

**WE
NEED
MUSIC**

Lullabubbas: Our Songbook

Project Report 2024

**YOUTH
MUSIC**



LOTTERY FUNDED



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Playing under the 'table den'

About Lullabubbas

Lullabubbas is We Need Music CIC's Early Years music making project. We co-create child-centred music making opportunities for babies and young children with their caregivers, both in community and childcare settings.

We place high value upon child-led musical play and exploration, creating spaces where very young children can take the lead and shape their own experiences. We recognise the importance of caregiver interactions and the valuable opportunities for increasing bonds that can develop. We foster supportive settings where relationships between families and caregivers can be built, acknowledging the value of raising children in community, reducing isolation and increasing social connections.

Lullabubbas offers a place to create, to connect and to express, which impacts upon wellbeing for young children and their caregivers.

We aspire to equality of access for all within our sessions and strive to reduce the barriers which can limit participation.

We create spaces full of child led-exploration and wonder, opportunities to be immersed in beautiful soundscapes and exciting multi-sensory experiences.

Lullabubbas runs sessions in Torbay and South Hams, Devon. We have worked across many settings including:

- with Young Parents and their children
- nurseries and pre-schools
- community settings
- a further education college
- forest school
- festivals
- special events



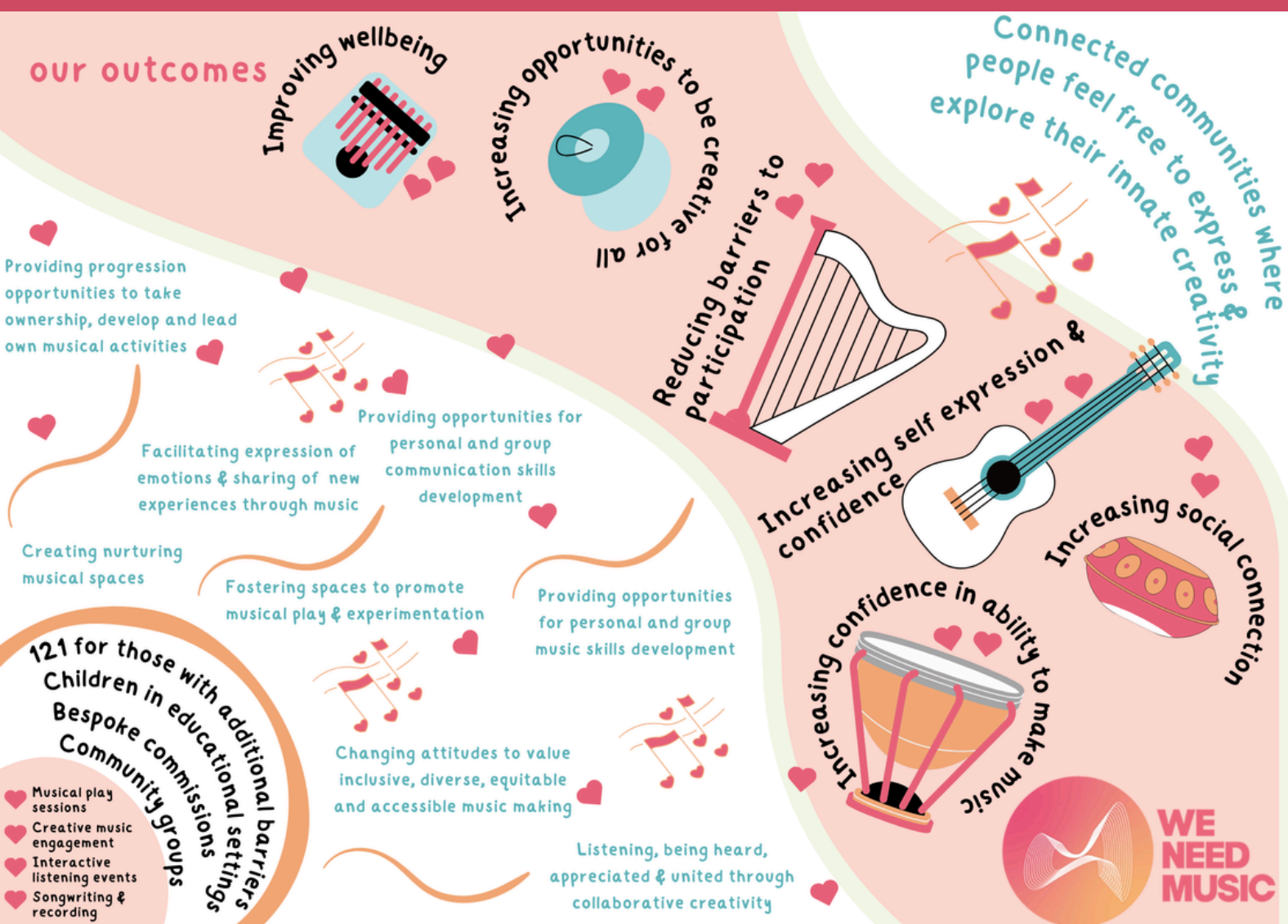
We Need Music, a Community Interest Company based in South Devon has been running since 2020. Our aim is to create inclusive music making and interactive listening opportunities aimed at connecting people; nurturing creativity and expression; building self esteem and confidence.

We work with a broad range of groups across many settings including with Young Carers, local primary schools, healthcare settings, various community settings and special events. **Our vision is to see more connected communities where people feel free to express and explore their innate creativity.**

"I started attending the Lullabubbas baby group when my daughter was about 6 months old... Then Laura asked me to be a peer supporter. I loved it. It gave me the opportunity to volunteer and do something to help others, giving me a sense of purpose outside of "mumming". It also gave my daughter the opportunity to meet other children. It soon became one of our weekly highlights."
-Kirsty Chant, Volunteer Peer Supporter

Our team included Early Years Music Practitioner: Laura Forster, Project Manager: Chloe Tingle, occasional second Music Practitioner: Lyndon Forster and a new 'Peer Supporter' role which evolved during this project. This was fulfilled by two parents who were very active group members in the first term of sessions, encouraging other parents and making them feel welcome.

Theory of Change



As part of this project, our Project Manager and Music Practitioner worked together to create a 'Theory of Change'. Parents, carers and children inputted into this process which drew upon the themes emerging in project data. Parents and carers were also asked for feedback upon the final draft of this document.

"A Theory of Change is a specific and measurable description of a social change that forms the basis for planning, ongoing decision-making and evaluation."
(NCVO, 2024)

Project Overview

OUR AIM

'Lullabubbas: Our Songbook' is our Youth Music Trailblazer project which took place between April 2023 and October 2024. Our goal was to co-design an Early Years project with parents, carers, nursery staff and 0-4 year olds, in order to co-create a songbook and accompanied recordings of community-written songs encouraging more music making and child-led musical play within nursery and home settings. Our plans included a combination of musician residencies in local Early Years settings and music sessions in the local community with parents, carers and their young children with one of the groups focusing on working with Young Parents.

We set out to co-create fun, engaging and creative music making sessions using a wide range of musical instruments and resources with plenty of space for child-led play and exploration. Throughout these sessions, we aimed to empower parents/carers to continue music making at home beyond our sessions.

OUR LEARNING

This Trailblazer project was designed to allow us to try new ways of working and to learn about how our future work might be best shaped in Early Years music making. We set out with a few questions:

- What music making currently takes place in nurseries and pre-schools in Torbay and the South Hams?
- How can we help Early Years practitioners to feel more confident making music with the children they support?
- How can we support parents/carers to continue music making at home beyond education/childcare settings?
- How can we encourage more specifically child-led, instrument and voice based music making in Early Years settings and at home?
- How can we as a small CIC improve access to quality music making opportunities for young children in Torbay and the South Hams?



A Community Session for 0-12 month olds



Summary of Project Delivery

Consultation	Focus group events before and during project x 10			
Regular sessions	Group and 1:1 sessions in Early Years Settings 10 locations, twice weekly for half a term each	Group sessions in Community Settings 3 per week during term time	Group and 1:1 sessions with Young Parents in a Community Setting, weekly during term time	Group sessions with Young Parents in a Supported Housing project, weekly for half a term
Training	CPD sessions for 46 Early Years Practitioners			
Special events	Fundraising concerts x 4			
	Celebration events x 2			
Who took part	346 0-4 year old core participants	86 additional 0-4 year olds attended one-off events	16 Young Parents	10 Early Years settings and 10 Childminders
Numbers of sessions	308 group sessions		41 1:1 sessions	



Fundraising concert



Celebration event at 'The Glade'

Data Collection

METHOD

We have sought to listen to children, parents and carers throughout this whole project, collecting a large amount of data using a variety of methods. These have included:

- In-person focus groups before launch
- In-person focus groups running twice a term throughout the project
- Informal group conversations with verbal young children
- Informal 1:1 conversations with verbal young children (and their caregivers)
- Paper and digital questionnaires
- 1:1 interviews with parents, carers and Early Years practitioners
- Pre and post project questions asked of parents, carers and Early Years practitioners
- 'Thoughts on a postcard' reflective questions
- Youth Music's 'Early Years Assessment Scale' (completed by Music Practitioner at beginning and end of engagement)
- Videoing of session for Music Practitioner reflective practice
- Short visual/written feedback from prompts
- Session attendance data
- Music Practitioner session reflections and observations
- Reflection opportunities for project team



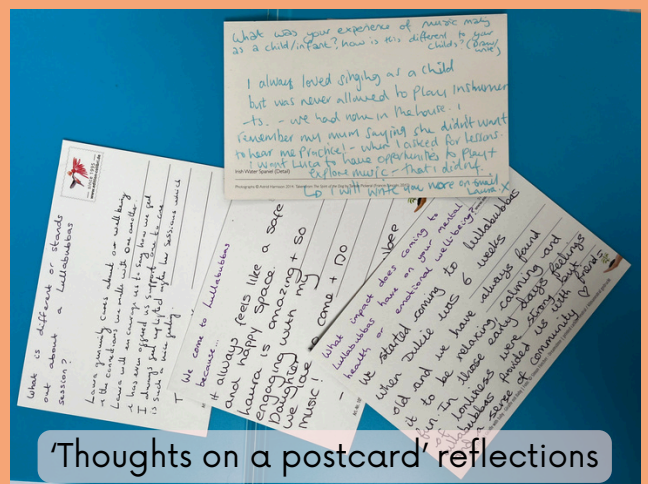
Feedback events in outdoor settings

OUR LEARNING

A significant amount of both qualitative and quantitative data has been collected. This has regularly been used throughout the project to shape and develop our work. At the end of each term, we collated and reflected on data to see what we could develop to better meet the needs and interests of those engaging with the project. As a Trailblazer project, we set out to try new ways of working, to learn more about Early Years music making in local settings and how we could encourage more music making in homes and Early Years settings. As such, we have collected data which helps develop both our understanding and practice.

CHANGES

We made some changes to our methods of data collection during the project. In particular, we recognised that it might be hard for some Early Years Practitioners to respond honestly about how often they make music with children in their care and how confident they feel doing this knowing that their questionnaire might be returned to us via a Manager. We included these questions within the CPD sessions which opened up some helpful conversations between team members and enabled us all to better understand some of the things that might build confidence in music making with young children.



'Thoughts on a postcard' reflections

Pre-Project: Focus Groups

Co-design before and during

Our pre-project focus groups and questionnaires were particularly helpful in understanding more about what might help support families to engage with music projects. We were particularly keen to learn more about the barriers that might stop families from taking part.



What makes a group enjoyable for your baby/toddler?

- Having the chance to explore
- Having some led activities
- Being with children of a similar age
- Having the option to join in or to observe
- Fun resources such as bubbles or parachute
- Being close to home so no need to drive
- Interesting toys and instruments for baby
- Age appropriate entertainment
- Interactions with other babies
- Sensory elements
- Variety of experiences

'She isn't a huge fan of the car, so walkable location is helpful.'

'A space for her to crawl around in while enjoying the class and always having something to play with so she keeps calm and happy.'

What makes a baby/toddler group enjoyable for you as a parent/carers?

- Easy to park
- Opportunity to talk and mix with other parents/carers
- Laid back feeling - able to feed/change baby
- Having time to bond with baby
- Proximity to home
- A relaxed atmosphere
- Easily accessible
- Friendliness
- Groups that are small in numbers
- Seeing child smiling and enjoying themselves
- Interaction

'Bonding time with my baby, time to focus on her rather than chores/my other child!'

What puts you off baby/toddler groups?

- Too expensive to attend
- 'Cliques' groups where it is hard to mingle
- Feeling 'judged' by others
- Not easily accessible
- Not feeling 'musical' yourself
- Too far from a bus/train route
- Difficult parking
- Age limits
- Being rushed to leave at the end
- Location being too far from home
- Very busy groups can feel overwhelming
- Feeling worried about breastfeeding
- Anxiety attending groups
- Timings clashing with naps
- Timings not fitting with school drop off

'Groups where everyone already knows each other can be intimidating!'

Early Years Settings

We worked with 10 Early Years settings, each for a Half Term block of 6 or 7 weeks*.

School based nurseries/pre-schools:

Kings Ash Academy - Nursery, Paignton
Curlidge Street Academy - Nursery, Paignton
Eden Park Primary and Nursery School, Brixham
St Michaels C of E Academy - Nursery, Paignton

Church based pre-school:

St Matthias Pre-School, Torquay

Day nurseries:

Rainbow Nursery, Totnes
Muddy Wellies Nursery at YMCA, Paignton
Sunflowers at Braeside Nursery, Paignton
Marldon Preschool Playgroup, Marldon

Independent Childminders:

Attending Orchard Forest School, Brixham

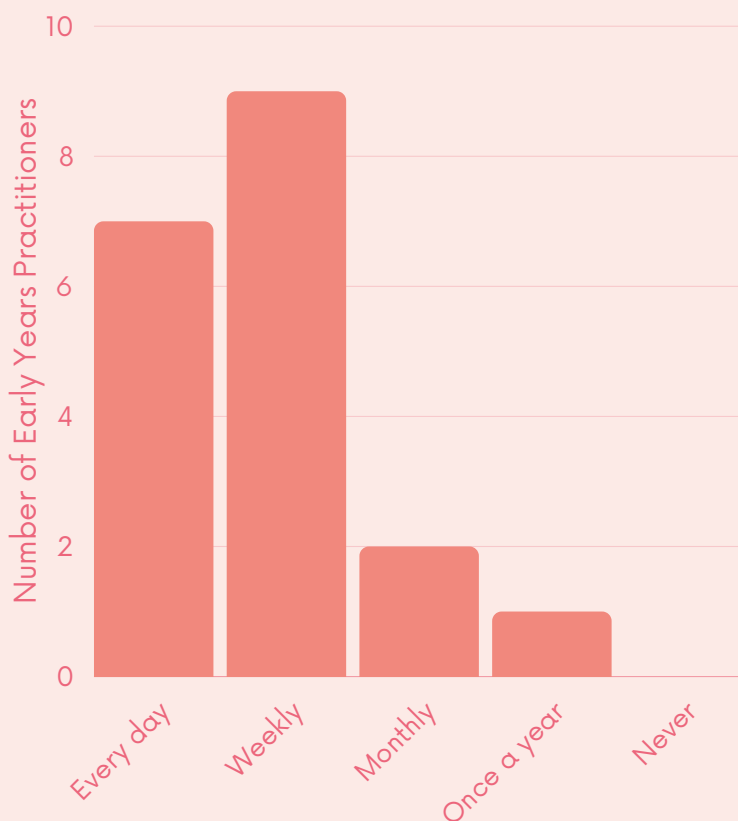
Within these settings we created adult and child led musical play opportunities and invited the Early Years Practitioners to join with our sessions.

As part of these sessions, we were keen to find out:

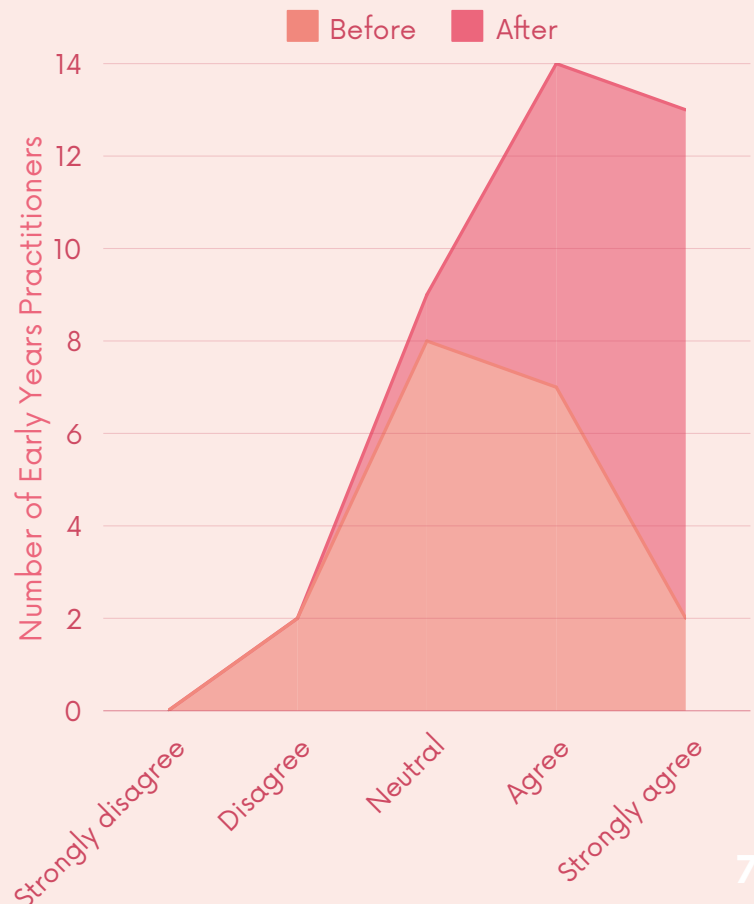
- What music making currently takes place in nurseries and pre-schools in Torbay and South Hams?
- How can we help Early Years Practitioners feel more confident music making with the children they support?
- How can we encourage more specifically child-led, instrument and voice based music making in Early Years settings and at home?

*We returned to deliver a follow up Half Term block of sessions at St Matthias Pre-School

Before this Lullabubbas project, how often did you personally make music with the children here?



'I feel confident making music with children here'



CPD in Early Years settings

Within these Early Years settings we offered to run CPD sessions for staff members. These were attended by 46 members of staff, many of whom also joined with the children's music making time. These sessions provided an opportunity to share our ways of working and we looked at:

- Why children's music making matters
- Reflecting on what music making already happens in their setting and how they are involved
- The role of caregivers in music making and their personal experiences that might shape this
- Child-led musical exploration and play – why this is essential and how it can be supported
- Adult-led music making – thinking about the repertoire we bring, how and why we might use it
- Considering how we might support a musical culture in a nursery environment

These sessions helped to inform a clearer picture of the music making already taking place in Early Years settings. The informal conversations within these CPD sessions were rich with opportunities for learning. Early Years Managers and Practitioners were asked to share written feedback after their sessions. The data gathered from CPD sessions, written questionnaires and online surveys is themed here with examples:

What music making already takes place here? (Prior to this project)

Theme	Illustrated example from Early Years Practitioners
Listening to music	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relaxing and calming music at drop off time• 'Sleep time' music at nap times• A parent sends in songs in different languages• Music to move to• A parent sometimes visits to play their instrument• Staff and children select songs on Alexa
Singing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nursery rhymes• Action songs and songs with props e.g. ribbons• Songs to fit with a theme e.g. Autumn songs• Worship songs and prayers sometimes in the adjoining church• Transition songs e.g. tidy up song, 'Here we go to Forest School' song, goodbye song• Songs to support learning e.g. counting or alphabet song• Karaoke with a disco ball• Weekly singing time with school music teacher
Using instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Playing on pots and pans• Handmade wind chimes• Limited musical instruments available• Using Charanga with instruments• Very basic percussion instruments• Instruments out as part of continuous provision

What might support you to feel more confident making music with children here?

Theme	Illustrated example from Early Years Practitioners
Increased resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment - Having more instruments or the financial means to buy them. Having other props such as scarves • We are a pack away setting so everything we use has to be brought out and then packed away each day. Resource bags that we could pull out quickly would help • Space – having different rooms to use so there are less distractions • Time - having more time to work with small groups in a separate space e.g. in the den
Increased repertoire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing more songs e.g. for different seasons • Songs linked with stories and learning focus
External input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge about how to make more instruments with children • More visiting musicians. Would be nice to have live music, guitar sessions or harp session etc. • More staff CPD • Having more time with Music Leaders to build knowledge and skills



An autumnal Childminder session at Orchard Forest School

What impact has this project had on you and your colleagues?

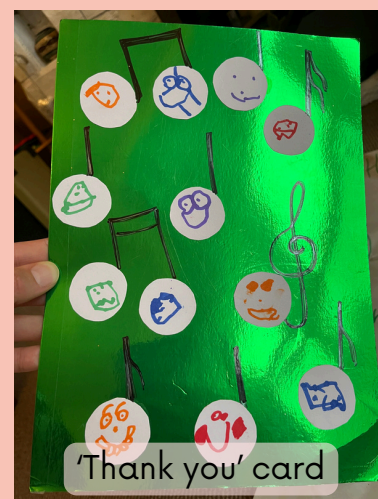
Theme	Illustrated example from Early Years Practitioners
Confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before you came in we felt embarrassed trying to make music and didn't know how far to take things. Having you coming in opened that up for us and made us feel more confident trying things and exploring more music with the children. • Since Laura has been visiting I feel more confident in finding and trying new songs with the children. • We have a music lead and the sessions have given her more confidence to support this areas of children's learning through play.
Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These sessions have given me new ideas on how to include songs within our daily routine. How to make it more child led. • Laura came into one of our team meetings – this was very useful sharing ideas without being interrupted by the children – thank-you. • We don't learn anything like this in college so it's nice to see other things you could do [with young children].
Enjoyment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I had to slip out to photocopy something and was telling all of the staff in the office how calm it was in the nursery room and how they should come and join us! • Never mind the children, can you come and run a session for us staff. That was so calming. • I've enjoyed learning new songs, seeing the children engage in the sessions and how much they have enjoyed it. • I've enjoyed watching the children respond and interact with a musician and listen to musical instruments, guitar, harp etc. • Thank you so much for the music sessions, they have been amazing and the staff have enjoyed it as much as the children. • Laura was absolutely fantastic! She engaged with the children incredibly well and her enthusiasm, passion and creativity were infectious! Thank you

What impact has this project had on the children here?

Theme	Illustrated example from Early Years Practitioners
Confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's also nice to see how much their confidence has grown. • The children have really enjoyed this. They have come out of themselves. • We have been able to see children thrive from this!
New experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The children have enjoyed seeing Laura each week and seeing the new instruments she brings. The children go home and talk about their time with Laura. • The children have absolutely enjoyed all the new experiences that you have shared with them. • They loved being in a small group.
Enjoyment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We really enjoyed listening to the different songs and the children liked exploring the different instruments. • They loved the new instruments and the new approach • This was perfect. Laura used our indoor and outdoor areas to develop sessions and adapted activities to meet all the needs of the children. • The children have really enjoyed Laura coming. We are hearing more music and singing around the nursery. One thing that we have definitely heard since Laura's visits is the children bursting into their own songs. • You just engage so much with the children here and they love your sessions.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K doesn't speak much English at all. It's the first time I've seen her really playing and interacting with the other children without language feeling like a barrier.



Making rain sticks with rice



'Thank you' card

Has this project offered any new experiences that you might use in the future?

Theme	Illustrated example from Early Years Practitioners
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use of fabrics for children to explore alongside music.• Lots of new songs• Activities such as ribbons dancing• Children controlling the dynamics• Rocking and bouncing the teddy on the pulled out fabric• Using the parachute slow and fast• Using instruments and dancing in group/circle time.• How to engage further with all children with various instruments
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It has made me realise that we need to collect more resources and have a box ready to go whenever needed. Ribbons, bubbles, parachute, material etc.• The resources used are now becoming part of our music practice - like the scrunchy. I think the staff were inspired by new ideas and excited to see the children so engaged.
Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How to make it more child led.• Different methods to create music/engage the children• These sessions have given me new ideas on how to include songs within our daily routine.• Sing encouragement. Sing instructions and affirmations.



Building a den with an invitation to play



Outdoor music making with Childminders

Managers of these Early Years settings were asked to complete feedback surveys after each block of sessions.

The following percentages represent those who 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with these statements:

90%

There is now more music happening within our nursery/pre-school setting

100%

My nursery worker team are more confident providing music making within sessions

60%

At least one of our team have shown an interest in taking ownership, developing and leading their own musical activities

Case study - St Matthias Pre-School

We worked with St Matthias Pre-School in Torquay for 7 weeks from Septembers 2023 and a further 5 weeks from January 2024. Each week we worked with two groups of up to 10 children. We also spent 1:1 time with three of their children who were awaiting an Autism assessment. 5 of their team members participated in a CPD session that we ran onsite.

"...it has been the most enjoyable and fulfilling journey for both the staff and children.

Every session brings something new for us to learn and to have fun with. The children smile, sing, clap and dance our way through the session. The children's cultural capital is enriched with the opportunities of being able to hear and play music and instruments from around the world.

Laura has a wonderful connection with all the children in the setting and will make connection and bonds with children with additional needs.

Laura has also supported the staff and boosted their confidence to implement music sessions and sing more through the working day through leading these sessions and delivering training.

Laura has a wonderful, gentle and welcoming personality which the children were instantly drawn to.

Sessions were sensitively planned to meet all the needs of our children including children with additional needs. Laura gave these children 1:1 time and again adapted the activities to each child's sensory needs. Children were encouraged and supported to make music and sing in a range of ways which kept them interested and engaged. Laura created sessions which were easily adaptable to meet the children's moods and energy levels.

Laura introduced a wider variety of instruments and musical activities than we have ever provided.

After the sessions the children were more vocal and would improve their own music and singing.

The staff in our setting were more confident and comfortable to sing freely in the setting not just during specific music times.

We are also going to invest in more, quality instruments for the children to access and more dedicated time in our routines for music."

Community Settings

We worked in two Community Settings, one in Paignton, Torbay and one in Totnes, South Hams. Within these settings we ran four weekly groups for children and their parents/carers, each running for 3 full terms between September 2023 and July 2024:

- Paignton: 0-12 month olds
- Paignton Young Parents: 0-4 year olds
- Totnes: 0-12 month olds
- Totnes: 10-18 month olds

These sessions allowed us to reflect upon our starting questions:

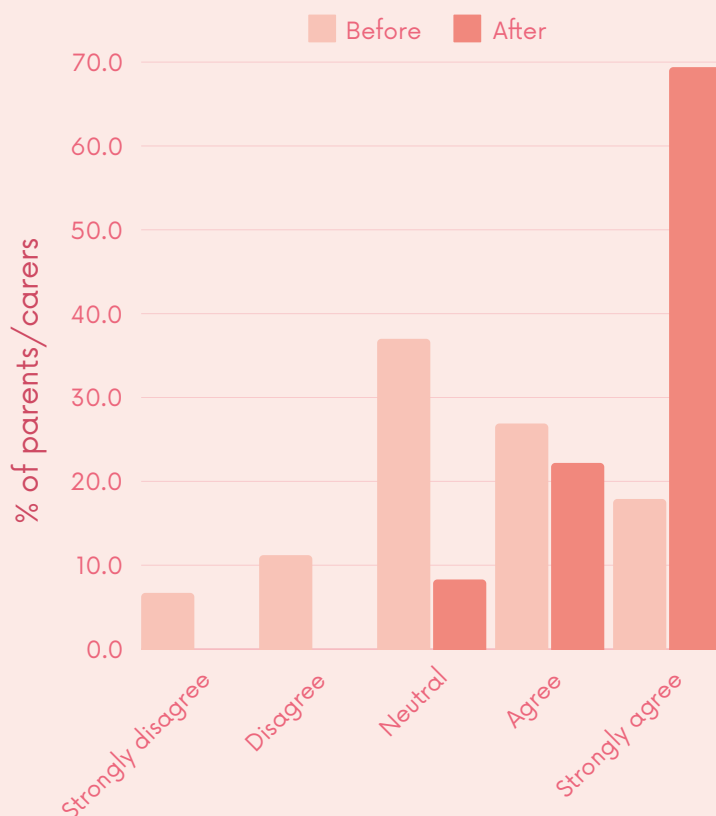
- How can we encourage more specifically child-led, instrument and voice based music making in Early Years settings and at home?
- How can we as a small CIC improve access to quality music making opportunities for young children in Torbay and the South Hams?



Playing harp together

We asked how confident parents and carers felt making music at home, both on their sign up form prior to attending sessions and then repeated in a post-project feedback form.

'I feel confident making music with my baby/child at home'



92%

'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statement

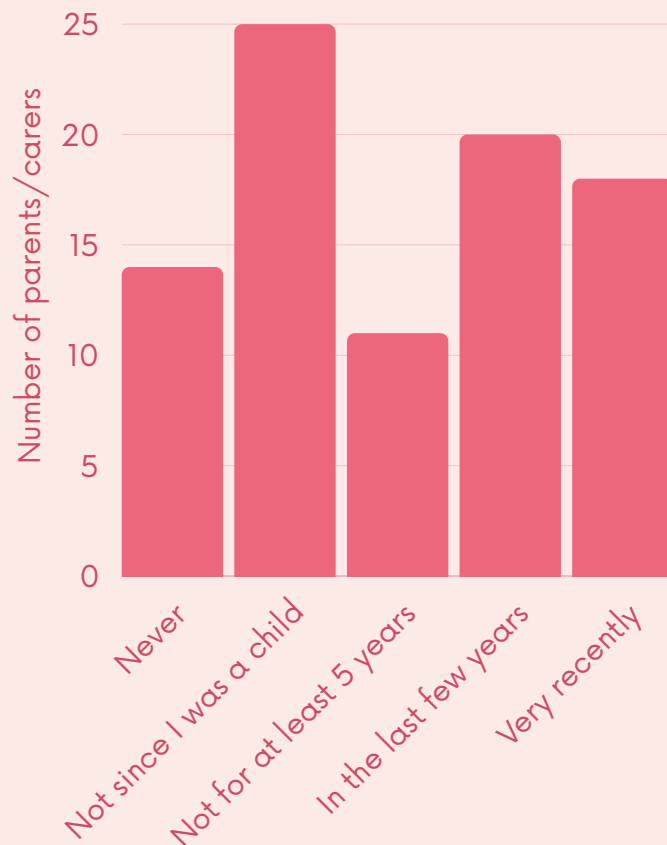
'I feel confident making music with my baby/child at home' by the end of the project.

When did you last make music yourself?

We wanted to understand more about parent/carer's own musical experiences, starting with when they themselves last made any music.

We noticed that some parents/carers seemed very comfortable singing and playing instruments with their children whereas others seem to find it harder to join in.

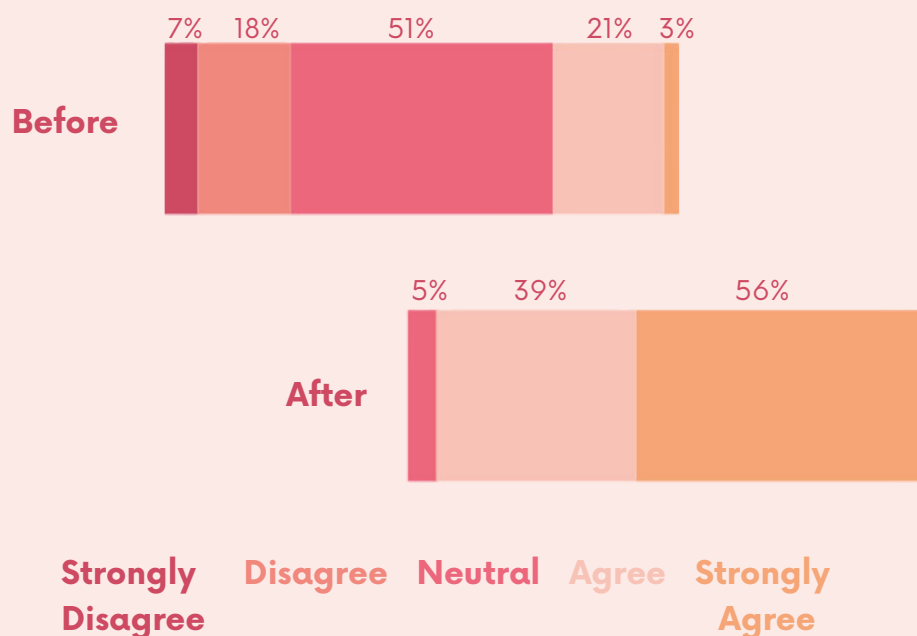
We also noticed both the ways that children might imitate their caregiver or make their own independent musical discoveries.



'I feel connected to other parents/carers in my community'

We also wanted to understand how socially connected parents/carers felt to their peers. Our initial focus groups showed us how important it is for parents/carers to feel welcomed and included in groups in order to continue attending. Within our sessions we actively seek to encourage caregivers to develop supportive peer relationships.

Suicide is tragically the leading cause of death amongst mothers during pregnancy and in the first year after birth. (De Backer et al., 2024) Post-natal depression can have an impact on children's development.



95%

'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statement
'I feel connected to other parents/carers in my community'
by the end of the project.

Theme	Illustrated examples from parents/carers
Baby/child led musical play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I've been doing Laura's "take baby's lead" exercises at home and it's made such a difference to my relationship with L. We do this everyday now for just a few minutes and it's developed into a new way of communicating and our own sense of humour. • I also feel encouraged to let my daughter explore musical instruments independently and follow her lead in play rather than always showing her what to do. • Setting aside some musical play time.
Playing with instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I've bought her some percussion instruments for her birthday. I think she will enjoy playing them at home with me • Take time to sit and play musical instrument with her and sing • Since starting at Lullabubbas I have bought a variety of instruments which I play with my baby whilst singing and listening to music and nursery rhymes. • We have more instruments at home now, inspired by the instruments we use at Lullabubbas. • We have bought some percussion instruments since seeing how much she loved the ones at Lullabubbas. My husband plays guitar and ukulele and I play piano so hopefully will play this more around her. • Inspired to make a little musical instruments basket that we can play with together • Purchased a toddler keyboard to play songs on, sing more, and encourage their dad to play his guitar more often • Provide both bought and homemade instruments for them to experiment with. Sing lots of songs
Singing together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will try and incorporate some of the Lullabubbas songs into our day! • Carry on singing songs played at Lullabubbas so will remember them and engage with dancing or games • Singing the songs we learnt from Lullabubbas and playing instruments we have at home.
Listening to music together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By singing songs together and listening to music.
Dancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using musical instruments, dancing to music, singing to my baby
Songwriting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making up songs, playing instruments, allowing my baby to explore/make noises with household objects.

Theme	Illustrated example
Reducing isolation and loneliness. Supporting mental health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We've absolutely loved coming to your class since 'D' was 6 weeks old, it was actually the first place/class I drove to after having a C-section. It was everything I'd hoped it would be- calm, welcoming, fun. I always feel so happy and relaxed afterwards and I think 'D' does too! Thank you for creating such a lovely place to meet other mums and helping make the start of the journey into motherhood less lonely. Lullabubbas gave me joy during difficult times and helped me and my baby to go through. Really supportive class where me and my baby enjoyed bonding over music and singing, got an improvement in my mental health and a sense of community during what can be a lonely and isolating season of life.
Relaxing and calming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lullabubbas has been a real breath of fresh air amongst the chaos of having a baby Lullabubbas is a very friendly and child led group. You automatically feel relaxed and calmed as soon as you walk through the door. Laura's sessions are warm and welcoming, calm, baby-centred, and the fact that all music is made in the session is a real highlight We look forward to Lullabubbas every week - a few moments of calm in a busy week and the babies are mesmerised by the music
Welcoming and friendly environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We started Lullabubbas when my baby was only 6 weeks old. It was the first class we attended and I'm so glad we did as it was so welcoming. I felt so calm and relaxed and my baby enjoys every session. I've also made some lovely friends from the class so I will be forever greatfull for that. Kind, friendly, welcoming environment!



Playing guitar together



Jamming under the table!

Parent/carers views about bringing their child to a Lullabubbas session in a Community Setting (continued)

Theme	Illustrated example
Bonding with baby	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lullabubbas was the first class I attended with my little one being only 6 weeks and I'm glad I came across it as it's a lovely music session. Everyone was welcoming and my baby is so calm and relaxed during the sessions. • Lullabubbas is a calm, friendly environment led by the lovely Laura. Through joining the session, I got to watch my little girl grow in confidence and master new skills, whilst also spending quality bonding time with her. I highly recommend joining! • A whole hour of mindful, beautiful bonding through music with your baby.
Developing supportive friendships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After trying many baby classes Lullabubbas is like nothing else. Laura provides a calm, friendly atmosphere cultivating relationships between mums/parents with a focus on bonding with your baby. From the moment you start Laura makes you feel at ease and relaxed as well as making the sessions fun and memorable. My daughter is always her happiest when she is playing instruments, listening to the singing and seeing the other babies. I read a quote recently which said "they may not remember these things but their childhood is also your motherhood." This is so true- while 'D' is only 9 months old so won't remember our time at Lullabubbas it will always hold a special place in my heart for the friendships it brought us, the memories we have made and the beautiful songs Laura has created. It truly is such a special class/community that we will treasure having been a part of. • Lullabubbas is a really supportive, kind and fun environment made that way by Laura's dedication to the group. Laura is one of the only baby group leaders I have met who encourages group interaction and genuinely cares about us all making connections and friends. Laura also asks how we are frequently which is refreshing as usually it is completely baby focused. Laura is always uplifting and compassionate and this has always been noticed and appreciated by me.
Accessible for those who don't consider themselves musical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The idea of going to a music group for someone who isn't necessarily 'musical' can be quite intimidating, but Lullabubbas is so much fun and both Laura and the other people there are all so lovely, there really isn't anything intimidating about it at all. Plus, the babies all have the best time!

Parent/carer views about bringing their child to a Lullabubbas session in a Community Setting (continued)

Theme	Illustrated example
<p>Enjoyment for parent and for child</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lullabubbas is one of the highlights of our week. The combination of Mamas singing in harmony; a baby focused time - R Adores it. Laura is a sonic magician - R is enthralled. He loves playing with the different instruments, and the addition of scarves, parachute, shiny lycra, bubbles - he's in baby heaven. Time to play with other babies - It really is a very special part of our week. Thank you so much Laura <3 • Wish we had found this music group sooner because it's my daughters favourite time of week now! We feel so happy and calm after our session • Such a lovely, friendly and relaxed group. My daughter has become more confident and loves exploring and making music. • My son enjoys going each week and loves having the chance to play with instruments and socialise with other babies. • Lullabubbas provided a fun, relaxed environment to explore making music with my little one. She loved it and gave me an opportunity to enjoy singing and meeting other parents. Laura is so lovely with the children and my little girl was always so excited to go to the sessions. Thank you so much.
<p>Going out of comfort zone</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is the first musical baby group I have ever been to, I went out of my comfort zone to attend and so glad I did. I can see how well my 8 month old engages with the music and how it makes her happy.
<p>Build more confidence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laura creates a lovely, welcoming environment. My little one loves the sessions. We love listening to Laura play/sing and join in. Thank you Laura for giving us more confidence with music.
<p>Slowing down</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have had some of my most magical parenting moments in these lovely classes, and will treasure the memories of them always! The value of slowing down and having uninterrupted quality time to bond with my baby through music and singing simply can't be overstated. Lullabubbas provides the most wonderful opportunities for babies to engage in music from their earliest days and for parents to find peace and connection even in the most frazzled of times.

The parents/carers of 42 children attending Community Sessions completed final feedback surveys. The following percentages represent those who 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with these statements:

83%

Since being part of Lullabubbas I feel a stronger bond with my baby/child

81%

Since being part of Lullabubbas mine and/or my baby/child's communication skills have improved

89%

Since coming to Lullabubbas sessions I feel less alone/isolated

100%

There is a need for more affordable/free music making opportunities like those Lullabubbas provides



100%

There is a need for spaces where everyone can play and experiment with music

86%

Since being part of Lullabubbas I feel heard

97%

During or soon after sessions, I feel calmed, soothed or de-stressed

97%

During or soon after sessions, I feel an improvement in my mental health or emotional wellbeing

100%

During or soon after sessions, I notice a change in my child's mood

"Coming to your groups been a lifesaver really because before I couldn't bond with her, she was screaming so much with her colic* and then with music, singing and calming voice, it just, I don't know, she just didn't think about the pain, she just focussed on the music, the playing and the songs."

Previous experience

We like listening to music but I don't play instruments at all. I give it my best shot but since having her I'm all for more music for her 'cause I think it does benefit them. None of my family do music or my husband. She's very vocal to noises and sounds or she looks. It's like she knows where it's coming from. If it's behind her she'll look behind. She's always alert to it.

Bonding

The first couple of months...being a new mum I was just like 'is this normal?' I don't know. My sisters have got kids and they kept saying they didn't cry this much. All she did was cry, it was really hard, I just couldn't bond with her... There was nothing we could do, she just cried. And just coming to your groups, for that hour, I could go in for a kiss or a cuddle because I never had that. **It was like that one time I was able to bond with her.**

Connection and friendship

I speak to K and L still, we're friends on Facebook now. It's a nice small community group. It's been really good, it's really positive and it's just been really nice through the first year. Some days I sit in then I realise I've got Lullabubbas on Tuesday and I'm going to go. It just gets you out doesn't it, you think positive, you've had a good session and you think 'actually that was alright' especially with the colic. That one hour was nice.

Claire and Erin's Story of Change

Attending Community Sessions in Paignton from 10 weeks old

Changes for baby Erin

100%, just stopped her crying. I used to message my husband after and I was like 'oh my god, she was so relaxed and calm, just for that one hour'. Her social skills too, it's not just making music. It's interacting with other babies, being more confident, babbling. When she was little she was quiet and now she's babbling away. And holding toys as well, like rattles, tapping and all that because of Lullabubbas. It's brought her out, as a small group you get to interact with the other babies, you do that circle time thing and they just interact whereas a big group... I prefer little smaller groups, she's just grown with it.

Continued music making

Some of the songs you've sung, I'll go back and sing them. My husband will ask 'why did you pick that one?' and I'll say because Laura sang it at Lullabubbas... so improved being at home and using those skills at home.

So yeah, it's made a massive impact on our lives!

*Infant colic leads to around 17% of families consulting a healthcare professional for support and can be defined as 'excessive crying' lasting at least '3 hours a day, for 3 days a week, for at least 3 weeks.' Lucassen (2010).

Young Parents settings

We were especially keen to include Young Parents in this project. We Need Music has a background in working with Young Parents through a local college and a supported housing project. Our past work has made us aware of some gaps in local provision. As such, we sought to create opportunities where Young Parents felt comfortable to engage with creative play with their young children in fun and inviting sessions.

Young Parents and their babies and children engaged with this project in a number of ways:

- By attending our weekly Young Parents session in a Community Setting
- By attending the sessions we ran in a Young Parent's Supported Housing project in Torquay, 'Matlock and Coverdale'
- By attending our other weekly Community Sessions in Paignton and Totnes, open to all parents/carers with children of particular ages
- We worked with one family where the 3 year old attended both our Nursery Sessions and came to our Young Parents Community Sessions with her parents and baby sister

The ethos we aimed to build with these Young Parents sessions meant:

- Trying to learn about the barriers that might make it harder for Young Parents to attend sessions and considering these in project design.
- Building the Young Parents own interests and needs into the sessions along with their children's.
- Trying to create welcoming 'ways in' for parents who might not have taken their children to any groups before
- Building supportive, non-judgemental spaces in which there was an acceptance of different experiences of becoming a parent
- Seeking to hear and understand Young Parent's views through informal conversations, focus groups and a 1:1 'interview' for a Case Study



'It's so lovely seeing 'B' get more confident and start to play with the other children. She's never really done that before.'

-Young Parent

'This is huge, so huge for [Young Parent]. She would never take B out to any groups or anything like this. I was so happy to see her coming back to the group. This is such a big step for her.'

-Young Parents' Support Worker

Feedback from Young Parents

I haven't taken [G] to any other groups. Some are too expensive or you have to be really organised to book the library one in advance and I usually forget. I like that we can come here and it feels really relaxed and [G] has lots of fun.

It's just a bit daunting going to groups. I like it here. Mornings are difficult because [A] goes to bed really late then sleeps-in in the morning. Afternoons are easier for us. I don't understand why so many groups are at 10am when we can't get to them.

I've not been to any groups before, not with [C- 3 year old] or with [J-newborn]. This is the first one.

I'm getting [P] some musical instruments for Christmas now as I can see how much she loves playing music here

Each child gets engaged with and there's something to entertain every age group. My daughter's confidence has grown massively and she gets happy to see everyone at the group!



A Young Parent playing handpan with her son

Feedback from Young Parents' Support Workers

It's so good for the babies to have this. To have the time to connect with their mums and to have this experience

We would like you to run a five week course - quarterly

"I find going to the group really positive and relaxing and I don't tend to like going to places. People judge you a lot. But when we go to your music class it feels like a safe space and you don't feel judged. From the moment you walk in it's really calm. Everyone is lovely so it's really relaxing."

Connection for Young Parents

It's really nice to interact with other mums, especially mums in our age group because it's for 25 and under. My daughter is learning so much, like new songs. It's a really nice way to socialise. There isn't many groups in Paignton as well so it's really nice to just see other mums and talk and enjoy the music. When I have my second one with me and we go [Sara will often attend with her partner] it's definitely nice to have other mums especially with younger babies as [Rose] is now an older one in the group. So it's nice to talk and connect with the other parents.

Continuity

Rose also attended some of the nursery sessions we ran.

She [Rose] loved the fact that she knew someone there as well and she knows you and she knows that you're musical and positive and it always helped calm her down. She found going there quite distressing but if she knew you were going to be there she was always a lot happier and she'd come out of class saying "Laura was there today" and it was just really nice.



An invitation to play in a Young Parents session in a Community Setting

Sara, Rose and Ruby's Story of Change

Young Parent, toddler and newborn

Changes for Rose (3 year old)

Rose definitely feels more musical especially after she's gone to Laura. She's always singing, she's copying the songs, she's a lot more confident and singing in front of people. She always tries to imitate you, she just loves it. She's definitely become more musical.

After we've been [to the group] she'll spend the whole day happy and positive. She always looks forward to it and knows Tuesdays are music day. I tell her the night before and she goes "Yay, music!" She's so excited and happy. Definitely makes her feel really positive so that's really nice.

Her favourite way of communicating is singing to everyone normally so she's just always singing and copying you. When you're talking to us you're singing and she's obviously taken that in because she's singing when she's talking to me at home. Yeah, it's really sweet.

She set all her teddies up in a row and was like "I'm Laura" and she has a little toy ukulele that she plays with and she goes "I'm Laura" and then she started singing the welcome song and copying everything that she's listened to you. It's just really sweet and she really takes it in.

Reflections from Young Parents sessions

Observation

Within sessions at the Young Parents' Supported Housing project, there was a noticeable difference in how parents engaged with their babies depending on if their Support Worker was present or not. Their Support Worker was always very warm and supportive of all of the parents and interacted with all of the babies herself. Interestingly, when she wasn't in the room, the young parents seemed more relaxed in trying things out and engaging directly with their babies. Interacting with their babies through musical play was a new experience for most of the group. Only one had attended an external group previously.

Attendance

The numbers of Young Parents and their children attending varied hugely from week to week. Some community sessions were full whilst on a couple of occasions we had no-one attend. Many of these families would send us a message to let us know why before returning the following week. Attendance of sessions at Matlock was helped by the Support Worker who would remind families each week as well knocking on their flat doors to encourage them to come downstairs. This mixed attendance was sometimes related to poor sleep, ill health, and other home responsibilities.

Key learning from Young Parents sessions

Looking beyond this project we are keen to build Young Parents music making projects into the core of our work. Some of the learning we will take forward includes:

- Involving Young Parents in the decision making and shaping of projects
- Considering both the needs of the parents and their children in planning
- Thinking about session timings, avoiding early starts
- Using venues in locations with good public transport links, ideally 'close to home'
- Considering parents own musical interests and preferences when choosing material or thinking about songwriting
- Talking to parents about the best way to make a group feel 'non-judgemental', safe and welcoming
- Thinking about other barriers to engagement such as travel costs, access to a venue, communicating with parents and considering other physical and emotional needs.



Playing together in a Young Parents session

Our Songbook

Within the sessions we made opportunities for children, parents and carers to create their own songs. This usually became a group process where individuals contributed and the whole group shaped and formed the songs.

Ten of these songs were recorded and made into a songbook which we have shared with all project participants. Copies were made for parents/carers attending sessions as well as for the Early Years settings taking part.

Whilst we expected this element of the project to be a core focus, interestingly it seemed less prominent alongside musical interactions and group sessions in Community Settings. We created many songwriting opportunities but the majority of children and parents/carers seemed more interested in being 'in the moment' within sessions and weren't as excited by this project component as we had expected. Several of these songs were created during 1:1 sessions where parents/carers could spend time reflecting on their parenting journey with their babies. We also wrote a few songs with Young Parents in small group sessions.



'Let's Gather' was written in a 1:1 session with a mum and her 16 month old. We showed Mum how to play two simple one-finger chords on a ukulele, 'C' and 'Am' which meant she could strum along. Her daughter joined her on another ukulele as well as shaking the maracas along to the song.

Your Smile

Your smile can make the worst day feel much better
Your cute button nose fills me with love

Now it's time to close your eyes
And go to sleep
It's time to close your eyes
And go to sleep



Chords used: A, D, E

Cuddle Time

Cuddle time
Don't you cry
Cuddle time
It's alright



Chords used: A, D, E

Tiger Tiger

Tiger, tiger
Tiger, tiger, orange, black and white
Tiger, tiger, roaring through the day and night
Tiger, tiger, tiger, tiger

Fairy, fairy
Fairy, fairy, fluttering up high
Fairy, fairy, flying in the sky
Fairy, fairy, fairy, fairy

Kings and queens
Kings and queens with their shiny crowns
Marching marching all around
Kings and queens, kings and queens



Chords used: A, D, E

Happy Bathtime

Drip drop drip drop drip drop drip
Let's get ready, run a bath

Splish, splash, splish, splash, splish
Let's climb in for giggles and laughs

Swish, swish, swish, swish, swish
Bubbles floating all around

Pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop
Happy bathtime, happy sounds



Chords used: C, F, G

Good Night, Sleep Tight

Good night, sleep tight
See you in the morning

Watching you washes away the worries from my day
Watching you fills my heart with love and bright sun rays

Chords used: C, F, G, Am

Peekaboo

We are playing peekaboo
Would you like to play it too?
We are playing peekaboo
Peekaboo, where are you?

We are strumming our guitars
Looking like true rock stars
We are strumming our guitars
It's sounding very lovely

We are shaking our maracas
Lots of noise and lots of laughter
We are shaking our maracas
Shakey, shakey, shake it



Chords used: G, C, D

Child-centred Practice

“One of the boys from our nursery session today threw his scarf across the room shouting ‘fireball’. I followed his lead and we all made ‘fireballs’ by scrunching up scarves and throwing them across the room which the whole group excitedly joined in with. By acknowledging his contribution it seemed to create a ‘way in’ for him to engage with the rest of the session in the way that suited him. One of the girls then made her scarves into butterfly wings so we ‘fluttered’ around the room before we transformed into jumping butterflies as led by another child. We used our voices playfully to accompany these movements repeating short ascending melodic phrases such as ‘Ooooooooooooooh fireball!”

-Music Practitioner Reflection

Oooh, can we be butterflies? Can we be tigers? I want to be a caterpillar. Let's be lions...

I like your big scrunchie. Can we play with that?

Where are your little guitars today?

Can I hold the bubbles?

Child-led music making was highly valued within this project. It looked different in each setting and we experimented with the varied spaces available.

Within adult-led music activities we were keen that the children could still shape and direct these and it felt important to model this across the Early Years settings.

Throughout the sessions, we were listening and looking for non-verbal cues from the children themselves, aiming to be responsive to their needs and interests and to allow them to shape sessions. Sometimes this resulted in spontaneous unplanned music making as led by the children.

Feedback from children often seemed to be shaped by their previous experiences with us. When asking what they'd like to do in a session, responses were often centred around activities from a previous week. Can we be butterflies again? (The previous week we danced with scarves singing a butterfly song)

From this came the delicate balance of supporting children to lead based on their own ideas and previous experiences whilst also making space for new songs, activities or musical provocations.

Challenges

Our attendance data offers a glimpse into who is engaging with our work. It also suggests some of the groups who might not be. We have always held accessibility as a core value of our practice but are considering what we could do better in the future.

- How could we reach and include communities who are not engaging?
- Who are we not reaching with our marketing?
- How could we make our marketing more accessible to a wider group?
- Could our venues be more accessible?
- Is transport a barrier to engagement?
- How could we better welcome male carers?
- How can we better meet individual needs of children and carers?

Collecting data in Community Settings has provided some challenges. For example, by separating diversity and monitoring data from personal information as required by GDPR, it was difficult to track missing forms. We would be keen to speak to other organisations about how they overcome this challenge.

Early Years settings are busy places and staff can sometimes be stretched with their responsibilities. We found the level of staff engagement varied significantly between settings. In most, we would always be joined by one or two Early Years practitioners actively participating, in others, staff would start re-setting the room in the background ready for their next activities. Illness and staff shortages sometimes meant they could not afford the time to join our music time particularly where a larger group was split in two and they needed to support an alternative activity for half of the children. Moving forwards, we'd like to be clearer about the value of Early Years Practitioners joining sessions as much as they are able.

Changes to Original Plan

Feedback and reflection led to us wanting to make a few small changes to our original grant application. We are very grateful to Youth Music for supporting us to learn from our progress and action changes which were being led by our ongoing evaluation. These changes included:

- Returning to a pre-school for a second half term block of sessions. St Matthias Pre-School were keen to work with us for a longer period of time. This provided us with an opportunity to see what would happen within an extended term of music making provision and collaborative working. It resulted in stronger connections being built with the children and their staff team who were keen to engage.
- Replacing one of our nursery blocks of sessions with a block of sessions at Matlock Supported Housing project for Young Parents. We were keen to further develop our Young Parents work after the first half term of Young Parents sessions in a Community Setting was well received. These sessions allowed us to reach young people who said they weren't yet comfortable attending sessions in external community settings and some who tended to stay in or near the supported housing project.
- Replacing one of our nursery blocks of sessions with a series of sessions for a group of children with their Childminders. These took place at Orchard Forest School, further building our opportunities to work in partnership with other organisations and individuals. As well as supporting staff working in nursery settings, this created an opportunity to work with Childminders in developing their confidence around music making.

Our Learning

We have learnt so much from co-creating and delivering this project, from the children and families who have engaged along with the Early Year practitioners. We set out asking 'How can we encourage more specifically child-led, instrument and voice based music making in Early Years settings and at home?' Through the data we have collected and our own reflections, the key learning we are taking away is:

Planning and practicalities

- Allowing time for planning, reflection and learning has been key to the success of this project
- Taking opportunities for training and reflecting on development needs has been essential
- Spending time with families over an extended period has led to meaningful connections and greater confidence in home music making
- Smaller group sizes have meant more physical and auditory space for children to explore and lead. Parents/carers have also appreciated this
- Invest time in building partner relationships to ensure meaningful collaboration

Supporting adults

- Encourage parents/carers to believe that all musical interactions are valid, that music and sound making is wide-ranging and diverse especially with young children
- Consider the pastoral and access needs of accompanying adults
- Acknowledge the varied musical experiences of parents/carers which may influence their engagement and expectations around children's music making
- Think about 'ways in' for adults who don't consider themselves to be 'musical'
- Recognise and learn from caregiver's knowledge and understanding of their children's needs, involving them in shaping sessions
- Supporting Early Years practitioners to feel confident providing music making opportunities has been important
- Regularly returning the focus on supporting caregivers to feel more confident continuing music making beyond this project. Encourage them in potential next steps.

Our approach to working with children

- A child-centred approach to music making allows us to best respond to the needs and interest of individual children
- Consider children's musical development on an individual basis
- Adapt to suit the needs of individuals considering how sessions can become more accessible
- Recognise that children's music making is often live and fleeting; as practitioners we should be alert to notice and respond where appropriate

Musical activities

- Plan adult-led and child-led activities but allow space and flexibility to respond in the moment being led by children's preferences or actions
- Consider musical learning outcomes for sessions but allow flexibility and space to respond to children and their caregivers
- Recognise music as a way of children and parents/carers expressing themselves
- Consider how music making is often naturally interwoven with other creative, movement and play activities
- Always come back to the potential for joy in music making

Looking ahead

- Learning about varied experiences of Early Years practitioners has shaped a subsequent funding bid working with young childcare students to build confidence in music making for their future roles.

Conclusion

Children, parents, carers and Early Years Practitioners have made this project a success. Without them, none of this could have been possible and to them, we are incredibly grateful. We set out to learn more about the landscape of Early Years music making in local Early Years settings and to understand our role in supporting ongoing music making in homes and in nurseries. Not only have we developed our understanding about some of the opportunities and challenges around making music with young children, we have developed our relationships with a huge number of families, organisations and individuals with whom we hope to continue this important work. Youth Music made this possible by awarding us a Trailblazer grant and we are hugely grateful for this fantastic opportunity to learn, test and develop what we believe will underpin much of our future practice.



Making new friends

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NB Names of children, parents and caregivers have been changed or shortened

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Kings Ash Academy - Nursery, Paignton
Curlidge Street Academy - Nursery, Paignton
Eden Park Primary and Nursery School, Brixham
Marldon Preschool Playgroup, Marldon
St Michaels C of E Academy - Nursery, Paignton
Independent Childminders from Torbay
Bay Baby Collective
Mummy and Me
St John's Church, Bridgetown
Lend a Helping Hand
Love Enterprise
Orchard Forest School

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Puppet fun

For more information about
Lullabubbas and We Need Music
Email: info@weneedmusic.org
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