

# Art Therapy, children 0-6 years and their families: A research project surveying the Sydney region of New South Wales, Australia

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## KEYWORDS

Art therapy, children, families, survey, Australia

## ABSTRACT

This article presents findings of a research project in partnership between The Infants' Home, Child & Family Services (TIHC&FS) and the Research Centre for Social Justice & Social Change, University of Western Sydney (SJSC, UWS) on art therapy practice with children 0-6 years and their families in Sydney, NSW, Australia. A literature search was conducted and information gathered from ten Art Therapists by questionnaire, focus group and art making. It provides the first survey of art therapy of its kind in this region and is intended to contribute to the development of a clinical and evaluative framework for art therapy with children 0-6 years and their families.

## INTRODUCTION

Art therapy as a profession and clinically recognised intervention is still emerging in Australia. As such it is not available in all child and family services. It is different to standard psychotherapeutic or family interventions as it employs art making and play as the central focus of the therapeutic relationship. Anecdotally agencies that employ art therapists (ATs) report valuable outcomes in working at emotional depth with children and families presenting with traumatic and challenging issues. This project begins to chart the local practices in the field and contributes to the development of knowledge and understanding of this intervention. The long term aim is to contribute towards the development of

a clinical and evaluative framework for art therapy with children 0-6 years and their families. This will form the foundation of art therapy practice becoming more evidence based, which is of strategic importance for its development and availability to improve the health and well being of this client group (Gilroy, 2006).

The key research question of this project is: 'How is art therapy being practiced with children 0-6 years and their families in the greater Sydney region?' To answer this question information was gathered on: organisational contexts, theoretical frameworks, referral, assessment, evaluation procedures and documentation.