

The SoundWaves Network 2018 - 2021

Evaluation Report

Caroline Barnes on behalf of Take Art





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Foreword

This report is a collective construction. It is based on an astute evaluator analysing and pulling together many hours of conversations in focus groups, semi-structured interviews, surveys, photographic and video film footage and observations from the last three years of an Early Childhood Music Education network programme. I for one am extremely grateful to Caroline Barnes and all of those who have given up their time to contribute to this report in an open, warm, honest and generous manner. I particularly thank all those who agreed to be interviewed (sometimes at great length!) or were part of a discussion group or completed baseline assessments (or end of CPD event surveys!) or excitedly sent us consented film footage or bravely stood up at packed network events and shared their learning. Everyone's contribution was valued.

I am indebted to the generous Early Years Setting Managers who opened their doors to us and indeed for one setting in the second half of the programme that adapted to the entire delivery format online at great speed due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Working on this programme with a dedicated team of Music Leaders has been such a privilege. The team did not just facilitate the programme in settings. They answered our endless requests for data to analyse, presented at evening and weekend network events, attended training sessions, contributed to focus groups and - all of them - either studied on the CREC Certificate for Music Educators: Early Childhood course or another music education course at the same time! I salute you all. It was such an honour to be an Early Years Music practitioner myself working on the ground with you in two settings. If possible, I recommend all project managers should spend time as practitioners to gain a much deeper understanding of a programme.

Thank you to the FE and HE institutions, the Early Years Advisory teams and the Music Education Hubs who contributed to our learning communities in such a positive and collaborative fashion, often going far beyond hosting events or liaising with local networks.

Behind the scenes (and in fact at the epicentre) of this complex and substantial programme has been an EY arts administrator beaver away, unphased, ensuring everything ran in good working order. Ruth Copping and then Nadine Griffiths are without doubt the most wonderful reliable rocks ever. Thank you both.

Finally, my immense thanks goes to Gina Westbrook who has the best critical ear in the South West. Without Gina this programme would not exist. Her vision, wise advice and inspiration is something I am truly grateful for.

The SoundWaves Network would like to acknowledge not just the financial support from Youth Music but also their continual guidance, help and genuine interest throughout the entire programme.

Jane Parker, Take Art
July 2021

Overview

The SoundWaves Network is an Early Years Music Network delivering in the South West, with a concentration of activity in three Music Education Hub (MEH) areas: Somerset, Bristol and Plymouth. The overarching aim has been to strengthen regional Early Childhood (EC) music practice. Central to the programme's outcomes have been expanding a tried and tested model of high quality provision that combines delivery (case studies), continuing professional development (CPD) and networking. Supported by Youth Music and MEHs, The SoundWaves Network grew out of two previous Youth Music programmes. It continues to build upon a growing network of interested musicians, practitioners, Setting Managers and leaders - all of whom have become increasingly invested in this valuable area of work.

A total of **728 children aged under five**, supported by **165 Early Years Practitioners (EYPs)** have taken part in over a **100 music based sessions** over the course of the programme. Behind these statistics there has been careful targeting, partnership development and key relationship building between setting staff, music leaders (MLs), MEHs, local authority (LA) advisors, members of the network, academics, researchers, trainers and experts in EC music and development.

MEHs and our LA Early Years advisors have been instrumental in supporting Take Art to effectively target settings in the three counties. These partners have worked with Take Art to deliver on case study projects as well as supporting MLs in their locality to access CPD, broadening and strengthening the EY and music workforce.

Each case study project involved pairs of musicians co-delivering musical based play through 10 half day sessions delivered alternate weeks over a 20-week timeframe. The sessional activity varied over the different projects (12 in total with one unable to be completed due to Covid-19) but all rooted in a style of work that was child-centred, exploratory and reflective. Bringing a varied repertoire of styles, skills, instruments and activities, the MLs worked alongside Early Years Practitioners (EYPs) to scaffold learning and development in their rooms or nursery groups. The age range of children involved was from babies to 4 year olds.

Parallel to the case studies, a programme of **40 CPD events with 970 attendees** was developed and delivered. EYPs started their project with a CPD session that introduced the MLs and Jane Parker, exploring what music in EC looks like, how to nurture, develop and capture it. Towards the end of the sessional activity, the whole setting led a sharing event presenting their findings and learning to their colleagues and peers. These CPD events have significantly contributed to an increase in musical confidence and skill levels felt by EYPs, MLs and Setting Managers. The restrictions enforced upon the EY community through Covid-19 meant networking and CPD events were moved on-line. The introduction of regular "Sounding Boards" Zooms helped to grow and deepen the network further during this time.

CPD has also been central to supporting MLs engaged with project delivery - with five musicians completing their Certificate Music Educators: Early Childhood (CME:EC) course at The Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC). This learning community has become a key driver in quality and shared understanding of pedagogy and effective practice. MLs have welcomed the opportunity to work over long contracts and in pairs, enabling each to develop and grow their practice through a supportive model of delivery and mentoring.

The third element of the programme focused upon strategic development, looking carefully at how to sustain and grow Take Art's position in the EC music sector. With strengthening relationships across the three MEH partners, targeted events including "Are You Early Years Ready?", coupled with a place at national advisory tables, Take Art and its role in EC music has become more and more visible at a local, regional and national level.

Although the programme has come to an end, the relationships and partnerships continue to grow, with an increasing number of MEHs wanting to engage in future activity. Some of our most loyal supporters have moved roles or institutions and are now advocating for EC music to be a key component in course delivery at regional universities. These universities are looking at the role of music and MLs delivering both through EC-focused CPD but also music based degrees/courses. By supporting practitioners and musicians at an early stage of their careers, The SoundWaves Network could engage a wider audience and also introduce a whole new potential workforce to the EC sector going forward.

The Objectives

To enhance the creative and expressive and musical ability of the early years

Children have developed their musical ability with MLs and staff providing exciting and curious opportunities for children to experiment and express themselves. Staff have used time and expertise in the reflective discussions to identify changes in behaviour and learning in the context of music, often for the first time. For some children, the music sessions have created opportunities to gain confidence, experiment with leadership and enjoying having their voice heard and valued. New musical languages have supported communication and behavioural challenges, where recorded, this has reduced the risk of development delay for identified children.

Children had sustained opportunities to explore voice play in new ways with new adults. They have also accessed a wider variety of instruments in their setting and have been encouraged to explore new sounds as individuals and with their peers. Appropriate repertoire of songs, materials and resources have all increased and staff have a clear understanding of what type of simple songs and rhymes are suitable for very young voices.

To improve EY communication, skills and empathy

During the project, staff and MLs felt confident that music was a strong and positive vehicle with which to support communication, skills and empathy. They witnessed numerous interactions where children, particularly non-verbal or those with EAL, found new ways of communicating through sound, rhythm and musical play, finding and communicating their voice. Staff noticed behavioural changes with children being more considered about their interactions with adults and their friends, taking time to listen, respond and collaborate. New interests and learning styles were developed or recognised with children making connections, improvising and creating together. Through a more reflective approach staff were able to gain new insights into how each child was developing and learning.

To increase Take Art's resilience to external circumstances to enable it to deliver a continuing music making programme for early years

Through a regular programme of CPD, networking and representation Take Art has successfully engaged with strategic partners across the Education and Early Years sector in the South West. Staff have lobbied, trained and been consulted at a national level helping to position Take Art in this specialist area. Events such as "Are You Early Years Ready?" consolidated Take Art's position further and paved the way for continued funding applications with a wider network of MEHs across the South West. Partnerships across three regional universities have facilitated a closer delivery and understanding of the HE sectors and workforce development for EYPs. The relationship with CREC continues to thrive with new students being supported and mentored by project manager, Jane Parker.

To improve setting abilities to provide a good quality and accessible musical environment to EY

Across the participating settings, staff and MLs have seen an improvement in the musical environment for very young children. From the introduction of new instruments, changes to how, where and when they are accessed through varied and interesting provocations regularly being introduced. Staff are more informed and confident about using music in their setting. They also have a clearer understanding of how music relates to each child's development. They are more sophisticated about how provocations are invited and more conscious of their role as adult partners in musical play. Most settings have reviewed their provision and have worked collaboratively to change, adapt, expand and refresh how music is utilised on a daily basis.

To increase MLs skills and confidence in working with EY children in challenging circumstances

MLs delivering on the project have experienced sustained and supportive periods of employment, delivering sessions in collaboration, by working in pairs. Each has developed their skills and confidence in EY music delivery and all feel part of a wider learning community. Most MLs have successfully completed their Certificate in Music Education. New collaborations, friendships and projects have begun as a result of these pairings. Through their work with EYPs, MLs have increased their knowledge of the Early Years Curriculum, using music across most learning areas.

Acronyms

ACE	Arts Council England
CME: EC	Certificate of Music Education: Early Childhood
CREC	Centre for Research in Early Childhood
CPD	Continual Professional Development
EAL	English as an additional language
EC	Early Childhood
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
EYP	Early Years Practitioner
LA	Local Authority
MEH	Music Education Hub
ML	Music Leader



About Take Art

Take Art is a pioneering Somerset-based charity that delivers a high quality arts programme across Early Years, Dance, Theatre, Music and Rural Touring. It has a local, national and increasingly international focus. Take Art's Early Years programmes specialises in developing rich Early Years (EY) creative learning projects for artists, EY practitioners and under-fives in some of the UK's most deprived communities. The work focuses on a reflective dialogue that respects the voice of the child, the EY artist and the EYP, exploring the potential for meaningful co-creations and cross-fertilizations that can ensure a longer-lasting legacy.

Take Art has substantial experience of building connections in EY creativity in Somerset and beyond over the last 20 years. It is an Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisation. EY has been a core delivery strand since 1997. Take Art initially offered a cross art-form participatory programme, Take Part, in EY settings, then developed a touring EY theatre programme, KinderGardens, in settings and theatres, latterly with partners in Shropshire and Cheshire (ACE, LA and setting funded). Little Big Bang was a ground-breaking three year creative programme in Children's Centres with arts organisations.

More recently, Creative Elements, 2016-2019, built on this by: supporting artists in EY settings in Somerset, researching the connection between senior management engagement and sustainability, building a network of EY setting promoters, commissioning and touring adapted EY shows in settings and traditional venues in Somerset and Surrey through Hopper. Making & Believing is the new Paul Hamlyn funded programme building on all the learning and working with Surrey Arts and Derby Theatre.

All Take Art's work is underpinned by practice and reflective research.

Context to the SoundWaves Network

The process of identifying settings involved drawing upon the local knowledge of LA Advisors, MEH staff and a growing network. Settings needed to be engaged with communities experiencing multiple layers of deprivation, ideally not having a regular programme of visiting artists but with an appetite to learn and to develop staff. The role of the MLs during their 10 sessions was to start to enthuse, inspire and support staff. The first session was all about spending half a day to step back and simply observe, watch and listen to absorb the pattern of the setting, the layout, the flow and the space before thinking about how best to structure time with the children and staff.

The 10 sessions were usually delivered on alternate weeks, allowing for setting staff to test, gather and reflect on ideas between sessions. Each visit started with the MLs touching base with setting staff on any logistical issues or changes that they need to be aware of and an update on observations/delivery. This would be followed by a short adult-facilitated group session, a new provocation designed to encourage musical play and EYPs and or MLs capturing spontaneous musical behaviours which would then act as the material to focus the final part of the session upon.

"Each week we would set up using our pitched bells and scarves, or our gathering drums, our chime bars, and we would begin to play and see what happened. Gradually children would come to visit us and see what was going on. There are some children that we knew we would see every week; they would appear as soon as the instruments came out and then we would see new children each week who we had not seen before. We gradually introduced our approach, through playing with the children and modelling ways of scaffolding the children's learning and recognising their musical offerings."

ML

Working with very young children, some preverbal or with limited spoken communication, the emphasis for gathering feedback was via careful observation by adults involved in delivery and reflection. Part of the CPD offered by MLs and Jane Parker, the project manager, has been on raising awareness of what to notice, how to interpret and successfully document spontaneous musical making. EYPs working alongside MLs explored how to notice moments of play, exploration and learning and record them (where possible) with cameras and tablets. EYPs were also asked to track up to three key children and log their behaviours in relation to musical abilities, expression, engagement and cooperation with others.



This photo is taken from a film which illustrates an EYP, two MLs and a manager all mirroring the children. This example of musical play in a busy EY setting demonstrates the type of space MLs were working in and the nature of the work was always co-facilitated with staff in the room.

Outcome One

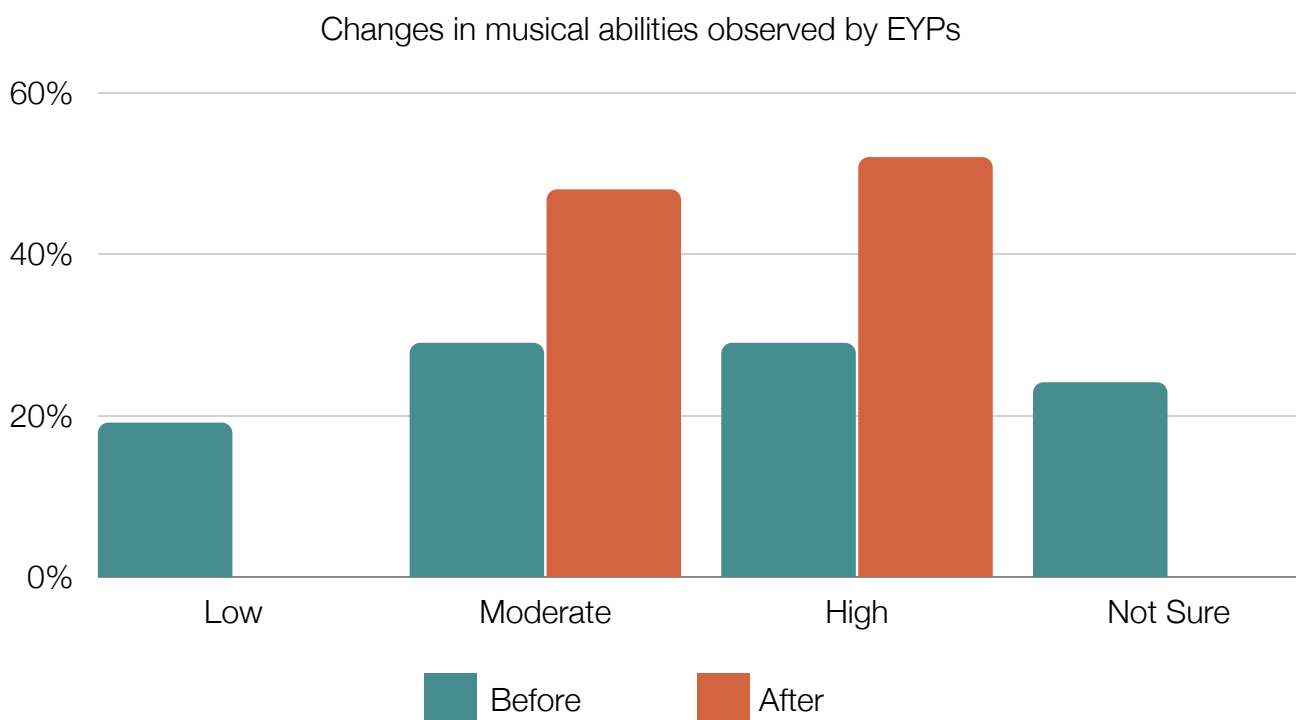
To enhance the creative and expressive and musical ability of the early years

Indicator: Staff and music leaders observe and agree or strongly agree that the children's musical abilities have increased

"Music in our setting has improved since we did the project, offering us a better understanding of rhythm and steady beat and learning new appropriately pitched songs that the children have loved learning too"

What did we discover?

The graph below indicates how EYPs have observed an increase in musical abilities for most of the key children involved in the programme, with all children being observed as having at least moderate abilities compared to low at the onset. The largest change has been in the "High musical abilities" with a gain of over 20%.



"We see children singing, bobbing, tapping, clapping, humming, swaying in blankets, wiggling, using gross motor skills to dance and move around indoor and out, lots of clapping to rhythms and steady beats, practitioners singing and leading a music session"

Manager

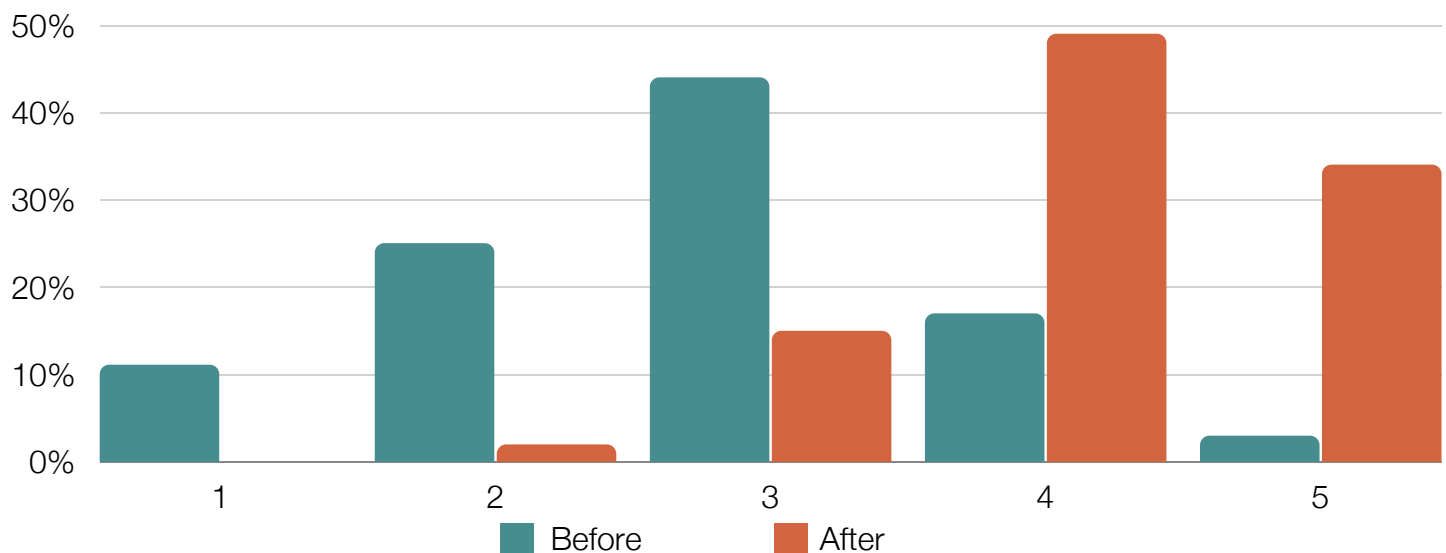
Observation				
<p>██████ showed great confidence in today's exploration of the instruments. He particularly enjoyed strumming and tapping the strings. Whilst Roger was playing the guitar, ██████ liked to shout 'Stop' and 'faster' encouraging Roger to play differently. The session was the most talkative we have seen ██████ so far.</p>				
Playing and exploring		Active learning		Creating and thinking critically
Prime Areas	PSED	PD		CL
Specific Areas	L	M	UW	EAD ✓30-50
Assessment: EYFS links - Notices what adults do, imitating and doing spontaneously. - Explores how sounds can be changed.				
Future focus Greater opportunities to explore, looking at rhythm and change.				

"One of our focus children has been able to keep a steady beat on a drum for a little while. Since doing this project we feel like we have become more aware of the children's budding musical skills! Now we know what we are looking for, we are seeing it all the time."

EYP

For many settings, this was the first time EYPs had accessed specific music focused CPD or worked with a ML over a sustained period of time. Prior to the project only 20% of EYPs thought their understanding of EC music was either good or high. This rose to 83% by the end of the delivery period.

EYPs' understanding of children's musical development (1 = low , 5= high)



"Being part of this incredible music experience, it helped us understand the children's creative development side. By offering a great insight of their perception and engagement as they took part in these fun music activities. It gave us a different perspective and helped us grow and acquire new skills along the way."

Manager

What did we see happen?

EYPs and MLs observed:

- Children exploring a new range of instruments, their sounds, shapes, textures, names, elements
- Children identifying a pulse and matching movements to steady beat and lyrics
- Children listening carefully to instruments, each other and adults
- Children's observations comparing the "noisy" and "quiet" instruments were increasingly unprovoked
- An increased use of musical terms from both adults and children
- Increased modelling of musical behaviour both by adults and their peers
- Increased musical interest and curiosity, moving in time to steady beat
- Increased participation, child-directed singing/playing
- Children exploring a wider variety of musical instruments e.g. babies responding to the vibration of a guitar to small group work with gathering drums, flute and piccolo
- Children have greatly increased the repertoire of musical activities
- Increased participation in free musical play e.g. improvised play/jamming and multimodal expression through jumping and vocalising while playing the drum
- Increased vocabulary using musical terms, instrument names and language through an increased repertoire of appropriate rhymes and simple songs

How did staff behaviour change?

Adults also observed changes in their own behaviour including:

- Staff responded well to modelling behaviour and technique
- Staff gained confidence to notice, record and communicate their observations
- Staff and Setting Managers valued the time, space and expertise to reflect on their observations
- Parents and carers feeding back new music-based interest and frequency of singing
- Parents and carers observed positive developments related to the music making “he just loved it”, “at home he has a djembe drum, he is into it much more than what he was, he comes straight home and wants to go back on the drum, it's making a massive difference”
- Staff noticed children developing their understanding of handling, positioning and playing of instruments “he is getting more precise about his beats and rhythm”
- Staff could see learning and development gains across curriculum areas outside of the music sessions
- Staff became more competent at capturing spontaneous musical play using video and photographs

What happened across the setting?

Setting Managers observed:

- Increased singing, using instruments, creating spontaneous chants outside of the music sessions e.g., during tidy up time
- A wider range of individuals taking the lead in music and other activities as confidence grew
- Increased and more focused observations by staff e.g. capturing singing and actions
- Increased communication and discussion across staff about how sounds and actions are being interpreted.
- Positive relationship changes being observed across some staff teams

“it’s been lovely with all the staff coming into the office saying what they have just picked up from the children, quite often they would come down with their iPad to show what they have captured” - Setting Manager

In some cases the act of noticing had an additional knock on effect:

“it’s happening a lot more because it is being noticed and valued - as staff have become more tuned in to observation techniques” - EYP

“We have found spontaneous music in our setting. It is difficult to capture but we value it and know what we are looking for.”

Setting Manager

MLs and EYPs have used the reflective time, at the end of each session, to share observations, providing insight from both a musical and developmental perspective. Video recording enabled staff, who were delivering, to literally see another angle and observe what was happening in other parts of the room whilst they focused on their interactions.

“The child is singing “Rain is falling down... Splash!” which is one of the songs Eliza taught us. She is using sensory rice as her “rain” and her actions mirror the song.” - EYP

MLs were conscious of using the settings familiar routines, resources and existing skills as starting points to develop practice. Each brought new ideas and interpretations to regular activities. Giving time and space for both MLs to learn from EYPs.

“I also loved the circle time that we had which was so full of movement and rhythm. Even when we chanted a simple rhyme, everyone jammed to that vocal rhythm... and many of the children spontaneously moved. So often it would literally just be a short repetitive rhyme... and everyone was into it.”

ML

What did we discover?

As the confidence, skills and experience of the EYPs grew, their perceptions of music became more sophisticated. Prior to the project EYPs described the type of activities in a very basic form e.g.: “Nursery Rhymes” but with little expansion as to how they were effective or what made them high quality. Post project, in response to the same question, EYPs were far more developed in their language and understanding using more music-based terms.

Before Project Delivery	After Project Delivery
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wake and shake (Frequency before =7 and after =1) Circle time Nursery Rhymes (Frequency before =31 and after =5) Sticky Kids Story time (Frequency before =29 and after =9) Singing weekly planned songs Dancing e.g., Musical bumps Song basket Action songs Group Music e.g., singing happy birthday Musical instruments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Playing and exploring Playing alongside children Differentiating between types of songs Free range with instruments Free access to instruments Free play with open ended resources Instrumental play Vocal babbling Ring games Copying rhythms Language included: Beat, pitch, score, provocation, mirroring, pitch making, pulse, investigating, tones, tempo, volume, conductor, listening

"Since the project there is a much greater level of confidence amongst the practitioners in recognizing and supporting children's musicality (voice play/reworking songs/mash-ups/movement to voice or pulse/use of instruments to support musical concepts, timbre, dynamics etc.). There is a greater range of music and song used throughout the day as well as at Circle time that is specially tailored for and modelled on the project. We have invested nearly £1000 on instruments for children and adults to use throughout the day." - Setting Manager

Staff felt they were more spontaneous in their approach as their confidence grew:

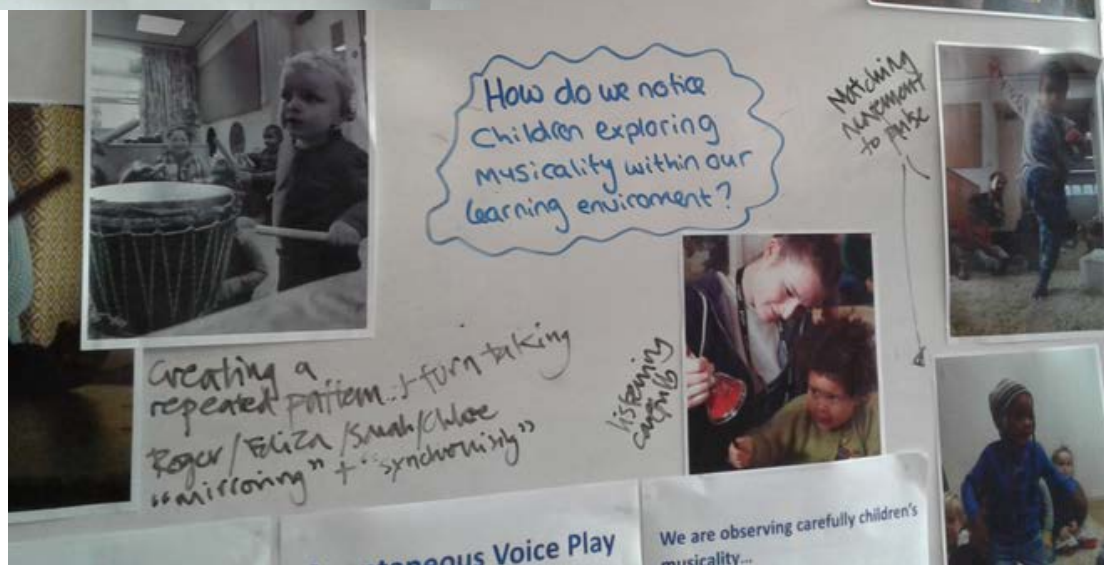
"...from being a little nervous at the start, standing back and watching, we are now joining in, mirroring the children, being play partners, going with the flow..." Setting Manager



An EYP being a musical play partner

"I think one of the fundamental things for my team, when I was leading the pre-school, was to change that shift in mind-set, you don't have to be a musician or a great singer to have a relationship with music, we all have a relationship with music and actually as a practitioner that is all you need. So, it was about shifting a little bit, actually you can lead musical activity sessions with young children even if you can't play an instrument."

Central to the approach is the shared understanding that all young children are competent, creative and display a range of musical behaviours. An important strand of the project was to observe and document these spontaneous behaviours. In order to do this, MLs supported adults to listen, recognize and value young children's own ways of being musical.



Staff documenting children's musical behaviours throughout the day on the staffroom whiteboard.

There has been a mixed approach to sharing the musical journey with wider staff teams and parents. Where staff have a positive relationship with parents and carers, the programme has been a constructive, fun way to deepen that engagement. Where Setting Managers embraced the project it flowed throughout the setting, being visible on notice boards, prioritised in planning meetings and integrated across teams.

"We have improved our awareness of how to support musical play and discovery but we have further to go. There is full enjoyment and enthusiasm of discovering sounds particularly with our youngest children."

"We recognise the musicality in the children and experiment more with them using their voices, instruments and other resources. Our musical instruments are used more often in meaningful ways and as learning provocations"

Case Study - Lark Children's Centre



At Lark Children's Centre staff were asked to identify up to three children to specifically track as the project developed. Three boys, all of whom presented with differing limitations in communication and peer engagement, were identified from the Willow room. Two of them were reticent at the beginning to approach the activities and one had English as an additional language. One liked very structured play, often on his own, and the third attended sporadically and had delay in speech and language.

Staff were able to observe how all the children developed in confidence and peer engagement over the project. The children with limited language began to find their voice through participation, they began to share a new language, some even became leaders in activities. Other children found the opportunity of music-making a way of overcoming their fear of getting involved. They became increasingly curious to join in with the sessions. The excitement and variety that came with trying different instruments, rhymes and simple songs were irresistible.

Staff noticed children being more adventurous in the ways they experimented with instrument and sound, showing high level problem solving skills e.g. working out how to produce sound from a mini accordion or playing a short simple refrain from a well known song together on the xylophone. Added to this, musical play sessions offered an enticing sound-rich environment where social interaction and expression could be explored.

The focus in this photo was on the interaction between child and ML as together they took it in turns to slowly fill the djembe drum with wood blocks whilst vocalising (a game initiated by the reticent child and scaffolded by the sensitive ML):



In these musical play examples, children are viewed as multi-modal beings. They were encouraged to use their imagination, think critically, explore and experiment, discover the impact of cause and effect, take risks, repeat and rehearse ideas (DfE, 2017).

They were able to express themselves using the instruments, well chosen materials and resources in a variety of ways:





The music became a mechanism to address issues of anxiety as they gained confidence and were valued as competent and capable creative beings. Staff began to value the children's musical activities, which in turn led to the children's increased expression.

These children were responding to MLs' improvisations and the MLs were responding to their movements:



There has been a mixed approach to sharing the musical journey with wider staff teams and parents. Where staff have a positive relationship with parents and carers SoundWaves has been a constructive, fun way to engage. Where Setting Managers embraced the project it flowed throughout the setting, being visible on notice boards, prioritised in planning meetings and integrated across teams.

"The confidence of practitioners, lack of training in this area, the value placed on the EYFS, getting parents on board to realise the importance of music in their child's development across all areas - we have been able to address many of these during the project and have held staff meetings and open mornings for parents to come and learn about the project all of which have helped."

Setting Manager

Case Study - St Pauls Nursery School and Children's Centre

At St Pauls Nursery School and Children's Centre, senior staff were looking to build and extend their knowledge across the staff team and were excited to learn. They did however, have some reservations about EYPs' capacity and confidence to fully engage with the musicians or the ideas they may introduce. Previous experience with visiting artists had not always been good.

The setting had large room sizes with 35 children or more in some cases. Individual staff reflected on their own experience of music:

"I was a bit hesitant as to how it would fit with professionals coming in and whether I would have to learn to read music. It's something I don't do. I was never encouraged at school, so I was a bit reserved about that, but quite excited that people could come in and it was going to be a regular thing... and it was going to keep going." - EYP

"When they came in - Roger and Eliza, it was just like that chaotic craziness, but you could really see like, the absorption and the direction they were going and it really fed through - the constant conversations and the excitement Roger and Eliza show really makes you feel like 'oh, I can do this'. - It can be chaotic, and things can be everywhere, but it's the learning that comes through that is so visible and I think really inspired everyone." - EYP

Staff went on to embrace the project:

- Seeing how focused children in groups of 38 can be when they are engaged in music
- Seeing the different levels of engagement children can have, from gentle moving to imitating
- Finding new ways to use exciting instruments, identify and investing in new ones, based on clear understanding of how and why to use them
- Finding new ways of including music in planning
- Utilising music as a way of working effectively with large groups "everybody suddenly finding a musical groove for 30 seconds or 5 minutes"
- Finding ways of modelling to silent play partners, "how to respond sensitively to children and then build on it "
- Finding new ways of supporting children "we were actually able to help them join in or just move on"





"To be able to use that underpinning knowledge has been really, really helpful. It's really helped me to see things more widely and in more depth"

EYP

How did settings share their musical journey?



One setting chose to display their learning via display boards positioned in corridors where parents / carers waited to collect their children.

Note the wording on these display boards 'spontaneous voice play', 'recognise and value children's own ways of being musical', 'foster young children's musicality' etc.



The majority of activity in settings took place prior to restrictions introduced in March 2020. During lockdown EYPs utilised the skills, repertoire and approach developed with their work with MLs to manage children returning or experiencing their childcare time during lockdown:

"During lockdown when we were still open, it really enabled them to come back into nursery. Obviously, we were shut for a short period and then we came back and we used, they used a lot of the songs and instruments to kind of settle themselves back in - it was quite noticeable."

"They use the gathering drums quite a lot. But they were doing it, we didn't initiate it, they would just gather around the drums and start imitating each other going fast, going slow. There was lots of looking at each other making that connection, almost like reconnecting but through musicality after being separated for such a long time."

Case Study - Freshlings Nursery

At Freshlings Nursery, staff set up a YouTube channel to deliver singing, music and audio stories via Zoom as well as sending home music resources. These outreach activities were positively received by parents and provided a consistent link between the nursery and home as well as a relationship they want to develop more.

"Loads of parents wanted to engage, we had to split the Zoom sessions up as so many people wanted to join in"

Familiar songs were used to welcome children into the nursery after breaks in attendance with older children singing simple songs and chanting rhymes they had learnt during the project to new children to help them settle in. Staff noticed that music-based activities acted as the prompt to enable children to participate when they were hesitant or nervous coming back after periods of lock down.

"We've got a lot better with all the different songs, we also know you don't have to have a repertoire of songs, it can be anything from humming or repeating, tapping out a rhythm"

What were the key challenges faced by the Music Leaders and the setting staff?

- Not all staff had the support of their Setting Managers or benefited from a culture of learning. At times this meant a lack of engagement which could range from disinterest to obstructive to at worst MLs feeling they were viewed with suspicion
- Not all staff were used to attending training where participation and openness was key to engagement
- Inconsistency in staffing meant relationships were not as well formed between MLs and EYPs compared to where a whole staff was engaged "if the manager values it, the staff will value it!"
- The endorsement and attendance of leaders or Setting Managers in the training made a big difference. From BS3 over 20 members of staff attended training together.

"I think part of the success was having access to that volume of the team, It's not like when you have one or two people go to a CPD, get enthused and then come back and try and sell it to everyone else, that can be a challenge and can things can fizzle out" - BS3 Manager

- Staff recognise the cost of quality training is high but the value is significant
- Managers have a real desire to build on their experience, extending staff experience through more training

Outcome Two

To improve EY communication, skills and empathy

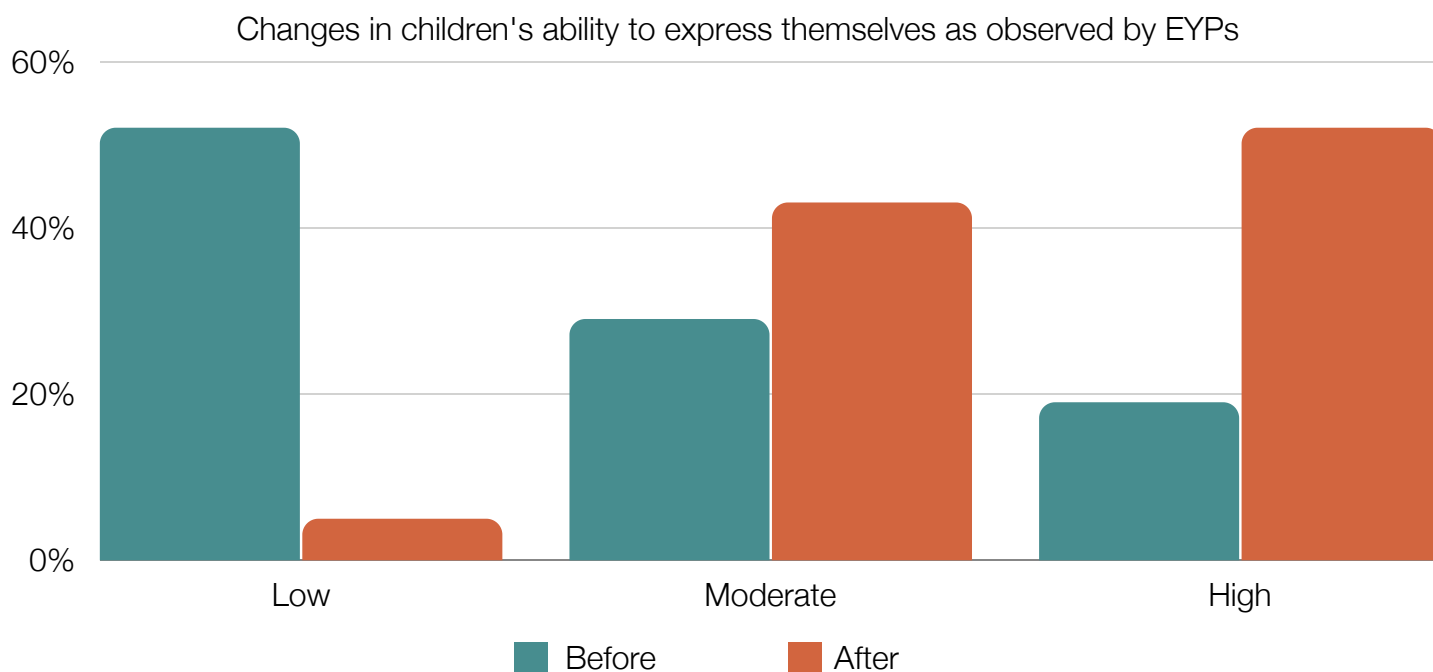
Indicators:

1. Setting staff observe and agree or strongly agree that children's ability to express themselves and cooperative with others has improved
2. Children demonstrate an increased level of engagement and cooperation

What did we find out?

Using data gathered on the "focus children", prior to the project the number of children considered to have high abilities to express themselves was 19%. By the end of the project (approx. 20 weeks later) this had increased to 52%. Children with low ability (52% at the beginning) had reduced to 5% - with some children moving towards moderate and high.

The programme was obviously one factor in this change but EYPs feel confident that their own increase in understanding of how music can support children's communication, skills, empathy and sustained activity had a real impact on improving EY communication, skills and empathy within their settings.



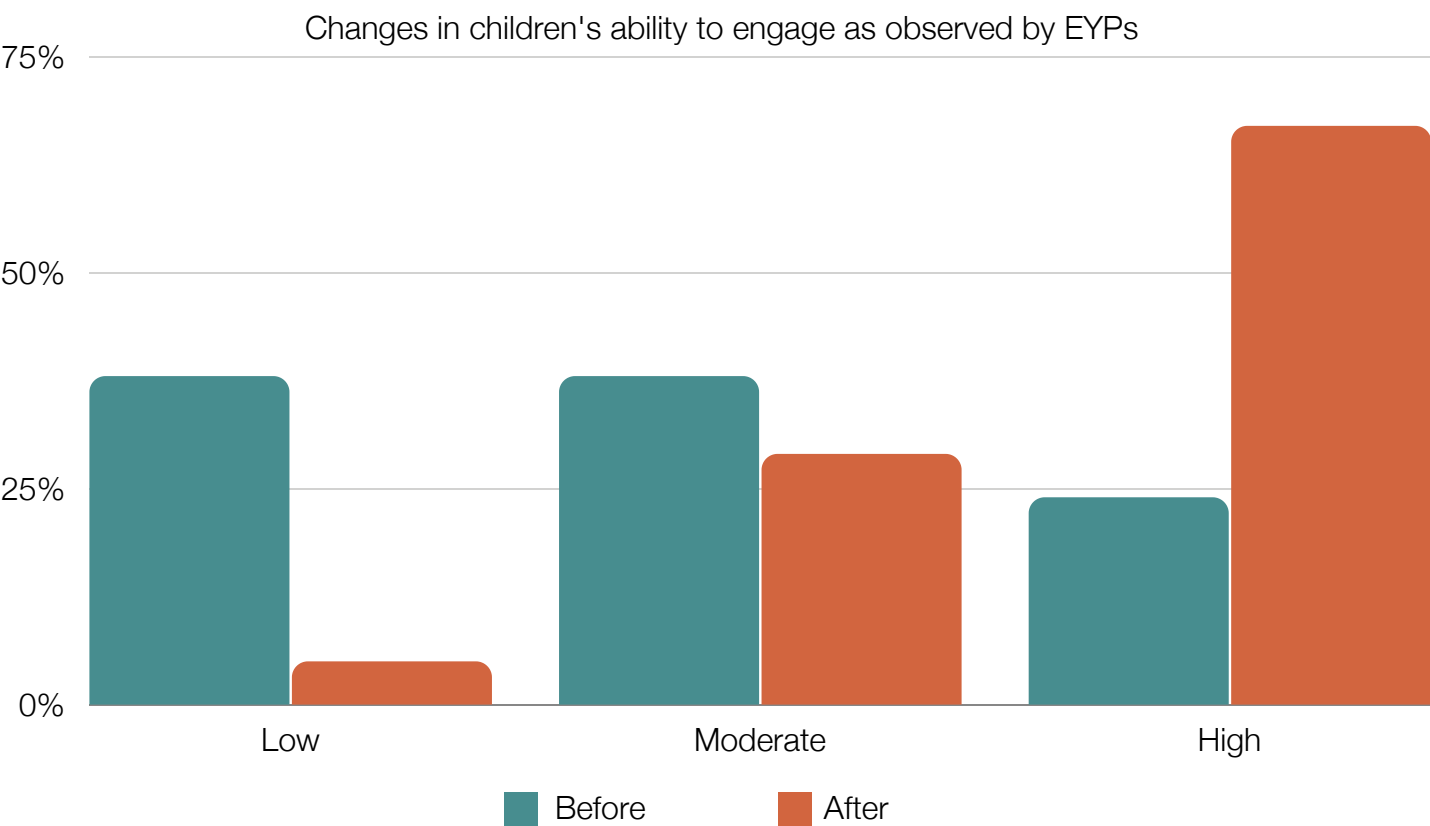
"Children who have never been able to find a way to lead because they are not very verbal, they don't have a lot of language, suddenly could be leading with a drum or leading with a harmonica alongside Rachel, and that I think, is one of the powers of the fact that we're getting a different behaviour from some children that not seen before, because they've become leaders without having to use words."

Setting Manager

2. increased level of engagement and participation

As part of the planning and relationship building between MLs and setting staff, it has been critical to understand any reservations, concerns or expectations EYPs had about the project from the beginning. For many, the introduction of new members of staff, how to fit activities into an already tight routine and confidence of staff were potential barriers to engagement. For the less confident or withdrawn children participation or hesitancy was also seen to be a significant issue to address.

Setting staff valued the sensitivity and thoughtful approach the MLs brought to their sessions. With an emphasis on inclusion and dialogue with setting staff, the MLs were able to gently encourage participation throughout the project from both adult and child. Across the observed children, their ability to engage with the activity and wider social interactions has improved, particularly when participating in musical play.



At St Jude’s Preschool in Plymouth some of the focus children clearly built up a very positive relationship with the MLs and would seek them out. One child with EnEAL) found new confidence through having musical conversations, these developed over the 10 sessions.

“A previously withdrawn and expressionless child who had very low confidence has made significant progress in terms of becoming more engaged and more confident over the weeks. He is engaging with the instruments more and more, particularly during the provocation, and now will spend sustained periods of time exploring instruments in an increasingly playful and expressive way.”

EYP

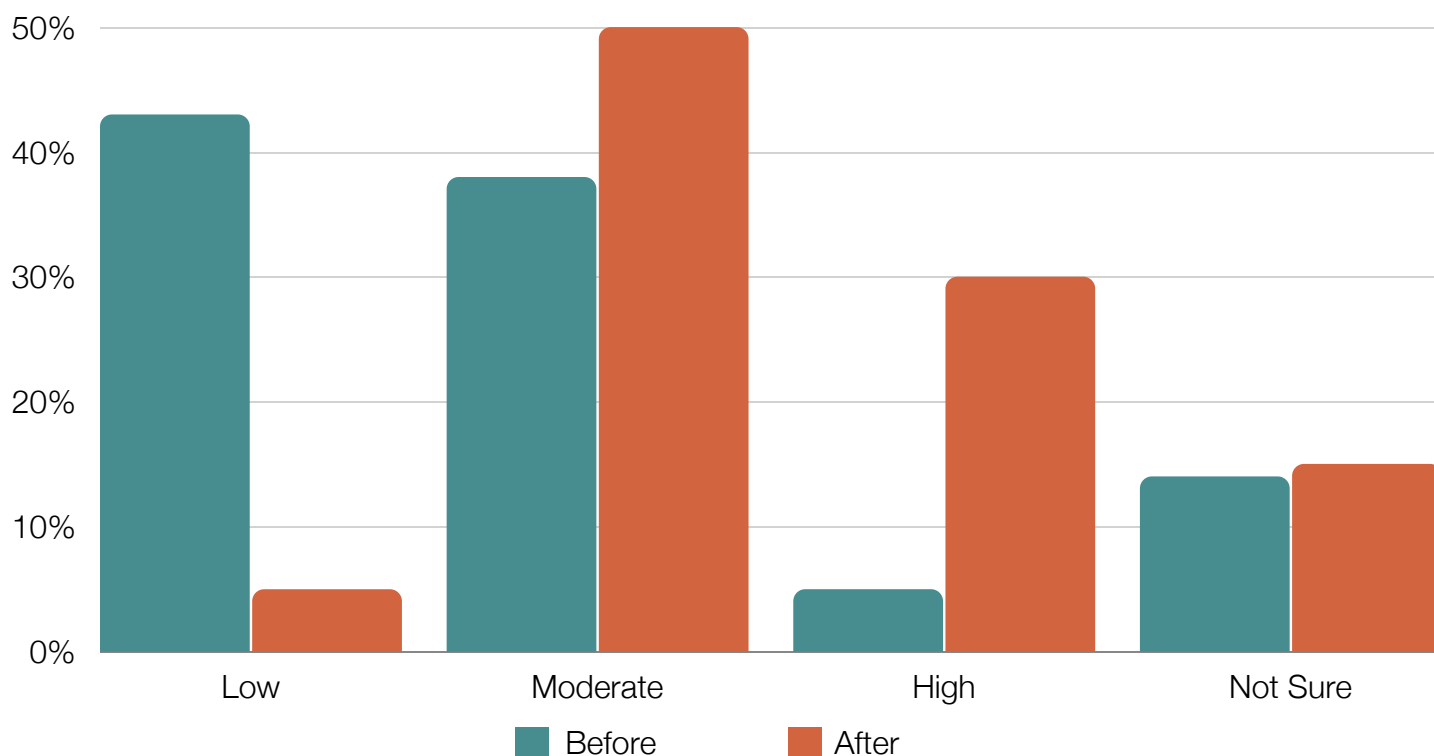
How did children's behaviour change?

Changes in children's ability to express, cooperate, communicate and empathise have all been observed by staff and MLs during the project:

- For some children there was an increased and sustained eye contact between staff and children
- "We have noticed a difference in the children as well, their behaviour during music sessions has improved as they have become more involved and been able to take some ownership"
- Increased participation including conducting, choosing songs, mouthing and signing words as well as experimenting with new and existing instruments
- Nonverbal or preverbal children experimenting with concepts of leadership and control
- New children demonstrating new found confidence through music based activity:
For one child this was "a big breakthrough as it involved standing up on his own in front of the other children which he doesn't normally do"
- Greater depth of engagement and concentration levels than anticipated:
"This child has consistently joined in with the sessions. She wants to join in and is trying to make the instrument work...trying to shake it, then trying to blow it. Social interaction, being part of the jam!"
Setting Manager
- Increased participation with broader and deeper child-directed singing/playing
- Children exploring a wider variety of musical instruments e.g. babies responding to the vibration of a guitar to small group work with circle drums, flutes and piccolo
- Children experiencing and recalling a greatly increased repertoire of musical activities
- Increased participation in free musical play e.g.: improvised play/jamming and multimodal expression through jumping and vocalising while playing the drum
- Turn taking, responding and respecting musical leads from their peers
- Music has been a tool for increased social interaction, children getting more involved, inside and outside the sessions

"We have noticed a difference in the children, their behaviour during music sessions has improved as they have become more involved and been able to take some ownership"

Changes in children's ability to cooperate with other children as observed by EYPs



For one child at St Pauls who struggled with space and other children “invading his space”, the music sessions enabled him to focus other children out. A dominant character, this boy used his love and desire to participate as a way of learning to regulate his emotions.

“ I never saw him struggle with his emotions, not once, which is quite a miracle” - EYP

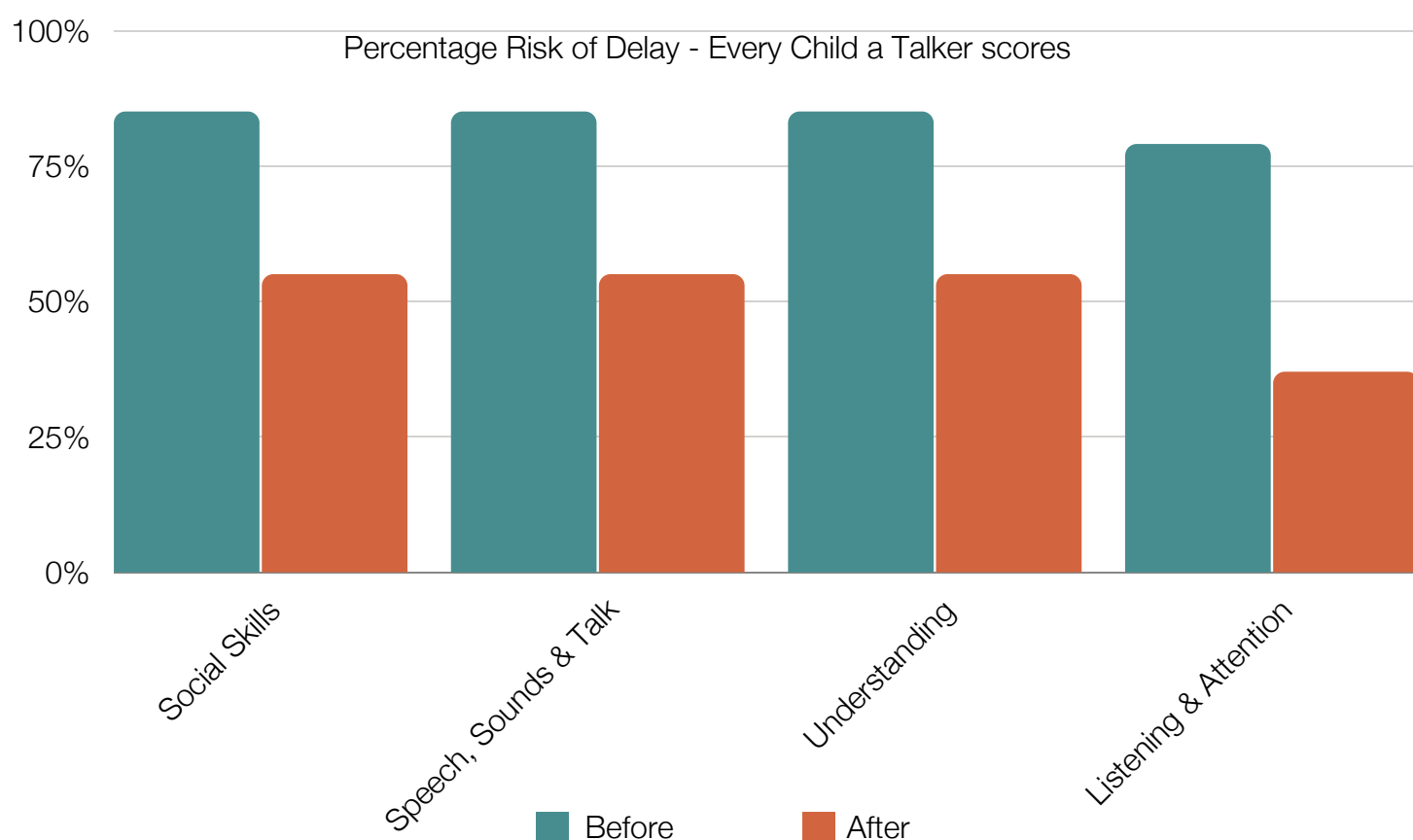
Some staff felt empowered to explore new ways of communicating with non-verbal children, through free play. Children’s reactions and adults reactions feeding off each other: “in a video we we can see him reacting to the adult who is smiling back, and he responds accordingly, smiling and carrying on. A great form of communication” - EYP

“Some previously withdrawn children (or children that rarely joined in) are now participating with other children and adults: “L appears to particularly enjoy sensory play during the provocations e.g. playing with the dance scarves, large scrunchies, feathers and ribbons. Through these materials in particular he is becoming more interactive with the adults around him. He is making more eye contact with adults, particularly when they mirror his actions, showing a clear awareness that he is being copied.”

Setting Manager



As children are gaining confidence and familiarity with the MLs dialogue staff at Lark Children's Centre staff used their "Every Child a Talker" chart to take measures at the beginning of their sessions and near the end. Staff noted that, boys especially, reduced their risk of delay across all four areas of the chart with the most variance in the Listening & Attention scores:



"I do remember the project engaged a number of boys who found it an exciting way to be able to join in and contribute to group activities where previously they had played solo, using limited language. I believe this was a large contributing factor to the language skills improvement."

Setting Manager

Where activity had to be delivered through a blend of live sessions, followed by Zoom calls, both MLs and practitioners were surprised at the levels of engagement. Without the MLs being in the room, EYPs had to be totally present and take more of a lead in delivery, supported by MLs virtually:



Outcome Three

To increase Take Art's resilience to external circumstances to enable it to deliver a continuing music making programme for early years

Indicator: Take Art and partners work together to increase developmental opportunities through the support of this work through policymaking and implementation strategies with identified ongoing resources for the target groups

The SoundWaves Network has benefited from a supportive steering group comprising of MLs, representatives from MEHs, Higher and Further Education, setting staff and EY Advisors. At regular meetings, members of the group were able to keep project staff up to date. Issues raised included wider trends and patterns, changes to the funding landscape, curriculum changes, issues affecting settings and wider community agendas.

Throughout the lifetime of the project Take Art has fostered new partnerships and connections regionally and nationally. Project staff and MLs have gained valuable knowledge and experience through attending and presenting at regular networking and CPD opportunities.

Project staff have been proactive in addressing issues of resilience and positioning, specifically through organising a key EY sectorial event: "Are you EYs Music Ready?" in June 2019. The design and timing of the event responded directly to the Department of Education's planned 'refresh' of the National Plan for Music Education and was a high profile event which raised visibility and tested potential delivery models.

The event was delivered by Take Art & Bristol Plays Music and targeted Music Service and Hub Leads. It was attended by 56 participants from 25 different MEHs and national organisations. The programme focused on research, structures and networks, funding and strategy.



How did the programme advocate for the sector?

At a national level, project staff Jane Parker and Gina Westbrook have actively engaged with debate and strategy focusing on EY Music and the ambition for EYs 0-5 to be included in the National Plan for Music Education. Through lobbying, networking and attendance, staff have supported the Music Education Council specialist EY working group over the last 3 years.

At a regional level The SoundWaves Network has provided the vehicle to engage with additional CPD opportunities either through cross marketing or through Jane Parker delivering modules and seminars as a guest lecture. These have included:

- Continued contribution to FE/HE EC programmes e.g.: UWE, Bristol City College, University of Plymouth and via teaching on the CME:EC programme
- Collaborations with Bristol EY Teaching School Alliance by leading CPD sessions
- Collaborative work with Bristol & Plymouth Universities
- Increased traction and connectivity with MEHs, with MLs and partners placing Take Art's EY work at the heart of sustained creative collaborations through renewed contracts and advocacy



University of Plymouth BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies students exploring musical play as part of a module.

Developing CPD & Resources

Across the EY sector, access to music based CPD is profoundly low (95% of attendees at events had not accessed any music based training in the last three years). Barriers to access have included time, cost and transport as well as opportunity. EYPs valued the combination of an event-based CPD (targeted at the beginning of the project) and the sustained relationship with musicians during the sessional activity to develop their confidence and practice.

The quality of the CPD events have been consistently rated as excellent (over 90%) both in person and virtual. A particularly successful element of the CPD delivery (events and sessions) has been the use of video as a reflection tool. Short reflective films, of projects in action, are now regularly used and disseminated at training events. Take Art and the individual settings are sharing a growing library of resources across The SoundWaves Network.

Diversifying the workforce

In 2019 Nadhim Zahawi, then Children and Families Minister, working with the Fatherhood Institute called for more men to enter the EY workforce, at the time just 3% of the workforce was male.

“Just as parenting is a shared responsibility, so is kickstarting a child’s love of learning. I want more men to play a positive role in educating and caring for our next generation. That’s why we’re supporting the Fatherhood Institute to encourage men from all walks of life into early years careers, to give children the best start in life and be a part of this important and rewarding sector”

From the experience of partners and MLs, Take Art estimates there is even less gender diversity within the EY music workforce. MLs delivering on The SoundWaves Network have cited barriers such as: a lack of awareness of career opportunities generally, but specifically throughout higher education: “Early Years wasn’t even mentioned, not even on community musician-type courses, let alone on classical music degrees” ML

MLs working on the programme were largely drawn from musicians who had a relationship with the CREC CME:EC course - either current students or recent graduates. Led by Dr Susan Young, the course has a reputation for high quality practical teaching with placement activity supported by mentoring. Jane Parker has long been a mentor on the CME:EC course.



Future programmes will still place quality as a key criteria for recruitment but there is an ambition to develop a more diverse approach to networking, promoting and encouraging applicants from different career paths and networks.

A new collaboration, researched towards the end of the programme, between Take Art and The University of Plymouth and the BA Music degree will explore how community music students could be offered placement opportunities in EY settings as part of their second year course module placement.



Early Years sectorial relevance

Through the LA EY representatives, project staff have felt an increased connectivity with the nursery & child-minding sectors, particularly in Somerset. This has been exemplified through support for CPD opportunities such as successful cross-marketing, fostering links to provider evenings and virtual training development. Positive relationships with LAs and MEH staff has successfully opened conversations around future music and creative programmes paving the way for partnership delivery and funding applications.



Gina Westbrook and Jane Parker contributed to the Early Education Journal in Autumn 2018 in an article “How and why Take Art supports early childhood music”.

How did The SoundWaves Network pivot and respond to Covid-19?

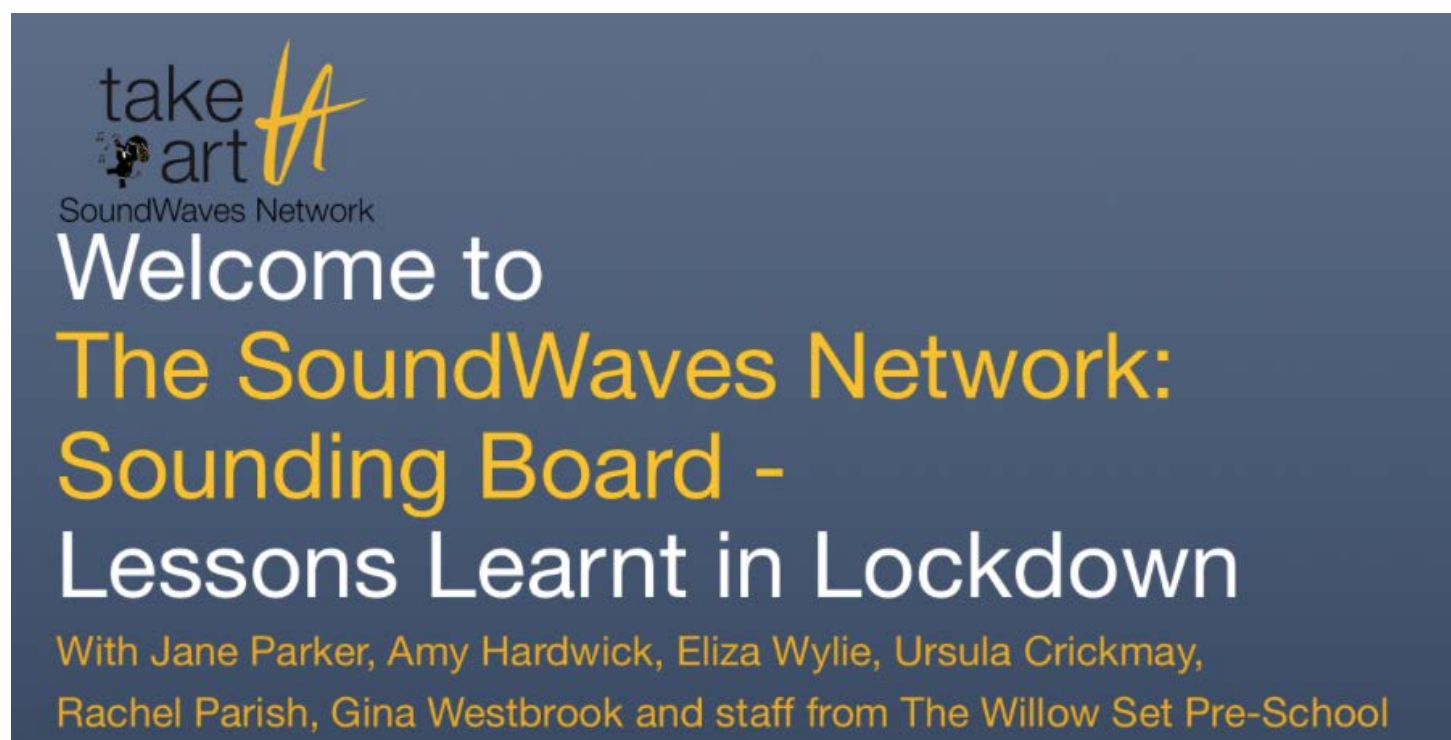
Project staff introduced a regular programme of “Sounding Boards” during lockdown (associated with Covid-19). These virtual meetings provided a welcome contact point for isolated freelancers and practitioners - it was a space to share ideas, fears and hopes within the community. As months went on, people were able to share how they were adapting to running virtual sessions, creating online resources or events and responding to the needs of their groups. Members shared what worked, where the challenges were and how they were overcome. The overall effect was one of anchoring The SoundWaves Network in a time of great uncertainty. The virtual nature of these events enabled an expansion of reach, with new colleagues from across the globe joining the conversation from as far afield as Japan, Sweden and Canada - expanding the possibilities of membership and collaboration.

As with any programme delivering over a three-year period, in three large counties, with three MEHs, staff have faced multiple challenges along the way including:

- The complexities of navigating LAs as regionally, structures differ from county to county
- Understanding how MEHs all operate on slightly different business models that can affect time & capacity to engage in EY work
- Understanding that MEHs rarely have dedicated or experienced EY team members but all have been generous in supporting the work through CPD subsidies and in the case of Plymouth, delivery time
- The fact that funding for LA has not changed in five years which makes sustaining work highly pressurised, from a financial and personnel perspective
- LA reorganisations, personnel changes and pressure on individuals' capacity to support programmes has been stretched

Having to convert sharing events, networking and CPD events to online platforms has demanded a new way of thinking in a sector which thrives on connection and engagement. Staff, particularly at Willow Set in Stoke St Greg, adapted quickly to maintain their participation in the sessions. For others the challenge of technology and connectivity was too difficult in the time frame and one setting decided to leave the programme during the lockdown period of 2020.

Sustaining this area of work for Take Art is seen as a priority and a fourth Youth Music programme is being developed as part of the exit strategy. Relationships and networks established over the last three years have become crucial to the next phase. Interviews with 10 MEHs in the South West have surfaced an appetite to collaborate with Take Art on delivery, CPD, developing and diversifying the EY music workforce and commissioning joint research into the future.



Outcome Four

To improve setting abilities to provide a good quality and accessible musical environment to EY

Indicators: Researcher observes a positive change in the children's music making environment, staff agree or strongly agree that the environment for music making has improved

MLs observe and agree or strongly agree that the music making environment has improved

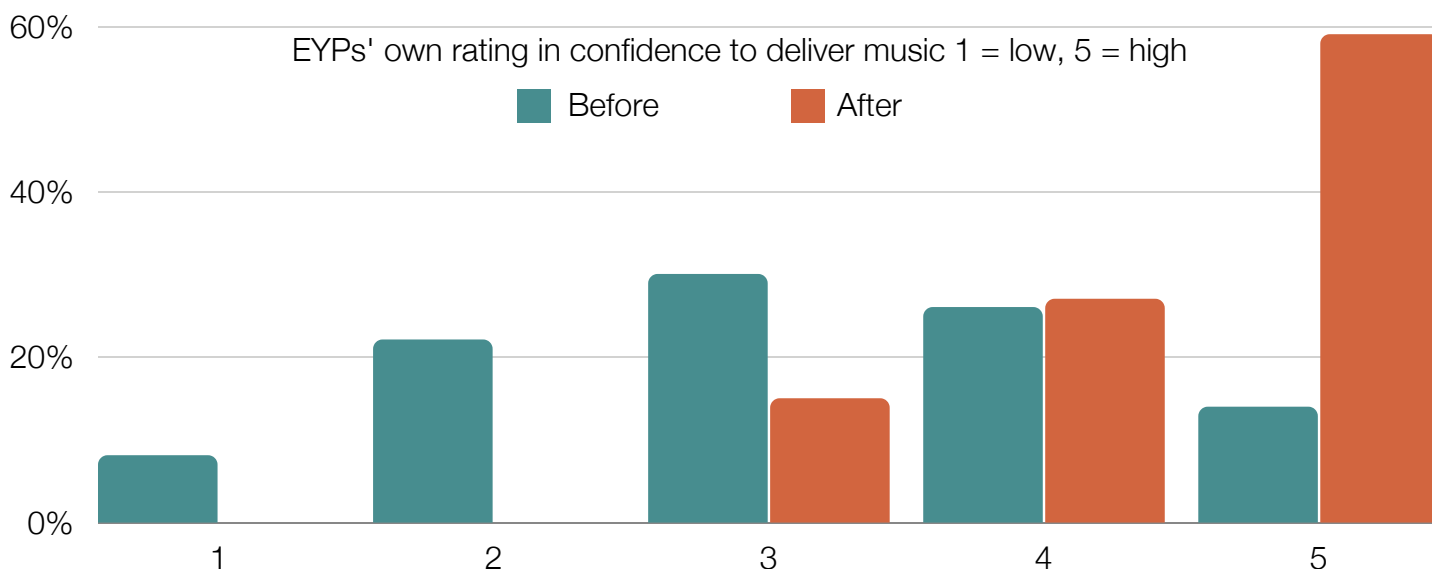
What does a good quality and accessible musical environment look like?

For this outcome the word "environment" has been interpreted as more than the physical space, musical instruments or equipment in the EY settings. Staff skills, confidence, perceptions of quality and opportunity have all been included in an assessment of what makes "a good quality and accessible musical environment".

As part of the pre and post project questionnaires, Setting Managers were asked to rate their settings against a number of resource and activity based questions relating to music. In addition MLs were asked to note any improvements. 100% of settings rated their environment as now good or high from a previous average or good score.

Did the programme improve staff confidence and develop staff skills?

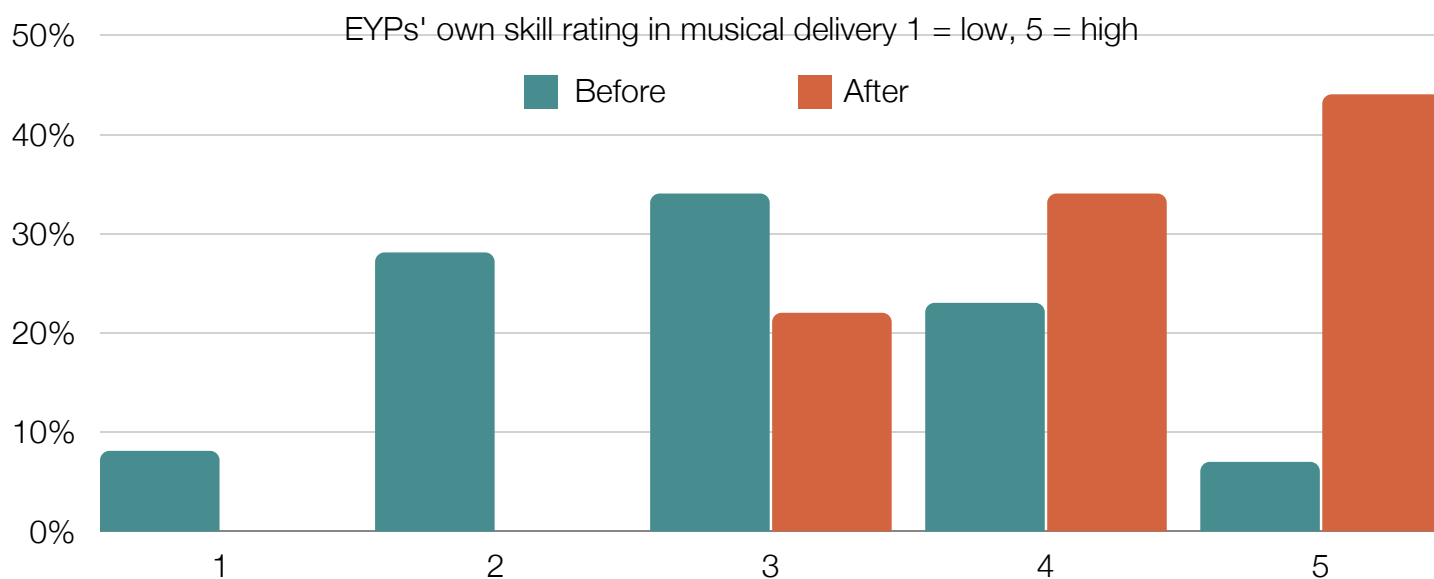
When asked about potential challenges to the project, "low staff confidence" has been a consistent response across all the settings involved.



Staff tended to view their knowledge and skill level as low to average prior to the project but post project this has significantly increased with 78% rating themselves as having good to high levels of skill.

"Being part of this incredible music experience helped us understand the children's creative development side - by offering a great insight of their perception and engagement as they took part in these music activities. It gave us a different perspective and helped us grow and acquire new skills along the way." - Setting Manager

"It was therapy for the staff, it really was."



"We recognise musicality in different ways and give time and attention to it... and allow it to happen if it can." Setting Manager

MLs, Staff and Setting Managers have noticed a range of behavioural changes in music delivery in their settings including:

- Finding out about children's preferred music as a way of making connections with home life and enabling the children to embrace different cultures
- Encouraging children to sing and play music during tidy up time, before meal times and for transitions
- "Since doing the project we now include a musical session into a daily routine and have more free musical play to offer"
- New materials have been introduced such as scarves, lycra and ribbons to enhance dancing and movement
- Encouraging and observing musical play outside – not necessarily with musical instruments eg: 'Saucepan walks', pipes tied to trees etc. "Although there were no instruments set up, there were musical play opportunities with a hill to run up and down and hula hoops"
- The frequency of singing and dancing has increased with 80% of settings reporting everyday singing as "embedded" compared to 10% at the start of the project
- "Since the project I have developed an interest in drumming and would like to train more to share my knowledge with the children"
- Staff have overcome shyness and low confidence by participating in the CPD and sharing skills in front of their peers
- Some staff have been inspired to learn a musical instrument and access more training on music and EC development
- Several Setting Managers expressed a need for regular top-up training to help sustain activity "Keeping the learning provocation going and the spirit of the project"

How did SoundWaves support Continual Professional Development?

Across the programme, 14 face to face CPDs with 564 attendees and a further 24 online events with 416 attendees have been delivered addressing the desire to improve skills and knowledge in early childhood music education.

"Finding, affording, accessing training locally is so difficult – so more training would be amazing. I think sessions explaining the value of music in children's development would be great. Someone teaching you about the difference between steady beat and rhythm... or saying to notice children spontaneously singing quietly has value... as does children's spontaneous drumming and patting - all the little points shared by Eliza and Jane really made a difference."

Setting Manager

Feedback from CPD events has been consistently high throughout the programme: 85% of respondents, completing questionnaires, felt the quality of the training was excellent and 15% felt it was good.

Feedback from events included:

- Staff coming away with more confidence and feeling they were likely to include the new skills in their everyday practice as a result of attending the training
- Increased confidence to lead musical play and setting out a musical provision for children to explore
- "This has shown through everybody's eagerness to provide more opportunities for the children to explore our own instruments." Setting Manager
- Staff enjoyed working with musicians and the time and space it provided within a busy schedule "It offered a rare opportunity to have time for reflecting on the session sharing both early years practitioners and music practitioner viewpoints." Setting Manager
- Some staff are looking at how to use music to support other areas of the curriculum beyond expressive art and design

"We are really focused on embedding what we have learnt so far with two early years rooms (children's centre) but are also very focused to ensuring this knowledge is shared and developed ACROSS the whole centre."

Setting Manager

Enabling activities and approaches



Singing spontaneously to support the child's needs

The baby in the blanket was new to nursery that morning, had been dropped off by the parent and was upset. The baby was distressed, crying and also tired. The EY practitioners chose to soothe the baby by singing a well-known song, spontaneously swinging the blanket slowly, quietly and gently side to side in time to the steady beat of the song – responding to the dynamic needed in the environment at that moment. The EY music practitioner improvises along, taking the cues from the EY practitioners. There is no directive leading. Instead there is so much listening and tuning in.

An inviting enabling environment with carefully chosen materials and resources

During CPD sessions the main findings from SALTMusic research report (2018) were shared and discussed with EY staff and our EY music practitioners. They took on the advice regarding the importance of carefully chosen materials and resources to encourage musical play. EY settings began to think carefully about creating immersive provocative, enabling, musical play spaces. Staff reflected on their role as willing adult play partners, following the children's initiatives by mirroring, turn-taking or synchronising their gestures, sounds or actions.

Here is an example of one setting using emergency blankets:



Paper, crayons and a willing adult play partner led beautiful musical vocalisations:



How were musical instruments utilised?

By introducing new instruments such as a gathering drum, musicians were able to model new ideas and music making opportunities for children, particularly in groups. A variety of instruments, from around the world, were all explored during the sessions.



With pressures on budgets, not all settings are able to purchase many new instruments, but as a result of their participation, staff are now more informed about the quality, quantity and purpose of their existing resources. Most settings have increased the number of instruments in their setting as a result of (from “a reasonable to a generous number”). Staff asked MLs to recommend high quality instruments to broaden their collections to include djembe drums, enough percussion for large group work and gathering drums.

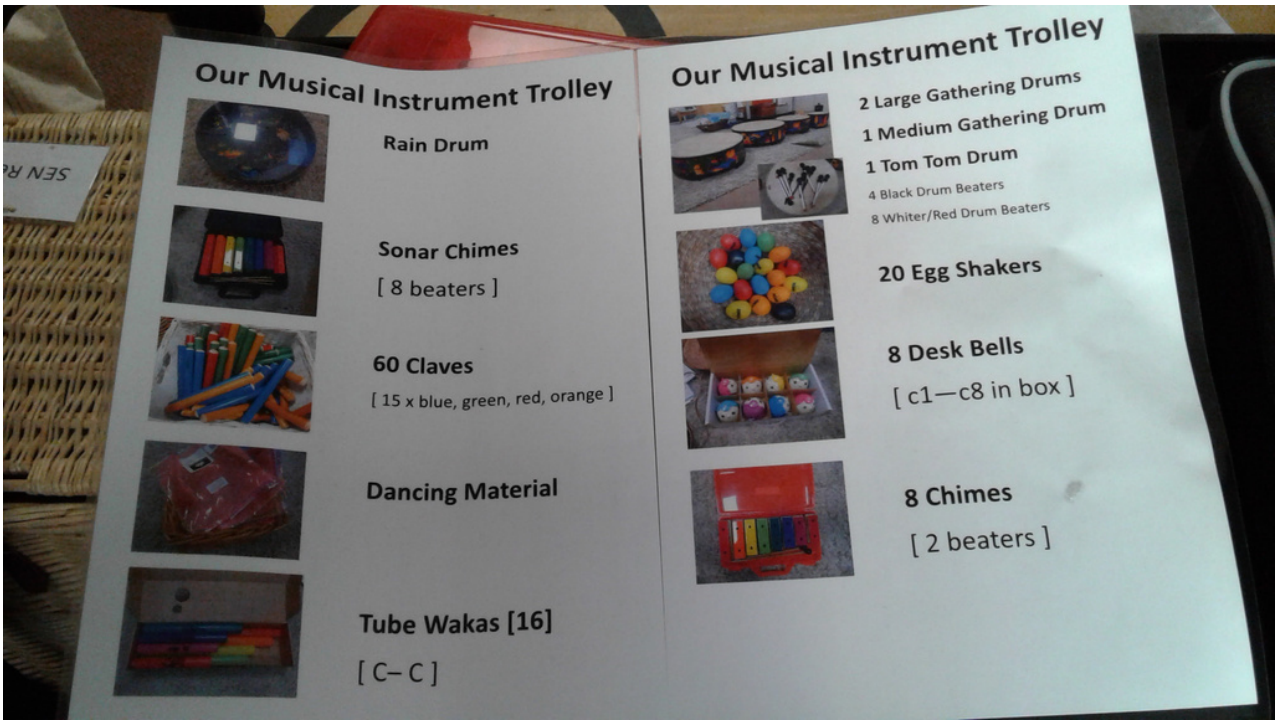


An EYP mirroring a child at the gathering drum



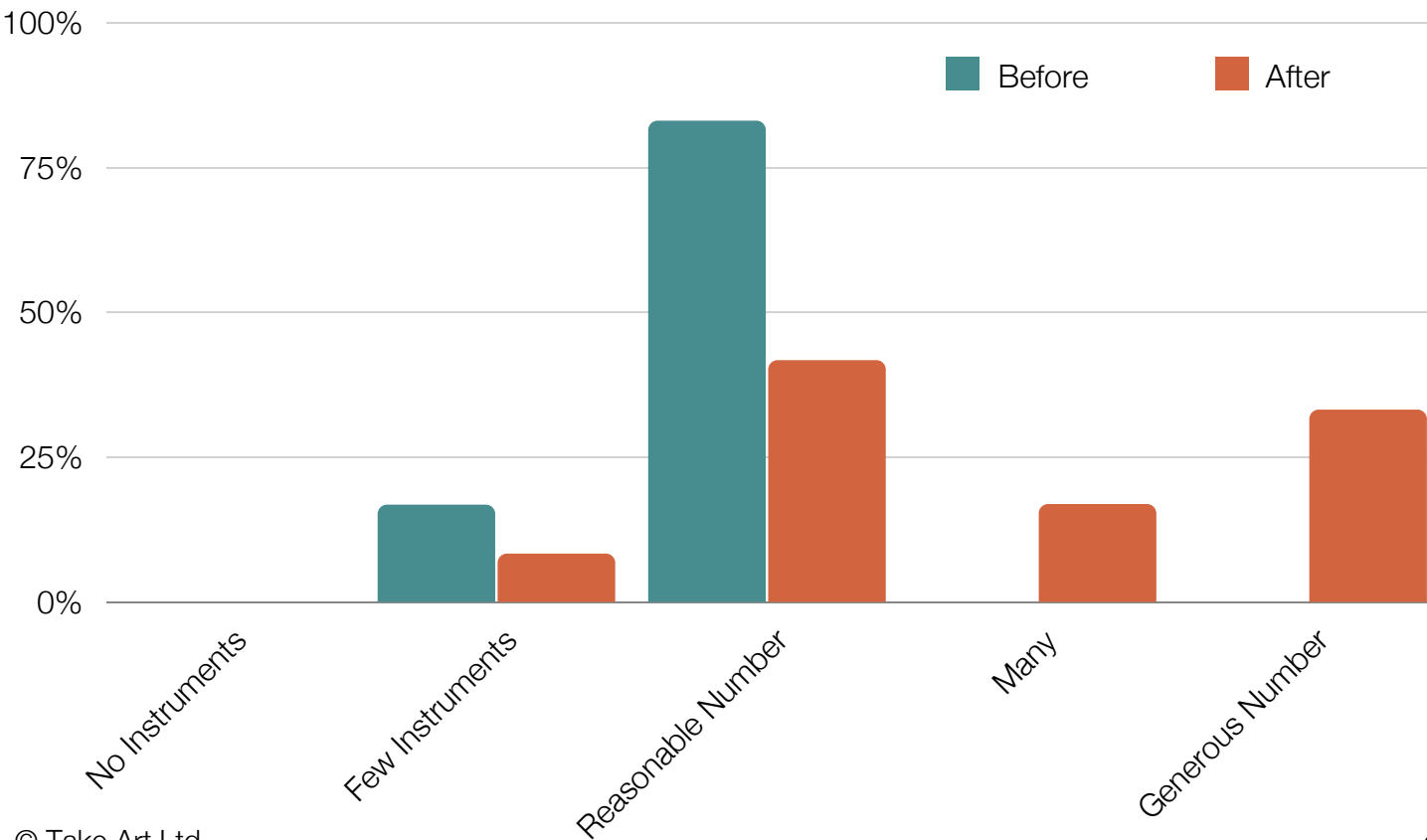
An EY student practitioner on placement on The SoundWaves Network project mirroring a child's musical play with a good quality selection of percussion instruments

“We have lots of resources, but it is perhaps using them in a different way which involves different skills from the practitioner”

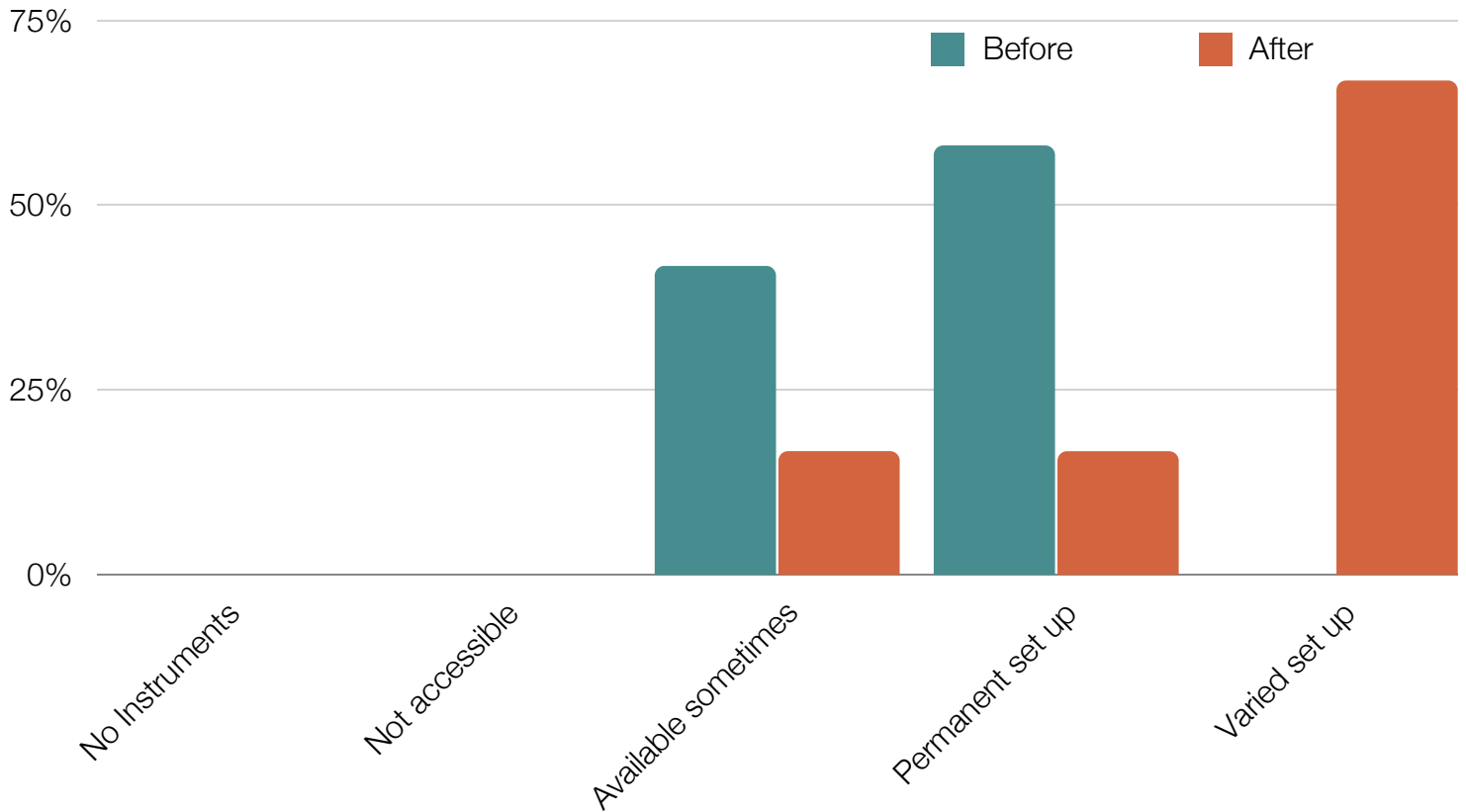


There have been changes to the way musical instruments have been displayed with a move towards increased frequency and a more varied set up across all settings:

Quantity of musical Instruments available



How instruments are set out



"We think our setting has had positive changes on all levels as a result of this project. The children are more curious. This is reflected in the way they play with music, sound and songs both set up by adults and explored independently."

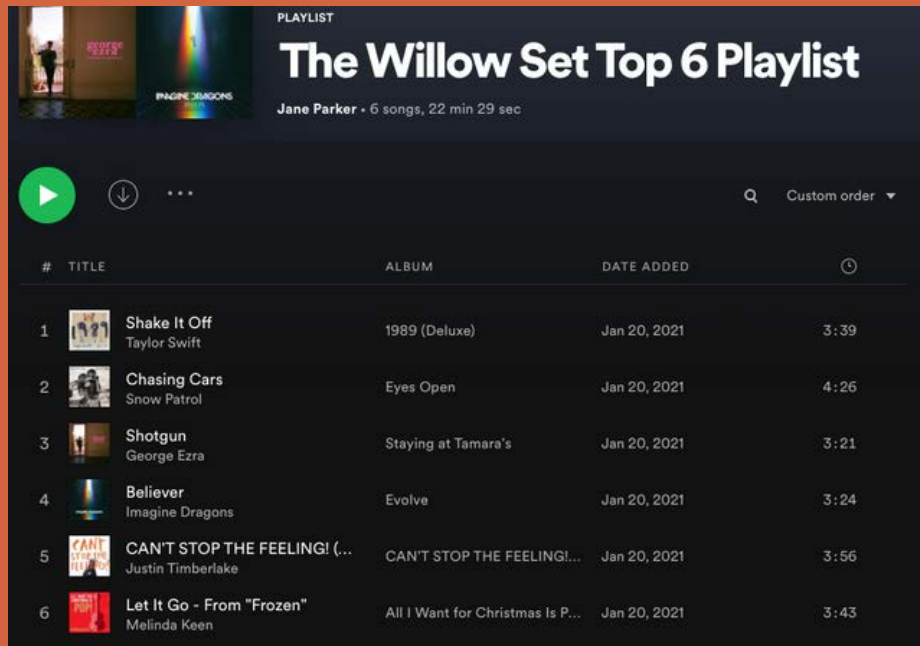
"Free access to instruments - opportunity to explore parachute games that encourage listening.. Group singing including actions... Opportunities for children to become the 'conductor' of a teacher/peer/trained musician... Activities that involve listening to a variety of genres of recorded music"

"...always being aware of their likes and dislikes... making sure to support the quiet ones and offer free play in order to support a holistic approach to match each child's developmental stage and age."

Some settings are now more likely to look to their community and staff (some of whom have started learning a musical instrument) to input into their settings, bringing a welcome development of parent/carer engagement, through music.

"...we invited parents in to play instruments, this went very well during our Glastonbury Festival celebrations, with one parent bringing his band in for the children to listen to..."

Case Study - the Auditory Environment



The project also considered the auditory environment of an EY setting. EY staff and EY music practitioners were asked to reflect on Burke's research re the limited range of recorded music played in EY settings (2013) and the Tune into Listening resource (2017). Staff were also asked to support and encourage active listening. They could see the benefits of offering their children rich and varied listening experiences. Some settings asked what recorded music was meaningful to the families of the children. This particular photo of one setting's Spotify list shows the results of that question. Setting staff provided various opportunities to listen to recorded music including when parents and carers dropped off and collected children, when children could express themselves freely through movement, when mark making and at meal-times. Furthermore, we asked some setting staff what particular recorded music was meaningful to them and why. Answers included:

'Sultans of swing' - it always makes me think of my Dad as he would often play this record in the house. And only a few days ago he was dancing to it with my 7yr old daughter.

'What a wonderful world ' by Louis Armstrong - I sing this song to my daughter every night.

'Butterfly fly away' by Miley Cyrus - this song is just gorgeous and is about the bond the child has with their dad. And my dad was my absolute rock when I had my child and I was at the time in an unhealthy relationship.

We then played their chosen recorded music tracks at Zoom training sessions they attended, in particular at the start whilst we were waiting for everyone to arrive - or coming back from a breakout room session. Needless to say, the individual EY practitioner's reactions when hearing their chosen tracks were sometimes incredibly emotional.

"We didn't realise before we started but many of our staff members were musically inclined, or at least interested, and we have noticed as the project has progressed that our staff team have become more confident in showing their talents!" - Setting Manager

Staff are now more trusting in letting the children explore high quality instruments. They have seen how the MLs have modelled being the child's interested play partner and given permission for the children to enjoy experimenting with the shapes, sounds, textures and materials of instruments. New, music based, language has been introduced by the MLs which is reinforced by EYPs and in turn the children.

"We are carrying out another survey on our musical environment and this is developing. We have purchased more instruments, sorted through the ones we have and shared them around the whole nursery. Instruments are more accessible to children during free play as well as during adult-led sessions. It is now a good musical environment. Music is heard much more often both planned and spontaneous. We have added more into our planning rather than using it to tick EYFS boxes" - Setting Manager

"It feels more considered, I am conscious of a clearer rationale behind the provision made available. So not just introducing instruments in circle time, but also setting up interesting and attractive opportunities to access instruments in different spaces" - EYP

"We already had this lycra but had never realized what we could do with it! This rhyme they want to repeat again and again. We reached 35 minutes with this one, it is fine to repeat it! Repetition is the mother of learning!" - EYP

Delivering virtually and adapting to Covid-19

Half way through delivery at the Willow Set in Somerset, Covid-19 restrictions came into force and the setting and MLs were forced to adapt their practice. A Zoom connection was set up with two MLs in their respective homes and a large screen at the setting. This was a new way of working for everyone, but enabled the staff to take a new lead role, with the MLs having more opportunity to observe. This was not without challenges:

- It was hard for MLs to accurately hear or see the children singing, as a result it was difficult to help them with pitch matching
- A delay on sound meant the musicians could not sing with the children
- EYPs were now leading the children with the support of the MLs: "It definitely helped with confidence, we couldn't just sit back as we were the ones on the film!" Setting Manager

"With the restrictions the way they are at present, it makes it hard for others to join with us in person. Zoom has been a good way to continue our musical journey with the children, but I prefer actual personal visits from the musicians to gain the full enjoyment with all the children as it's easier to keep them focused and fully engaged." - EYP

How is The SoundWaves Network being sustained and can the learning be embedded?

The SoundWaves Network was a time limited project and, despite a 10 session intervention with targeted CPD, the challenge has always been to embed practice sufficiently to ensure continuity and sustainability. During the project, finding time for reflection, where staff are focused outside of their main duties, has always been a challenge but felt to be highly valuable. The programme provided structured opportunities to take a step back and observe the children in their musical play.

MLs have been conscious of their enabling role and each week encouraged staff to start initiating and leading activities with the musician's support.

"I think thinking about music from training to recruitment and building a focus is so important"
Setting Manager

At St Pauls the team have developed a new staff manual, others have continued to employ musicians and actively encourage attendance at relevant new CPD events.

Setting manager explained:

"We wanted this book to be a document of what we've learnt, a document of what the children have done, but also an opportunity for CPD. Song words, an understanding of what pitch, tempo, dynamics was, the idea about how to observe and be a silent partner. The emphasis of what Roger and Eliza showed us in terms of what vocal doodling or vocal drama looked like, and how that might be encouraged. As well as some, maybe slightly more academic provocative stuff from Dr Susan Young's books. The idea of it being accessible for parents and children, but then it would also have these other layers in."



Outcome Five

To increase MLs' skills and confidence in working with EY children in challenging circumstances

Indicator: Participants agree that confidence and practice has improved, percentage of ML who say that as a result of the project they are more confident and that they have incorporated learning from the project into their practice

MLs have been at the heart of the Take Art EY team and have played a vital role in the planning, delivery and evaluation of the programme. The logistics of delivering sessions across three counties has been complex and success is reliant on experienced, knowledgeable and confident practitioners. When surveyed, all MLs agreed that both their skills and confidence had increased since being involved in the programme. Most MLs specific improvements in their skills facilitating meaningful musical play.

The ML team all now know and have seen each other's practice and many have collaborated on delivery. Five out of eight MLs are either completing or completed the CME:EC. Furthermore two were completing music education courses focussing on SEN&D. The eighth music leader - Jane Parker - who stepped in at short notice, has completed an MA in Early Childhood Music Education. Therefore all MLs had a strong desire which demonstrates a need to continually move forward in their learning to improve their practice. Three of the MLs had worked on previous programmes and were able to support other members of the team by working in pairs.

The experience of the CME:EC has acted as a key anchor point for the MLs employed on The SoundWaves Network. A shared understanding of theoretical practice, coupled with a paired approach to delivery has continued to build a positive community of learning amongst the MLs. Building in time to explore, share ideas, repertoire and session structure at the beginning of the project, as well as ongoing CPD opportunities, has meant MLs have felt supported by their peers, the Take Art administrative team and their mentor Jane Parker.

"...the chance to share expertise with music practitioners and have reflective conversations has been invaluable..."

ML comments on participating on the CME course

"I have learnt the importance of anticipation...and stepping back! I have learnt how to facilitate quality musical play and really follow the children. I have learnt good EYs music practice is not a simplified version of KS1 or 2 music."

ML

MLs - Isabel Bedford, Georgia Bourne, Jude Cummins, Amy Hardwick, Roger Luxton, Rachel Thame and Eliza Wylie have all identified increased skill development and understanding across the EYFS, EC Music development, confidence and understanding of reflective practice.



What was the significance of paired delivery?

Working in pairs the musicians were able to develop their practice through collaboration. Each ML was able to bring complementary skills, knowledge, instrument skill set and repertoire. Used to working as sole freelancers, the opportunity to access mutual support throughout the sessions was felt to be invaluable.

"It's a massive thing actually, I always found working on your own, you are your own worst enemy because you perhaps come out of a setting not knowing if that was a good piece of work or not a good piece of work. There is no reflection when working on your own, other than with your demon which is saying 'ah you could have done better!'. Working with other musicians lots of things are happening there, working with people whose skill set is different perhaps, so we are playing off of each other. There are more positives than negatives, I think the negative is if you have worked on your own for so long it's sharing...sharing ideas... it's not that we are being selfish it's just we've never had that luxury before and that's something that I definitely had to learn!! But moreover I think it's sitting and having a cup of coffee at the end of session and being able to say "That was amazing, what you did there we should develop that -" having those reflective conversations just as musicians... it's absolutely brilliant... knowing someone has got your back".

ML



At Yeovil College the impact of the project was wide felt across a number of teams including those in the baby, toddler and preschool rooms. The temptation from staff was often to enable every child to experience the project and, at times, the musicians felt stretched between agendas in the short time they had. However, MLs were able to successfully advocate for a consistent deeper engagement with fewer children as opposed to spreading themselves too thin. As the project progressed staff became more fluid with their approach taking their new skills and cascading learning from room to room, using a consistent approach across age ranges but tailored to different development needs, all with the support of the MLs.



A two way process between MLs and EYPs

The learning between MLs and EYPs was often reciprocal, with MLs gaining knowledge of how the EYFS was applied across the setting and curriculum areas.

From the setting's perspective the MLs not only brought their knowledge and skills in delivery, but with a generosity of spirit - sharing their ideas, encouragement and constantly valuing the EYPs input.

"I personally learnt as much from you as you did from us. I've come forward massively in the way I work with children over the course of this project... it's been fantastic to get your feedback.. I've learnt huge amounts and I'm always mentioning your setting wherever I go!"

ML



"...uniting our Nursery through music..."

Key themes that emerged over the 3 years for MLs:

- Co-delivery was important for MLs who are now disseminating this way of work with their Hub Leads on other projects including: applying a musical play ethos, structural changes, modelling play partners and resources
- “I have truly enjoyed working in a pair. To plan together, deliver together and reflect together is the way it should be!” ML
- MLs feel they have become more reflective, taking time to step back and notice spontaneous musical behaviours “...in short my practice has completely transformed for the better!”
- Valued working alongside a high quality mentor
- Enjoyed the change in pace, “becoming an observer as well as facilitator”
- Gaining a deeper understanding of a range of approaches including Kodaly and Dalcroze
- Increased their understanding of their own practice - through discussion, reflection and the use of video recording
- Enjoyed and valued peer support “working alongside a great mix of skilled practitioners”

Part of the MLs role has been acknowledging and where possible addressing the challenges to engagement that can face settings which include:

- Pressures on money, time and training priorities
- Lack of funding for good quality instruments and materials
- Lack of joined up thinking across staff teams
- Opportunity to building consistent relationships with staff
- Tackling ingrained beliefs that music provision is primarily adult-led
- “Getting the gatekeepers/decision makers/managers to understand what good practice looks like”
- Lack of confidence experienced by EYPs
- Tolerance around noise and disruption of setting routine

Summary

- EYPs have found that spontaneous musical interactions are **already happening** in their settings, their increase in skills, confidence and experience now means these interactions are now valued and interpreted in new ways.
- The programme has therefore enabled the adults to **listen and value** children's own ways of being musical and recognise these characteristics as part of early childhood development.
- EYPs have been **empowered with strategies** and ideas for interacting with their children in musically playful ways
- The ongoing challenges that the **EY workforce** faces including: staff wellbeing, recruitment, finances, Covid-19, child poverty, parental engagement and supporting learning gaps. These make for a complex backdrop to delivery
- The CPD programme has proved to be an effective way of engaging practitioners and significantly **increasing their confidence** to deliver high quality music as part of their daily routines
- Children have gained a sense of joy from developing and exploring musical play, new instruments and resources with willing and ready **musical play partners**
- Children have felt valued in their own right, their own contributions however small have been recognised, many have found their **voice** for the first time in their settings
- MLs have welcomed the opportunities for collaboration and feel they belong to a vibrant and **positive learning community**
- **Co-delivery** for all staff (MLs & EYs) has created learning opportunities for both those leading and carrying out observations
- Capturing on video and spending time reflecting on practice, continues to be a highly effective tool to aid understanding of children's development
- The involvement, engagement and advice from LA staff has been key to grounding the projects in their localities, acting as well respected advocates within and beyond their sector
- MLs continue to face a challenges to employment and participation as settings open up post lockdown which could affect their practice for months to come
- The partnerships with HE/FE and CREC CME:EC have been an effective way of keeping up to date with **best practice**, creating opportunities to grow the EY music workforce
- Every setting has improved its musical environment, spaces have become more enabling, with a richer variety of instruments, provocations and **evidence based approaches**
- The wider strategic partnerships, across the South West, established during The SoundWaves Network have the potential to be cemented into future programmes building and expanding to reach more musicians, practitioners and children

Methodology

- Early Years Practitioners and Setting Managers completed a pre-project survey, identifying skill and confidence levels, current music based provision, environment, training needs and any concerns. This survey was then repeated post project.
- Musicians completed a pre and post project survey again identifying skill and confidence levels, areas for concern and expectations.
- Notes from steering group meetings were recorded and used to inform the programme development and evaluation.
- Musicians recorded qualitative data via journals, plans and video which was analysed more formally by the researcher with the musician at the end of the project.
- Musicians regularly attended project meetings, the notes from which informed development and the evaluation.
- Musicians attended a post project focus group.
- Steering group members attended a focus group towards the end of the project.
- Feedback from CPD events has been captured via questionnaires and a top line analysis has been made identifying changes in confidence and skill levels.
- An environmental audit has been carried out by each participating setting, which was used as a benchmark against a repeated audit at the end of the project in each setting.
- Numbers and basic demographics of participants attending CPD events and sessional activity have been recorded via a register and weekly activity logs.

The SoundWaves Network Team



Caroline Barnes, The SoundWaves Network Evaluator, working outside Take Art's office on the report in Somerset.

Music Leaders

Isabel Bedford, Georgia Bourne, Jude Cummins, Amy Hardwick, Roger Luxton, Rachel Thame, Eliza Wylie and Jane Parker

Project manager

Jane Parker

Director of Early Years Creativity

Gina Westbrook

Settings

Lark Children's Centre, Ham Drive Nursery School, Yeovil Children's Centre, First Steps Children's Day Nursery, Rosemary Nursery School and Children's Centre, The Southville Centre BS3 Community, Freshlings Nursery, St Jude's Preschool, The Willow Set Preschool, Abacus Nursery, St Pauls Nursery School & Children's Centre, Chessel Centre BS3 Community

Partners

University of Plymouth, Plymouth Music Education Hub, Plymouth Early Years Advisory Team, Sound Foundation Somerset, Somerset Early Years Advisory Team, University of the West of England, Bristol City College, Bristol Plays Music, Bristol Early Years Teaching School Alliance

For further links to videos, case studies and The SoundWaves Network please visit www.takeart.org

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