

Section 2



Sensopherics®

**Enabling Practitioners to Enhance a child's
Wellbeing and Sensory Development**

The Reasoning Behind the Innovation

During the Covid-19 pandemic, anxiety in children has risen tremendously.

Research conducted by Fortuna *et al.*, (2023); Mansfield *et al.*, (2021) and UK Government (2021) has revealed that due to the isolation of children during these lockdown periods, children of 4 years old now demonstrate changes in their socio-economic development.



(Source:- Good Housekeeping, 2016)

This change in development has had an impact on behavioural, emotional and attention aspects of children between the ages of 4 to 10 years of age.

Current Practise

Due to awareness of a child's uniqueness and the need to treat individuals with distinctive independent plan, Additional Learning Needs (ALN) settings have the ability to provide children with the support needed to express their feelings of anxiety and fear.

However, non-maintained settings, due to staff and child ratios, have found dealing with this current situation extremely difficult to achieve the required curricula outcome.



(Source:- Tharp & Santana, 2014)

Despite ALN settings having access to designated sensory rooms, these sessions are limited to 40 minutes per week within a fixed setting. This system does not take into consideration, that children cannot plan their emotional or behavioural outburst to

fall in line with this session and that individuals require additional sensory intervention.

The Innovation

Sensopherics® has been established to furnish settings with the ability to provide mobile and easily accessible access to sensory equipment. These sensory sacks can provide sensory intervention sessions when required and in any available area.

Encouraging the use of both Sensory and Atmospheric holistic interaction sessions within Early Years Settings, Specialist Schools, and Behavioural Units, hence the name Sensopherics®.

We aim to supply non-funded settings with interchangeable and unique

opportunities, to enable children and practitioners to access essential sensory sessions to develop children's social and well-being development, in accordance with the Curriculum for Wales (Welsh Government, 2020a).



(Source:- Calm Sense, 2024)

Connections to the Welsh Curriculum

The Welsh Government (2023) and Public Health Wales (2022) both state that Health and Well-being is central to the Curriculum of Wales. Explaining further that



(Source:- Welsh Government, 2020b)

by developing a child's physical health and well-being, outcomes connected to the four purposes such as creating healthy and confident individuals, can be achieved.

Developed to promote a child's emotional and social well-being, Sensopherics® in addition to the Welsh Curriculum, has the child's health and well-being development at its heart.

By providing well-being support strategies to overcome anxiety, behavioural, social, and emotional difficulties, Sensopherics® enables individuals to become 'valued members of society'.

Product Concept

We as a company, aim to provide non-maintained settings, the NHS and the wider community, opportunities to embrace a new sensory concept in delivering sensory sessions.

Sensopherics®, will provide practitioners, health visitors and other therapy providers with access to online training on the importance of sensory sessions, and how sessions can be adapted to the individual needs of each child.

Demonstrating that with the introduction of our specially designed mobile sensory sacks, sensory sessions can be adapted to different situations, needs and with the uniqueness of each individual. This online training can be accessed through our company's website and



completed by practitioners as and when needed. It provides settings with the ability to individualise and adapt the training process for the needs of both practitioners and children. Sensopherics® will develop a working relationship with each setting. During which, we can develop the range of mobile and easy access sensory equipment required to enhance the settings current sensory sessions.

We will take this opportunity to discuss the needs and obstacles which the setting currently presents. Providing us with an opportunity to demonstrate our specially designed mobile sensory sacks, how sensory sessions can be adapted to different situations and needs and with the uniqueness of each individual.

To alleviate any potential possibility of food allergies and/ or intolerance, we as a company have decided to remove the sense of taste from our non-maintained setting sessions, to reduce added stress on practitioners. However, these setting sensory sacks will still provide the necessary sensory products to provoke the child's sense of smell, touch, vision, and hearing.

In addition, Sensopherics® aims to provide accessible workshops for parents and carers, whereby information on the importance of sensory session involvement, and how to access sensory objects through a sensory sack loan facility.

This service will be available in community-based buildings such as libraries, health care centres, leisure centres, and baby and children's play groups. By providing these services at an affordable cost, in addition to a drop-in service, it enables low-income families the opportunity to attend this workshop facility. Not only providing families the ability to learn new skills but enable them to create a community support system.



(Source:- Two Faces of MS?, 2020)

Unlike the practitioners' sensory sacks, parents and carers will be provided with the additional option of adding the sense of taste to their sensory sessions. This introduction enables the child to experience a further depth to their sensory experience.

This unique, mobile, and adaptable concept and product, allows participants access to a sustainable sensory solution (UCKA, 2024.), as the product is a multi-use item, and individual parts can be replaced as needed in a cost-effective manner.

Best Company for the Job

Over the past 25 years, I have gained numerous qualifications and experience in mainstream, specialist and behavioural educational settings. During which time, opportunities have arisen, enabling me to work closely with children with severe Additional Learning Needs and children who are military dependents.



(Source:- Grace Counselling, 2022)

Due to my disability, the pandemic had a detrimental effect on my mental health and wellbeing, causing me to suffer from social anxiety. This social anxiety also became apparent within my youngest daughter.

With this firsthand experience and through personal trial and error, I have gained a profound interest in children's holistic health and well-being development.

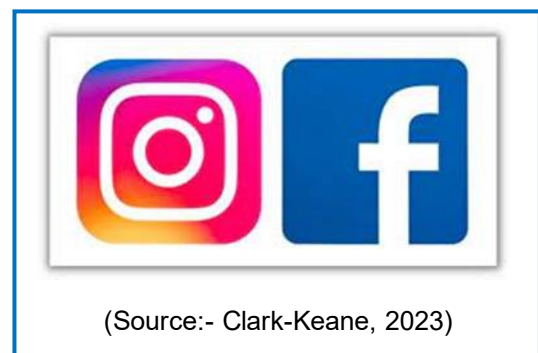
Although this was an extremely challenging period, I took it upon myself to further my knowledge, understanding and qualifications on aspects of Childrens Holistic care, these included, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, Aromatherapy, Sound, Music, Art, and Play Therapy. The majority of which can be utilised within all aspects of Sensory, Health and Well-being development.

Marketing

Our product and strategy will be promoted to schools and settings by a direct method approach, through emails and face-to-face meetings with practitioners and senior management.

To access the social community, we will provide information via business literature, located in doctors' surgery's, health care clinics, libraries, and other community hubs, in addition to social media advertisements on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat.

Due to today's consumer market, Sensopherics® replacement products will be available to purchase direct from our website, this enables customers to obtain discount vouchers with purchases over £100 and free delivery will be provided for orders over £50.



(Source:- Clark-Keane, 2023)

Our products will also be available on selling platforms such as Etsy and eBay, however purchases made by these means will not qualify for the above incentives.

Sensopherics® as a concept, product, and service, has been patented and copyright to prevent copyright infringement, to prevent copyright infringement (Chang, 2023).

Ltd Company

Registered as a Ltd company, Sensopherics® has its own legal identity, provided security for both customers and the personal liability of shareholders. In addition to providing both suppliers and customers confidence in the service which is supplied.

This registration with Company House also protects the company name from copyright infringement. As a result of registration, it enables us as a company to take advantages of Tax Benefits, reducing our company Corporation Tax rate to approximately 19%.

Not only reducing tax outgoings a Ltd company can additionally benefit from a range of allowances and tax-deductible costs (UK Government, 2014).

Financial Feasibility

Sensopherics® require £33,000 as a startup cost, this is necessary to create a training programme, to produce the relevant marketing products and portfolio, storage facility rental and product acquisition from warehouse companies.

As a company have the three option to acquire funding.

1) National Lottery Community Funding Grant of £300 - £20,000



(Source:- Sky, 2024)

This grant will provide the funding needed to provide the community loan library facility, as this aspect of our business strategy fulfils the 'bring people together to build strong relationships in and across communities' and 'help more people to reach their potential, by supporting them at the earliest possible stage' requirements of

The National Lottery Community Fund Wales (2023).

2) Welsh Government Business Loan (2020c)

Developed by the Welsh Government, this loan enables us a company to combine funding grants with this loan facility to create a funding package to cover our setup costs. This facility provides loans to new Welsh businesses from £1,000 to £10m with a fixed interest rate, which can be paid back over the loan term of up to 15 years.

3) Stakeholder Shares

As a Ltd company, we are provided with an option to acquire the necessary finance. Ltd companies have the opportunity to issue new shares to raise capital, these shares can be made available for purchase by existing or new shareholders (UK Government, 2014).

Sensopherics® as a Children's Wellbeing Company not only aims to provide an affordable sensory experience for children within a non-maintained setting, but it also enables opportunities for families to create a community support system through cross-cultural community wellbeing workshops.



The aim of this critique is to debate the positive and negative consequences of sensory sessions in a child's development and its connection to the Welsh Curriculum. Further discussing social entrepreneurship and the aspects which can influence and challenge women entrepreneurs, including workplace culture, collaboration of staff and imposter syndrome. In addition, further analysis will be compiled on Sensopherics® business plan, discussing further the positive and negative points of competition, financial grants, loans, and marketing choices.

Piaget (1971) believed that the sensorimotor stage of learning takes place during the first 2 years of a child's life and after this time a child cannot return. Discussing further that during this time a child has the ability to learn through their physical actions and their senses (Cousins and Cunnah, 2018.; Sharpiro *et al.*, 2014. p.111-126). However, Hebb and Vygotsky dispute these findings by expanding on the belief that children are social beings and continue to require sensory involvement within their development (Ghassemzadeh *et al.*, 2013. p. 292-306). Hebb argues further that when individuals are sensory deprived, it can result in depression and severe anxiety (Raz, 2013. p. 75-96).

Ayres *et al.*, (2023), and NHS UK (2018) , believe that sensory sessions, have the ability to organise a child's sensory system. This is achieved by providing auditory, interoceptive, gustatory, olfactory, proprioceptive, tactile, vestibular, and visual inputs. Elaborating further that sensory exploration is a natural learning experience of children, enabling them to develop an understanding of the world around them, furthermore, providing children with positive social and emotional experiences Williams (2020). However, although current research promotes sensory activities within settings, Cruger (2024), Conelea *et al.*, (2014. p. 510-521) and Smith *et al.*, (2020. p. 104643) promotes the notion that practitioners should be aware of sensory overstimulation. Debating further, that sensory sensitivities can be stimulated, leading to compulsive-like behaviours and reduced play behaviours (Goodman-Scott and Lambert, 2015. p. 257-263.; Smees *et al.*, 2022) . Continuing to state that high levels of stimulation have been associated to Arousal Theory and suggests that an individual's behaviour and development can be compromised (Harrison, 2015. p. 427-435.; Urai *et al.*, 2017.; Bruel *et al.*, 2022). Yet, Rossow *et al.*, (2021.p. 1645-1657) and Neil *et al.*, (2016.p. 1962-1973) both argue that within the early years, there are children who seek out sensory stimuli to overcome feeling of both anxiety and depression. They discuss further that this sensory reactivity to alleviate mental

health issues, is paramount in children with both Autism and/ or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

Tamblyn *et al.*, (2022. p. 708-724); Berti *et al.*, (2019. p. 991-1021) and Van Liempd *et al.*, (2020. p.101385) discuss the opinion that physical and sensory experience is a 'salient aspect of early childhood education'. This is reinforced in the Health and Well-being area of the Welsh Curriculum. This holistic approach enables learners to develop strategies to navigate through life's challenges and opportunities. Promoting children's awareness of the interconnections of health and wellbeing, enables children to succeed in their learning and development (Hwb, 2020.; Ouellet *et al.*, 2018. p. 75-83). James (2020) states that when children become aware of these interconnections, it has the ability to affect the availability of learning and a child's development.

Sensopherics® is a social entrepreneurship innovation, it has been designed to address a social issue, to improve the well-being of children within non-maintained settings and in the wider community. Collavo (2023. p. 27-38) describes social entrepreneur as an individual who observes a potential community-orientate problem and pursues a solution to enable a positive social change. This individual is mission driven and seldom profit driven, as business success is focused and measured on the impact to the local community. Revenue received from the company, is reinvested into the organisation to be utilised in future social causes (Carraher *et al.*, 2016. p. 386). Having a results-orientated strategy, these individuals have the ability to overcome a gap within the market and with relentless determination they have the ability to unlock both their own potential and that of the community (Philips *et al.*, 2014. p. 428-461.; Portales, 2019. p. 81-95). This talent of spotting these enabling conditions, provides opportunities to address social and ecological challenges, enabling the likelihood of governmental approach or strategy changes.

However, like all companies, Sensopherics® has to overcome challenges. Ladge *et al* (2019. p. 615-624) and Rietveld and Patel (2022) discuss that '75% of all women executives experience imposter syndrome'. Stating that due to the need to prove themselves within a masculine environment, women are at a higher risk of burnout, anxiety, and stress. They have revealed that despite having the relevant qualifications and training, women are significantly more at risk of self-doubt and

negativity towards their own abilities (Shaw, 2021. p. 22-23). In addition, Paulise (2023) explains that women can suffer from imposter syndrome, due to the lack of professional role models, sexist comments from male workers and non-supportive performance managers. Furthermore, Ladge *et al.*, (2019. p. 615-624) and Rietveld and Patel (2022) discuss that it is vital that the gender gap within entrepreneurship is closed and that to obtain 'economic empowerment of females', the gender pay gap must also be addressed.

Additionally, challenges may occur when new strategies are introduced within settings. These can include people's attitudes and approaches towards change, as some individuals are reluctant due to a fixed mindset (King, 2017.p.137-145). Fixed mindsets can lead to negating thinking and resistance to change, as a result of a fear of failure, the fear of the unknown and the reluctance to leave their comfort zone (Hunter and Reiter-Palmon, 2023.; Petrou *et al.*, 2016. p. 1766-1792.; Bourne, 2016).

In spite of this challenge, there are means to overcome this mental approach and workplace culture. Rodd, (2015. p. 117-118) explains that by utilising the means of staff collaboration, teamwork, and effective communication, it provides employees with confidence, personal satisfaction, and motivation to engage in new task. Stating further that when engaged in these three approaches, it enables inclusivity, better staff engagement, efficient problem solving and strengthens relationships. Haas & Mortensen (2024) goes on further to state, that when practitioners are provided with opportunities to share knowledge and experiences, it creates a collaborative workplace culture. Shaw (2021.p. 14) and Mack *et al.*, (2016) agree that this collaborative practice, overcomes any volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity that may arise, discussing further that previous workplace cultures were unable to overcome these barriers due to fixed mindsets.

Despite the positive outcomes displayed within the Sensopherics® business plan such as product sustainability and the connections between children's health and well-being in conjunction with the Welsh curriculum. It does however reveal some problematic points.

Although the concept and product are unique, there is nevertheless, alternative individual items that are available for purchase from outlets such as Sensory Direct

(2024). Although, these products are mainly designed towards Additional Learning Needs settings with a central Sensory room facility and are not cost effective for non-maintained settings or for community workshops.

The Sensopherics® Sensory Sacks enable settings and parents/guardians the option to individualise the items within the sack to meet the needs of the individual child, and due to its size, it is easier to store, as no additional room is required. Taking the opportunity to overcome current economic and social barriers, in addition to providing children with a mobile sensory experience (The Prince's Trust, 2015).

To finance this venture, it has been stated that a combination of a Business Loan and National Lottery Grant will be utilised. Although the National Lottery Grant may be taken advantage of, it does however come with some challenges. The application process for this grant currently stands at 14 weeks, within which time you are unable to run the activity in which you are seeking funding. There is however the possibility that at the end of this period you will not qualify for the grant (The National Lottery Community Fund, 2023).

Although when applying for a Business Loan through the Welsh Government's Banc facility, it can enable businesses to access funding in a shorter period of time, it can also present its own challenges. Each application is taken on an individual basis, checks are carried out in accordance with the Credit Reference Agency and will require lenders to disclose recent financial performance. On assessment of the data provided, the loan application will be entered into a banding system or declined, this banded system will determine the interest rate assigned to your business loan (Welsh Government, 2024).

Unfortunate, if the National Lottery Funding is declined, Sensopherics® as a company is unable to provide the relevant information needed to complete the 'recent financial performance', section in the application process of the loan. This can be overcome by applying for a startup loan with a company such as National Finance (2023), as they are able to supply finance for companies who currently have no registered proof of trading.

Whilst Sensopherics® has a varied marketing strategy which has the potential to increase personal relationships with targeted customers, there are however some challenges which need to be overcome. As a small business, marketing can be

financially draining and time consuming, both of which will affect the company's profits (Quain, 2019). Mehta (2024) explains that due to today's digital culture, online marketing can provide businesses with a cost-effective, further reaching advertising platform. Online marketing provides 24-hour access to compete effectively with larger companies. Be that as it may, there are still disadvantages to digital marketing, these include fierce online competition for advertisement visibility, online users employing ad blocking facilities and technical glitches such as slower or intermittent internet speeds. Online marketing has a certitude that negative reviews and comments if not responded to or managed correctly to be spread quickly, resulting in a detrimental effect on current and future sales (Veleva & Tsvetanova, 2020. p. 012065).

Employing Vygotsky, Hebb and Piaget's theories on sensory involvement in a child's development, Sensopherics® provides opportunities for both non-maintained setting and the further community to access sensory enhancing products and services. As a company it has developed a business plan that has challenged the current system and has explored all challenges which can affect the company's outcomes. Nonetheless, there are challenges which can have a significant impact on this business venture, these include personal self-doubt in their abilities resulting in imposter syndrome, in addition to fixed mindset workplaces. When provided with positive role models, individuals have the ability to overcome imposter syndrome and enables others to create a collaborative workplace.

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