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# RHYMES

## Reimagined

### **A Research and Development project**

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To what extent are children's centres, libraries and playgroups in England engaging parents and young children with singing and music making? Is there a need for greater support and training for practitioners and volunteers, and if so, what is the nature of the need?



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# INTRODUCTION

## Executive summary

This research project seeks to explore the extent to which children's centres, libraries and playgroups providing free or low-cost activities and support to families in England are engaging parents and young children with singing and music making. Is there a need for greater support and training for the practitioner and volunteer workforce in delivering music to families and if so, what is the nature of the need?

This area is under-researched. It falls between established funding areas in arts and education, and sits outside of mainstream education funding. With the estimated 1,000 closures to Sure Start centres since 2010, remaining children's centres, libraries and more informally run toddler groups are under increasing pressure. This reflects a much wider trend in decreasing spend on early intervention services. The workforce is low-paid and deemed low-skilled and has not benefited from consistent or high quality training, and government policy in support of working parents has tended to focus on supporting parents with the cost of childcare, to the detriment of investment into both infancy and new parenthood.

For all these reasons this topic is a critical one to explore, as families are accessing music through early years settings in what is often an unstructured, unsupported context which often means parents, children and early years leaders are failing to achieve the many social, health, early development and wellbeing benefits that musical activity has long been known to deliver.

I surveyed over 340 practitioners in England, carried out 12 observations in a variety of settings, conducted 14 interviews with practitioners, and completed a case study of the Scottish BookTrust's Bookbug music programme. In addition, I held a focus group day with 16 practitioners. My main findings were as follows:

1. Music-making activity is taking place with families all over the country in a variety of settings, and is being delivered by staff and volunteers that have generally not received any musical training or support.
2. There is a great deal of instinctive understanding from practitioners around the wide-ranging benefits of the activity for both parents and their children.
3. Delivering music activity with families presents many challenges for practitioners, but one of the major challenges across the board was engaging parents. However, parental confidence was seen by practitioners as the biggest barrier to access. Interviews with parents also brought to light that their motivation for attendance at groups doesn't always match the perceptions of practitioners.
4. There is a lack of a cohesive framework or guidance for practitioners and volunteers in England and a sense therefore that the work is not supported or valued. Observing the impact, influence and consistent messaging of the Scottish Bookbug programme highlighted this contrast.
5. There is a need for a training and resource tool for practitioners that is accessible, flexible and user friendly, highlighted through the Focus Group. Further R&D is now needed to establish the nature of this tool, and to work together with practitioners to build, test and deliver.

The research opens up many possibilities for further study including the changing role of the library as a major component of the current 'offer' for family activity in England, and the factors that have allowed the quality of provision across library services in England to vary so wildly.

But critically it also identifies practical solutions for meeting the current, and in some cases overwhelming, needs of practitioners and settings. Here is a summary of some of the main recommendations arising from the study:

- The creation or adaption of music leadership resources designed around the skills and confidence levels of practitioners, which is accessible, free of charge, user-friendly, dynamic, and which meets practitioners where they are.
- To establish an entity (whether an organisation, a network, or a partnership is still unclear) that tackles the lack of clear messaging around music making with families - and which, alongside offering practical training and resources, advocates and promotes the activity as a vital part of parenting young children.
- We've identified the need for new policy at all levels (from early years settings to government) that promotes a strong music culture in setting as well as in the home, as a vital component of education, health and wellbeing, for both babies and young children, but critically, also for parents and families.

## Background

I have been a music leader since 2010, and have recently specialised in spearheading and delivering projects with families with infants (children aged 3 and under), focusing on themes including; embedding music and singing in families; musical storytelling; song writing with parents and babies; and maternal mental health.

Inspiring parents and children to sing and make music together is what motivates me – to improve communication and well-being, and to equip parents and children to build better routines and stronger attachments. My own experience as a parent has also been influential – the first-hand experience of the way that music and song can connect, distract, change an atmosphere and create shared experiences.

I have delivered many projects that place skilled facilitators in a setting for a finite number of weeks or months, and there are clear benefits to this way of working. Despite this, as I have delivered more and more short-term projects, I have felt a growing unease with the lack of meaningful legacy for the staff left behind. At on-site training sessions with staff or volunteers, I find that generally, enthusiasm is high, but practitioners are desperate for additional resources, practical tools and new ideas to support their delivery of music and singing activity with families.

It is my belief, that to effect widespread and long-term change, we need to break down some of the barriers that exist between music specialists and non-specialist practitioners and volunteers. My experience when working with and alongside family practitioners / volunteers is that enthusiasm is high, but that practitioners are desperate for resources, practical tools and new ideas to support their delivery of music and singing activity with families. I believe that by providing access to quality, accessible and free resources, staff on the ground will be able to refresh and strengthen their existing skill base.

In January 2019 I was awarded a grant from the 'Ideas and Pioneers' fund at the Paul Hamlyn Foundation to examine this subject in closer detail, and establish whether my assumptions as outlined above, were accurate, and if so, ask the question: how can we practically aim to meet the needs of the sector?

## Rationale

There is a rich array of music and singing activity taking place with families across the UK, largely in an informal context and without the support of a clear policy framework. And despite the increasing body of research demonstrating the impact that singing can have on both parents and their young infants for well-being, mental health and attachment, there has been little in the way of musical investment in families, or to train those staff on the ground delivering music activity with families on a daily or weekly basis.

Through my experience and observations, it is clear that the staff or volunteers working in free, low-cost or drop in services for families have a vital role to play in influencing parents in their choices, especially in the initial challenging months of parenthood. This influence also arguably extends to the delivery of singing and music making, and staff, regardless of training or levels of confidence, often incorporate singing into their activity, demonstrating some recognition of its importance.

But what quality is the provision of singing and music making for families in England? And does quality affect a parent's enjoyment, and therefore their likelihood to sing and make music at home? Arguably, provision which is considered, researched, culturally relevant and takes into account the benefits for both parents and child will lead a parent to sing more and use singing in daily life. This belief is the motivation behind this project.

Music has been shown to enhance children's development across multiple skill areas including communication, speech and language, early reading, spatial skills, fine and gross motor coordination, numeracy, and in social and emotional development. Impact begins right from the very start of life. There is also a significant body of research demonstrating the benefits of singing and music-making for both parent and baby, enhancing attachment and bonding, parental well-being, and a faster rate of recovery from post-natal depression (Fancourt and Perkins, 2018). However, it is still unclear whether on the ground, this kind of research has reached early years practitioners (EYPs) working with families, working its way into practice. Also in question are the channels by which this might be achieved, as statutory general training isn't always required for EYPs or volunteers working with families and young children, depending on the setting.

I believe that the key to unlocking the power of music for families is for music specialists to empower staff and volunteers that have regular contact with families, through building awareness of the benefits, and then through the provision of quality, considered and accessible resources and training. For singing and music making activity to make a real long-term impact, ongoing access to better resources for EYPs and volunteers is needed.

I set out to test the level of training or quality resources available and to discover what, if anything, is required to raise the confidence, awareness and skills of leaders, and whether interventions in these areas could increase the effectiveness of delivery.

# Aims and objectives

1

To paint a picture of 'music' and 'singing' activity in a variety of free, accessible early years settings across England.

- *Use a survey to collect qualitative and quantitative data from ≤ 100 practitioners and volunteers about aspects of their delivery of music.*

2

To assess the need for more support for staff leading music activity in their settings.

- *Supplement survey data with observations of sessions in a range of settings followed by interviews with staff.*
- *Interviews with parents in settings will also paint a picture of their musical habits, and help establish the influence of the sessions they attend.*

3

To establish what might be needed to improve the skills, confidence and effectiveness of delivery by practitioners

- *Share findings with a focus group to explore these issues in greater depth.*
- *Undertake a case study visit to the Scottish Bookbug programme to look at a current model of 'good practice'.*

# Terms and Scope

## Terms:

- 'setting' – any place or group in which families congregate and incorporates children's centres, libraries, toddler groups, community centres, church playgroups and parent-run services.
- 'EYPs' – early years Practitioners, can apply to anyone working with babies and young children, in a paid or voluntary capacity.
- 'infants' – children aged 3 and under.
- 'music specialist' – a musician who has been trained in working in community contexts, particularly in early years, or who has built their expertise through experience working in the sector.
- 'practitioner' – an overarching term to describe any staff / EYP / volunteer that works with young children and families.

## Scope:

- This research looks at settings that provide free, or low-cost activities or drop-in services for families.
- Specialist-led music classes, franchises and childcare settings are not examined.
- The focus is on families with under 3's, though often provision is for 'under 5's', so these groups have also been included in the research.
- Settings that contribute to the survey are all within England. However, my case study examines the Scottish 'Bookbug' programme as an example of good practice.

# 2. Review of Literature

## Theoretical Framework

*A brief look at the key research that highlights the importance of the musical activity I'm examining in this R&D, both for infant, and for parent or carer. These benefits start prenatally, and continue throughout early childhood (and beyond).*

### *It begins in the womb*

Hearing is the first sense to be developed inside the womb, in the third trimester (Kisilevsky et al., 2003). Babies recognise, and respond to, their mother's voice above other voices, even straight after birth (DeCasper and Fifer, 1980). Malloch (1999) found that a mother subtly and subconsciously adjusts the rhythm, melody, and timbre of her voice, automatically matching her baby's preferences and needs. As a baby grows, it responds more to the singing voice than to a speaking voice (Nakata and Trehub, 2004), and even learns faster and begins to develop language and memory effectively through singing (Trehub, 2009).

### *Effective communication*

Researchers emphasise how singing to babies is a highly effective way of communicating. Even unknowingly, we automatically adjust the way we talk to babies, exaggerating pitch and using short, repetitive phrases – just like a lullaby (Papousek, et al, 1991).

### *Child development and learning*

There is a wide body of evidence to demonstrate that early engagement in music making or musical experience can have a beneficial impact upon young children's development (Williams et al., 2015; Hogenes, van Oers, and Diekstra, 2014), in areas such as development of attention, language, verbal memory, social skills and listening.

### *Healthy outcomes – baby*

Babies that are sung to or spoken to in a melodic way in neonatal wards show an increased rate of recovery than those that are not (Shoemark and Grocke, 2010; American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013). Singing can lead to healthier outcomes for children – one study found that a music therapist interacting with babies using 'communicative musicality' three times a week, helped them to maintain a healthy pattern of infant neurodevelopment (Malloch et al., 2012).

### *Attachment building*

Research has demonstrated the often instinctive desire of the new parent to sing or interact musically with their child, knowingly or unknowingly (Trehub et al., 1997), and it is a proven way to build strong attachment. If bonding is inhibited or compromised as a result of challenging circumstances, such as poor parental mental health, singing can play a particularly crucial role (Papoušek, 2007), providing a channel through which love and safety can be effectively communicated.

This physical and aural closeness can also invoke feelings and emotions that could later be perceived as love and confidence (Corrigall and Wilkinson, 2003) and music can therefore form the foundations of a 'secure base' (Ainsworth et al., 1978) soothing pain or sadness, dispelling fears and softening unfamiliar situations and transitions for the child.

## Wellbeing

There is a significant body of research demonstrating the benefits of singing and music-making for both parent and baby. A 2017 study demonstrated that communal singing can increase the speed of recovery for those suffering from post-natal depression (Fancourt and Perkins, 2017). Further, a study by Weinberg and Joseph (2017) showed that attending and engaging with music, by dancing or attending musical events, was associated with higher subjective wellbeing than for those who did not engage with music in these forms. The findings also emphasised the important role of engaging 'in the company of others, highlighting an interpersonal feature of music' (*ibid*, p.1).

## Existing policy, national guidelines or initiatives

*How much recent attention has been given to this field nationally, in arts, education policy and initiatives with a view to national rollout?*

### *Creative Health: The Arts, Health and Wellbeing, 2017*

This inquiry into the existing engagement of the arts in health and social care was made to make recommendations to improve policy and practice. Section 6.2 refers to perinatal mental health, and highlights the uneven provision for sufferers across the country. It highlights an urgent need to 'compensate for historic underfunding and provision in perinatal and postnatal mental healthcare'(Creative Health, 2017). 'Social prescription' is an emerging idea that is gaining traction at a government level, and which some Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG's) and GP practices are already implementing. It takes a holistic approach to health and wellbeing, working with the knowledge that sometimes art, social and cultural activities can provide solutions that conventional medicine cannot. Link workers connect people to community groups and statutory services for practical and emotional support. Arts organisation Breathe Arts Health Research in London are an example of how this can work in practice. They deliver a targeted project working with women suffering from post-natal depression and anxiety, and work with referrals from GP's as well as by visiting local post-natal services in the area to meet potential participants directly. They are now developing a model which works in partnerships with healthcare providers and CCG's directly.

### *'The Importance of Music: A National Plan for Music Education, 2011*

England's latest National Plan for Music Education states that 'Most children will have their first experience of music at school' (2011, p.3). This is a huge oversight, such a glaring error, and the document does not provide any other useful or insightful content regarding the important musical experiences that begin at the very start of life. Music doesn't become a statutory part of the curriculum until age 5, and the plan abdicates responsibility for funding work in the early years, stating that 'hubs will link with work in the early years, in some cases with hub partners drawing on funding from, for example, trusts, foundations or Youth Music that has recently launched a funding module supporting music in the early years' (*ibid*, p.10).

### *Music Development Matters (MDM) by Nicola Burke, 2018*

This report has been downloaded over 22,000 times and was created, in part, to plug the gap in the National Plan for Music Education in early years music provision. It is designed 'to support practitioners, teachers and parents/carers to see the musical attributes of young children and to offer ideas as to how they can support and nurture children's musical development by offering broad musical experiences' (MDM, 2018, p.1). The guidance is presented in the format of the non-statutory guidance document 'Development Matters' – familiar and popular with practitioners. It's a fascinating as well as practical document for practitioners.



## Look, Say, Sing, Play, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), 2019

This provides parents with 'some fun and easy tips to help you bring even more look, say, sing and play into your daily routine with your baby. Each week a new tip, tailored to your child's age, is sent via email or messaging' (NSPCC, 2019). It works on the premise that parents are responsible for the brain development of their babies, achieved through various quality interactions. Information on the website is scant, but it does state that 'positive, supportive experiences with parents and other adults are important to their brain development' (*ibid*). How effective emailed 'tips' on how to interact with your baby are in practice remains to be seen, but the prevalence of apps, emails, online advice and online content to support parents to parent is an interesting trend. Susan Young makes a point regarding these guidelines in a 2019 article, that 'these skills are detached from any connection to social context, culture, values or beliefs, and are presented as a universal set of neutral and biologically 'natural' techniques of good parenting' (Young, 2019; Jenson, 2018).

## Youth Music (various funded initiatives)

Youth Music is a publicly funded national charity investing in music-making projects that help children and young people aged 0-25 to develop personally and socially as well as musically. Early years (0-5) has been a strategic focus since it was established in 1999. Youth Music has an important role to play in advocating for investment in early years music, including workforce development and research across the UK. The website states: 'We're supporting organisations across England who are working to provide music-making opportunities for children from birth to age 5. These projects work directly with early years children in a variety of settings, and they also make an important contribution to the music education sector'. It has funded many pioneering projects for early years including some mentioned later in this review (Groundswell Arts, Take Art, Creative Futures, and Soundabout).

# Relevant research / action research

*Looking at some recent papers and research projects that have tackled the issue of music provision for the under 3's, and the practitioner's role in delivery.*

Project /author	Summary	Details	Learning
Scolding (2018). Greenwich Music School: 'Musical Beginnings' project report	Musical Beginnings is a project by Greenwich Music School (GMS) which took place in partnership with children's centres in Quaggy Development Trust (QDT), Greenwich, Autumn 2018. The project aimed to improve access to music education in the early years in Greenwich. Focus on babies 0 - 1.	It focused on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- parents / carers via a 5 week course delivered by specialists from GMS</li> <li>- swapping skills between practitioners</li> <li>- creating a tailored resource for practitioners</li> <li>- wider training session which aimed to shift the culture around music making more widely.</li> </ul>	There was a clear shift in parents, practitioners, and the wider culture. Partnership working was key to its success: 'Our multi-agency approach enabled us to effect both immediate and long-term impact, widening access to high quality music education and creating a meaningful musical legacy through skill-sharing, training and reflective practice across the full spectrum of the partnership.'
Tri-music together Project, 2016 – ongoing. Tri-borough Music Hub	Started in September 2016. Concerned about the lack of music-making opportunities for young children, the hub set up the Tri-Music Together project to provide training for early years practitioners as well as for music professionals who work or are interested in working with young children.	The initial stages of the project involved a mapping exercise to obtain a picture of current music provision in early years settings and the CPD needs of early years practitioners, teachers and music practitioners. The team then commissioned a range of training sessions in response. The second phase involved practitioners from 10 early years settings being partnered with 10 music leaders, working together for three days in their individual settings and then come together to reflect and discuss how to further support music development.	One of the major outcomes of the project was Nicola Burke's 'Music Development Matters' document which responded to a need identified through the project. Rosie Adediran was one of the music leaders on the project, and her research in a Westminster children's centre was part of the inspiration for this project. Opportunities to visit a setting, talk to practitioners and reflect are rare, so this kind of project is valuable.

# Libraries and children's centres: statistics and research

We know that libraries and children's centres have a huge role to play in the community, offering free activities, signposting and advice for new parents, and valuable social interaction at a time that can be incredibly isolating. But the current landscape of library and children's centre services for families with infants is patchy at best, and the quality of local services can be a postcode lottery. Recent statistics show that both libraries and children's centres are facing huge closures and funding cuts.

For example:

- Since 2010, 1,000 Sure Start centres – more than 30% – have closed, and those that remain offer a more limited range of services (Smith, 2018).
- There is a greater focus and pressure to reach high risk families (action for children, 2015).
- Government policy has prioritised support for parents to return to full time employment rather than investing in the months or years that the infant is at home with a parent.
- Early intervention spending falls year upon year. Local authority spending on children's centres has fallen by 35 per cent from £1.2 billion in 2010 to £740 million in 2015 (action for children, 2015).
- Early years practitioners are often paid minimum wage, and a 2018 report by the early years alliance revealed a mental health crisis in the workforce- '25% of respondents are considering leaving the early year sector due to stress or mental health difficulties' (early years alliance, 2018).
- In 2016/17, local council funding for libraries was cut by £66m, with 5% of librarians – almost 900 people – losing their jobs (The Guardian, 2018).
- Staffing is also a huge issue in libraries – last year, full-time paid library posts continued to fall, while the numbers of volunteers taking up roles in libraries surged. There are now well over three times as many volunteers working in libraries as there are full-time paid staff.

A small number of studies have examined the cultural and musical offering of libraries and children's centres for families and the under 5 age group, though this is an area that could benefit from further research. However, the studies found back up the importance of these services for new parents.

A 2008 study examined storytelling and music within libraries, and parents / caregivers perceptions of it. The research suggests that storytelling events at libraries can positively impact children, during the sessions and after, through the integration of music. They:

- expanded parent/caregivers' song vocabulary
- exposed them to using actions to songs, new ways of singing songs, and integrating songs with stories
- engaged parent/caregivers and young children in musical activities they might not have done otherwise.

A rigorous DCMS study (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport) conducted in 2018 over a year in libraries in Essex found that library-based rhyme times sessions had a positive effect on the mood and mental wellbeing of mothers. As many as 95% of mothers felt "happy" or "very happy" upon leaving a session compared to 77% when they arrived (DCMS, 2018). The sessions were attended by people from across the socioeconomic spectrum, including those living in the most deprived postcodes.

A study by Jessica Pitt in 2017 investigated the role of and rationale for parent–child (0–3 years) group music making activities in children's centres. Pitt says 'Although parent–child group music sessions appear frequently in Children's Centre activity programmes, the rationale for their inclusion remains unclear' (Pitt, 2017). The study revealed some significant differences between the views of parent and practitioner groups, as well as between parents in different age groups. Practitioners expressed more positive views about the perceived benefits of music for parents than were expressed by the parents themselves.

# Programmes and resources

As part of the process of compiling this review, Dr Susan Young, a world renowned writer, academic and commentator on music in early childhood, was commissioned to review the current resources available which support practitioners to provide music for the under 3s and families. Below is a summary of her findings.

'For each organisation, the list provides location, resources, song repertoire and the nature of the underpinning practice that informs the provision. For the most part, organisations are offering resources and materials on a national basis via a website. Occasionally these are free, more often they are for purchase. Free resources and materials are usually fairly lightweight or are offered as tasters. Training might be offered nationally using programmes, booklets and training days run by specialist staff from the organisation and typically these must be purchased as part of a training package. The review is not intended to be exhaustive, but is sufficiently thorough to be informative' (Young, 2019).

## Peepie

**Location:** Oxford based with national outreach provision

**Practice based upon:** Early childhood education

**Resources:** Detailed programme booklets available for purchase as part of training

**Repertoire:** Songs and rhymes, mainly traditional, for babies and young children

**Detail:** The programmes aim to support parents and children learning together. They are not exclusively music-based, but contain a strong musical component. Training is offered to practitioners based on the programme materials and there is also a programme intended just for parents. Peepie is a longstanding programme of national standing.

## Music One-2-One

**Location:** Exeter University and 3 children's centres

**Practice based upon:** Developmental psychology of music

**Resources:** Project report, survey findings, information sheets for parents via National Literacy Trust, and video clips on the website

**Repertoire:** Influenced by PEEP materials (these originate from a programme by Peepie for parents with a child aged 0-5), practitioners' own repertoire and the repertoire and ideas contributed by mothers

**Detail:** A short-term research and development of practice project that aimed to develop approaches in music with mothers and babies in children's centres. The survey enquired about mothers' current practices so that the approaches could emerge from and be informed by what mothers prefer, are comfortable with and already integrate into their everyday lives.

## SALTMusic

**Location:** Great Yarmouth

**Practice based upon:** Language therapy combined with community music

**Resources:** No direct resources but the project report contains valuable ideas for practice

**Repertoire:** Musical ideas emerged from the work with children, with parents present. No fixed repertoire

**Detail:** SALTMusic was an action research project based at the Great Yarmouth Community Trust. The project brings together music practitioners and speech and language therapists to support young children with communication difficulties through music-making. The team have been exploring what happens when these two groups of specialists bring together their expertise.

## Voices Foundation

**Location:** London, national and web-based resources

**Practice based upon:** Kodaly method

**Resource:** A handbook for early years practitioners that provides a practical guide for teaching music to children up to the age of 5.

**Repertoire:** Traditional 'Kodály' style repertoire of children's rhymes and songs with limited pitch. [Kodály is an approach to music education that develops musicianship through singing.] A CD is provided [but no chance to hear the recordings]

**Comments:** Would seem to be less focused on 0-3 and not on work with parent and baby/toddler groups. The focus is on learning musical skills from pre-school age and upwards.

## Boogie-Mites

**Location:** South England and web-based resources

**Practice based upon:** Not clear from the website but claims to be 'research' based

**Resources:** Complete music programmes (purchasable online), song collections and themed music workshops

**Repertoire:** Original songs by the founder – 'to expand the repertoire of traditional children's songs and to offer songs with themes that would interest the children but musical backing tracks that would interest and uplift the adults taking part'

**Detail:** A franchised approach for music sessions with parent-child groups that also offers training to settings. The materials aim to cover the whole preschool age phase, but would appear to be more focused on nursery practice and the older age phases. The approach has an emphasis on language learning, phonics and 'school readiness'

**Comments:** The songs recordings are very 'upbeat', [and in my view, generally too fast for children to sing successfully].

## SoundLINCS

**Location:** East England

**Practice based upon:** General early years practice

**Resource:** Early Ears is a 'practical and fun resource' comprising 10 colourful double sided cards. They are full of ideas for music-making activities with children aged 0-5  
Devised and designed especially for use at home

**Repertoire:** No specific

**Detail:** The overall aim of Early Ears is to raise participation in children's centres through activities that engage children and families and break down barriers to attendance.

## Babigloo

**Location:** South West England and web-based resource

**Practice based upon:** Founder Jenny Gordon with Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, and SAMP music school in Portugal

**Resources:** None

**Repertoire:** Composed songs which seem quite distinctive and, (judging by the melodic style from web-based clips) are intended to be sung to the children by the practitioner rather than by parents themselves

**Detail:** The project delivers therapeutic music led sessions to parents and babies 0-12 months. The sessions are all non-verbal, using vocal and musical rhythms combining classical music and theatre.

## Baby College

**Location:** UK-wide, a franchise

**Practice based upon:** Sally Goddard Blythe at the Institute of Neuro-Physiological Psychology (INPP) in Chester

**Resources:** Music and movement is one component of the classes

**Repertoire:** No information about repertoire on the website

**Detail:** Classes take parent and child through a unique range of activities that enhance every aspect of a child's development. Parents gain insight into different areas of early development as they participate in linguistic play, music, movement and other activities with their child.

## Sing and Sign

**Location:** Nationwide Franchise

**Practice based upon:** Communication development through signing

**Resources:** Sing and sign DVDs available on website

**Repertoire:** Typical material, light instrumental accompaniments

**Detail:** Each session includes singing and signing with social time for the parents. The session includes both family and original songs, with toys, props and pictures to 'inspire your baby's interest and illustrate the signs'.

## INTERNATIONAL EXAMPLES:

### Lullaby Link: Musical Parenting Center

**Location:** US with website

**Practice based upon:** Not known

**Resource:** Lullaby recordings purchasable from the website and a book *The Mommy Jingles Musical Parenting Program*

**Repertoire:** Traditional lullabies from different countries sung mostly a capella

**Detail:** 'Our mission and passion is to support parents, grandparents and caregivers in building and sharing the magic and music of their own voice with their babies in ways that are easy, fun and also very effective in laying the foundations for their baby's education'. The musical parenting program includes 8 video modules with musical cues for daily activities. Downloadable lyrics sheets and reminder cards help parents learn the songs.

## Sing & Grow

**Location:** Australia

**Practice source:** Music therapy

**Resources:** Sing & Grow brochures, the Sing & Grow Together CD and accompanying booklet and the *Making Music Time a Success* resource book and accompanying CD  
**Repertoire:** Sing & Grow Together CD. Selected repertoire available on YouTube

**Detail:** An early intervention music therapy programme for families with children aged 0-3 years. It is delivered by registered music therapists in local community settings across Australia to groups of up to 10 families, in 1-hour sessions, weekly for 10 weeks. Each host organisation is also provided with the *Making Music Time a Success* resource book and accompanying CD. This resource was developed due to requests from host organisations for more information and training on how to run music groups with their clients in a meaningful, fun and successful way.

## Sing & Grow continued

The resource book explores the use of musical experiences in working with families with young children. It is designed to inspire community workers to use music more effectively with their clients. Practical tips are provided to guide workers in structuring and facilitating music time, and to highlight the many possibilities and benefits of using music with families. Provision of this resource to each host organisation helps to maximise the sustainability of positive outcomes for families and build community capacity in the use of music to engage families with young children.

**Comment:** Chroma, Ross on Wye, run Sing and Grow in the UK, although the website did not seem to indicate any groups currently running.

## Bond with Baby

**Location:** Australia

**Practice source:** No specific approach

**Resources:** A website with information and music resources, 'proven to help parents gain knowledge and skills that boost happiness and the loving partnership with baby'

**Repertoire:** Mostly traditional rhymes separated into playsongs and lullabies. Words provided with audio clips

**Comments:** Variable quality of the recordings and sung with a very slow, deliberate enunciation of the words [that in my view many would find patronising and unnatural].

## The Lullaby Project

**Location:** New York City, Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute

**Practice source:** Community artists – as composers and performers

**Resources:** Information on a website

**Repertoire:** Individually composed and performed lullabies personal to the participating parents and their babies. *Hopes and Dreams*, a recording of 15 original lullabies written by parents in New York from 2011 to 2015, performed by a range of artists

**Detail:** The Lullaby Project pairs pregnant women and new mothers and fathers with professional artists to write and sing personal lullabies for their babies, supporting maternal health, aiding child development, and strengthening the bond between parent and child. The project reaches parents in healthcare settings, homeless shelters, high schools, foster care, and correctional facilities.

## The Lullaby Project continued...

**Comment:** It is now being replicated nationally and internationally. In London, see Haringey Lullaby Project (report 2014, Sydney de Haan Research Centre, Canterbury University.) and RPO Lullaby Project with refugee and migrant mothers and fathers in prison (report 2017).

## Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing

**Location:** Initially California, US – now seems to be US wide via website

**Practice source:** Psychology and neuroscience

**Resources:** Talk, Read and Sing 'tips sheet'

**Repertoire:** Not specified

**Detail:** *Talk, Read and Sing* is a public awareness and action campaign that helps parents recognise their power to 'boost their children's early brain and vocabulary development through simple, everyday actions'. Using books, parent videos, text messaging, social media, and information from expert partners, *Talking is Teaching* empowers parents and caregivers with fun and easy ways to improve their babies' learning

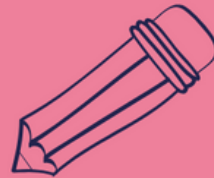
**Comment:** The NSPCC have launched a similar programme.

# 3. Methods

## Overview

### SURVEY

**342 responses** from practitioners and volunteers working in settings that support families with under 3's, who offer music or singing as part of their regular activity.



### OBSERVATIONS



**12 session observations** in varied settings, mostly in Greater London, looking at delivery style, confidence of leaders, and engagement of parents and children.

### INTERVIEWS

**14 interviews** with leaders in settings visited for observations, as well as short informal conversations with parents in each setting.



### CASE STUDY



I went to Edinburgh to visit the Scottish BookTrust and examine their early years 'Bookbug' programme. Two library-based session observations, two leader interviews and two staff interviews.

### FOCUS GROUP

**15 EYPs and volunteers** from a range of settings discussing the realities and challenges of music delivery with families in their settings, followed by plenty of 'blue sky thinking' about music delivery tools.



## Detail

### Survey

- **Communication and distribution**

The survey (Appendix 2) was designed using Google Forms, an online platform, with the support of education consultant Abigail D'Amore (Sound Connections). It was tailored to try and communicate most effectively with the target audience – non-musician EYP's or volunteers working with families in various settings.

A web page was used to direct people to the survey, with some clear information and the criteria for taking part. Drop-down FAQ's were used so the page didn't look content heavy, and the design was meant to be appealing with bright images and colours. The page was hosted within the London Rhymes website. This was because ownership and familiarity allowed fast and free publishing of the page, and some target settings were already familiar with the London Rhymes website.

- **Recruitment**

The survey was initially distributed amongst existing contacts, and the research was posted on relevant social media pages.

To widen the pool of participants, contact details of relevant settings were gathered using the internet – this process started within each borough of Greater London, searching first for details of children's centres, then libraries, and then other groups such as toddler groups, parent-led playgroups and others. This method was then repeated in counties across England by the researcher and later on, an administrator at Sound Connections. Emails (personalised where possible) were sent to each contact gathered with a link to the web page where they could access the survey. As an incentive, a list of free (and low-cost) music resources for families, as well as a poster entitled 'Sing for the win' were offered (Appendix 1).

### Observations

The survey ended with an option to opt-in to the possibility of a case study visit. Of those that opted-in, 10 session observations (Appendix 2) were conducted at 7 libraries, 2 playgroups and 2 children's centres. Sessions were usually between 30 minutes and 45 minutes long.

### Interviews

- **Parents:** Informal conversations with parents took place after the sessions. No formal 'script' was used but general questioning and the responses are listed in Appendix 2.
- **Practitioners:** Interviews with the leaders were slightly longer and more involved. A script was followed as much as possible (Appendix 3). Where possible these interviews were recorded using the voicenotes app on an iPhone 5c and transcribed. When recording was not possible/appropriate/consented to notes were hand-written and then typed up (Appendix 3). Consent forms were presented to each practitioner to be signed prior to recording.

### Case study

The Bookbug music programme is the early years offer from the Scottish BookTrust – a universal book gifting programme for all under 5's in Scotland containing books, music and other resources for families. It also offers a network of free 'Bookbug' sessions across the country, delivered by local trained leaders.

The musical resources include a new phone app, recorded tracks online, several CD's, and a website, as well as training for leaders that deliver the sessions. The Bookbug team set up two library visits in Edinburgh as well as interviews with two of their staff.

The same method applied: interviews followed the setting observations with practitioners and parents (Appendix 4)



## Focus group

The final stage of the R&D was the focus group. This was held at the centrally located Paul Hamlyn offices in Kings Cross, London.

Training was combined with focus group activities in order to attract participants. There were 15 participants, from a range of different settings. It was staffed by the project researcher Rosie Adediran, education consultant Abigail D'Amore, early years music specialist Linda Bance and creative producer Vanessa Stanstall. It was a varied day full of useful and interesting discussion.

## Ethics

Susan Young provided support in the creation of the ethics statement (Appendix 5), and, alongside Alison Street, checked over the consent forms (Appendix 6) created for the survey and the interviews. Participants were requested to complete a form prior to filling in the survey online and giving interviews.

## Issues arising

Here's a summary of some of the issues encountered when carrying out the research, in its design and delivery.

### Survey and recruitment

- Google Forms was chosen for the survey, as it was familiar, free, and seemed most suitable. However, with the greater number of responses than initially expected (342 v ≤100) using a different tool such as SurveyMonkey would have given more in-built analytics. Further, Google Forms was blocked on a number of government/council email systems. This meant someone had to be invested enough to want to respond and then email to say they could not access the survey and then be sent a PDF version. If this had been anticipated, then a caveat could have been included in the email with a pre-filled response requesting a PDF survey. Further, only two (out of 5 requested) completed PDF survey's were returned.
- It quickly became apparent that too much emphasis had been placed on existing contacts, which were music professionals (not the target audience). Furthermore, the settings that these music practitioners work in are all likely to have benefited from additional investment/support, so aren't necessarily representative of the wider sector. There was certainly a marked difference in the results from the first 17 survey responses that came via contacts in the sector. However the decision was made to keep them in the sample, as examples of settings that had a little more in the way of training/investment.
- It was hard to communicate the criteria of the research clearly. I tried to combat this by creating a drop-down FAQ section on my landing page, which laid out the criteria for participation.
- Getting in touch with the right person in the settings wasn't easy. Some counties /boroughs do not provide email addresses at all. In this case, other ways of contacting settings were used, either via central email addresses, or via searching other sites such as netmums.
- Collecting the contact details was quite a lengthy process. Some administration support was sought part way through the process, but should have been done sooner to save time.

### Observations

- Some email responses indicated that settings were not keen on being 'observed'. Initially it was thought that offering some free training or a series of recommendations for a setting used as a case study may act as an 'ice-breaker', but in reality there was not the capacity to offer this. A clearer description of these visits may have avoided settings feeling scrutinised without feedback or anything in return.
- When conducting the observations, some leaders appeared nervous. This was despite attempts to make them feel relaxed with verbal reassurance such as ' I am just here to join in', and smiling, singing and looking encouraging alongside trying to record the observations.

- It also needed to be made clearer to parents that the sessions were being observed at the start of each session, and this did not always occur.

### **Interviews**

- Interviews with parents were tricky, as they were understandably keen to leave straight away, and were obviously distracted. As a result, the conversations often felt quite rushed with lots of distractions. In future, better support from practitioners to ask parents and set conversations up in advance would be useful.
- As the settings varied so greatly, it was not always appropriate to record using a mobile phone and in some cases, practitioners didn't want to be recorded.

### **Focus group**

- In the preparation of the day, there was concern about getting the balance right between championing the group in what they were currently doing and encouraging them to think about ways that they could improve and grow.
- At first, recruitment of the 15 participants wasn't easy. Then, with advice from Nicola Burke, it was tweaked it to become a joint 'training and focus group' day. This increase the response rate significantly to allow the focus group to run at full capacity.

# 4. Results

## Survey

### a) Picture of music activity in England

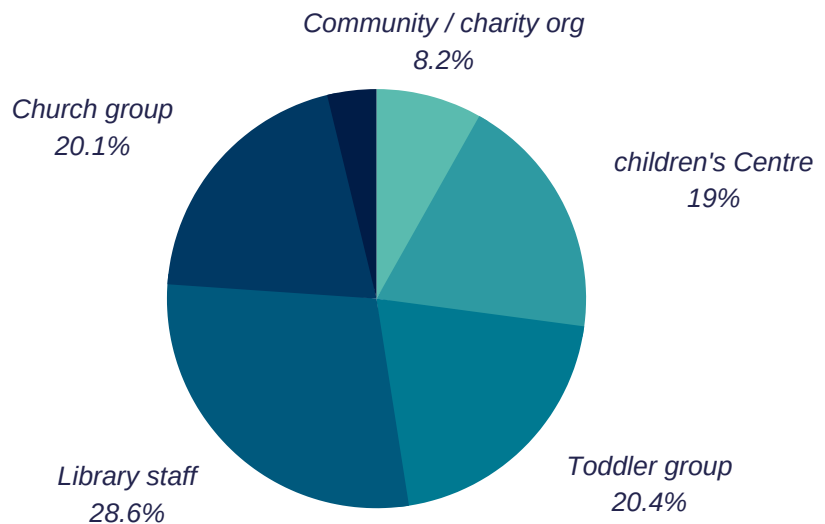
There were **342 responses** to the practitioner survey.

28.6% responses came from libraries, but in total, over 40% of respondents were toddler groups or church-run playgroups.

Music activity was run regularly in all the groups targeted. 93% stated that they run regular music activity with the families that attend their setting, 77% of which run music as a part of every group that they run.

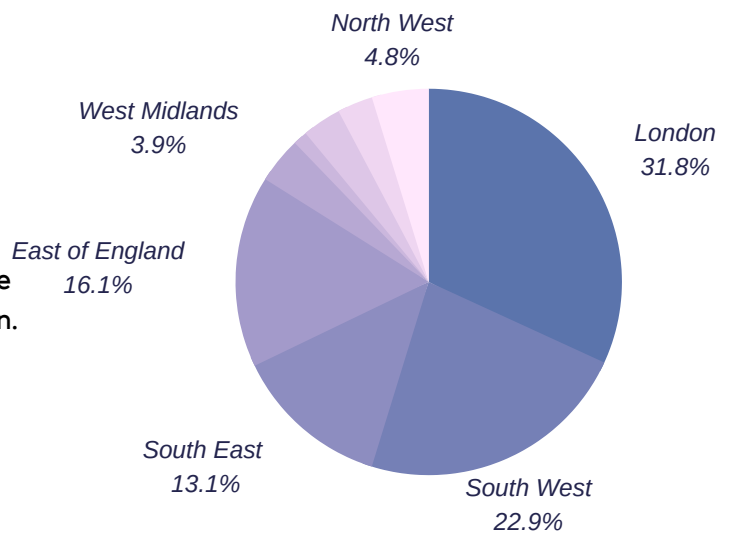
Settings were often reaching large numbers of families every week. Children's centres and libraries reached the most families per week: 65% of the children's centres and 40% of the libraries work with over 50 families per week

#### Setting type

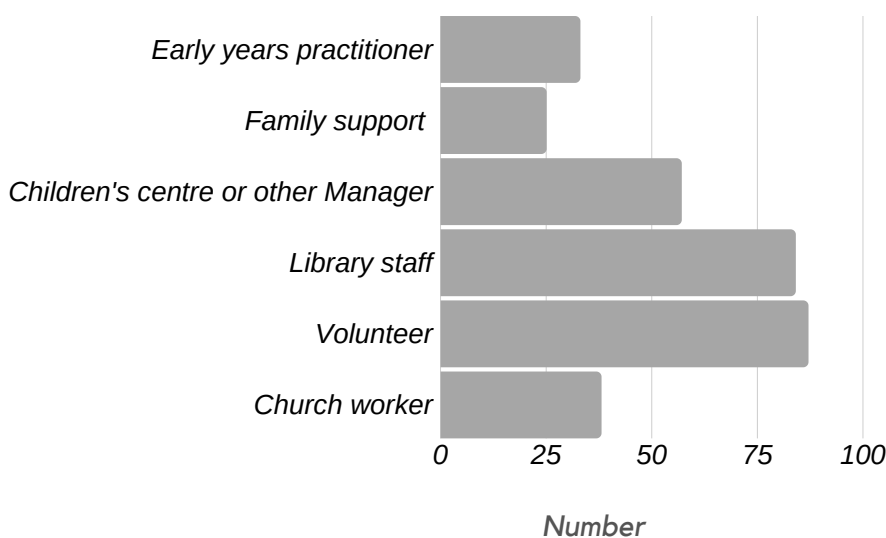


#### Setting location

Location of respondents: whilst more groups in London were contacted (31% of respondents came from Greater London), groups all over England were targeted, and responses received from every region.



#### Role of respondents

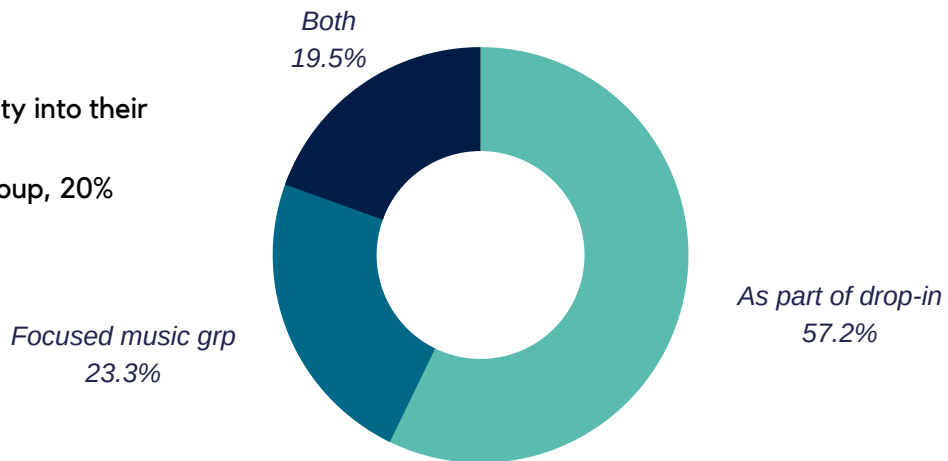


Volunteers were the biggest respondent group, followed closely by library staff and managers.

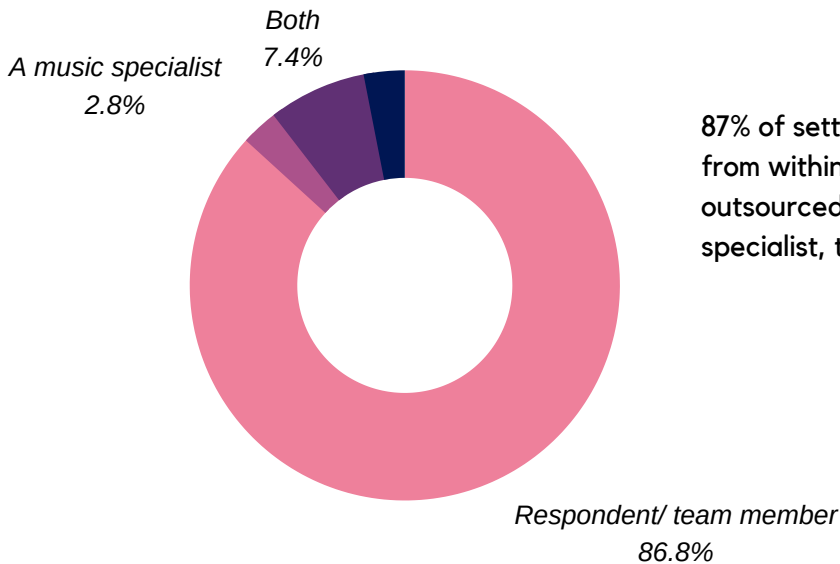
In hindsight, the categories offered gave slightly ambiguous results, and in reality, several categories can apply to a role. However, this gives a guideline, and the prevalence of volunteers is interesting.

- 57% of settings incorporated music activity into their regular drop-ins
- 23% offered a focused music-making group, 20% offered both.

### Nature of sessions



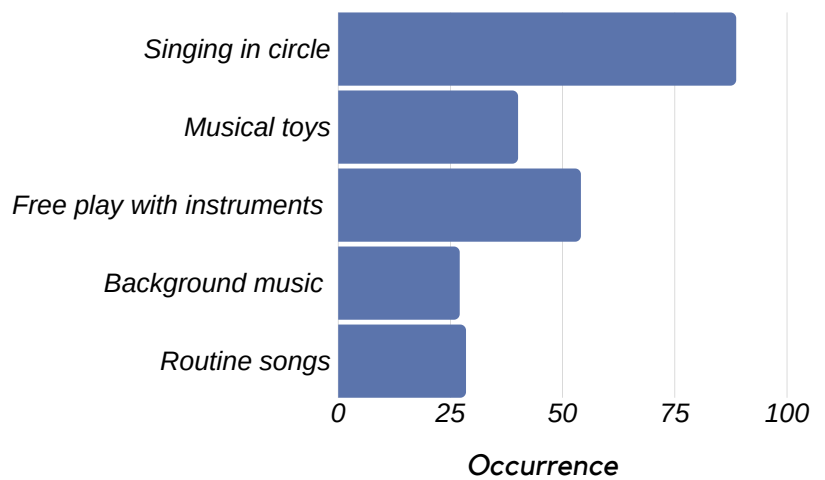
### Session leadership



87% of settings were leading music activity themselves, or from within their own team compared with 2.8% who outsourced their music programme to an outside music specialist, though 7.4% did both.

The most common activity cited by settings is 'singing in a circle', with 88.6% of respondents choosing this option. 'Free play with instruments' was also a popular choice, though this was undefined in the survey, and could have been interpreted very differently.

### Activity type



### Popular songs

The survey asked respondents to name two songs they'd used in the past month in their groups. The purpose of this question was to try and ascertain examples of respondent's 'go-to' songs – the ones that spring to mind in an instant when asked.

The song cited the most times at 21% was Wheels on the bus. Other favourites included (in order of popularity), Sleeping bunnies, Wind the bobbin up, Row your boat, Twinkle twinkle little star and Old MacDonald.

In summary, the survey results in this category seem to paint a picture of an active workforce across a range of settings, with practitioners incorporating music and song into their sessions and delivering it predominantly themselves, without the input of outside specialists. There was a strong response rate from more informal settings such as toddler groups and church-run playgroups, many of which are led by many volunteers. This was particularly true for regions outside of London (especially rural locations) where these groups seem to play a particularly important role in the local community. The participation of such a large proportion of volunteers suggests a) that as set out in the rationale, informal, volunteer-led settings are playing a big part in the delivery of music for families, and b) that there is a great deal of enthusiasm and passion for the work, regardless of whether the role is a paid position or not.

## b) Skills, confidence and enjoyment of practitioners

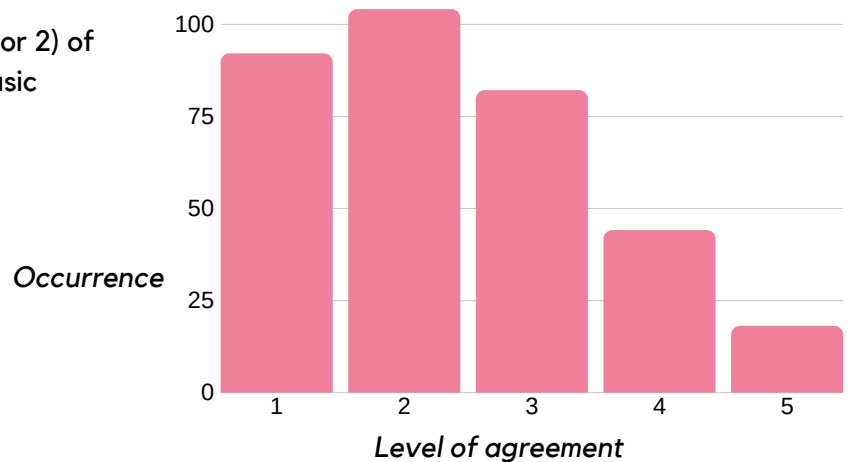
How do practitioners / volunteers feel about their music delivery with families? What challenges do they face, and what are they currently accessing for support and resources?

Respondents were given a statement (below) and asked to pick from a linear scale of 1 - 5 (1 being the most agreement, and 5 the least.)

### Skills

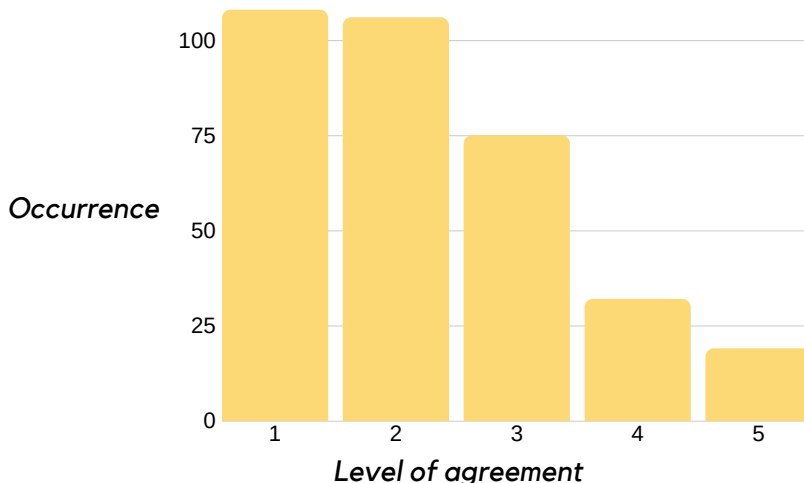
*'Staff have skills and knowledge to deliver music activities and singing'*

57% of respondents had high levels (option 1 or 2) of perceived skills and knowledge to deliver music activities and singing.



### Confidence

*'Staff have confidence to deliver music activities and singing'*



63% of respondents were highly confident or confident in their delivery of music activities and singing.

## Enjoyment

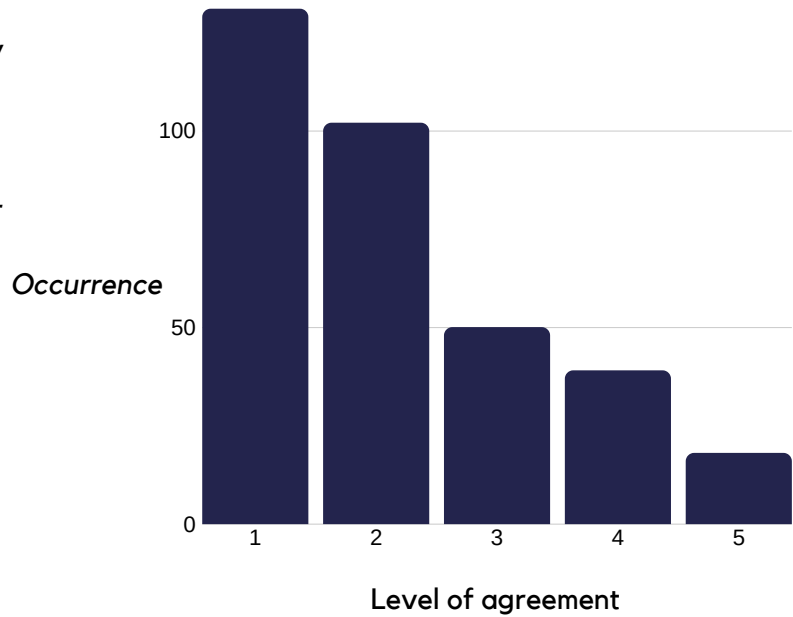
'Staff enjoy delivering music activities and singing'

68.5% agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed delivering music activity.

Scores for enjoyment were higher than for skills and confidence.

As a comparison:

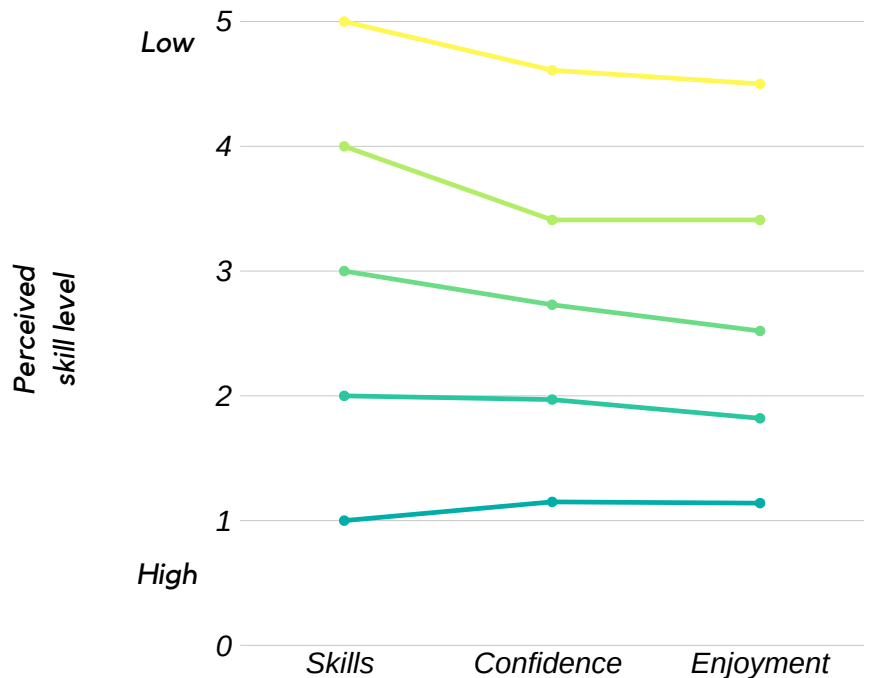
- Skills: 57% chose option 1 or 2
- Confidence: 63% chose option 1 or 2
- Enjoyment: 68.5% chose option 1 or 2.



## Link between skills, enjoyment and confidence

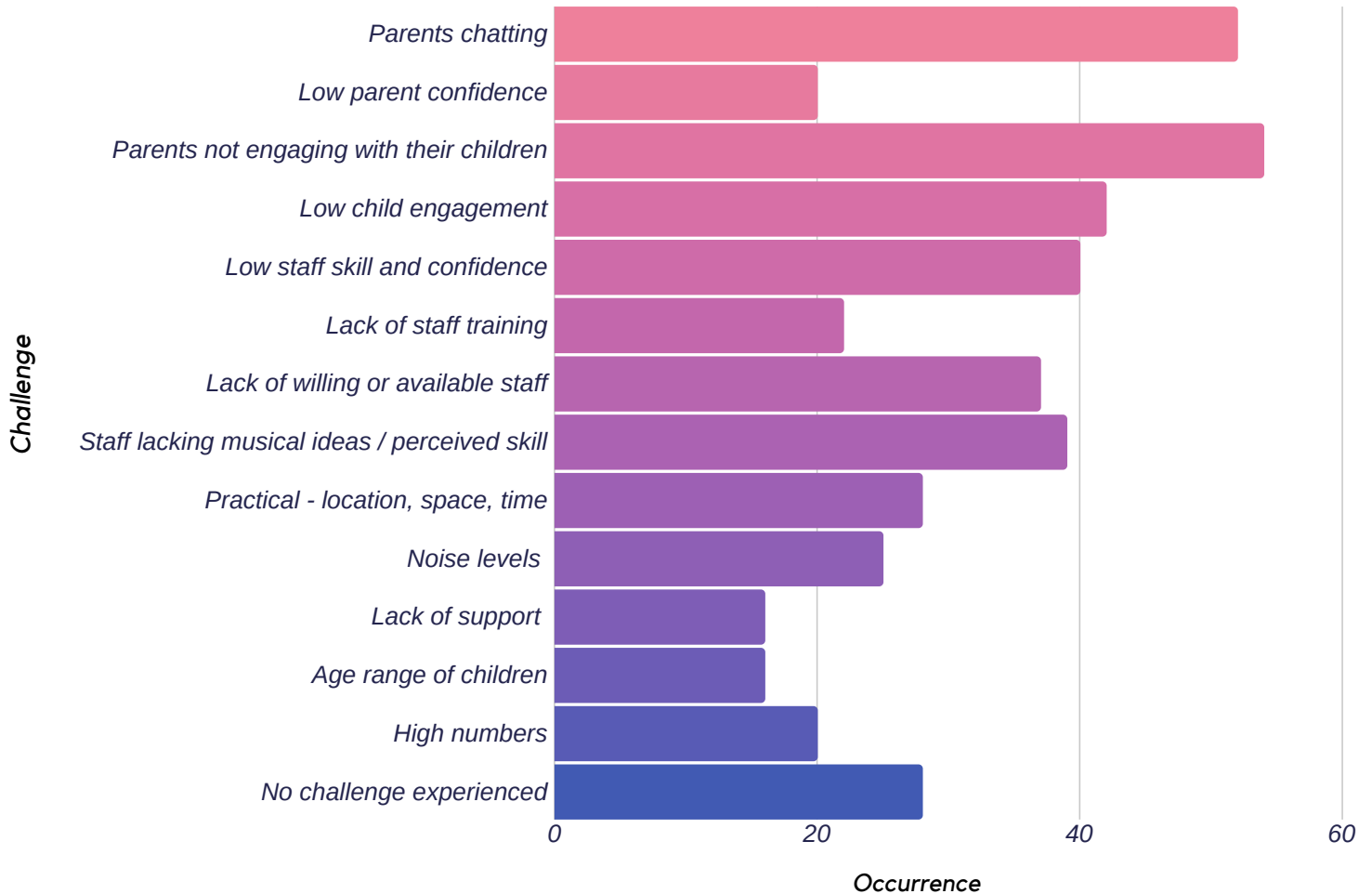
There is a clear link between levels of skill (perceived), enjoyment and confidence, as demonstrated in this graph.

Respondents who believed they were skilled, also reported high confidence and enjoyment. Conversely, those who reported low skill levels, also scored low for confidence and enjoyment.



## c) Challenges faced by practitioners

This was an open question in the survey. Most respondents cited more than one challenge in their answers.



The biggest single challenges cited related to parents – chatting, confidence and not engaging with their children during the music session – were mentioned a total of 126 times (out of a total of 439 total cited challenges – 29%)

Some quotes from the survey:

- *"Encouraging parents to sing up!"*
- *"Parents taking. Children with behavioral issues"*
- *"When adults don't join the singing but chat within themselves"*
- *"Embarrassed singing from parents"*
- *"It can be difficult to engage some parents. They sit and fiddle with their phones, ignoring their child"*
- *"I really struggle with adults chatting to one another instead of engaging with their children".*

There were also various challenges mentioned relating to staff – more than 138 occurrences (31%). Major themes emerging were: staff lacking confidence, ideas and perceived musical skill, a lack of willing or available staff members or volunteers, and a lack of training. Some examples from the survey:

- *"Only a small percentage of staff are able to deliver sessions"*
- *"My colleagues don't like doing the music!"*
- *"None of the group are confident singers and I've often been told I'm tone deaf"*
- *"Staff members don't/can't sing and don't feel confident to do so"*
- *"We only sing the same songs and very little creativity with any other form of music"*
- *"Staff confidence is a huge barrier and finding staff willing to deliver story and rhymetime sessions with songs and music is sometimes challenging"*
- *"I love working with children and families and sang to my own child recently but I have no musical background, am pretty much tone deaf and have little confidence performing. I think this probably shows and puts some people off"*
- *"I can't hold a tune, but it's more about enthusiasm than skill"*
- *"We are a volunteer run charity. Nobody wants to sing"*

Other challenges cited related to disengaged children, noise levels, lack of support on a wider level, English as an additional language, the range of ages that can show up in a drop-in, as well as the practical difficulties of knowing what recorded music they can play without a PRS license.

- *"As a drop in, I never know who will turn up, so planning for different age groups can be difficult"*
- *"Crying babies!"*
- *"Sometimes the kids aren't interested in singing"*
- *"Introducing new songs, also lots of non-English speakers"*
- *"Lack of understanding from senior management"*
- *"No PRS license, so I can't play recorded music".*

In comparison, 8% of respondents stated that they didn't experience any challenges.

- *"No particular challenges. Our group has been running for 29 years using the same format and same songs. Now grandparents are returning with their grand children"*
- *"None - it is a very short, relaxed, do it if you want to, session".*

When looking at challenges by setting type, library staff cited the challenges of 'lack of staff training' and 'staff lacking musical skill' more than the other setting types. However the numbers aren't high enough for this to be of statistical significance.

## **d) Parental engagement**

One key area of interest was to find out how practitioners perceive parental engagement in their sessions. Libraries had the highest average scores for parental engagement – with an average score of 1.9 (1 being highest engagement, and 5 the lowest).

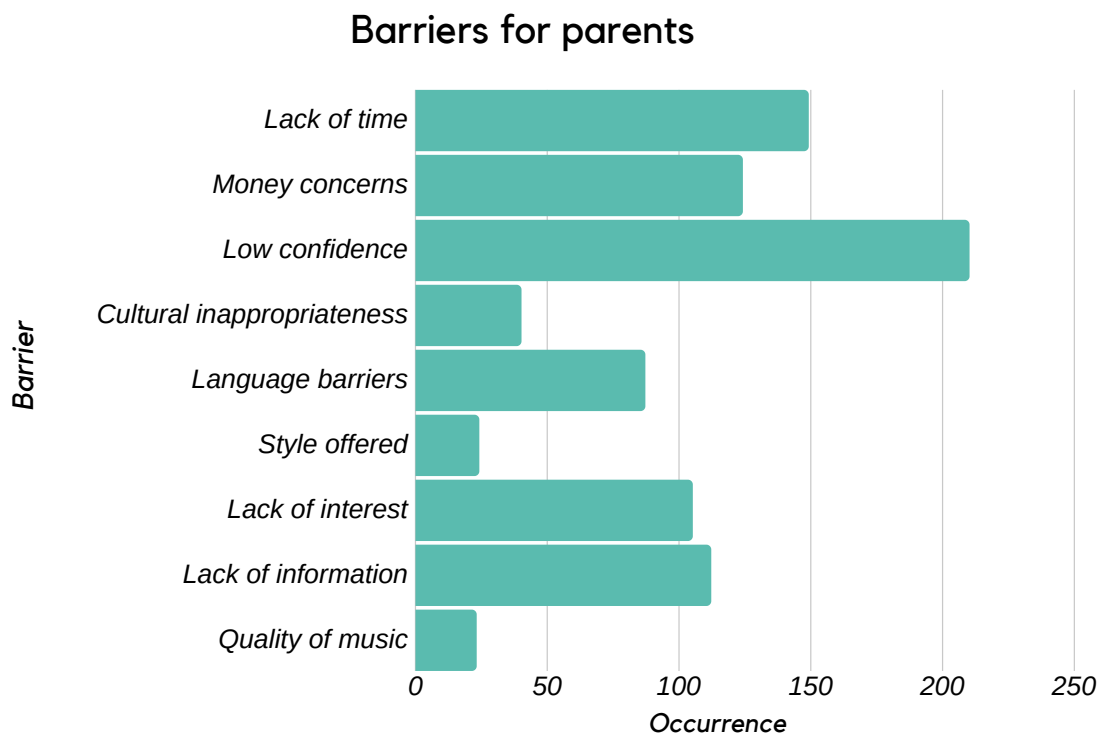
Children's centres had the lowest average perceived parental engagement scores, of an average of 2.8.



## Summary of parental engagement

Setting type	Average perceived parental engagement score (1 = highest, 5 = lowest)
Libraries	1.9
Charity / community groups	2.4
Playgroups / toddler groups	2.5
Children's centres	2.8

Connected to this, I was interested to know what practitioners / volunteers identified as being the main barriers for parents' engagement in music activity. From a list of tick boxes, practitioners picked the barriers that applied to their perception.



'Low confidence' was the leading barrier identified by practitioners – chosen a total of 210 times (24%). The next highest was 'Lack of time' – 149 times (17%). Options such as Style of music offered and Quality of music offered were the two least popular options, at just 23 and 24 (under 3%) respectively.

## e) Awareness of the benefits

I was interested to find out how practitioners / volunteers perceived and articulated the reasons behind their music delivery – the benefits for both the parents and their young children.

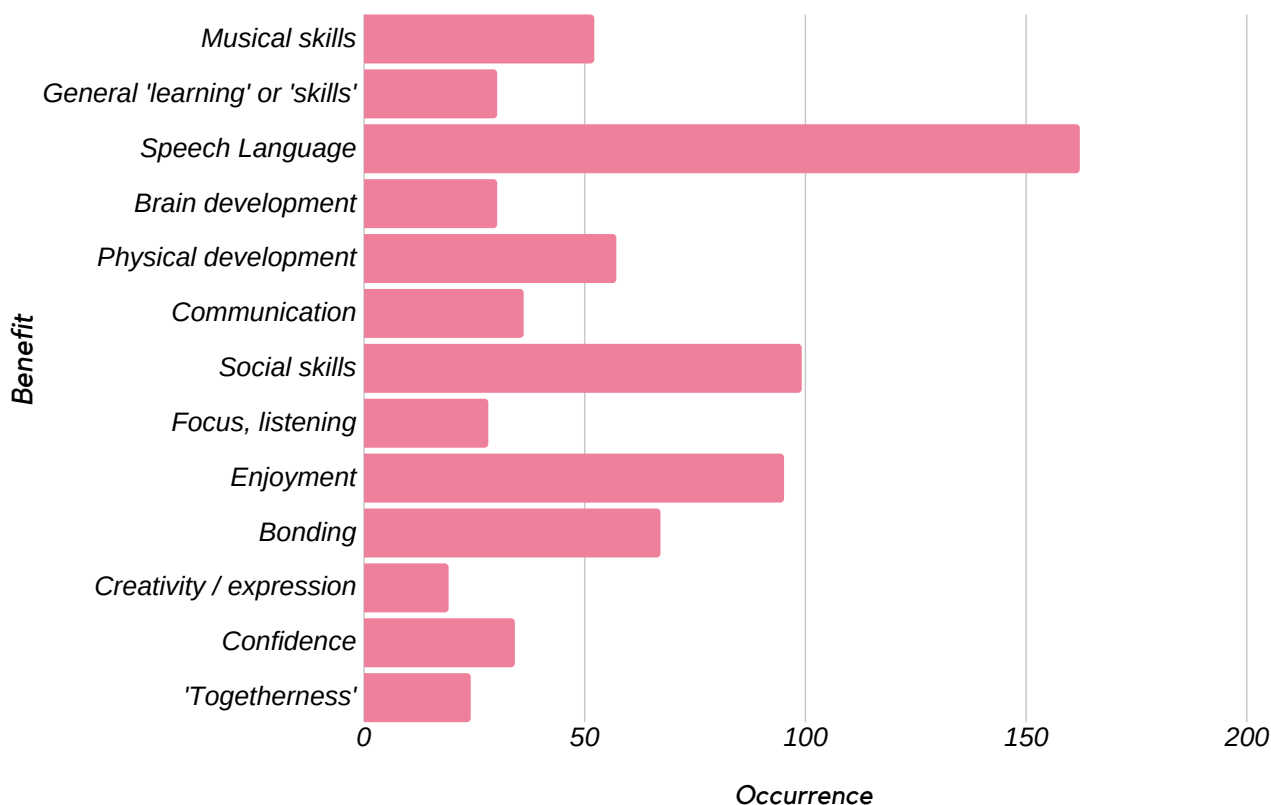
### Benefits for infants

There was a huge array of benefits cited in this open question, with clear themes emerging in the answers.

- Speech and language development was the most cited benefit, mentioned 162 times (20%).
- Social skills and enjoyment were also cited over 90 times each (11%). Bonding and attachment were mentioned 67 times (8%).
- Musical skills (rhythm, singing skills etc) were mentioned a relatively few 52 times (6%) with responses relating to the development of creativity and expression mentioned 19 times (2.5%).

This chart which summarises the major themes emerging from the survey relating to benefits of music activity for infants.

### Perceived benefit of music activity for infants



Some examples taken from the survey:

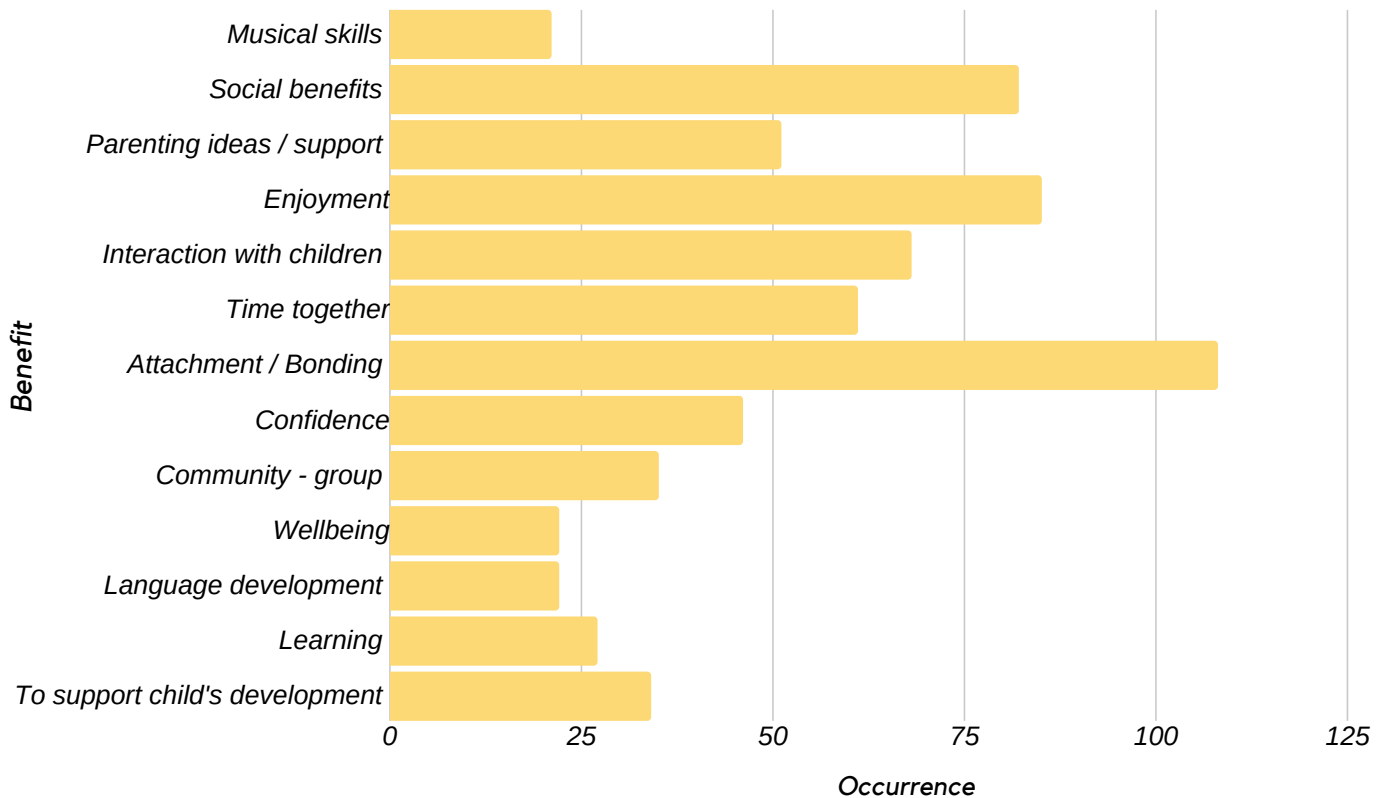
- *"They learn to enjoy singing and music making and hopefully will have less inhibitions as they grow older"*
- *"The physical bonding actions... Sheer fun of being active ie bouncing, rowing, stretching etc"*
- *"Repetition helps with language development, cognitive and physical development"*
- *"Helps them with confidence. Fills them with joy. Develops engagement. Interacting"*
- *"Having fun, bonding, acquiring language".*

### Benefits for parents and carers:

- For parents and families, bonding and attachment with their babies was the most cited benefit, mentioned 108 times (15%).
- This was followed by the opportunity for parents to socialise with other parents (mentioned 82 times [11%]) and enjoyment (mentioned 85 times [12%]).
- Interaction with their children (mentioned in 10% of answers) and Quality time with their children (9%) were also valued.
- As with babies, enhanced musical skills weren't valued as highly – appearing in just 3% of answers.
- In addition to the most frequently cited benefits for parents and families, other ideas emerged such as: connecting to local or cultural history and traditions, giving parents ideas and skills to use at home, wellbeing benefits, and developing their English skills.

Here is a chart summarising the major themes emerging:

### Perceived benefits for parents and families:



Some examples taken from the survey:

- *"It's an activity that gives the family members a different way to engage with their child in a meaningful way"*
- *"Bonding with their children, feel-good factor of singing"*
- *"Doing something together, strengthening their bond"*
- *"Interaction and building positive relationships".*

### Summary

Here is a summary of some of the benefits mentioned – those unique to infants and to parents and families, and some of the crossover in themes.

#### Children

Speech and language  
Brain development  
Physical development  
'Togetherness'  
Focus, listening skills  
Communication  
Memory skills

Musical benefits  
Fun  
Social benefits  
Confidence  
Connecting to culture  
Bonding

#### Parents / families

Interaction with child  
Quality time together  
Parenting ideas / skills  
Wellbeing  
Learning  
Community building  
Language (English)  
Relaxation  
To be able to support child

## f) Training and resources

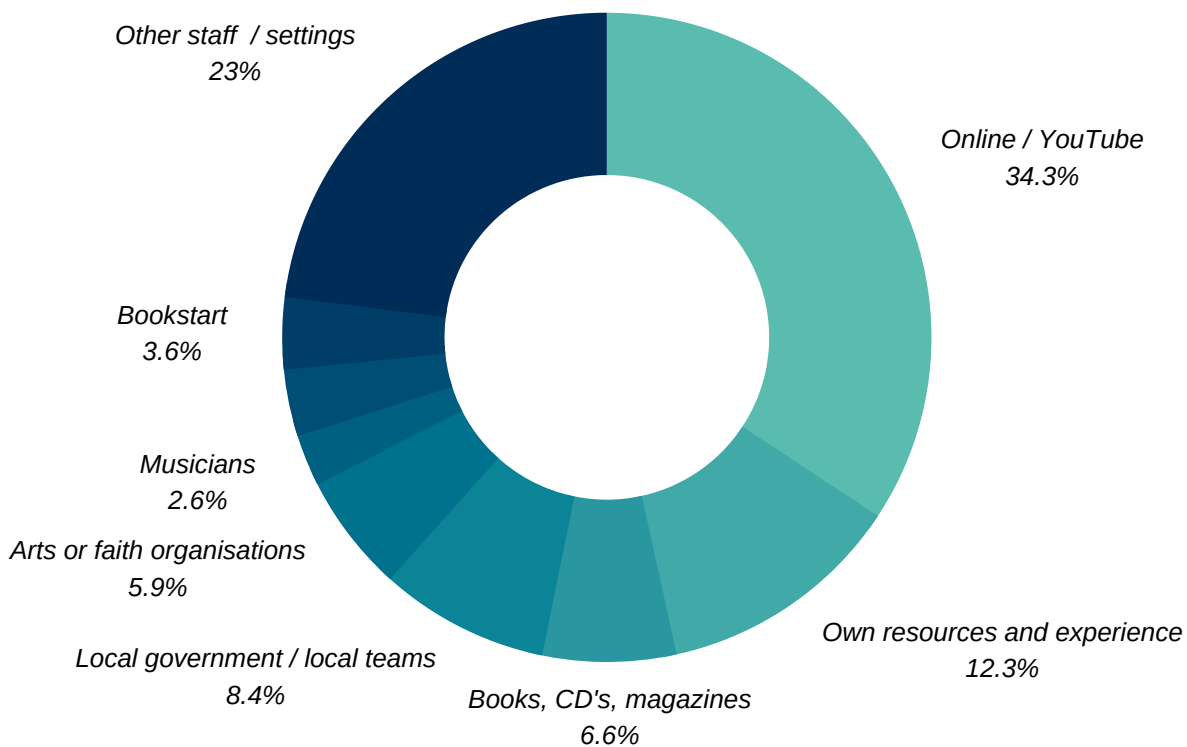
78% of practitioners have received no training or support in their music delivery in the past two years.

Of the remaining 22% that *have* received support or training:

- 29 practitioners (15 of which are from children's centres) have received training from a music specialist
- 16 practitioners (13 of which are from libraries) have conducted their own in-house training or support
- 9 practitioners (6 of which are from libraries) have received training from an early years specialist that incorporated a musical element.

An open question asked respondents to elaborate on where they'd go for ideas, support or resources for their music delivery. Most respondents offered more than one idea in their answers.

### Where do you go for musical ideas, support or resources?

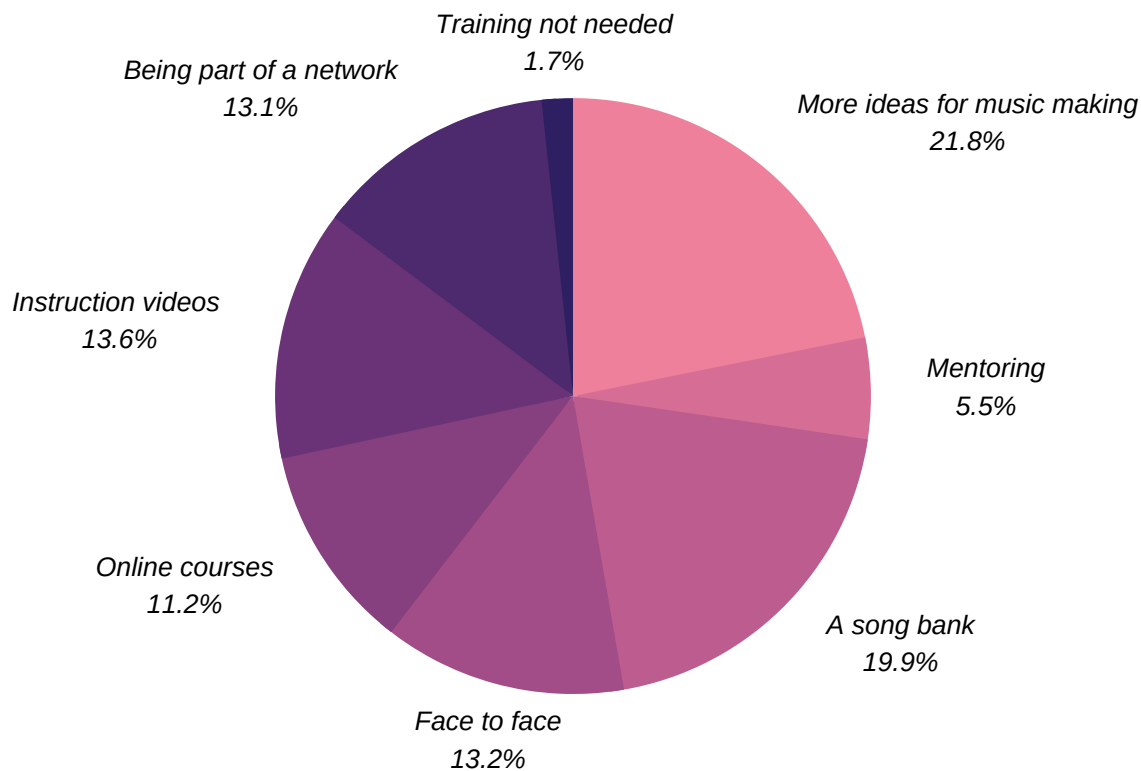


Online (including YouTube) was the main resource at 34% of total responses citing this option. Just 6.6% used printed/recorded materials including books, CD's or magazines. 12.3% (44 respondents) said that they relied purely on their own experience/resources. Just 2.6% said that they'd turn to a musician specialist for support, ideas or resources.

## g) What is needed to improve the skills, confidence and delivery of practitioners/volunteers?

This question was explored predominantly through case studies and the focus group, but one question in the survey sought to explore the kinds of tools that would support practitioners in their music making. Respondents could choose from multiple options.

### What is needed to improve your confidence and skills?



- 'More ideas for music making' came out on top at nearly 22%, followed by a song bank at 20%.
- 'Mentoring' was the least popular option at just 5.5% of answers.
- Nearly equally popular were the options of 'face to face training', 'instruction videos', 'being part of a network' and 'online courses' (ranging from 11.3% and 13.6%).
- 'Training not needed' came out at just 1.7% of responses. For example (taken from the survey): *"We only sing nursery rhymes so don't really need training"*.

### Summary

Findings relating to training, resources and ideas for music-making were mostly as expected. There had been very little in the way of training for practitioners in their musical delivery. Online and YouTube are the major source of ideas and resource. There were no major themes in terms of other resources used by practitioners (no single book, website, or training scheme stood out in the results) and practitioners were most enthusiastic about the idea of 'more ideas for music-making', and a 'song bank' to improve their skills and confidence.

# Observations

A total of 12 music sessions were observed (Appendix 2) in various locations and setting types. The following areas were looked at:

- type of activity
- leadership style and levels of confidence
- practical considerations (numbers, layout and the space)
- props and resources used
- response from parents and the children.

Below is a brief summary of my findings, grouped into five of the themes that stood out – musical leadership, resources, group sizes and structure, age range, and content and material. Please see Appendix 2 for complete notes on the observations.

## Musical leadership skills

The sessions were delivered by either library staff or early years practitioners, rather than a 'music specialist'. Despite this, in two visits, it was clear that thought and time had been given to some of the musical elements within the session – for example, pitching, repetition, counting in clearly, and adjusting tempo and dynamics. Similarly, in children's centres 2 and 3, there was some really thoughtful practice by experienced rather than 'trained' staff. They had, over time, developed their skills in-house, through practice, instinct and from observing other staff members. In library sessions 4 and 5, staff were highly supported by the borough early years team and there was a clear confidence in the leadership style of these sessions which was reflected in the engagement of parents and infants.

Some of the library sessions observed didn't show the same awareness or thoughtfulness of practice, though enthusiasm wasn't in short supply. Leaders in libraries had developed their own 'style' and methods for leading the sessions, and showed a passion for the activities and for the local following that they had developed.

## Resources

There was a huge disparity between settings when looking at the resources available to practitioners in the sessions, and their confidence in using them. There was only one library service which was well equipped with resources such as percussion instruments and sensory elements like scarves, bubbles and lycra – this library was within a borough with a dedicated early years team, and a coordinator committed to raising funds independently for additional arts and music projects in the borough despite central funding cuts. Compare to that another London borough library service whose sessions are the same each week (consisting of the songs on a Bookstart CD which is played from beginning to end), you can see the disparity between the libraries, depending on the borough. In Scotland, where the Bookbug sessions are delivered within the Scottish BookTrust framework and supported with training and resources, there was less disparity in the provision across the different settings I visited. There was also a tangible sense that these sessions were part of a bigger framework.

## Group sizes

In two library visits, the high numbers and the unsuitability of the spaces were detrimental to the enjoyment and the quality of the experience for parents and their children. Conversely, the sessions where the numbers were restricted were where best practice was observed, and provided a safe, nurturing and inspiring space.

## **Age range**

Most 'Rhyme time' library sessions and many 'stay and play' playgroups / drop-ins seem to cater for 0-5's broadly. This is a vast age gap and is a hard task to engage a 6-month-old and a 5-year-old with the same activity. The sessions that had restricted the age range of participants (or who offered a range of more targeted sessions) were the ones in which high engagement from parents and children was observed. This was the case in the two children's centres visited, where there was a broader offer of activities throughout the week than libraries or playgroups are able to offer.

## **Content and material**

In many of the library sessions observed there were a large number of songs sung, some extremely fast and with little repetition. Library sessions 4 and 5 were the exception to this where the age ranges were limited, and there were songs that were more targeted and appropriate for the children and parents present, rather than a long list of more general 'nursery rhymes' sung one after the other.

In both of the children's centre observations there was clear thought given to songs encouraging interaction between parent, carers and children, with songs used specifically to facilitate this, using tickles for example, or encouraging face to face interaction.

In terms of repertoire, most sessions used a standard nursery rhyme repertoire. The exception to this was library session 5, and both children's centre observations, where a more diverse range of repertoire and recorded music was used, and even the more 'standard' material was used in a more imaginative way.

# Interviews

Thirteen staff interviews were conducted with the leaders observed in each setting. One or two parents per setting were engaged in a more informal chat, and sometimes sitting in an informal group. These were often cut quite short due to the needs of their children who were often restless at the end of the session. Please see Appendix 4 for a full breakdown of the responses.

## Parent interviews

Here are some of the categories of questioning, and key themes emerging from their responses.

### Reasons for coming

#### a) Social benefits – both for parents / carers and their children:

- o "it's good for her to be involved with other children – she spends most of her time with me"
- o "meeting other babies, building their skills"

#### b) Something to do / structuring the day

- o "it's the only thing on at a convenient time"
- o "it breaks up the morning, gets us out the house"
- o "she sleeps afterwards"

#### c) Convenience and accessibility

- o "it's free"
- o "paying for a 6 week block is too hard to commit to"
- o "it's an ideal location"
- o "there are no other music groups in the area"

#### d) Quality time with child

- o "time to spend with just her"
- o "gives me 40 minutes to enjoy time with them, no distractions"

#### e) Child's learning, enjoyment and development

- o "I thought it was pointless at this age, but he's already learning to clap"
- o "they get familiar and start to recognise the songs"
- o "an opportunity to find out how they (children) respond"
- o "I see all the milestones"
- o "she knows what sound a duck makes, because of the song"

#### f) Musical

- o "learning the songs – it jogs my memory"
- o "the songs are lovely"

#### g) Ideas for home

- o "we sing the songs through the day"
- o "learning routines"



**For sessions held within libraries, there were other benefits related to books and reading - for example:**

- "coming to the library for the sessions means that it's become a habit and we read a lot"

**Other reasons, mentioned with less frequently included:**

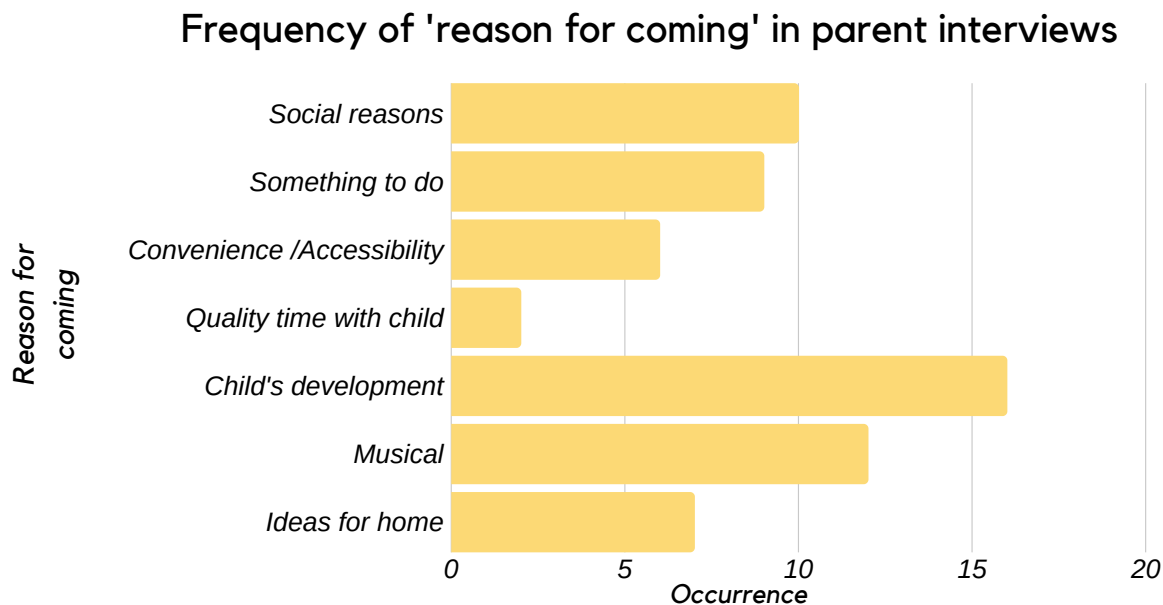
- "I come to be in an English speaking environment"
- "I come to escape"
- "It's good for my mental health"

Even for the parents that had less than positive things to say about the sessions, the benefits seemed to outweighed the negatives.

- "it's a bit rubbish, and is the same in all the libraries in the borough but it's free and gives structure to the day"
- "we used to have people from the children's centres leading but now we don't"

### Overview

Here is an summary of the frequency of each 'reason for coming' cited by parents across all of the parent interviews:



Comparing the parent interview responses with the practitioner survey responses there are some correlations and contrasts:

- the social benefits of group music-making were recognised by both parents and practitioners / volunteers.
- observing child development, enjoyment and learning was a more prominent theme from the parents than the practitioners
- bonding and attachment and interaction with children featured highly in practitioners ideas around the benefits of music-making for parents, but this was not reflected in the parents responses
- quality time, which is often a euphemism for bonding and attachment, was cited by parents, but was the least cited benefit
- parents placed great value on a session's ability to give structure to their day, as well as values around accessibility and convenience (location, timing and cost) – these elements were not mentioned by practitioners
- language development was the biggest benefit of music making cited by practitioners for babies and young children. This was not mentioned explicitly by parents, however, it could be included in the 'child development' category which was the highest cited benefit with reasons including song and sound recognition which fall under language development.

## Leaders / practitioner interviews

A look at the themes emerging from the interviews with leaders by setting type. Below are the major themes arising from interviews conducted in i) libraries, ii) children's centres and iii) playgroups. Note that the Scottish library interviews are not covered here – but in the next section (Case Study). For transcripts please see Appendix 5.

### Library staff

#### 1) Background of leaders

The librarians that I interviewed who were leading music sessions had come to the role through their librarian work.

- One had a retail background but had always played the guitar. Another described how singing had helped him through happy and sad times in his life.
- Two librarians had been running the rhyme time sessions for 10 - 12 years. One had little experience, and was a volunteer in the library.
- Another had been a librarian for most of her working life and had increasingly been expected to do some of the work with family groups.

*"When I got promoted to assistant manager, I had to know how to do everything." Library Interview 1*  
*"It's a release from the day to day. Singing helped me when I got ill". Library Interview 2*

One librarian had been leading sessions for 15 years and whilst had started off feeling reluctant, had grown a passion for it over time as he realised its importance for the library service:

*"0-5's are really important for the library. You need to have the willingness." Library Interview 3*

#### 2) Training

There was a greater disparity when it came to discussing training. Whilst the children's centres and playgroups saw a need for and value in training, the library staff firmly believed experience gained 'on the job' was more valuable, three even saying there was no need for training and it was potentially 'not useful'.

*"It comes naturally, doing 3 sessions a week you get used to it." Library Interview 1*

*"Once you've done it, its (training) not useful." Library Interview 1*

*" It helps to a degree but you have to practise." Library Interview 2*

*"We've received no training. It's more of a gut feel. " Library Interview 3*

Storytelling was something that two of the leaders had been trained in, but many years ago:

*"We had some storytelling training but it was before 2010." Library Interview 3*

One of the librarians had received some training, but still valued practical experience.

*"We had half a day's formal training from the early years team. Then we learnt on the job and that's what prepares you. You start slowly and build." Library Interview 4*

#### 3) Challenges

##### Staffing

Librarians cited staffing challenges much more than in the other settings (not enough staff being willing, not having enough staff to deal with the numbers).

They need to be increasingly flexible, with the 0-5 and families age group often being the primary user group of the library. This was something identified in the majority of the libraries visited. Many librarians lack the confidence to take up the role, and so the pressure was put on just one or two staff members to deliver – *"It'd be nice if more staff could do it"* (Library interview 2). This tallies with the results of the survey, where library staff cited staffing challenges more than any other group.

*"Even staff that have been there for a long time (e.g. of a staff member who's been there 30 years) struggles with confidence to give it a go."* Library Interview 1

*"Librarians have become community workers"* Library Interview 1

*"New library staff aren't that keen. it's daunting, they feel like they're performing"* Library Interview 2

### **Space**

Sometimes open plan libraries, especially in urban locations are not safe spaces for families. This is exacerbated by the numbers that can come through the doors, which is often unregulated. This was also reflected in the survey, which highlighted the high numbers: 40% of the library respondents work with over 50 families per week.

*"There are many adults using the space... can't predict who's going to come through, drunk, anti-social behaviour...it's a central London library. Sometimes we find syringes in the toilets"* Library Interview 1

*"We used to do ticketing but it didn't work. We don't have enough staff to deal with the numbers."* Library Interview 1

### **Lack of resources**

Whilst this wasn't always something that leaders explicitly articulated, several things came up in the conversations that reflected a lack of resources - musical material, props, or instruments. The libraries visited had (to varying degrees) created their own 'way of doing things', and in two of the libraries, things hadn't changed for a long time:

*"We try to bring new songs but parents like familiarity. So we try not to change it too much – it's stayed the same for 15 years."* Library Interview 4

*"We need more puppets. The children's centre gave us some instruments."* Library Interview 2

One of the library services that was well equipped with staff and resources, depended on additional fundraising for creative projects for the under 5's and families. There seems to be little structure in place for libraries, providing a framework, resources and training for leaders doing this vital job. It's down to individual library services, and possibly down to individuals who believe in the importance of early years and who are motivated to seek funding and support for their services.

## Children's Centre staff

### 1) Background / attitude of leaders

The children's centres visited seemed to have built up more specialist experience through their intensive work with families and young children, and had confidence that there was value in what they were delivering for families.

*"We provide a safe space for families" Children's Centre (CC) Interview 2*

There was also a strong sense of enjoyment in their work, and a clear passion.

*"We really enjoy it, it's why we do it. And other people seem to enjoy it" CC Interview 1*

*"We change our programme termly. We use resources like parachutes, we adapt and incorporate songs." CC Interview 2*

### 2) Training

Children's Centre staff were specific about the kind of training and resources that would be useful to them.

- *"We'd like a core group of songs." CC Interview 2*
- *"We'd like some high quality versions of songs to use in the sessions and as backing tracks" CC Interview 2*
- *"About protecting your own voice? Because I always have to talk and sing. I don't think we're particularly 'good' singers, it would be nice to have some training in making not great singers more passable." CC Interview 1*
- *"Something which breaks research down into different areas would be really interesting. In a digestible form, like a leaflet, would be really handy." CC Interview 1*

### Challenges

One theme cited in both CC interviews was a lack of support for the work and a lack of understanding about the impact of music activity from their management.

*"We don't have good support for what we're doing. (They say) 'it's just singing!'" CC Interview 2*

Pressure on the staff and workload due to budget cuts was also cited: all the music leadership fell to just one or two staff members. They identified the fact that they had not got additional budget to bring in outside specialists, however, they appreciated the consistency of familiar staff for the families.

*"Building up a relationship is important." CC Interview 2*

Reflecting the survey data, interviews with both children's centre and playgroup staff revealed the same main challenge – parents chatting. The children's centres had considered this issue carefully and had come up with some good strategies already, and were fairly confident to put these into action:

*"We get their attention but it gets tiresome to keep telling them to stop and it's really distracting to talk over the top of people." CC Interview 1*

*"We have signs up, and tell them that children can't distinguish background noise and foreground noise." CC Interview 1*

## Playgroup workers

### 1) Background / attitude of leaders

The two playgroups were run by two different London-based charities. One employs play workers to deliver the drop-in play sessions, and the other employs one member of staff who coordinates the session and runs it with the help of volunteers. It should be mentioned that the researcher Rosie Adediran had previously worked on a music project with both groups, and delivered a one-off tailored training session to them over the past 18 months. There was a good understanding of the benefits of music making with families amongst staff interviewed, and a good level of confidence in delivery:

*"It's the time when mums can be a bit closer to their kids, bond with them, and learn language (English)"*  
Playgroup Interview 1

*"I don't feel particularly good at it, but i'm happy and confident to do it."* Playgroup Interview 3

Another practitioner valued the routine encouraging benefits.

*"We do it at the end so they know it's singing and it's nearly time to say goodbye"* Playgroup Interview 2

### 2) Challenges

Similar themes came from conversations with playgroup workers regarding their challenges leading music sessions: content and knowing how to introduce new songs, and parents not engaging / chatting.

- *"We don't have the same kids all the time, so we stick to the routine of singing songs that they already know."* Playgroup Interview 2
- *"Sometimes I can't think what songs to sing."* Playgroup Interview 3
- *"Sometimes parents talk nearby and it's distracting."* Playgroup Interview 3

### 3) Training

As mentioned, both playgroups had received a one-off tailored training session from the researcher, which was valued:

*"I think the fact that we had time as a team to talk about how we do the singing, with your help was really good. That's helped me feel like, 'this is what we do'...but in another year's time it'd be good to it again."* Playgroup Interview 3

## Setting interviews: Summary

All of the leader interviewed saw music as being important, and had a good understanding of the benefits, despite confidence varying between individuals.

There was a greater disparity when it came to discussing training. Whilst the children's centres and playgroups leaders saw a need for and value in training, the majority of library staff interviewed firmly believed experience gained 'on the job' was more valuable, three even saying there was no need for training and it was potentially 'not useful'.

There was also a wide range of challenges, with the library staff citing double the number of challenges to staff in the other two settings. The main challenge for library staff was the increasing need to be more flexible, with the 0-5 and families age group becoming the primary user group of the library.

However, low confidence amongst library staff was a clear theme in each library, with the pressure on just one or two staff members to deliver. This was also a pressure for playgroup staff interviewed, but it was budget cuts and not lack of confidence which meant delivery was limited to the same few staff members.

Reflecting the survey data, interviews with both children's centre and playgroup staff revealed the same main challenge – parents chatting. The children's centres had considered this issue carefully and had come up with some good strategies, and displayed a level of confidence putting these into action.

# Case Study

## Background

The Scottish Booktrust is a national charity, set up to bring the 'benefits of reading a writing to everyone in Scotland'. Bookbug is a specific scheme run by the charity with a focus on giving free books, music and other resources to children aged 0-5 through free sessions, with an aim to 'inspire a love of stories, songs and rhymes from birth'.

They reach families directly via age-specific books, music and other resources in the universally distributed book bags, and via the free sessions held across the country delivered by trained leaders. Singing and rhyming appeared to have been integrated into their advocacy and activity for 0-5's and families.

This scheme was chosen as a case study because it is an example of a model of consistent delivery, well resourced, with trained staff and limited group sizes in appropriate settings. It allows for comparison against settings that lack these elements in order to see if my rationale is supported.

## Bookbug overview

- **Book bags:** Bookbug gives every child in Scotland four free bags of books as babies, toddlers, three and five year olds. The bags contain books and other resources that are suited to their age group, such as activity books, height charts and magnetic white-boards.
- **Bookbug sessions:** Bookbug Bags are supported by free Bookbug sessions, where parents and carers can enjoy sharing stories, songs and rhymes with their children. Bookbug sessions take place in libraries and community venues across Scotland.
- **Training:** Bookbug also provides a range of funded training opportunities for people working or volunteering in the early years, as well as free learning resources to support sharing stories, songs and rhymes with young children. Up to 2017, 3,686 practitioners had been trained.
- **Funding and staffing:** The Scottish Booktrust has a team of over 50 staff, with 13 specifically in the early years team, delivering the elements outlined above, across the whole of Scotland. Bookbug is funded by the Scottish Government's Improving Health and Wellbeing Division and by Creative Scotland's Youth Music Initiative. It also works in partnership with local authorities and NHS Health Scotland to deliver local Bookbug activities.

**Case study approach:** 2 sessions were observed (Appendix 3, final two observations listed) in 2 libraries (Edinburgh and Dunbar) and 4 interviews (Appendix 6) conducted with leaders in both libraries and 2 members of central BookTrust staff.

I explore the programme in terms of its impact on both practitioners and families, using my observations, interviews with leaders and staff, and detail from a 2017 evaluation report by the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships - a two year evaluation of the programme's activities. The aim of this study was to examine how, and to what extent, Bookbug impacts on the lives of families in Scotland, and on the knowledge, attitudes and practices of the practitioners delivering the programme.

## Impact for families

The impact of the programme for families is two-fold. Firstly, through the direct gifting of the book bags, and secondly, through the impact of attending Bookbug sessions.

### Reach:

The evaluation report notes that there is a high level of awareness of the Bookbug sessions, with variation according to age, social deprivation and English as an additional language, but that there were additional barriers to attendance for younger parents and those living in the most deprived areas. Also flagged were issues of inappropriate timing, insufficient regularity, waiting lists and a lack of weekend provision. However, almost three quarters of practitioner respondents believed that the Bookbug programme allowed them to reach families that they otherwise would not (Evaluation report, 2017).

### Quality:

The Bookbug staff allowed me to take their four current book bags home with me, and I was struck by the quality of the resources. Both the books themselves, but also the additional resources which varied according to age. The musical resources (a CD – the tracks are also available for free online) were high quality and age appropriate. Taken from the 2017 evaluation report: *"Parent and practitioner testimonies confirmed the appeal of the books to young children, and children's delight in receiving them"* (Evaluation report 2017).

### Accessibility:

The accessibility of the programme for families is clearly of high priority. The sessions themselves are always free to attend. The early years programme development manager emphasised this strongly and clearly placed high value on the open welcome factor for families when entering a Bookbug session, above the 'musicality' or quality of delivery. High numbers are, however an issue in libraries (particularly in Edinburgh) and so a ticket system had been used in some libraries to restrict numbers.

Younger parents and parents living in deprived areas face barriers engaging in mainstream Bookbug Sessions, and the 2017 evaluation report recommends further research into how best to extend the reach to these parents.

### Resources:

The musical resources for parents include CD's (containing age-appropriate songs) in each bag, with the songs also available for free online, and the Bookbug app, available as a free download on iPhone and Android. The app was designed after a thorough consultation process involving a series of focus groups and appeals to both families and practitioners. It contains a range of songs in different styles and languages, and can categorise according to theme. It also contains some accompanying videos, the ability to build your own playlist, and features original songs from bands such as 'Sprog Rock'. Since its launch, songs and rhymes have been played via the app over 1.1 million times.

A 'find your nearest bookbug session' has also recently been built into the app functionality. In parent interviews, they were asked about the extent to which they use these resources. 5 parents spoken to didn't use the CD's or the app at all (though all but one parent was aware of them) but some valued them greatly, for a number of reasons:

- Language and confidence building: *"Because I am French, I listen to the CD first, and it helps with my language and gives me confidence to come"*
- Distraction, Travel: *"We use the CD's in the car"*
- Parenting support: *"The CD is a lifesaver – I bought books but wouldn't have thought to buy a CD of children's music"*
- Introducing children to new styles: *"It introduces different styles of music too"*
- Developing child's independent use of technology: *"We use the Bookbug app – she (daughter) can do it herself"*



**Impact on home life:**

The book bags have had a significant impact across Scotland, on reading and singing practices within the home: 'Well over 80% of families with babies or toddlers reported singing at least once a day, and singing was found to be a more common practice than reading from birth' (Evaluation report, 2017). This was supported by my conversations with parents before and after the sessions, where there was an overwhelmingly positive response from parents regarding their home use of the provided musical resources (see earlier quotations).

**Impact for practitioners**

The evaluation report reveals that Bookbug training and resources are highly valued, 'with Bookbug broadly complementing what practitioners are trying to achieve in their work overall' (Evaluation Report, 2017). It also highlights the fact that the quality of practice is appreciated by parents: 'The importance of session leaders' practice was highlighted by parents, underlining the continued importance of staff commitment, motivation, training and support' (Evaluation Report, 2017).

**Training:**

In interviews with two leaders, there was acknowledgment that the training course content was 'very useful':

- *"It's theoretical, it's quite intensive. It covers a whole range of things. They give you lots of goodies."* Leader, Edinburgh library.

But despite this, there was a recognition that topping-up training was very difficult, contributed to by high staff turnover – a clear theme in Scottish libraries as well as English.

- *"It's been a long time since i've had training. Maybe 5 years."* Leader, Dunbar Library
- *"Staff turnover is huge at the moment. Everyone's been asked to do more work."* Leader, Dunbar Library

Feedback on the training scheme content was positive; particularly marked were the links between language and brain development to the development of musicality. The early years programme development manager described the course content:

*" It incorporates everything from joining in with a Bookbug session, to looking at the impact on family relationships, healthy families and wellbeing, why that's important, language and brain development development of musicality, linking pulse, steady beat rhythm – we link these concepts back to children learning learning to speak and read"* Booktrust staff member.

Looking through the course handbook that is given to leaders, it's a practical and insightful document that has been designed well, incorporating practical guidance and tips for leading Bookbug sessions as well as some of relevant theoretical framework.

Leaders are given considerable freedom once they've attended a training session, and there is a lot of trust involved in the rollout of the programme, with monitoring a tricky task especially with funding cuts. There is an admission that there were 'sessions of varying quality out there' – however leaders are accepted and encouraged onto the training from all walks of life, and some staff mentioned that, in isolated areas, something is better than nothing and that creating a welcoming space for families was the most important thing, even if the sessions were not necessarily demonstrating 'best practice'.

*"I'll continue to advocate for good quality music, but at the end of the day it's better than nothing."* Booktrust staff member

## **Conclusion:**

The case study visit to the Scottish BookTrust confirmed that the BookBug music programme is a thought through, well designed and successfully delivered programme, achieving many of its aims around impact for families (through accessible BookBug sessions and free quality resources) and for practitioners (a training scheme which equips leaders and seeks to give them a strong grounding in key principles of music delivery). The way in which it works alongside and in partnership with the book giving scheme ensures its reach to the vast majority of families in Scotland, and allows for advocacy of the values of rhyming and singing alongside the perhaps more established values around sharing books with infants.

The resources for parents and leaders (including the new app) are high quality and valued by parents and are continually being developed and adapted in response to the needs of families and leaders. There is clear vision behind the programme and the passion for the work is evident through the interviews with the BookTrust staff members. I believe that this case study has given me a solid example of the kind of programme that supports practitioners, helping me meet my third aim, which is to 'establish what might be needed to improve the skills, confidence and effectiveness of delivery by practitioners'.

# Focus group

Fifteen practitioners attended a focus group held in Central London in November 2019. The attendees comprised of library staff (one manager, a number of librarians and the children's lead for a London borough), children's centre practitioners, and a playgroup volunteer. The session was led by the researcher Rosie Adediran, alongside education consultant Abigail D'Amore. The focus group activities were also combined with some practical music delivery training led by Linda Bance (early years music consultant and founder of Play Music Play).

## Aims

There were three aims for the day:

1. To summarise the journey – presenting and discussing some of the themes emerging from the survey, observations and interviews, allowing participants to bring their own experience to the discussions.
2. To take the conversation on – from the content of the survey, observations and interviews, to discuss future action, and to do some 'blue sky thinking' of practical solutions to meet the needs of the many challenges faced on the ground in their various contexts.
3. Music delivery training – to inspire those attending, and to leave them with something tangible.

## Summary

The format meant that each activity was short and focused, allowing participants to maintain concentration and not to overthink their responses. The Focus group activities were delivered by Abigail, and were delivered in three main sections:

1. Firstly, we asked participants: *why* they do music activity with families, *what* they do and *how* they do it. This allowed participants to really focus on what they do, their thinking behind it, and what their activities look like.
2. We then moved on to looking at what the group saw as being the key skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to deliver this kind of work.
3. Thirdly, we looked to the future. What are the features of a tool or resource that would best support their practice?

## WHY is music used in your setting?

- Language development
  - speech, literacy, English as an additional language, communication and educational
- Enjoyment
  - physical development, and the enjoyment of staff, parents and children.
- Bonding
  - parent and child, and as a group
- Social and emotional
- Supporting our core purpose
  - routine, variety and adding structure
- Communication
  - language, baby signing and gaining a better understanding of baby responses



**WHAT is used in your sessions?**

- Songs and rhymes
  - nursery rhymes, movements, actions, recorded music and welcome and goodbye songs
- Props
  - blankets, puppets, scarves, lycra, parachute, pictures and song cards
- Instruments
  - child appropriate percussion, bells and shakers
- Activities and actions
  - dancing, signing and song bags.

**HOW do music sessions happen in your setting?**

- Drop-ins – often general stay and play with circle time
- Age groups – some are 0-5, and some split into different age groups e.g. 0 to walkers and walkers to 4
- Some specific music and movement sessions
- Free of charge – most are free
- Outreach in nurseries
- Use of books and storytelling within sessions.

We then looked at the *skills, knowledge* and *behaviours* are needed for practitioners delivering music in early years settings. Here are some of the main ideas coming from practitioners:

**SKILLS**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to lead/manage session</li> <li>• Crowd control</li> <li>• Keeping room calm</li> <li>• Communication           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Confidence</li> <li>◦ Having presence</li> <li>◦ Public speaking skills</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Organised – time management</li> <li>• Vocal skills / singing</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible / adaptable</li> <li>• Team spirit</li> <li>• Interpersonal / people skills           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Supportive</li> <li>◦ Engaging</li> <li>◦ Empathetic</li> <li>◦ Kind</li> <li>◦ Friendly</li> <li>◦ Able to read people / group</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
|---|---|

**KNOWLEDGE**

Ideas for areas of knowledge necessary or desirable to run music activity with families:

- Different interesting songs / tunes
- ICT skills to enhance the session (like ability to use YouTube and other apps)
- Knowledge of child behavior and different age groups
- Purpose / impact to the user groups
- Local community settings
- Cultural behavior and needs
- Special needs of children / families
- Families names (if possible)
- Child development and musical progression
- Local issues
- Different relevant services for signposting
- Themes/special events and celebrations

**BEHAVIOURS**

Desirable behaviours present in leaders:

- Confidence – being happy to make mistakes
- Enthusiasm
- Approachable / welcoming
- Non-judgmental / inclusive / open minded
- Relaxed / calm
- Positive
- Role model
- Engaging
- Passionate
- Sense of humour / fun / enjoyment

By positively framing the needs of practitioners in terms the qualities (skills, knowledge and behaviours) they should possess, rather than via the challenges that they face, new learning was revealed that is useful in terms of understanding a) what practitioners value, and b) how to meet their needs

For example, the skills cited by practitioners as being necessary or desirable were predominantly non-musical, and encompassed people skills, personal qualities (such as friendliness and kindness) and knowing how to manage the room. Knowledge that practitioners saw as being beneficial encompassed cultural festivals, local knowledge, an understanding of a child's musical development, and ICT skills. Positive behaviours such as being approachable, engaging and passionate were valued. This activity highlighted the fact that the musical side of delivering is, in reality seen by practitioners as being a small part of what goes into making the session a 'success'.

This activity led into a conversation about specific challenges relating to practitioners in the room. Here are some of the major challenges, and other parts of the research they appear.

Challenge	Other parts of research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Not in the training'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reluctance from staff to support sessions – not in their job description</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey and interviews, especially in libraries.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of knowledge / support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey and interviews</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funding for equipment / training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews - particularly in CC's</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Groups are getting bigger – staff confidence with this</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Library observation, interviews and survey</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of confidence with staff to use technology / operate equipment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This wasn't a major theme in other parts of research</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need enthusiasm and energy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This wasn't a major theme in other parts of research</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perception of staff – they feel they can't sing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey and library interviews</li> </ul>

## Design Sprints

The second part of the day focused on future action and 'blue sky thinking'. Attendees were asked to think about what a resource, tool or training scheme that supported their delivery of music with families would look like. What would be the key features?

Led by Abigail, we started the process of completing design sprints: either sketching or writing down ideas on a piece of paper divided into eight sections. From these, we shared the ideas with the group, going through a process of 'dot voting' (each person had a certain number of votes to cast with a dot sticker), and we worked on the most popular ideas together in small groups.

The following page summarises this shortlist of ideas.

## Design sprints: what would a tool, resource or training offer look like?

**Guest speakers** coming to session and speaking to staff about the importance of the work we do and why: to inspire.

### YouTube channel or downloadable resource

A website, with videos of all the songs taught in today's session, including input from members.

With these resources, I could build a whole repertoire of varied sessions. Families can copy the songs easily.

The most beneficial thing for me would be a **mobile app** (Facebook page if app too costly!) containing: songs; song words; tunes; dance moves; ideas to do at home and makaton signs. Be able to save favourites; families and professionals could log in; same versions that we use at sessions; song cards; all recognisable, familiar and accessible.

### Training sessions

- (1) training session with a member of staff who does Rhyme time: go through list of songs; their actions; props/toys for the songs; practice run and Q&A session
- (2) how to use the AV/CD/ Speakers/iPad
- (3) shadow a Rhyme time

### Training for staff

Through online courses or face-to-face training.  
In this way staff will build confidence.  
Trained staff are more effective for families.

### Regular library staff meetups across service.

Discuss ideas: concerns, challenges, experiences in branch.  
Opportunity to share best practice, how the above has been overcome; discuss new ideas.

**Digital resource** containing a song bank, printable song cards and videos of best practice sessions. Free to access, collaborative and monitored.

**Film and video journey induction.** Using images to depict the theory of why music is important (for staff and new parents). Short video library of ideas and how to deliver and adapt a music session.  
Video link with other groups.  
Have a sister group for support.

**Video** consisting of different staff delivering rhymes – singing actions.  
Themed songs and starts and ends of sessions.  
Ends with video of staff doing live workshop. Video needs to be accessible on work PCs so that it can be seen at any time. Ease of use depends a lot on ICT policies.  
Why: To give staff instant access, at workplace, to rhymes.

Here are the main elements and recurring themes from the design sprints session. Also included, some additional detail from the discussions not captured directly in the design sprint process.

- **Digital resource** which is accessible.
  - For some, the most useful tool was an app that could be used on an iPad whilst in-session (CC staff particularly).
  - Others talked of a website that was accessible and user friendly.
  - Resource should be responsive to the needs of both parents and settings.
- **Functionality** of such resource:
  - Images and video content were referred to more than once. For example, demonstration videos of leaders delivering in real situations and workshops.
  - Being able to save 'favourite' songs and activities, and which potentially can be used to access recorded music and session plans.
  - Includes information on some of the theoretical foundations of music-making, in a really accessible format
- **Peer support** was a theme, particularly for the library staff attending. Being able to visit other libraries for observations, and have area meetings where ideas can be exchanged.
- **Online network** such as a facebook group. There was a feeling of isolation for many of the leaders present, and an online space to share challenges and ideas for was seen to be beneficial.
- **Technology training:** This was a recurring theme amongst the attendees. Understanding what technology is appropriate, and proper training in-setting on how to use it (for example, AV systems, speakers and where to find appropriate music with the right permissions in place).
- **Funding available to release practitioners.** It was a challenge for some of our attendees to gain permission from managers to attend the focus group. Attendance at future meetings or training sessions would be out of the question unless suitable cover was provided for.

# 5. Conclusions

**There is a huge range of family music-making activity happening in villages, towns and cities across England.**

Whether centrally funded and run (children's centres and libraries), or in much more informal settings (church playgroups or parent-led toddler groups), there is a lot of low cost activity across England that incorporates music and singing into their regular activity. In my observations, I was struck by the many and varied singing communities that exist in so many different spaces. Even in settings and situations which lacked inspirational and creative resources and leadership, there's much to be gained from the shared experience of singing and making music, and in the bond that this facilitates between carer and child, regardless of the confidence of the leaders and breadth of repertoire used.

**There is a huge and varied workforce delivering this kind of service to families, and the vast majority are doing so with little or no musical background, training or support.**

I believe that specialist musicians are hugely valuable and have an important role to play in early years settings. However, in reality, within this more informal family sector, music specialist practitioners actually play a very small role in provision. A huge 87% of survey respondents were running their own music provision. Just 2.9% of practitioners said that they would approach a music specialist for training or support, and it is the internet that is giving the majority of practitioners the ideas for music-making that they're looking for.

**There is a lack of recognition of the value of musical activity for families at a national level.**

Whilst there are many interesting and valuable one-off projects (some of which are detailed in the Literature Review), there appears to be a lack of a national, joined-up approach seeking to improve the provision of musical activity for families across England. Youth Music has funded some fantastic projects and initiatives that seek to train and share knowledge with EYPs, yet most focus on a specific geographical area.

Other initiatives such as Boogie Mites have a national focus and an ethos around training leaders that is socially motivated, yet as a franchise and a paid-for training offer it is out of reach for many settings.

In comparison to the Scottish Booktrust, Booktrust (England) has had significant funding cuts, and their music resources have been stripped back to the bare minimum. Amongst libraries, Booktrust (England) was barely mentioned in the survey or interviews. The prevalence of franchises (Jo Jingles, Monkey Music, Gymboree) in England have plugged a gap in provision for those that can pay, as well as the many other privately run classes run independently, none of which are subject to regulation in quality or content. And for those either unwilling or unable to pay for music input, libraries, children's centres and informal playgroups are stepping in, offering a valued and valuable service.

**There are many factors that can make this role hugely challenging for practitioners/volunteers, and yet there is a sense that the work is not valued by fellow staff and parents.**

Sometimes staff or volunteers are managing rooms full of lively, loud children and adults, and are expected to pull off the impossible! To engage every person in the room including babies, toddlers, parents/grandparents, to overcome the chaos and the noise, to deal with the unexpected, and somehow in all of that to lead something meaningful and musical, requires high level of confidence and skill. Yet my observations brought to light the fact that these activities are not valued by the wider staff team, or management. The lack of investment in training and support for staff to deliver music to these community groups is a problem – even releasing staff to attend training is a challenge, as we encountered when planning the focus group and training day.

**Parental engagement is a key issue for practitioners in all settings examined.**

The fact that practitioners and volunteers give insightful ideas around the benefits of making music and singing, suggest a level of instinctive understanding about the 'why'. However, there seems to be a disconnect between these insights and the realities of leading music activity with families, where the biggest challenge faced by practitioners relates to the disengagement of parents.



Many practitioners see parents as being the source of their biggest challenges in the groups (see survey results, p.23) yet also identify parents' lack of confidence as being a major barrier for engagement. Could this therefore be a key to unlock greater parental engagement? I'd suggest that there's a need for better training to understand how to meet the needs of parents and communicate effectively with them, whilst also acknowledging the many different starting points they have with regards to engagement in music making.

We can see from the contrasting messages from practitioners in the survey, to the parents in the interviews, that each group sees their attendance or participation in music activity, very differently. When comparing practitioners survey responses to parents interview responses, it is clear that parents do not always identify the same benefits of music making (such as speech and language development, bonding, and attachment) as practitioners. But that does not mean that they are not experiencing them subliminally, or that the benefits that they do value (an activity to give structure to the day or a social opportunity for them and their child) are not valuable. I would argue that the key to unlocking even greater parental engagement, is to work together with practitioners to find ways to communicate with them effectively. This in turn would increase their musical confidence and their level of participation, giving the sessions the optimum chance of 'success' (measured by engagement, enjoyment and home use).

### **An instinctive understanding of the benefits of family music-making doesn't automatically lead to a practice that facilitates or optimises these benefits.**

Whether practitioners see their own delivery as something that could improve, to better meet the needs of parents and infants isn't always clear. Instinct and personal research is used and valued when it comes to planning and delivering sessions. Practitioners and volunteers that lead music activity with little or no training, are finding ideas and inspiration on the internet, or creating their own system in the settings in which they work. I've seen this done successfully in my observations, in both of the children's centres I visited but less successfully in two of the library observations. Practitioners identified the that biggest barriers for parents engaging with sessions were those relating to the content of the sessions themselves (style of music offered, quality of music offered and cultural inappropriateness). However, the survey showed that low staff skill, confidence, and recruitment are major challenges for practitioners (especially library staff), which would suggest some recognition of the need. Despite this, in three of my interviews with library staff, additional training in music delivery was dismissed as being not as useful as practical experience, and even 'not useful'. So there is a tension there which needs exploring further.

### **The role of practitioners and settings in enforcing 'good parenting' strategies.**

As practitioners working with families, a key goal is to positively influence a family in their everyday lives, outside of the group or setting. But we need to think carefully about whether our strategies for influencing families (and particularly mothers) are appropriate or even effective. According to Dr Susan Young (Exeter University), 'bonding and interaction is thus no longer a private, intimate aspect of mothering, but is opened up for expert intrusion to become a disciplined practice that should follow the exact guidance' (Young, 2019, p.6). And, some councils are actively attempting to influence parenting in families attending library sessions. For example, in Bournemouth, the council had identified a goal of improving communication between parents and young children. Bournemouth libraries now have specific activities to develop those skills as well as a 'tip of the month' such as 'get down on the child's level when you're speaking to them' or 'take the child's dummy out' (The Experimental Library, 2017)

Whilst this is not music-specific, it is interesting to hear that libraries are using their role in the community to give parenting advice. Is this the right space to provide this? Or is this an overly intrusive approach for a community space such as a library? I think we need to consider further the needs of parents when it comes to their motivations for attending musical activity in settings with their children, and how the activities offered chime with images of current-day motherhood or parenthood.

### **Libraries as community spaces. What is their role in family music-making?**

Libraries are under increasing pressure to bring families into their spaces – in the libraries visited, librarians went so far as to say that it is the family events and activities that keep libraries thriving. Libraries offer a free, open and public space with structured activity for under 5's that is attractive to families. Because of this, there are often no restrictions to numbers, or no-one to enforce restrictions. In a sector rife with closures and cutbacks, public library usage among adults has declined by almost a third since 2005 - increasing pressure on remaining libraries and the alternative cultural and learning activities that keep the numbers coming in.

The 'Public Libraries Universal Culture Offer' (published by charity 'Libraries Connected') states that a core part of this offer should be that 'people can enjoy a quality and diverse cultural experience in every library service in the UK', and be somewhere where 'children and adults can immerse themselves in every form of art'. Indeed, as the offer states, 'no other public body has the same reach into and across the UK's diverse local communities, or the economies of scale and flexibility to respond to local needs', but to what extent can libraries be expected to provide this kind of all encompassing cultural service to its users, without specialist support, high quality training and increased investment?

This kind of investment certainly isn't a matter of course – in my visits, the only library service to be offering these kinds of cultural experiences for children and families was within a borough with a dedicated early years team, and a coordinator committed to raising funds independently for additional arts and music projects in the borough despite central funding cuts. This particular borough underwent a government funded 'Transformation Project' in 2011, in response to funding cuts. As a result, it closed half its libraries and reduced its overall budget, but funneled resources into the remaining buildings. Three libraries were given substantial investment, 'resulting in designs that more easily accommodated wireless technology and the changing nature of library visits: large spaces for events and separate areas for quiet versus noisy visitors (such as students and children, respectively).' Annual visits increased 4.5% over the year before. (CIPFA, 2018).

Separate and safe spaces for children and families in libraries is a challenge, especially with the trend for large, open plan spaces. But in my observations, suitability of the space was a big factor in the engagement of both parents and children.

### **The idea of a broadly consistent structure or pattern for group music making, such as the 'Rhymetime' has been lost**

It is my understanding that the concept of a 'Rhyme time' session originated with Booktrust (England). On their website, they state that '*no two Rhyme times are identical in format, but a typical session might include:*

1. *Welcome song introducing each child by name*
2. *Rhymes and songs for everyone to join in - including lots of action, dancing and clapping*
3. *Bags full of toys or books for children to choose from and a rhyme that links to each prop*
4. *Stories*
5. *Props and sensory elements such as scarves, puppets and bubbles*
6. *Sign language*
7. *Rhymes and songs in various languages*
8. *Dual-language books and stories*
9. *Crafts, colouring and play time*
10. *Goodbye song*
11. *Time for children to play and for parents and carers to chat'*

Only the activities listed in numbers 2, 4 and 5 were part of the 'Rhyme time' sessions observed. I couldn't find guidance for practitioners on the Bookstart website, and in my interviews, Bookstart resources were not mentioned by library staff members.

**Learning from each other**

We have a great deal to learn from each other – practitioners and music specialists. I came away from both the children's centre observations and interviews feeling impressed with the work that they were doing: with limited budget and without any specialist input, they had developed their skills over time within the context of their local communities which they'd been immersed in for years. There was a depth to their delivery and a thoughtfulness that was inspiring, and which I learnt a lot from observing.

Practitioners working so regularly with families will also have insights into the habits and motivations of parents in their communities far more than many music 'specialists' who operate in a project-based way. The Tri-music together project managed to bring practitioners and musicians together for mutual learning, but (as a musician on the project), it was a challenge to find a point of mutual interest and act on it in the time available.

**Meeting settings and practitioners where they are.**

Whilst we would like to imagine a world where practitioners working with families are working together with music specialists, receiving regular direct support and training, I believe that we need to instead value the role that non-musician practitioners play. We should be realistic about the fact that budgets are being cut and that many settings will never be able to (or sometimes even want to) bring in specialist support, and work with them to support the delivery of music in their settings, in a cost-effective way, using tools that they already access. We should be working alongside them in the development of a resource and learning from them, as well as the other way round.

The uptake of Music Development Matters must be attributed partly to its connection to existing and familiar structures in the Early Years Foundation Stage. We must learn from this, and work towards simplicity and usability in the resource that we seek to create.

## Further action

Below are some ideas on how I plan to build upon the learning of this research project.

### Further research

These are areas that weren't a focus of this study, but emerged as themes that could benefit from further investigation:

- **Libraries and their offer to families with 0 - 5's.**
  - Whereas it was fairly straightforward to find information and statistics regarding children and reading from age 5+, there seemed to be little in the way of research into the offer for families and 0-5's. It would be beneficial to understand more about the impact that libraries are having in their communities statistically, and to find out more about how policy filters through and impacts local library services for families.
  - More rigorous research into the impact and value of music activity for families in libraries, and the evolution of the 'rhymetime'.
- **Parents' motivations for attendance, and participation in music activity.**
  - Whilst this wasn't a focus of my study, the informal conversations that I had with parents during my observations highlighted the potential discrepancy between their motivations for attendance, and practitioners' perceptions of the benefits of their attendance and frustration at their lack of engagement. I would like to investigate this further.

### Development of a resource, or 'toolkit' for practitioners

There is a clear need for better training, support and resources for practitioners delivering music with under 3's and families. What resources do exist, are either not accessible, or not known to settings and practitioners. The next phase of this project will be to establish further the type, design and content of such a resource, and to develop, test and evaluate a prototype.

- This will start with a series of short focus groups between practitioners and music specialists, facilitated by an education consultant.
- We will then work to develop a prototype resource based on the results of the above focus groups, combined with an in-person training offer, and pilot this within a specific geographical area. Such a pilot project would require the support and participation of a network of suitable organisations, and would be evaluated by an external researcher.
- I will also be establishing an advisory group comprised of key individuals from arts organisations and early years settings to advise and guide the next phases of activity.

### Advocacy

There currently isn't a clear voice in England advocating for the value of music for families with young children, who is promoting its benefits in a way that is making a significant impact. Whilst there are many pockets of excellent practice across the country, I'm interested in how to unlock the potential to reach a significant number of people with the development and promotion of this resource. To make a real impact. To advocate and petition for this work, when many would see it as being frivolous or insignificant. To inform, shape and shift perceptions. And to inspire practitioners, policy makers and families to take music seriously.

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# 7. Appendices

## 1. 'Sing for the win' poster

### RHYMES Reimagined

### Sing for the win!

Singing and music-making is GREAT for babies, children, AND parents!

Babies can hear sound in the womb from around 26 weeks!

After birth, babies recognise their mother's voice straight after birth

It equates to love, comfort and protection. So encourage it as much as you can!

Singing can help form strong attachments between parent and child --- This is especially important when bonding might be compromised

We're scientifically primed to communicate with babies using 'baby talk'. We subconsciously match the preferences of babies with the sounds of our voices!

Regular singing activity with babies has been proven to speed recovery from post-natal depression

Babies and young children respond to singing more than speaking

They also learn faster and develop language and memory more effectively

We've been singing lullabies to babies and children for millennia....



**So...**

**It doesn't matter if you consider yourself a 'good' singer... if you sing with confidence, it will encourage parents to do the same. Everyone wins!**

**#singforthewin**

References: 2013 by the American Academy of Pediatrics; Fancourt & Perkins (2018), Nakata & Trehub (2004), Papoušek, Bornstein, Nuzzo, Papoušek & Symmes (1991), Trehub, Unyk, & Trainor (1993), Shoemark (2016)

## 2. Survey

07/10/2019

SURVEY: Music-making and singing provision in settings supporting parents and under 3's

### **SURVEY: Music-making and singing provision in settings supporting parents and under 3's**

This survey is being used to find out about the musical and singing habits within settings that offer support for families and under 3's.

I'm a singer and music leader passionate about working with this group, and I'll be using the results of the survey as part of a Paul Hamlyn Foundation funded research and development project.

It should take no more than 10 minutes to complete. Your responses will provide invaluable insights to help improve our understanding of early years music activity, and contribute to more investment going into training and resources for staff and volunteers.

Information provided via this survey will be retained on a password protected computer, kept for the duration of the project (6 months) and destroyed thereafter. All data will be anonymised, and no individual's response will be identifiable in reports produced unless permission is given.

Thank you! Rosie

\* Required

### **Ethics and Consent**

---

My research ethics document is available to read at <http://tiny.cc/vzq4az> and the consent form for this survey is HERE: <http://tiny.cc/p1q4az> If you have any questions at all please contact me on [rosie.adediran@gmail.com](mailto:rosie.adediran@gmail.com) or 07737452006.

1. I confirm that I have read the attached consent form <http://tiny.cc/p1q4az> and in ticking 'yes' below, I give my consent for my answers to be (anonymously) used for the purposes of this research. \*

*Check all that apply.*

I consent

2. Setting name \*

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Setting location

*Mark only one oval.*



07/10/2019

SURVEY: Music-making and singing provision in settings supporting parents and under 3's

- Wiltshire
- Worcestershire

**4. Type of setting \****Check all that apply.*

- Children's Centre
- Playgroup
- Library
- Charity or community led organisation
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**5. What is your role? (select all that apply)***Check all that apply.*

- Manager
- Early Years Practitioner
- Family support worker
- Library staff member
- Volunteer
- Charity worker
- Nursery nurse
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**6. What age children does your setting work with? (tick all that apply) \****Check all that apply.*

- Newborn - 1
- 1 - 2 years
- 2 - 3 years

**7. How many families does your setting support on a weekly basis? \****Mark only one oval.*

- 10 or under
- 10 - 20
- 20 - 50
- More than 50
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**8. Do you deliver or host any musical activity with families in your setting? \****Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No *Skip to question 14.*
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**2: All about music**

07/10/2019

SURVEY: Music-making and singing provision in settings supporting parents and under 3's

**9. How regularly does music activity take place in your setting? \****Check all that apply.*

- Throughout a session (e.g music is part of almost every activity)
- In every session, but in a dedicated slot
- In most sessions
- Now and again (e.g. once every 2 or 3 weeks)
- Hardly at all (e.g. once a month)
- Never
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Which statement is most accurate for your setting?***Mark only one oval.*

- We offer music as part of our regular drop-in sessions
- We offer music as a focussed music-making or singing group
- Both of the above
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**11. Who delivers the musical activity? \****Mark only one oval.*

- Me or members of the team
- A visiting music specialist
- Both of the above
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**12. Which of the following take place in your setting? \****Check all that apply.*

- Free play with musical instruments
- Playing with toys that have a musical element
- Singing time in a circle
- Playing background music
- Songs to aide routines (e.g. a tidying song)
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**13. If you regularly lead singing sessions, please provide two examples of songs you have used in the past month.**

\_\_\_\_\_

**3: Staff and training**

"Staff" refers to anyone working directly with families - whether in a paid capacity or a voluntary role.

**Thinking about the staff in your setting (or yourself) to what extent do you agree with the following statements:****14. Staff have skills and knowledge to deliver music activities and singing \****Mark only one oval.*

- |                |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                   |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
|                | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |                   |
| Strongly agree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly disagree |

07/10/2019

SURVEY: Music-making and singing provision in settings supporting parents and under 3's

**15. Staff have confidence to deliver music activities and singing \***

*Mark only one oval.*

1      2      3      4      5

---

Strongly agree                  Strongly disagree

**16. Staff enjoy delivering music activities and singing \***

*Mark only one oval.*

1      2      3      4      5

---

Strongly agree                  Strongly disagree

**17. What challenges do you face when delivering music in your setting? \***

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**18. Has anyone in your setting received any training or support in delivering music or leading singing during the past two years? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No

**19. If 'yes' then please describe the training below:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**20. Where do you look for training, ideas or resources to deliver music with families?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**21. What sort of training or support might be useful in the future? \***

*Check all that apply.*

- More ideas for music making
- A song bank
- Being part of a network
- Mentoring
- Online courses
- Instruction videos
- Face to face training session
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**4: Parents and families**

07/10/2019

SURVEY: Music-making and singing provision in settings supporting parents and under 3's

22. To what extent would you say parents / carers in your setting engage with their children during music activity in your setting? (e.g. by singing, supporting their children to participate) \*

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5		
Highly engaged	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Not at all engaged

23. What do you feel are the barriers for families accessing musical activities, either in your setting or elsewhere? (Tick all that apply) \*

Check all that apply.

- Lack of time
- Money concerns
- Lack of interest
- Low confidence
- Lack of information
- Cultural inappropriateness
- Language barriers
- Style of music offered
- Quality of music offered
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**What do you think are the main benefits to music making and singing activity with:**

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24. Babies and young children? \*

\_\_\_\_\_

25. Parents and families? \*

\_\_\_\_\_

26. Do you have any other comments?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**And that's it!**

Thank you for your time in completing this survey.

27. Would you be willing to

Check all that apply.

- Join our mailing list so that we can keep you in touch with further developments?
- Have a 10 minute follow-up phone interview?
- Put your setting forward for a case study visit?
- Be part of a Focus Group on the 27th November?

**If you've checked any of the boxes above, please do provide your email address and / or contact number below:**

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Please visit <https://www.londonrhymes.com/rhymes-reimagined> for our full privacy policy and information on how we use your data. By providing your personal details you are providing consent for me to correspond with you in the way indicated above. Your personal details will be stored in a password protected database

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1OIGPWJnITB4spc5qaTd5iApmLpsgdBBtBWWQ7i7B24Y/edit>

6/7

### 3. Observation detail

#### Libraries

No.	Location	Activity, practical details	Leader	Props/ resources	Responses
1.	Central London - Zone 2	Rhyme time session in the children's library, attended by Majority nannies / carers. Layout: leaders at front, with participants spread out across the space which was tightly packed. 50+ adults plus children 0-5.	Male, confident - leading with guitar and supported by an assistant who was leading actions and puppets.	Guitar-led. Lyrics held up at the front. Use of puppets.	Enthusiastic participation from parents / carers - enjoyment and familiarity with the format and musical material. Adults asking for 'more' and 'again!' at the end of songs, and spontaneous clapping.
2.	East London borough	Rhyme time session in the children's library. Session starts with singing warm-up, then straight into a long list of nursery rhymes. 25 parents/carers and children 0-5.	Male, confident in his own style, leading without an instrument, supported by an assistant helping with actions.	Leader uses a drum to lead one song, but with no instruments for the children. Engages participants with bubbles and puppets.	Tentative responses at first but more enthusiastic as the session progressed. The puppets and bubbles seemed to unlock more relaxed enjoyment for children and adults, as did favourite, familiar songs.
3.	Outer London borough	Rhyme time session in the children's library. Mixture of parents, carers, and grandparents. Framed as a 'Book Start' rhyme time, using a CD to structure the session, with a Book Start lyric sheet which was handed around containing 21 songs. 20+ adults plus infants up to pre-schoolers.	Male, under confident. Little direct communication with parents or children.	Led by the songs on the Bookstart CD with a small flip-chart of printed lyrics to introduce each new song. Puppets and soft toys used but without participant engagement.	Despite the lack of leader engagement with the attendees, there were some nice interactions between parents/carers and children. E.g. Children on laps, bouncing and taking part in the actions with their adult.
4.	Outer London borough	'Toddler Read and Rhyme' free but bookable session, for a max of 15 parents and children aged 1 to 2 years-old. Session incorporates a story. Space is off the main library space, with a closed door. Seated in a semi-circle.	Confident male leader with an assistant who was adept with the repertoire and in using the props effectively. Good communication with parents.	Excellent range of resources such as small percussion instruments and fabric scarves.	A calm atmosphere, with a clearly comfortable group who were all on time, highly engaged and participating. Attention dipped during the story.

No.	Location	Activity, practical details	Leader	Props/ resources	Responses
5.	Outer London borough	'Baby bounce and play' session - the only 'paid-for' session observed (subsidised £3.50) For a max of 12 parents and babies up to 1 year-old. Lots of focused singing activity, all supported with various props and aids. Clear structure being followed, but still some time set aside for free play within the session.	Female, confident, a member of the borough's early years team with lots of experience. Offered ideas of ways to use the songs at home.	Led with voice (strong), and with a number of themed sensory resources, all pre-prepared by the team and which changed each week.	Focused, engaged parents and babies enjoying the sensory play. A relaxed atmosphere with opportunity for the chatting and catching up that parents thoroughly enjoyed.
6.	Scotland	A 'Bookbug' reading and rhymes session. Large space with cushions and Bookbug teddies, and laid out in a circle. Session began with 15 mins of chatting, within which social groups were clear, with a few parents isolated. Session itself incorporated Bookbug repertoire. (see Case Study) 15 parents + infants 0 -5.	Female, confident and who clearly knew the group well. Offered a nice range of songs that the group seemed to enjoy, even those not as 'well-known'.	Bookbug teddies used as an example of how to engage babies in activities. Two pieces of lycra used for certain songs, but not big enough for group.	Mostly engaged, though singing was more tentative for songs with lots of lyrics. Babies were encouraged to stay in their places which was not always possible. Shorter rhymes which encouraged tickles or actions were well received.
7.	Scotland	Bookbug reading and rhymes session. Compact space laid out in a circle, Session incorporated Bookbug repertoire.  30 parents and children 0-5.	Female, confident with much enjoyment.	Bookbug teddies used as an example throughout. Some books laid out on the floor, puppets and a few shakers.	High engagement from parents, a few who were behaving in an informal assistant role. They seemed to know and understand the format. Story time was much less successful in terms of engagement. Older children start to lose interest at the end, reading the books on the floor.
8.	London borough - zone 2.	'Baby bounce & rhyme' session in open plan library space. No provision for parents/babies to sit on floor together, and so forced to either sitting on cold floor or perched on stools - unsuitable for parents and babies especially those juggling more than one child. 17 parents + infants 0-5.	Female, enthusiastic but less confident in leadership style. Plenty of actions.	Use of a flip chart with the song words.	A small nucleus of families engaged in the first tier, but quite a few sat fairly far away and dipped in and out. The seating arrangement inhibited families from participating fully.

## b) Children's centres / playgroups

No.	Location	Activity, practical details	Leader	Props/ resources	Response
1.	Central London - zone 2	A charity-run Spanish playgroup (for mums and children 0-5) Every session ends with 15 minutes of music. Mums and babies sit in a circle and sing mostly English songs.	Playgroup leader led confidently, communicated with the mums in Spanish, and encouraged them to join in. Spoke to them in Spanish to explain the benefits of the songs.	Lyric sheets in English were held up, lots of actions, and some shakers.	Enthusiastic participation and loud, confident singing. Many toddlers in the group were distracted by toys that were lying around, but parents continued to sing within the circle even when children wandered off.
2.	West London borough	'Movers and groovers' session for 6 months - 5 years. 18 parents plus children. The session started with free play (non-musical) for 15 mins. The music session began, in a structured way – the leader confidently followed a plan, supported with resources used effectively. Participation was expected, and the leader used some key phrases to encourage parental engagement relating to the benefits of the activity.	Female, no assistant – very confident and followed a clear plan. Adept with baby signing and encouraged parents to engage all the way through – was even strict with them at times, setting rules at the start.	Flip chart with lyrics, then recorded music, shakers, parachute and bubbles. Baby signing was used throughout.	A mixture of confident engagement and a group of Mums that chatted most of the way through despite the best efforts of the leader. Parents seemed very familiar with the material (even the key changes were followed with no hesitation) and sang loudly along with the backing tracks.
3.	East London borough	A small music-focused session for children aged 0 -14 months, free and drop-in. In an upstairs classroom space. Co-led by two leaders who followed a clear structure and used a range of songs combined with some recorded music. Lots of repetition and sensory elements. Leaders threw in snippets of relevant research to help parents understand the context of songs / activities.	Two female leaders – relaxed approach to who was leading the singing as it passed between them, and parents were encouraged to get involved/input to song choice.	Lots of resources and props - instruments, claves, scarves, recorded music, bubbles and a large piece of fabric.	A very calm atmosphere, with a clearly comfortable group who were all on time, highly engaged, participating and interacting with their babies with smiles, touches, tickles and movement. Lots of rapport between leaders and parents.
4.	East London borough - zone 2	A small outdoor/playbus session – the singing took place outside on a mat for 10 minutes at the end of the drop-in. Around 8 parents plus their children. A clear structure was followed with a hello song, a name song, followed by several action songs, and a goodbye.	Two female leaders - relaxed approach to who is leading the singing - it's passed between them, and parents are encouraged to get involved / input to song choices.	No props used, lots of actions and some signing.	Good rapport between leader and families – quite a small group, that were clearly known to the leaders. The children were mostly engaged but some of them were toys and wandered off.

## 4. Parent interviews

### How do you use music at home?

*Answers included from different settings*

- we sing at home with her daughter all day
- we watch the baby club (X2)
- we youtube nursery rhymes
- we sing all these songs
- we sing the songs through the day
- we use educational songs
- we listen to classical and world music
- we sing at bedtime
- we listen to church music
- we dance
- she's happier when music is on
- we dance
- I feel like music and learning go together.

### What do you use to listen to / make music at home?

- CD's, french and english songs
- we use instruments, we sing a lot
- Little baby bum on Youtube
- youtube 'rhymes'
- we youtube lullabies
- baby club, cbeebies
- 'Alexa – play some nursery rhymes'!
- we play baby music on youtube
- youtube
- It's educational as well. It's teaching her rhythm and also numbers 'as much as I feel like a donut I'll do it, they learn off you'

### Why do you come to this session?

- come to the session to socialise
- they get to do things that they can't do at home
- to be in an english speaking environment
- there are no other music groups in the area
- it's the only thing on at a convenient time
- gives a structure to the day
- good for her to be involved with other children socialising – she spends most of her time with me (mum)
- we enjoy singing together
- nice way to spend time with other kids the same age
- something to do
- they babies are learning
- meet other mums
- occupies them
- affordable, accessible
- (baby bounce and rhyme), the rhyme time sessions are really packed.
- The songs are lovely



- gives me 40 minutes to enjoy time with them, no distractions
- Yes, the sessions have influenced us, there was less singing before
- it's about music, but it's also about the whole group
- My mother in law really enjoyed it, she uses the songs with a local dementia group
- we've come from 3 weeks old. I like seeing how they (child) develop.
- It's a relaxed environment
- It gets us out the house
- Bit of interaction, fun
- He's learning, we like doing something interactive
- 'she sleeps afterwards
- They like what they know, the older one knows them too
- To get out
- seeing his reaction
- there's not too much going on
- learning routines

**Less positive**

- some of the leaders aren't appropriate – they have additional needs and tell the toddlers off.
- They say 'you're doing it wrong' and get impatient

## 5. Practitioner interviews

### Library Interview 1: Rhyme time

#### Location: Central London

#### **Background:**

Our sessions are very well attended.

I've been running these sessions for 10 years.

I have a retail background, played guitar.

When got promoted to assistant manager, I had to know how to do everything.

#### **Training - any offered?**

- a couple of workshops.
- Once you've done it, its not useful.

#### **Challenges**

- getting more staff involved

even staff that have been there for a long time (e.g. of a staff member who's been there 30 years) struggles with confidence to give it a go.

30 years ago, working in the library you'd sit behind the desk and not come out.

Not like that anymore. No more librarians. People do things online. Librarians have become community workers.

You get to know the kids, see them in the street.

These are the events that keep us going. If we didn't have the children's group, more libraries would be closed.

But people are still in the mindset of 30 years ago.

New staff are chosen with children's activity in mind, they're expected to have those skills.

Families want to feel relaxed when they come in. you get to know them, see them from when they're babies.

Secret weapon - sing a song.

- Incorporating storytelling. Using the right books, short ones like Dear Zoo, Brown Bear, walking through the jungle.
- Getting the grown-ups to join in. We say switch off your phones.

When we do something different, parents really love it. (e.g. christmas workshops)

Don't really face challenges in leading anymore. Performed before, it comes naturally, doing 3 a week you get used to it.

- Having staff available to help.
- Numbers.

High numbers - safety concerns. We used to do ticketing but it didn't work. We don't have enough staff to deal with the numbers.

Parents will complain if its not 'up to scratch'.

The space - there are many adults using the space, can't predict who's going to come through, drunk, anti-social behaviour..it's a central London library. Sometimes we find syringes in the toilets, rough sleepers...

### Library Interview 2: Leader, Rhyme time

#### Location: East London borough

Been doing Rhyme time for 10-12 years.

Wearing a hat gave me confidence. Also using props gives confidence. We've developed a card system.

#### **Training, support.**

We've done a storytelling course but nothing about music. I just do my own thing.

We need more puppets. The children's centre gave us some instruments.

#### **Challenges**

- getting them involved. Sometimes they're enthused, sometimes not.
- Numbers - sometimes we have 20, 60 80 people. Having a second volunteer assistant is very useful.

I enjoy the independence. But it would be good to have some new songs.

Singing - I've found it good, a good therapy. Music when you're sad, and when you're happy.

When I was a kid, listening to records. And it helped me when I was ill. It's a release from the day to day.

- new library staff aren't that keen
- it's daunting, they feel like they're 'performing'.
- It'd be nice if more staff could do it.
- Training helps to a degree but you have to practice.

### **Library Interview 3: Rhyme time**

#### **Location: South East London**

Word of mouth - numbers depend on the weather, the timing, school holidays.

We get quite a young group.

We do a story with a rhyme - good for when they're learning to speak.

Everyone leads, unless they really don't want to.

We've received no training. It's more of a gut feel.

We had some storytelling training but it was before 2010.

Everyone does their own thing. There's no set format.

Mums ask if they can photograph the words on the song flipchart so they can learn them.

Bookstart - we don't use resources for music. We have a limited supply of baby packs.

I enjoy it - the first couple were a bit daunting. We buddy up with new people. When you get a good response it's great.

**Challenges** - my worry is that I haven't got the song right. We could do with more multicultural songs.

### **Library Interview 4: Rhyme time**

#### **Location: North London borough**

#### **1. Volunteer:**

I've been working here since 2004. I used to bring my own son. I contacted the head of the library and asked to volunteer. I love it.

#### **2. Leader:**

I was reluctant for the first 5 years.

*What changed?*

You focus on the children and not yourself, and how much they get out of it.

We had half a day's formal training from the early years team. Then we learnt on the job and that's what prepares you. You start slowly and build.

We need 2 people to lead the sessions.

Props help to engage parents.

#### **Challenges?**

Staff - having enough that are willing.

Chatty parents are challenging.

Keeping the tempo up.

Getting the story right

Keeping the flow right. We try to bring new songs but parents like familiarity.

So we try not to change it too much - it's stayed the same for 15 years. The sessions are always full - it's consistently busy and full.

0 - 5's are really important for the library. You need to have the willingness.

During holidays we do a Dad's session.

We've not had any resources from Bookstart.

### **3. Service Development Manager: Schools and Early Years:**

We are currently running 29 early years sessions each week and attendance totals 350 upwards. The activities

**Do the parents engage well?**

Yes, it's a good time for us to ask them their favourite songs. Sometimes parents bring their songs and their musical instruments, and work as a team.

**Challenges?**

Introducing new songs is nerve wracking.

Once we get going. Depends, sometimes parents are more willing and when they sing it boosts the morale of everyone.

It would be good to get other organisations to teach us.

Depends on the group, sometimes there's two of us.

Going to try and theme songs, like black history month.

Lead without instruments. Sometimes use the shakers that they've made themselves.

**Could you benefit from support / training?**

There's a whole range of songs out there that we could incorporate instead of just sticking to our normal ones. Especially as we have 0 - 5, more action songs and using more musical instruments.

**What one thing would help you as a team to feel more skilled, and confident?**

Group training in-person. To bring in instruments to learn some new songs.

Signing.

**Playgroup Interview 3: Charity-run group (2)****Location: East London****How valued is music within the sessions.**

It varies. For some families it's irrelevant and for some families it's really important part of the routine. We do it 95% of the time. Sometimes the group isn't interested.

**How confident do you feel running music?**

I don't feel particularly good at it but I'm happy and confident to do it.

**What do parents and their kids get out of it?**

Time for everyone to be together. Some are interacting with their kids, some are having a break. I think the kids learn and enjoy the music. They all get a bit of attention from the adult which they really like, playful. Singing their names, making eye contact. Parents love it when their child gets attention.

**Challenges?**

Sometimes I can't think what songs to sing  
sometimes parents talk nearby and it's distracting.

**Do you plan..?** we did the training with you and after that we came up with a list of songs. We only ever do 5 or 6 songs. Zoom zoom, twinkle, name song and hello song. So it's organised and I think families appreciate the routine of it. You see other leaders doing different things and get inspiration.

**Are there any challenges for parents engaging with it?**

Sometimes people don't know the songs. If they're not confident they can't just join in.  
for me it's fine if a child doesn't want to join in but some parents want their child to do it and they get a bit stressed and feel like it's bad if they don't join in.

**Do you feel a need for more training, or support?**

I think the fact that we had time as a team to talk about how we do the singing, with your help was really good. That's helped me feel like, 'this is what we do' but in another year's time it'd be good to do it again. New people added to the team, a new lady - 'why is she doing the singing like that?' but it was really good that she brought new things, it's good to mix it up.

**Children's Centre Interview 1: Music group (0 - 14 months)**

range between basis free Rhyme sessions run by regular library staff to a range of age appropriate sessions for babies and toddlers which we charge for. These are run by a specialist team who are highly skilled practitioners. Some sessions are free (Rhyme time) but some are £3.50 or £5. They include engaging and chatting to the parents as well - and signposting to local services.

### **Playgroup Interview 1: Spanish mums group**

#### **Location: Central London (zone 2)**

Music is an important part of the group. It's the time when mums can be a bit closer to their kids, bond with them, and learn language (english)

Also learning to sing with their kids, it's not part of Spanish culture so parents struggle to sing with their children, they are self conscious.

#### **What does music bring to the families?**

Bonding, language.  
They can interact with the songs, repeat what we do.

#### **Challenges**

Language - some of the mums struggle with english language songs.  
most of mums feel insecure to sing to their children, feel awkward.

Some of the mums don't repeat after me, it's hard for me to encourage them to sing. Even when sing first, and then say 'now you' they don't.

It makes me feel less confident, makes me think 'maybe they don't enjoy singing time'  
I started to sing spanish songs, but even those they don't sing. I use hands and expression to encourage the mums to sing.

#### **Are the parents aware of the benefits?**

I say 'this is the time you can be close with your kids',  
'when you use expressions, your children will learn'  
I try everything, mostly they know but they still don't do the expressions.

'You are going to hold this song. I'm not going to sing'. But they still don't sing.

The mums do want to sing in english so they can learn language.

### **Playgroup Interview 2: Charity-run group (1)**

#### **Location: East London**

we take it in turns.

#### **Is music an important part of the sessions at the playbus?**

Music forms part of the routine. We do it at the end so they know it's singing and it's nearly time to say goodbye. We tidy up and sing, and so they know what's happening next.  
It's a really good medium through which children can engage with songs and rhymes from a young age. That's why we do songs that they can be familiar with , they learn how sounds work.

#### **How confident do you feel?**

Moderately. We stick to songs that families tend to know. We don't have the same kids all the time, so we stick to the routine of singing songs that they already know.

#### **What do you think that parents and their children get out of it?**

Routine. Doing things together. for them to share what they do at home, favourite songs. Share their experiences from home. Provides community for the kids too and they're learning.

**Location: East London**

We inherited the music and movement session, but weren't given any information on what to do - our sure start manager asked us to do it. But didn't give us any materials, so we freestyled.

Always done circle time with our stay and play. General one 0 - 5. being doing that for 10 years, it develops when we get new ideas.

We always used to plan but we follow the same routine,

Music tots - because the music and movement was so crowded, and baby sessions are popular, lets do a music one for 0 - 14 month.

It tends to be 0 - 12 months, because its afternoon. We find it works doing baby sessions in the afternoon. It's drop-in. We've never turned anyone away. Our capacity would be 16 and that would be overcrowded. It's nice to have a restricted age group.

**Do you enjoy running the sessions?**

"We really enjoy it, it's why we do it. And other people seem to enjoy it"

**Training?**

We've never done any training, it wasn't very useful, it would have been useful at the beginning by that time we'd already been doing it for a while. Now we use YouTube for information and ideas. Training seems to general, talking generally about the benefits and saying you should have music for routines and including music that isn't 'children's music' which we already do. Now we need something more precise.

**What exactly?**

Protecting your own voice? Because I always have to talk and sing. I don't think we're particularly 'good' singers, it would be nice to have some training in making not great singers more passable. In a way it's good as it shows the parents you don't have to be a great singer to do it, but it would be good to have a bit of singing training. Stretching out our faces and doing humming etc...

**What would you say are your biggest challenges?**

When the parents start talking to each other. We get their attention but it gets tiresome to keep telling them to stop and it's really distracting to talk over the top of people. We have signs up, and tell them that children can't distinguish background noise and foreground noise. First 10 minutes is ok, but even if two of them are talking it's still very distracting.

The babies are fine.

On Fridays there's 35 children.

the worst are teachers.

**The tracks that you used - where are they from?** We used to use CD's, but now we use the phone. It's the easiest, and we use a speaker.

It would be nice to get going a band for pregnant women, bringing their instruments, and babies up to crawling. I'd be interested in research benefits of music for pregnancy going into the early stages.

Something which breaks research down into different areas would be really interesting. In a digestible form. Like a leaflet, would be really handy. That had not been sponsored by any product like cow&gate. We can't give out leaflets that promote formula milk.

Imogen Heap's Happy song was sponsored by Cow&Gate, it doesn't pose a problem.

Getting some ideas for new songs. I get attached to certain songs.

Playing songs - some ideas for new songs would be good.

Have a thing which breaks it down into age groups, with research that backs it up, rather than general.

**Children's Centre Interview 2: Music session****Location: West London**

We change our programme termly. We use resources like parachutes, we adapt and incorporate songs.

We try to be child led. On the walls we have boards to write down what children like.

We use signing a lot within the singing.  
We use 'song cards' which children recognise from the pictures.  
We provide a safe space for families.

### **Challenges**

We have no budget for bringing in outside specialists  
Consistency with the practitioners that they see every week is important. Building up a relationship is important.  
Budget doesn't permit for external suppliers, so staff are leading all the sessions for parents themselves.  
Families change all the time.

- parents chatting. We need some good strategies!
- We don't have good support for what we're doing. 'It's just singing'.
- Young parents and those with English as an additional language - they don't know some of the old songs, they've gone out of fashion. All the songs are new to them.

We ask the parents, but getting them to lead is hard.

### **Training? Received any? What needs do you have.**

We haven't received any particular training in music.  
We'd like a core group of songs.  
We'd like some high quality versions of songs to use in the sessions and as backing tracks.  
It's hard to find good versions of songs that are available to download.

## 6. Case Study Interviews

### Dunbar Library leader interview

Been running for 18 years.

Came under BookStart, and then it came under BookBug.

#### Do you enjoy it?

Sometimes. Lots of new members of staff and they don't want to do it.

Everybody has done their training, but some just don't like doing it. It's definitely undervalued by management, but yet they still want to put it in their statistics if somebody asks. Having said that, there's some training – the 'train the trainer' sessions in Jan and I was the only one who wanted to do it. We're busy, squeezing it in with everything else – the girls are busy out there.

There's pressure on other staff as you're missing – only for an hours.

I think Dunbar is one of the most popular.

It depends – sometimes you do a session when nobody joins in and it's really hard work.

**Challenges** – mobile phones. I don't know if they knew you were there. I had steam coming out my ears, 3 of them on their phones the whole time. I'm quite strict, I'll just stop and then they'll realise. You learn techniques to deal with it and it doesn't happen very often. They come because they want to do it – that's why they come. It's great – a couple of new girls who hadn't been before it's a great place to network and find out where things are happening.

The cafe is really busy.

No children's centre but lots of playgroups.

Syrian refugee came today for the first time. Dunbar is so isolated. Sure start exists. But libraries are a good place – this is a good place for community, it's used as a hub. Housing officer comes and they can use other services.

Getting parents to join in is the hardest thing. Using the book bug, it's supposed to represent your baby.

#### Training – tell me about.

Very useful – its quite hard. It's been a long time since i've had training. Maybe 5 years. We used to go to scottish book trust but now we do 'train the trainer' where the assistant librarian delivers training to new members of staff. She's stepping down. You have to commit to training 4 staff members.

Staff turnover is huge at the moment. Everyone been asked to do more work.

Just because you're trained doesn't mean that you know how to do it – you just have to do it.

It's once a week for two hours. We don't turn anyone away.

#### How supported do you feel in terms of the resources you receive from the Book Trust?

you have to refresh songs. We all know different songs.

We get the book bugs and the Lycra, we get a lot.

#### How do you plan a session?

When we first started and it was just 10 adults and 10 kids, you could read a story. But with the lycra you have too many.. but they really like it. But you have to plan it.



**What do you try to incorporate into a session?**

Tickling and touching. We have loads of scottish songs that I'm not very good at as I don't have the accent. There's lots of Gaelic rhymes. I've got the CD's so sometimes I play it to them so they can hear. We have school groups coming into the library and I do the same thing.

**Do you feel like you're supported by a wider bookbug structure?**

Yes definitely.

**Leader 2: Edinburgh leader****How was that today?**

It was fairly normal with the size and slow build-up. The nature of the wife age range. You do have to have rhymes that suit babies and toddlers, and be on the ball with the flow and ebb of the session. Keeping going. Deep breath and keep going! A good number of the children have been coming on a regular basis. There are within the area, a few very committed adults – from the word go. Parents very committed.

On the whole it was a typical session.

**Format – is that the same in each session?**

Story worked really well. There are very few stories that work well. We talked about it in the training. Some stories far too long.

**Do you enjoy leading?**

It's a bit like everything – if you don't love it don't do it. You're there to be enthusiastic, you're the facilitator, to encourage parents to interact with their children, to remind parents of the rhymes they learnt when they were tiny. It's lovely having grandparents there as they bring the wealth of memory of rhyme. Apart from bookbug, cbeebies sometimes do rhymes but there's not many rhymes in the media. There's a niche. It's a time when you can interact with your child and talk absolute rubbish, it's what you and your child has in those precious moments together, you make it your time. You end up with your favourite rhymes, you work out.. they are mood changers, they are soothers, calmers, sharers.

My earliest memory is being rocked to sleep by father, and he sung to me. I have rhymes in my head which are 60 years old, and the age that he was when he sung to me.

folk history that you can share when you sing nursery rhymes. Some have gone out of favours and some have come back in.

**Training – did it give you the tools that you needed?**

Almost all library staff go on bookbug training.

They should have two people – facilitator and the other a singer. Everybody and anybody can sing. Don't say 'you can't sing' so I can't do it.

It's theoretical, it's quite intensive. It covers a whole range of things.

They give you lots of goodies.

## **Bookbug staff 1**

My role is in Training and development: Early years programme development manager.

Resources aimed at professional aimed at improving their skills.

Trying out things with new audiences, piloting new programmes in the area of Resource creation and training.

### **How is training delivered to staff?**

Frequency – depends on the funding. When we started, we had a very different model. Being responsive to cuts. Bookbug and literacy in early reading.

You come on a 1 day Bookbug training session. 50% is practical, where we get people to sing, songs and rhymes, and we do voice work. People who are not musicians who've never worked with children. Library staff, coming from all walks of life. We don't audition for it, but we always work with them on principles of delivering quality music for families.

Training involves everything from joining in with a Bookbug session, to looking at the impact on family relationships, healthy families and wellbeing, why that's important, language and brain development development of musicality, linking pulse, steady beat rhythm – we link these concepts back to children learning learning to speak and read – vital part of communication even when they don't realise it. We make it accessible with them.

We do practical activities with Lycra, tips on how to read a book out loud – how to link songs and rhymes into books. How to add a bit of singing into your stories. Add a bit of singing to it – getting the attention of the group – singing easier to hear than spoken speech. We're really conscious that if people want to give explicit messages to parents that's fine, but if nothing else, we're models for families – they can watch and take away what's relevant to them. We hammer that home.

I do work around quality, we have issues around songs being sung at ridiculous pitch, no repetition. People run sessions from their adult brains. But what the children wants is to sing it again. Even the parents – they need to be able to take that message home.

Repetition can be more exciting – you could speed up, or down, get louder or softer.

We do a lot of putting people's fears at ease, and also how to engage families.

Largely practical, lots of space for discussion and reflection so people can try things up.

### **How often do leaders top-up their training, what are the expectations?**

Used to be once a year. Sometimes now we don't see them again after the initial training. Hard to keep up with where they're at – if they're still delivering, are we not hearing from them because they've stopped?

Monitoring the quality is difficult. Sessions have always got to be free. We sometimes gets approached by commercial venues, like soft play. We say no – that goes against our principles.

We're really concerned about ensuring there's access. Monitoring that is harder – we have to trust and rely on the leaders that we train. There are challenges with that model, for the most part it works.

There's no way that people can take on board everything you say to them which is why refreshing practice is important.

Trying to work on a quality assurance form for leaders, they'd fill it out and reflect on their practice and we give them tips. How can we give them a bit more support?

A lot of it comes down to personal leader confidence. I have a colleague who can brilliantly politely with humour, tell off a group of parents – stop talking, put phone away, in a really nice way.

I have no problem telling baby around to face them, but so much comes down to personality. You can't train personality – you work with what you can.

I quite often tell a story – someone came to a bookbug and a mum was on her phone the whole time and the kid was running around. It turns out that that mother was looking for housing as they'd been evicted that morning. You never know. We're trying to say 'don't make an assumption about the behaviour' but you have to have a relationship with the family first.

Resources for the training? What do they get? – handbook.

key messages - how you might want to convey messages

mascot doll

t shirt

finger puppers

stickers

Lycra

a book

They are ready to go after the training.

### **Is there a system of visiting sessions?**

There used to be. When people were trained, they used to be assigned a mentor. Used to call, and visit and give them a development plan.

What is it you want to work on? Then help them come up with a plan. We don't orchestrate that anymore.

Some local authorities have their own system in place. Sessions of varying quality out there.

### **Is there any defensiveness with leaders ?**

when you're asking them to reflect on their practice there's a certain defensiveness. People are 'sent' on training, from libraries who are are main partner. Sometimes they have no interest in doing it – nobody wins. Example of a man who didn't like children, or stories or music.

But he was happy to wear the t shirt and tell people in the library about the sessions.

We do have problems with attitudes. In training, people don't want to 'be a kid' with adults.

It's not about judging, it's about 'best practice' especially in terms of libraries – they're not as aware of what's happening in the early childhood world, we can use that. Making this change – this is the change that will be happening. Using the science - and people sometimes take it on board.

In the session that I took my son to the local library, on maternity leave, he was 3 weeks old. They knew me as Tracy from Bookbug! The two girls who ran the sessions were loved by families, enthusiastic and passionate it wasn't 'best practice' – singing quality not great, no repetition etc, but every single family was made to feel welcome and encouraged to stay on and not to rush away.

I'll continue to advocate for good quality music, but at the end of the day it's better than nothing. And in a small community we would have been isolated had it not been for that.

You have to let people 'do their own thing' and bring their own personalities.

## 7. Ethics and Consent Forms

# RHYMES Reimagined

A Research and Development study undertaken by Rosie Adediran and supported by the



### ETHICS and CONSENT procedures

#### Research question:

What is the extent to which settings intentionally engage parents and young children with singing and music making? And what (if anything) is required to raise the quality of the experience, both in-setting, and in the transference of the activity to the day to day lives of families?

#### Aims of R&D:

To paint a picture of current music provision in a variety of free, accessible parent-child support settings across varied locations in the UK

To further understand the need, and the nature of need amongst a range of settings, for guidance, training and resources for non music-specialist staff and volunteers, in the delivery of singing and music activity with parents and under 3s.

To gather support and build an awareness in the sector of this need through interviews with music specialists, and draw relevant expertise and partners for the next phase of work.

#### Data will be collected from the following groups of people:

1. Individuals working with families with under 3's: setting staff, managers or volunteers.
2. Parents of under 3's in the case study settings that I visit in person, where I'll be conducting short 5 – 10 minute interviews.
3. Early years music professionals / managers: Either via face to face interviews, telephone interviews or via an online form, I'll be gathering the thoughts, ideas

# RHYMES Reimagined

A Research and Development study undertaken by Rosie Adediran and supported by the



## CONSENT FORM Online survey

This research project conforms to the Data Protection Act 2018, and ethical procedures detailed in separate document available to be viewed at <https://www.londonrhymes.com/rhymes-reimagined> and has been reviewed by Susan Young and Alison Street.

I understand:

the aim of the study as detailed <https://www.londonrhymes.com/rhymes-reimagined>

I understand that I can decline to answer a question. I understand that my identity will be hidden and that none of my answers will be repeated to any other person or quoted unless permission is explicitly granted.

I understand that all information provided will be confidential and my anonymity will be protected throughout the study. At no point during the study will my IP address be collected, meaning that any information I provide cannot be traced back to myself..

I understand that no-one else except the researcher will have access to my online survey answers, and that they will be kept secure in the researchers' laptops.

I understand the privacy policy at <https://www.londonrhymes.com/rhymes-reimagined> outlines in more detail, how my data will be handled.

I understand that by completing any online surveys or questionnaires, I give permission for my answers to be solely used for the purposes of this research project.

I understand that I may contact Rosie Adediran ([rosie.adediran@gmail.com](mailto:rosie.adediran@gmail.com)) at any time should I have queries regarding the research.

# RHYMES

## Reimagined

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### CONSENT FORM

#### Interviews

This research project conforms to the Data Protection Act 2018, and ethical procedures detailed in separate document available to be viewed at <https://www.londonrhymes.com/rhymes-reimagined> and has been reviewed by Susan Young and Alison Street.

I understand:

the aim of the study as detailed <https://www.londonrhymes.com/rhymes-reimagined>

I understand that I can decline to answer a question, or withdraw from the interview at any point. I understand that my identity will be hidden and that nothing I say in this interview will be repeated to any other person or quoted, unless permission is explicitly granted.

I understand that all information provided will be confidential and my / my child's anonymity will be protected throughout the study. At no point during the study will IP addresses be collected, meaning that any information I provide cannot be traced back to me.

I understand that no-one else except the researcher will have access to my interview recordings (or written notes) which will be kept secure in the researchers' laptops. I understand that no written transcript of what I say will be made. I understand that the recording will be deleted at the end of the project.

I understand that by completing this interview, I give permission for my answers to be solely used for the purposes of this research project.

I understand that I may contact Rosie Adediran ([rosie.adediran@gmail.com](mailto:rosie.adediran@gmail.com)) at any time should I have queries regarding the research.

Signed Interviewee:

Date

Signed Interviewer:

Date

# RHYMES

## Reimagined

A Research and Development study undertaken by Rosie Adediran and supported by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

### CONSENT FORM

#### Focus Group

#### Introduction

*This research project conforms to the Data Protection Act 2018, and ethical procedures detailed in separate document available to be viewed at <https://www.londonrhymes.com/rhymes-reimagined>, which have been reviewed by Susan Young and Alison Street.*

**Purpose:** the aim of this study is to gain insight and understanding into the state of music provision in a variety of settings supporting families with under 3's across England, and to assess the need for further training and resources for practitioners and volunteers.

#### Participants' Rights

I understand that I can decline to answer a question, or withdraw from the interview at any point. I understand that my identity will be hidden and that nothing I say in this focus group will be repeated to any other person or quoted, unless permission is explicitly granted.

I understand that I may skip any questions or tasks that I don't wish to complete.

I understand that all information provided will be confidential and my anonymity will be protected throughout the study. At no point during the study will IP addresses be collected, meaning that any information I provide cannot be traced back to me.

I understand that no-one else except the researcher will have access to the notes and transcripts from this focus group, which will be kept secure in the researcher's laptop.

I understand that any recordings made during the day will be deleted at the end of the project.

#### Consent:

I understand that I am participating in a study of my own free will.

I give permission for my ideas and input to be used for the purposes of this project.

I understand that ideas formed in this focus group may be used to inform and develop future projects and that I may be approached for input in the future.

I agree to have any verbal responses transcribed for further analysis with the understanding that my responses will not be linked to me personally in any way.

I understand that I may contact Rosie Adediran ([rosie.adediran@gmail.com](mailto:rosie.adediran@gmail.com)) at any time should I have queries regarding the research.

I understand my rights as a research participant as outlined above. I acknowledge that my participation is fully voluntary.

Signed Interviewee:

Date

Signed Interviewer:

Date