with the rest of the group who takes on the role of a 'reflective team.' A reflective team approach is a way of deepening the discussion by structuring the reflective process such that they make a 'back row and observe in silence' whilst the trainee and VERP guider review and discuss the video clips (by making a triangle between the video, trainee and guider). As the sessions develop, the VERP guider moves from a supportive teaching role to a facilitator, to enable participants to take more ownership of their development. The building blocks of attuned interactions are illustrated below in Figure 1. The VERP guider uses these principles for developing attunement with the trainee during the VERP sessions to support them to feel attended to, received and to develop discussion with them around the clips.



Figure 1: The principles for developing attunement¹

¹ The figure is courtesy of the Association of Video Interaction Guidance UK (AVIG UK).

CONTEXT FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE MUSIC VERP PROJECT

This VERP project was commissioned through conversations with the team lead of Cambridgeshire Music (www.cambridgeshiremusic.org). The team lead was keen in exploring VERP training to enhance reflective practice of the music therapy team through group supervision (called shared reviews) of video clips from clinical practice. VERP was suggested as a methodology to meet the following aims: 1) to empower and increase confidence of the music therapy team in using video in their work with families; and 2) to increase the reflective capacity of the team by looking at short clips of their interactions with the children and young people they work with.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Six female music therapists aged between 30-60 years old took part in the project. All of them had more than ten years of clinical experience and two had undergone additional training in systemic practice. Working for Cambridgeshire Music™, their work was typically delivered in clinics, homes, and schools throughout the counties of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough in response to the commissioners to their services.

Procedure

An introductory meeting was held with the music therapy team at one of their team meetings. Subsequently, two training sessions were held in March 2018 and April 2018. The purpose of these training sessions was to share the aims of VIG and VERP approaches, introduce the VIG attunement principles, outline expectations for VERP training including the content of the course, and discuss practicalities around filming.

A two-day training programme was held over two sessions: Day 1 included the co-construction of a group goal – *To balance the child-led initiatives with the objectives/goals of music therapy to inform our actions as therapists* – and a group name for the project. Everitt, a member of the team who was training in VIG, facilitated the process of co-constructing the group goal by listening, receiving, and reflecting back the words, thoughts, and feelings of the group. Day 1 also included didactic teaching on how to film sessions, how to select and edit films to illustrate the principles for developing attunement, the concept of following the client's initiatives, and exercises of identifying attuned interactions on film.

Day 2 comprised of completing baseline measures; setting, scaling, and recording personal goals; identifying a parent to work with; preparing consent forms for filming; clarifying expectations for recording and micro-analysis of video clips for group supervision; and outlining next steps for supervision.

Measures used

Target Monitoring and Evaluation (T.M.E.; Dunsmuir et al., 2009) was used as an evidence-based outcome measure. This was adapted from Goal Based Outcomes that was used in medical settings as a Likert Scale (between 1-10; e.g. 1 = not present; to 10 = always present) to help participants formulate a helping question or goal and define what this goal looks like at baseline and at the end of the project (achieved) to evaluate change. The researcher supported each participant to set an individual goal by asking them what they wanted to work and what this would look like in their current practice. This form of goal setting was used pre- (April 2018) and post-project (September 2018) to evaluate outcomes.

Three group supervisions (of 1.5 hours each) were held every month between May and July 2018. This was facilitated by myself (an accredited VIG supervisor) alongside a VIG guider in training (Stage 3). The music therapists brought films to supervision that showed them using attunement principles in their interactions with children and young people. This was linked to their individual goals as illustrated in Table 1. I enabled and led the group to explore films together in group supervision (shared reviews), supporting each to identify positive moments of attuned interaction and next steps to take forward. A final celebration session was held during the final meeting (July) to acknowledge the strengths and the next steps of practice for each music therapist.

"What am I doing to deepen discussion with X (child) to explore/express verbally issues around his emotions and anxieties?" "How am I receiving with words to develop shared meaning of language in a purposeful way?" "What is it that I'm doing to guide and extend a child into developing effective verbal communication?" "What is it that I'm doing to support the balance of communication, holding in mind both the child's and my own agenda?" "What am I doing to guide the child into deeper discussion to facilitate insight for the child?"

Table 1: Individual participants' helping questions (or individual goals)

During this final celebration, rating of the VIG attunement principles as well as the individual and group goals using T.M.E. took place again, alongside a short questionnaire. Certificates of attendance were given to each participant for completing the VERP project (led by the VIG Supervisor (myself) and VIG practitioner (Everitt) and for the purposes of continuing professional development record for the music therapy team.

FINDINGS

As part of our evaluation of VERP for music therapists in this setting, we used pre- and post- T.M.E. scores. Overall, this showed an effect size of 1.71 (mean post T.M.E. scores – mean pre T.M.E. scores / SD). This would be considered to be a large effect size (Coe, 2002). The T.M.E. data revealed positive shifts of 3 points for the group goal pre- and post-project. The T.M.E. data also revealed average shifts of 3.6 points in relation to progress with individual practitioner's goals (Table 2).

Post-T.M.E. scores showed that by the end of the project, participants used VIG communication principles more frequently in their interactions with children. Participants also completed a self-rating scale on their use of the VIG Attunement Principles pre- and post-project. The self-rating scales showed increased frequency in the participant's use of the VIG Attunement Principles in their interactions with parents.

Qualitative feedback from participants revealed positive responses. There was an overall sense that the team was more cohesive and connected on completion of the project.

Group goal and individuals' helping questions	Pre-	Post-	Shift in T.M.E. score
Group goal			
To balance the child led initiatives with the objectives/goals of the therapy to inform our actions as therapists.	4	7	+3
Individuals' goals			
What am I doing to deepen discussion with X (child) to explore/express verbally issues around his emotions and anxieties?	6	7	+1
How am I receiving with words to develop shared meaning of language in a purposeful way?	3	8	+5
What is it that I'm doing to guide and extend a child into developing effective verbal communication?	3	9	+6
What is it that I'm doing to support the balance of communication, holding in mind both the child's and my own agenda?	6	9	+3
What am I doing to guide the child into deeper discussion to facilitate insight for the child?	5	8	+3

Table 2: Likert scores (1-10) using pre- and post-T.M.E.

DISCUSSION: REFLECTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

This project was valued by the service lead. Also, participants indicated that this opportunity gave them time to 'press the pause' in the business of professional practice, allowing them to connect and reflect together through a shared group learning experience. All colleagues reported enjoying time together, feeling empowered and experiencing a shared sense of purpose and belonging. Although empowerment, agency, and belonging were not the primary focus of the project (so not measured formally), these would be useful to consider in future work. A follow-up study could be done to analyse the qualitative comments more by looking at emerging themes using content or discourse analysis, for example.

Upon completing the project, I found that participants needed additional modelling on how to identify moments of positive attunement initially. Additionally, they needed more time to think about physical positioning of the filming device within their own shared reviews with clients to enable empowerment. They also needed more time to complete the micro-analysis of films between group supervisions in their pairs, given that participants were working in a time demanding role of a busy music therapy practice.

Overall feedback indicated that the course was perceived as a supportive and enabling opportunity to develop professional practice and professional confidence. Additionally, practitioners reflected that they learnt how to put forward a client-centred goal and valued the safe space to reflect and learn from each other's practice.

The theme of increased agency – the feeling of control over their actions and their consequences and increased confidence in putting forward a goal for the client was noticeable. Also participants shared that the group supervision reinforced an awareness of their attuned interactions with clients and one another from a shared collaborative learning experience with peers. A full summary of the comments is included in the Appendix.

Reflections and implications for music therapy practice

How do you think your communication with your clients has changed?

Practitioners indicated that they felt their communication with clients had changed as a result of attending the course. They indicated that they were more reflective in sessions: they made links with previous sessions in their current conversations with clients. They also felt that they were following the children's initiative more during therapy to guide children into using more language by reflecting back their words. Other practitioners felt that they had more confidence in identifying when an interaction was working well. For instance, some noted that by waiting and giving more space, they were better able to look for positive moments of communication.

How will you use what you have learned on the course in your work?

Participants reported increased motivation to consider other forms of video feedback training (such as VIG) as well as a willingness to continue to develop verbal reflection skills – using and reflecting back a client's words – when appropriate. There was also increased motivation to think about how staff within the school context could use video recording as a tool for reflection. Participants felt more confident to wait, listen, and follow the client as they learnt how these behaviours positively impacted their music therapy practice.

What are you doing differently now as a result of participating in the VERP course?

Individual practitioners reflected on the impact of the VERP course on their practice. Some examples include:

We are all now following the children's initiatives more.

I feel I am more confident in thinking about what the child's initiatives are and what my 'Therapist intentions' are, and how I might share these in a session.

It's good to keep in mind how much structure I am putting in, and the balance of leading and following. It has made me think about following the child more to get the balance in communication.

I'm thinking more about how to allow the child to lead more, rather than following the Therapy objectives. I certainly feel like there is more balance now, otherwise you can get into a pattern.

It is easy to lead all the time, I think I have shifted to following the child's initiatives more.

During the final celebration session, the team lead shared the impact that the project had for staff confidence. She also indicated feeling empowered to report a large effect size in terms of T.M.E. outcome data pre- and post-project and positive comments as illustrated in the qualitative feedback to the Cambridgeshire's Local Authority Ofsted inspection. These findings replicate previous research that found increased staff confidence as a result of using video feedback to support training (Gooding & Standley, 2010). The team leader also indicated that the project was a 'good spend' in being able to evidence the impact of the project, and to support the continuing professional development of the team. An additional unexpected benefit that came about through this project is that it embedded the Attunement model and the use of video reflection for supervision and parent feedback, much more firmly. The team leader reflected that "the questioning used in VERP was really helpful and helped to sharpen our reflective practice skills, for example notice some things that we may have been doing already but were not articulating or understanding" and "the questioning model and script really helped to then improve confidence for work with parents and gave a structure and language for discussion and reflection."

The team lead reflected that another gap for music therapists is often the use of language with clients:

Non-verbal communication and attunement is 'quite easy' for music therapist but practitioners do not always have training in the use of words or verbal reflection without taking some short counselling type course.

Spending time thinking about similarities and differences between musical and verbal attunement was key and joined up some gaps. Rehearsing scripts and language were also key.

One limitation of this project included the duration of the project. Ideally, another group supervision (called a shared review) would have enabled further learning, but this proved to be difficult because we needed to balance this against the time for continuing professional development within

the context of a busy service, childcare needs, and colleagues having access to recording equipment. Other limitations included not controlling for confidence level and prior experience of engaging with video feedback as a tool for professional development. Two colleagues (out of six) anecdotally reported extensive use of video feedback due to prior training opportunities.

In summary, this project was considered a successful joint endeavour between agencies within one Local Authority (Cambridgeshire Music and the Educational Psychology Service in Cambridgeshire). The use of an embedded learning reflective video model for continuing professional development provided learning opportunities for both practitioners and the supervisor, alongside one music therapist who had trained in VIG who took a supervisory role alongside myself.

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APPENDIX

Comments received from participants on the VERP course:

"Discussions deepened and moved toward transition to post school education, rather than anxieties. There was good linking between conversations/ topics past and present."

"A supportive opportunity to reflect on my own practice."

"I found sharing my work with colleagues really useful, and keeping focused on the positives."

"Really useful to share and review clinical skills together."

"Reinforced awareness in sessions including shared learning practice/experience."

"It was useful to share and follow up reflections with the team as part of sessions, but also in ongoing discussions after with team."

"Enjoyable course and good to have the chance to share video material with the team. Maybe next time I would choose a different goal."

"Sharing video material/discussion, and good hearing and seeing others' Music Therapy work."

"Thank you very much! A very interesting and enjoyable course!"

"I do feel more confident (agency) putting the goal (my agenda) forward than I would have in the past."

"I would recommend this course to other colleagues because of the emphasis on positive attributes and reduction in problem saturated conversations."

"Identifying the positive interactions and sharing work in an affirming manner."

"I found the course extremely useful, particularly when thinking of positive communication skills."

"I would recommend this course to analyse your communication and that of the client, and find a 'weak' point to strengthen."

"Identifying the positive interactions and sharing work in an affirming way."

Ελληνική περίληψη | Greek abstract

Χρησιμοποιώντας την Ενισχυμένη Πρακτική Αναστοχασμού μέσω Βίντεο (VERP) για τη συνεχή επαγγελματική ανάπτυξη μιας ομάδας μουσικοθεραπευτών: Αξιολόγηση και στοχασμοί

Miriam Craddock

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Το 2018, έξι μουσικοθεραπευτές παρακολούθησαν μια σύντομη εκπαίδευση για την Ενισχυμένη Πρακτική Αναστοχασμού μέσω Βίντεο (Video Enhanced Reflective Practice - VERP). Συν-σχεδιάστηκε ένας ομαδικός στόχος για την ανάπτυξη της ομάδας ως μέρος του προγράμματος, με εφαρμογή στην ατομική εργασία περιστατικών. Η εκπαίδευση πραγματοποιήθηκε κατά τη διάρκεια δύο συναντήσεων διάρκειας 1,5 ωρών, κατά τις οποίες εξηγήθηκαν οι αρχές για την ανάπτυξη συντονισμού, αποφασίστηκαν ατομικοί στόχοι για την ανάπτυξη κάθε ασκούμενου, και διεξήχθη συζήτηση για την ατομική εργασία περιστατικών. Συζητήθηκε επίσης η διαδικασία καταγραφής και ανάλυσης σύντομων βιντεοκλίπ πριν από την ομαδική εποπτεία. Η παρακολούθηση και αξιολόγηση στόχων χρησιμοποιήθηκε για να καταμετρηθεί η επίδραση των στόχων πριν και μετά το πρόγραμμα. Άλλες μετρήσεις που χρησιμοποιήθηκαν περιλάμβαναν μία κλίμακα αυτοαξιολόγησης των Αρχών Επικοινωνίας πριν και μετά το πρόγραμμα, καθώς και ερωτήσεις ανοιχτού τύπου σε φόρμες αξιολόγησης. Τα δεδομένα της παρακολούθησης και αξιολόγησης στόχων αποκάλυψαν θετική μεταβολή 3 βαθμών για τον ομαδικό στόχο πριν και μετά το πρόγραμμα, και μέση μεταβολή 3,6 βαθμών προς τη θετική κατεύθυνση για τους ατομικούς στόχους. Επιπλέον, οι κλίμακες αυτοαξιολόγησης των ασκούμενων έδειξαν αυξημένη συχνότητα στη χρήση των Αρχών Επικοινωνίας στις αλληλεπιδράσεις τους με τα παιδιά. Το πρόγραμμα αυτό βασίζεται σε έρευνα που δείχνει ότι η VERP είναι ένα εργαλείο επαγγελματικής ανάπτυξης που βελτιώνει την αυτοπεποίθηση και αυτενέργεια των ακούμενων μέσω της αυτογνωσίας και της γνώσης των δεξιοτήτων που χρησιμοποιούν στην καθημερινή κλινική πράξη. Επιπρόσθετα, παρείχε έναν μηχανισμό για μια ομάδα να σκέφτεται και να εργάζεται δημιουργικά και θεραπευτικά μαζί.

ΛΕΞΕΙΣ ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ

αυτενέργεια, συντονισμός, αλληλεπίδραση, ενδυνάμωση, παρακολούθηση και αξιολόγηση στόχων, εκτίμηση, Ενισχυμένη Πρακτική Αναστοχασμού μέσω Βίντεο, μουσικοθεραπεία, αυτο-αναστοχασμός