

A CASE STUDY



**Flying
Start**

A Sure Start Children's Centre

with



Soundwaves

Developing language in young children from multi-cultural families
Exploring a collaboration between a music specialist and early year's worker



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THE IDEA

Who behind this?

Soundwaves Extra is an early years' music organisation established to look at how music impacts on, and develops musicality in young children. Soundwaves Extra is funded by Youth Music which supports, shares and endorses music making, training and resources across the UK. Soundwaves Extra is the early years' arm of Take Art, a multi-arts organisation providing multi-arts activities for children and people in the South West.

This study is part of a large initiative working with early years' settings across the South West. Flying Start Children's centre was chosen as one of six setting to provide regular music sessions, training and professional development to young children, their families and the early years' workforce.

The Objective

The aim of this case study was twofold:

a/ To see how regular music making impacts on communication skills in young children from multi-cultural backgrounds, from families with more than one language spoken and children with emerging language delay. We wanted to

- Musically engage young children and parents
- Share music making with singing, instruments, listening, moving and reflecting
- Nurture young children's language development through mutually shared experiences

b/ To create a positive and relevant collaboration between the early years' worker (EYW) and the music specialist (MS). By sharing mutual skills we would demonstrate how sustainable musical activities was possible once the project had ended. We wanted to

- Give the EYW increased confidence to deliver music making activities
- Share and exchange skills
- Confirm ongoing activities after the project had ended

The MS would lead the weekly music sessions for a period of time with the EYW participating alongside. The EYW would begin to lead some of the modules of the session once she felt confident to do so. Ongoing guidance with the gradual transition of leadership would take place over the duration of the project.

By taking evidence from the collected data we would provide a model to inspire other centres to adopt, thereby strengthening investment in musical play and language development for more children in the communities.

The Early Years Worker – an introduction

The role of the EYW focuses on specific areas:

- Working with families at the children's centre, in outreach groups and sometimes one to one within the home.
- Delivery of a variety of sessions including heuristic play, play sessions, parenting courses, home learning and provision of childcare for parenting courses and adult education.

The objective of an EYW is to communicate with, and support parents in understanding child development through provision of activities and information available. Parents are critical to children's later educational success hence the importance of sharing knowledge of how to support ongoing learning and development at home.

Sourcing the children's centre and early year's worker

Soundwaves Extra contacted Flying Start, one of a cluster in Exeter. Flying Start has a high ratio of multi-cultural families with a strong focus on developing language. Some families were referred from Family Support including one child with profound needs. The centre manager asked if one of their team was interested in participating in the project. Jayne had been running a pre-school singing group based at a local library, for 16 months. She confirmed that her musical ability was limited, and with the exception of a few months playing the recorder at infant school had not played an instrument, nor would she consider herself 'at all musical' (taken from appraisal notes).

Jayne confirmed apprehension about joining the project initially as she was told that she would be learning an instrument. This was not part of the project's criteria and the source of this incorrect information is unknown. However, and despite her apprehension Jayne agreed to participate fully. She was already running weekly rhyme-time sessions and saw this as an opportunity develop musical skills. The project had a different target group so would not affect the existing provision.

The Music specialist – an introduction

The role of the MS is to provide musical learning that is appropriate for each age group. Musical learning involves offering a range of musical activities with specific outcomes. Music activities normally involves a balanced template so young children can experience and enjoy singing, moving, instrumental play and exploration. Appropriate activities and resources should engage young children in playful musical exchange in conjunction with developing musical learning overall.

Sourcing the music specialist

Emma Hutchinson was invited to be the MS to work with multi-cultural families and those with confirmed or emerging signs of additional needs and/or language delay. Emma is an experienced music facilitator, trainer and advocate of music as a successful intervention to achieving children's developmental milestones, language, attachment and learning.

Sourcing the families

Jayne initially spoke to families from multi-cultural communities, most of whom were already attending a group at Flying Start. As sessions developed family support workers referred more families to the group. Young children and toddlers from 12 months – 5 years old from multi-cultural families were targeted and those with language delay. Some families were known to Jayne from attendance to other activities including her rhyme time sessions so she was able to approach the parent directly. The following families signed up to the project. By the end of the project we had a total of 39 families from the following communities:

French, Italian, Spanish, Arabic, Polish, Slovakian, Malay, Turkish, Hungarian, Russian, Chinese, Kurdish, Kazach and Africaans. The following list represents regular attendees throughout the life of the project:

Who	Age	Nationality	Delay (registered)
A	2	Polish	
N	1.5 months	Turkish	
K	1.5 months	Polish	
E	2.6 months	French	
L	2.6 months	French	
LB	12 months	Italian	
O	2.6 months	French	

M	3	Polish
F	3	English/Polish
OB	2	Slovak
AB	2	Kazach
MB	2	Polish
P	4	Spanish/Italian
MC	2	Spanish/Italian
AC	2	Japanese
BC	2	Chinese
CB	2	Chinese
Y	2	Arabic
AC	3	Polish
W	1.8 months	Polish
BD	2	English

Apart from one formally registered with profound additional needs no-one volunteered information on emerging or confirmed language delay or other need. To ignite interest we created and circulated a flyer to attract families to the idea of music making (App:25). Registering directly with the children's centre meant that they would then need to sign up and be committed once the project's aims had understood.

Commitment to the project included weekly attendance for 20 weeks (excluding half term and holiday periods), with the parent fully participating. Parental engagement was encouraged rather than a carer to enable first-hand experience of language development through music making. We did have regular attendance although not everyone was able to stay for the duration of the project partly due to the transient nature of the group (i.e. some families moving back to their home countries).

The setting

The children's centre had an excellent relationship with their local church in Southenhay, Exeter. Situated just 2 minutes from the children's centre was ideal for families as it was accessible and with strong ties to the centre. The church hall was free from furniture or clutter. There was plenty of light with a large wooden floor. Accessories

available included a large rug with a colourful urban picture depicting cars, pedestrians, roads and shops.

Establishing the project (*written from the MS perspective*)

Communication away from the children was critical if the two project was to as an eventual model for sharing. Whilst helpful for disseminating weekly reports, emails could not replicate the mutual respect and transparency of actual meetings. Jayne and I agreed to the following over a course of 20 weeks of morning sessions broken down as follows:

- a/ Pre-start meeting to exchange skills, objectives and confirm outline of sessions
- b/ 20 weeks of sessions comprising up to 1.5 hours in total
- c/ 15 minutes set up and set down time allowed
- d/ Pre-session meetings for practice, discussion and feedback

What Professional development?

Jayne completed a staff questionnaire with the following areas of interest highlighted:

‘...a better understanding of the connection of music and dance to early childhood development and SEN’.

‘...To be more confident. To gain ideas on activities. To see how music can affect our feelings and emotions.’

With these comments in mind I established a template with songs and resources as a starting point. The template (See App:23) was created to maximise the potential for playful musical games and to allow movement and vocalising to flow.

We agreed that sitting on the floor in a circle was the most relaxed way to greet and share musical experiences. Circles are a primeval and inclusive shape for young children and their families to confront, share and exchange information. Circles create bonds, assist with eye contact, promote cohesion between new people and supportive mutual play in the activities experienced and enjoyed. Circles are an excellent starting point for new patterns to emerge such as walking around the outside, playful music making in the middle, passing of resources and developing compositional ideas (in groups and alone).

Activities

To create a balanced set of activities the template comprised

- Welcome: being sociable, nurturing and respectful
- Warmup: Awakening all the senses together (making sounds, moving and listening)
- Mini-stories: Focused activity with a topic in mind
- Instruments: Experience a range of sounds
- Moving and dancing: Developing vocal responses through movement games
- Reflection and chill: Ask questions to each other and acknowledging responses
- Farewell: Acknowledging, sociable and affirmative (closure)

Chosen songs

Jayne chose a range of well-loved, familiar songs enjoyed at rhyme-time sessions including

The wheels on the bus
If you're happy and you know it
Frere Jacques
Twinkle twinkle
Old MacDonald

I chose a range of new songs and poems appropriate for nurturing vocal responses, mutual engagement, and were joyful. They were short, with delightful rhythmical shapes, were not pitched too high (especially for parents and Jayne's developing confidence in singing), and encouraged musical or compositional development over time. These included:

Sing hello together
Can you make a sound like me?
Gallee Gallee
Someone is knocking at the door
Roll the ball
Roly poly
Leaves are falling down
Walking by the seaside/in the garden
Hear the little bird
Sing goodbye together

(App:26)

Dual-Purpose of songs and poems

The songs and poems were chosen because of their short phrasing patterns, simple melodies, with a focus on one or two Information carrying words¹ such as 'boat' and 'sail'. These helped multi-lingual or language delayed children to fully engage with new words through sound, moving and instrumental play.

The new songs also reflected the eventual transition of leadership. If the songs were complex, or demanded multi-levels of musical objectives (i.e. learning to sing high and low, sing quietly, and play instruments together) the musical objective would have been top-heavy and unnecessarily challenging.

Ethics

All families signed a consent form (App:24) stating approval to documenting the study with video snippets, photographs and jottings. Each child had at least one parent in attendance. We encouraged regular attendance so as to nurture familiarity and develop a 'take-home' factor of songs learnt.

Collating the evidence

Jayne and I wrote jottings down during post-session free musical play, and a brief report each week on what we saw. We also took video snippets throughout. The evidence together with our different specialisms helped us to adjust and develop sessions, and to learn from each other. Areas of focus included vocal responses, shared musical participation from the children and parents, and Jayne's developing musical ability.

Commitment and regular attendance

A weekly register was kept so as to confirm attendance. Attendance from every family who initially signed up dropped away from approximately 14 to about 10. This remained at a steady 80% throughout the 20 weeks, with about 4 – 5 families dipping in and out as, and when they could commit.

¹ ¹ Information Carrying Words refers to words that carry meaning (Knowles & Massidlover (1978)

¹ Step-down – in speech/language terms this applies to applying visual aids to support language acquisition. Step-up applies to the removal of aids as the child develops language.

WHAT HAPPENED?

Summary of findings

Our initial aim was to see how music initiated language development through regular sessions, and to see what preferences to music experiences were noted. After a few weeks it quickly became apparent that Jayne's music learning and delivery was having as much positive impact in developing children's language as the actual aim itself.

Igniting interest in developing new skills *(written from the MS perspective)*

Respect for mutual skills is vital if a working relationship is to embark on progressive routes, and achieve success. Being aware of how *professionalism, particularly music professionalism can be disempowering is critical at this stage* (Young:2003:76). For example, Jayne suggested that we put toys out for the children to enjoy after the music session, and whilst parents and ourselves chatted.

After the first session it was clear to both of us that toys detracted from the overall musical experience and message that we were trying to convey. Jayne volunteered more musically exploratory activities. We both agreed that extending instrumental play was a more appropriate option to toys. We did not look back.

Feedback from parents and children

Relaxed conversations post-sessions with parents took place during spontaneous musical play. These post-session moments were special, playful and inclusive. They were far more effective than paper feedback notes since in the entire project we only got six paper responses back from parents. Post-session chat time also helped to empower Jayne since feedback was direct and constantly positive. By week 2 our collective jottings reported:

F's dad and grandma both sang to him and Grandma pretended to play a trumpet, he seemed to really enjoy this interaction.

By week 4

Two Polish children (average age 2 years) volunteered spontaneous sound-play

By week 6 N's mum commented:

"This group had the biggest impact on N out of any of the other groups he has attended".

By week 7 N. normally reserved and by his mother's side:

Was in the middle (of the circle) moving, shaking instruments.

After the same session N's mother asked for ideas on making instruments. The positive responses from the parents so early on was undoubtedly due to seeing how engaged their key worker was, which in turn encouraged them to join in.

The power of a little instrument

A ukulele had been generously purchased by Soundwaves Extra as part of a collection of resources that included a Little Birdsong treasure basket of 22 instruments (App:23). Jayne quietly observed me beginning the sessions with a ukulele in the "hello" song. Jayne's willingness to directly participate was a direct sign of endorsement. She sat near me in the circle observing closely everything that I did including with the ukulele.

In the second week Jayne picked up the ukulele before the session started. I showed her how to hold it then before settling on the rug strumming my own ukulele quietly as families arrived. As the hello song started Jayne sat near me with her ukulele, watching how I strummed. I retained strumming whilst repeating a short four bar phrased "hello" song:

"Hello hello hello hello..."

As she did so I added quiet interjections along the lines of

"Just one finger, one chord and sorted!"

"C is one finger for 'hello. That's it'."

"Finger 1 and C, C, C, C...(in time to the beat)"

Jayne strummed quietly, joining as she absorbed the snippets of information offered. This was interactive skills exchange at its most sustainable. In the doing both of us were learning. I was imparting information without a pause thereby respecting the group and the ongoing activity that ensued. Jayne was present as a direct participator, thus endorsing the activities to a group who knew her well, and at the same time learning on the spot.

I noted that Jayne allowed children to sit close, watching her strum the strings – it was okay for them to look, touch, experience. This highlights the importance of tactile

opportunities. If music educators are in doubt, investment in a less valuable instrument for teaching will reap additional rewards in child initiated live instrumental outcomes.

I can't sing! I can't play!

Playing an instrument alongside a musician is a brave move since preconceptions of being judged in playing or singing is often a barrier to participation. Jayne's pre-project admission in the baseline questionnaire included

"I can't sing or play an instrument, I am not particularly musical."

This spark of interest led to my suggestion of Jayne joining a ukulele club – *"why not? There is a great little place in Magdalene Road."* Being mindful of potential personal cost I suggested that Jayne could continue to learn with me throughout the project. Jayne confirmed that she had an old ukulele at home and would bring this along to future sessions so as to allow children to explore the Soundwaves Extra model.

Soon after the project had started Jayne confirmed that she had signed up to the ukulele club. She continued to sit alongside me, playing and copying my actions. I continued to interject tips. Not long afterwards Jayne brought along a ukulele book bursting with songs and chord progressions.

During the second term I suggested that I ran a ukulele workshop as part of a session – specially for the parents whilst their children played with smaller instruments. The parents agreed enthusiastically. I got hold of Babcock Music Services who generously lent 12 ukuleles for the workshop at no cost. The feedback was in short, fantastic.



Emma Hutchinson 2017
Developing language in young children from multi-cultural families
Exploring a collaboration between a music specialist and early years worker ®

The family support workers (two attended) also participated and saw first-hand how accessible playing an instrument could be. Playing together with sociable, fun and embedded all the components of a music session whilst concentrating on an instrument. We moved whilst playing, we sang our favourite songs and created strumming and plucking sounds all with just two chords. At least two parents said that they would get a ukulele. One family support worker bought a second hand ukulele after the workshop.

Developing leadership skills

With respect to skills development I refer to the second term. In the first week Jayne and I agreed that weekly pre-session warmups with the ukulele and voice would help us to share the delivery of activities. I created a print-out of favourite nursery songs as suggested by Jayne, with ukulele chord progressions. Together, with her enormous ukulele book we began the morning with warm up songs such as

Can you make a sound like me? using the ukulele's C chord as a start-up strum.

By playing together Jayne had to play chord changes and sing simultaneously without stopping. I volunteered comments like *"my singing is rubbish first thing in the morning"* and *"I am certainly not a trained singer"*, *"so don't worry about what you sound like as I am worse!"* I took no notice of Jayne's earlier admission of *"...don't have a tuneful voice...obviously... unchangeable"* (pre-project questionnaire) preferring to concentrate on what we could both achieve with silly vocal warmup sounds including:

(Sound of a bike) *"brrrrrrrruuuummm!"* (follow a bee with your voice) *"bzzzzzzzzzz!"*. We then played songs such as *The wheels on the bus*, *Row row row your boat*, *Twinkle*. Later we moved onto Jayne's favourites such as *Yellow submarine*, *She'll be coming round the mountain*.

Jayne took up the gauntlet throughout. I refused to take "no can do" for an answer and only ever saw positive responses emerging. Together we had a lot of fun mutually making mistakes, correcting them, and generally developing shared musicianship ideas. As much as Jayne achieved, as a musician I achieved too, in the sharing and showing how music making can be an accessible skill. Notably ukulele is not my first instrument (I am a pianist and brass

player). I reminded Jayne of this on occasions and to my delight she showed me how to play new chords to more diverse pop and folk songs. From about the sixth session onwards Jayne joined in with the ukulele, and taking over from me to completely to run the majority of a session.

Initiating musical objectives through real life activity

The purpose of the chosen songs and poems were twofold:

- To be appropriate for very young children's developing language and participation.
- To enable the early year's worker to confidently participate thus self-perpetuating musical ability.

Learning how music works is one thing, but delivering music in the context of planned outcomes requires an innate understanding of the musical objective in order to deliver activities with confidence. Approaching music from a technical perspective would have been challenging in the short time that Jayne and I had together. Musical skills had to make sense in the context of real life activities. Trevarthen and Malloch state 'The fluidity and agility of people's responsive and expressive acts as they participate in everyday life whether in speech gestures movement breathing or being still can be portrayed through music...(2000, cited from MacDonald et al:2012). Elliott identifies 'making music as something that humans 'already do' (1995, cited Malloch and Trevarthen:2009:466). With this in mind I translated musical nuts and bolts to include

Long and short notes and rests = finding our breath

Finding different ideas to breath, hold our breath, release and so on was fun, playful and relevant to both musical learning (rhythm, silence, composition) and vocalising (impulse to make sounds)

Song: Can you make a sound like me?/Can you blow up a balloon?

Video Can you make a sound? (Ind:VC1)

High and low = using emotion

Providing playful facial clues to be happy (high up), sad or cross (low down) thus creating some interesting sounds together.

Song: Roly poly up up up!

Beat and rests = time to explore and respond

Song: Someone is knocking on the door

Video *Someone is knocking on the door* (App:VC2)

Composition = using the body and voice to make sounds.

Song: Leaves are falling down/Roll the ball

Video *Roll the ball* (App:23)

Initiating language with familiar songs

As the weeks progressed I encouraged Jayne to also choose songs that she knew well. With their complex rhythms and pitch many of her chosen, familiar nursery songs were too difficult for young children to sing. However, in this case singing was not the penultimate aim. Loved traditional rhymes and songs hold intrinsic value that is both sociable and comforting. The example video clip shows Jayne sharing ‘The Wheels on the bus’. Note how towards the end she slows down to let the children in vocally and physically.

Video example: *Up and down* (Ind:VC4)

Every so often Jayne asked the group “what would you like to sing now?” The shared anticipation of enjoying something that everyone knew well always sparked positive responses and active engagement. I subsequently looked closely at developing Jayne’s skills on *how* to deliver rather than *what* to deliver. During a CPD² session I encouraged Jayne to think more expansively about musical aims in a loved song that could also help nurture vocalising – particularly in children with EAL³ or from multi-lingual backgrounds. One example was to add sounds and focus on the beat:

Hey diddle **diddle** the **cat** and the **fiddle**,

The **cow** jumped **over** the **moon** (weee!)

The **dog** he **laughed** to **see** such **fun**,

The **dish** ran **away** with the **spoon** (runrunrunrunrun!)⁴

² Continuing professional development

³ English as an additional language

⁴ Brackets denote sounds. Bold denotes beat

Alternatively ask questions about what happened next and describe in motion and sound:

"What did the cow do?" (lots of jumping actions). Jayne's leadership skills developed through applying new ideas to familiar songs and being creatively expansive. In one session Jayne sang "Old MacDonald" then paused before asking *"Who lived on Old MacDonald's farm?"* Children responded whether in sound ("mooo") or in animal ("Cow") with Jayne then encouraging responses in the parent tongue.

Later she delivered 'The wheels on the bus' as follows:

"The (pause) (child says "wheels!") on the bus go (pause) (child says "round!") (creates big round movements) and round" etc. On another occasion, and before starting "Row row..." Jayne made water sounds whilst slapping the floor *"Splish splash splosh"* (children and parents joined in)...*"Row row row your boat etc"* thus introducing irresistibly playful sounds – an important prelude to vocalising words. Another video example (App:VC5) highlights adaptation of a well-known melody to tidy instruments up. In this example Jayne is engaging with the children at their pace, and enabling responsibility and initiative to occur. 'Feeding' a melody during an activity is playful and makes a routine activity more interesting.

Using resources and visuals

I encouraged Jayne to use resources that were meaningful to the musical focus as well the musical activity. Resources such as socks for worms, brought the group together in shared anticipation and sound making, and were free (bring your own socks!) Others included scarves or real leaves to bring a thematic song to life (leaves are falling down), fish and lycra cloth to create water sounds and jumping fish (adaptation of "row row"). Jayne later brought in foil and coloured film to create anticipation and sounds for "I hear thunder".

One week she brought in a brightly coloured microphone and encouraged vocalising to "Can you make a sound like me?" Jayne adapted songs including "Someone is knocking on the box". This now consisted of a box with a rabbit in, which then led to a new song and calmer activity. The flow and ebb of a session used time and space thoughtfully. Little suggestions by myself were constantly understood and acted upon. These included breaking down the whole sensory experience:

Introduce the sound of a car (aural) BEFORE showing the car (visual), then do the song with actions (motor). Enjoy a new activity three times to strengthen muscle and multi-sensory memory:

FAR = a/ I Focus on the song. b/ I Absorb the song. C/ I Respond to the song.

I encouraged Jayne to constantly think how music can be offered in multi-sensory ways so as to meet the needs of the whole child (Bannan et al,2009:456). When working in groups treating moving, visuals, listening, vocalising and touch as equals builds on every child's strengths rather than a few. Jayne was now delivering each activity with clear goals of language development encompassed by the sharing of different languages.

The template

The modules established for each session (App.26) reflected a routine that was familiar for the children as well as for Jayne. The group had about 90 minutes to enjoy lots of musical activities that excited, calmed, moved, were repeated and changed. The template provided a sense of structure, familiarity and a new multi-sensory perspective and provided building blocks of experiencing, engaging and learning. By the 8th session in the first term Jayne moved from one activity to another comfortably, sometimes adapting the template order to meet the group's ever-changing emotions and energy.

Personal, Sociable and Emotional skills

In the context of Jayne's developing skills delivering music to her group notable vocal responses emerged from the children. N is a reserved three year old who preferred to stay close to his mother, watching closely what was going on was more vocal and curious within a few short weeks. In the example video (App.VC5) N (in the white shirt is seen being physically animated and fully participating.

A young girl, normally non-responsive is seen strumming and looking to her mother for approval (App.VC6). Her sibling is watching closely throughout. She is engaged and absorbing the activity which is as relevant to musical engagement as being actively responsive.

Another example confirms the motivation to attachment through playful vocalising and touch. A dad evokes emotional response in his son. His son is participating directly in a kind

of silent, visual singsong since his gaze does not waver throughout the musical game (App.VC7). Even when the responses are not vocal, making and responding to music is akin to physical vocalisation and should be noted as a positive response to communicating and a sense of belonging (Malloch and Trevarthan: 304)

Collaborative achievement

Valerie, a family support worker with a particular interest in speech and a colleague wanted to find out more about sound making ideas and musical games to support language development. They attended at least three music sessions including the ukulele workshop. Valerie understood the similarity in music to speech, and the enormous possibilities of embedding spontaneous and progressive development in speech through musical play. Importantly she noted the emotionally positive impact musical learning was having on the group, and how the children developed vocal play spontaneously, and without pressure to repeat word patterns or speak.

As a music practitioner I was constantly struck by Jayne's quiet, determined enthusiasm for developing her music skills, whilst simultaneously achieving shared language outcomes for her families. Key language milestones included creating new ways to tease out different languages from the rich variety of cultures. This included *Bunny in a box* an adaptation of *Someone is knocking on the box* where the bunny was passed around in the box. At the end of the song the child opened the box and the bunny hopped out. The child had to say "hello" in their own language before everyone had fun hopping about. Other animals were later introduced as a surprise, producing squeals of merriment.

Over a few weeks Jayne brought in typed translations of songs and asked the parents to translate and enact them. A shy Japanese and Turkish mother each recited a poem then explained what it meant with accompanying actions. When encouraged by Jayne the group repeated back the poem. Their respective children looked animated and clearly delighted at hearing familiar words, and seeing their mother 'in charge' (App.VC8).

Another notable response came from a French mother called Alice. She threw herself into moving, singing and describing 'Menuier tu dors' – a song about a windmill. Alice encouraged the group to stand up and spin arms around, whilst reciting the song in French. Her twin daughters were wide-eyed, copying the actions and mouthing the words.

Were the aims of the project fulfilled?

Towards the end of the project I discovered that I, as the music specialist was increasingly focused on developing Jayne's music skills to enable sustainable music making after the funding support ended. Jayne on the other hand retained the initial aim of nurturing language development. With this in mind she applied her newly found musical skills to achieve these aims. An earlier study by Pitts (2016) highlights similar parallels that occurred when investigating the impact that music has on language skills. Jayne's confidence in music was undoubtedly strengthened by realising that

Professional goals can be achieved by applying other (music) skills

No-one – in particular children – is judging you

Communicative outcomes can be achieved with music as well as music itself

A lack of confidence in delivering music seems to be a recurring theme in early years teams. Personal confidence is diminished if others provide negative responses. Confidence bashing seems to occur in the historical context (in childhood or as a teenager) – "I was told I was rubbish at singing" "I gave up the violin as no one liked it!" One example was eloquently described by a parent who was reluctant to get involved due to being discouraged from playing the recorder at school. She joined in, and really enjoyed the sessions. Our earliest (often negative) memories can affect us for the rest of our lives. Thus, music teachers have a huge responsibility to encourage children's musical interests, however small.

On the other hand, if positive feedback is regularly given confidence increases. Developing language in young children during music sessions was a constant focus for Jayne. The positive impact that music had on communicating was reason enough for Jayne to apply her new-found skills in the context of her role at the children's centre. In the end it was not I, the music specialist focusing on language development but Jayne.

Jayne understood that there was no pressure to become an 'skillful musician'. Rather, she sought musical ideas to immerse within her professional role so as to encourage vocalising and language in the context of the child's ability and culture. All of this Jayne achieved in joyous, creatively musical ways by using her voice and her ukulele combined with extraordinary empathy with her families. My job was done. Or was it?

The future

The families were disappointed when they realised that the music project would not be continuing. In her continuing role with the Children's centre and current rhyme-time activities Jayne could not pursue these sessions. Alice, a French mother announced that she would like to continue running the weekly music sessions for multi-lingual families. Alice had never taught music before, nor did she play an instrument. Despite this she decided to adopt all the songs and poems she and her daughters had enjoyed in addition to those from Jayne's rhyme-time sessions.



Jayne managed to secure a space at the centre together with some resources and they agreed that Alice would start the following term. Jayne would be around, although busy in other duties. How was I – the music specialist – ensure that Alice and her families continued without fresh input of music activities? I wanted to harness Alice and the group's enthusiasm and provide continuing support where possible. I also did not want Jayne to feel under pressure or responsible for retaining the group.

I got in touch with Babcock Music Services again, to ask if they could fund a term's worth of ukulele lessons for the adults. My reasoning was that if Alice, Jayne, parents and other early years workers could continue learning the instrument with playing, singing, moving and achieving core objectives, and linking to the EYFS goals, Babcock Music Services would be investing in educational goals and pupils approaching school age. A "yes" came back, together with confirmed ongoing loan of the instruments. There was absolutely no time to waste. When one branch grows, another flourishes, but has to be watered at every step of the way. In this, none of us could be complacent. This was shared responsibility at its best.

I contacted Katie, social media guru of the children's centre cluster, together with my colleague to create a flyer. To apply with Babcock Music Service's mission to make music accessible and inclusive I created two fortnightly classes – one at Flying Start for multi-cultural families with Alice's music group, and one at the Chestnut Children's centre for early years' educators, EY's specialists and children's support groups.

Both are now taking place. The project continues to reach families within all Jayne's groups – the play sessions, music group, crèche, home learning and CSL group. The impact on children has included curiosity and wonder, an increased interest in music and movement overall. The ukulele lessons at Flying Start focuses on learning the instrument by using new and traditional songs for their children to enjoy. Parents noted that if their early years worker could 'do music' then so could they. One of the parents - Alice - continues to develop her repertoire through ongoing support and ideas during our bi-weekly ukulele sessions.

The ripples of this project continues to reach further afield – to speech and language specialists, family support workers, managers, parents and the children themselves.

Acknowledgements

Grateful thanks go to

Flying Start Children's Centre for endorsing and supporting the project

Sarah Rundle, Early Years Manager for her support

Jayne Leaver for her tireless and committed enthusiasm

Youth Music and Soundwaves Extra for their funding support and endorsement

All the participating children and families without whom we would not have achieved so much.

Further acknowledgements and feedback are from Jayne:

I would like to thank Emma for sharing her wonderful practice, for her support, encouragement, boundless energy and enthusiasm and not forgetting her confidence in me.

Thank you also to Jane Parker for her support and creative ideas.

Emma encouraged me to take up the ukulele. On her advice I joined a ukulele group which was well outside of my comfort zone! Nine months later I took part in a ukulele concert which I never dreamt I could do. I was particularly interested to learn about the link between music and PSE and as the group progressed I witnessed our less confident children really blossom, the gently persuasive influence of music had a seemingly magical effect on their confidence. It also encouraged playful interactions between parent and child.

My continuing practice has benefitted from being able to play an instrument, from slowing things down, dissecting and exploring songs and themes, using props in a creative way and including vocal expression. My confidence in delivering music groups and activities has improved and I realise that you don't need to be an expert to take part in music, this is something I now try to convey to our families.

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APPENDIX

Video clips (available via Dropbox)

Video Example: Parent lead

Video example: Roll the ball

Video example: Can you make a sound like me?

Video example: Shared Participation

Video example: Up and down

Video example: Vocal attachment

Video example: Silence and play



Winter 2016

Consent letter
Supporting communication and learning with musical play

Taunton Opportunities Group is delighted to be working with Soundwaves Extra in a fantastic music project to show how important music is in supporting learning, communication and life skills in young children.

Would you be happy for us to do short video clips of your child enjoying music with the music specialist? Emma Hutchinson has many years of experience in researching and understanding how important music is for young children – particularly in helping with communication, learning and life skills.

If you have any questions please get in touch with Emma on emma@musichouseforchildren.co.uk or Jane Parker, Manager of Soundwaves Extra on jane@takeart.org.

Best wishes

I consent to my child participating in musical activities and to having video snippets taken for the purpose of highlighting the importance of music in young children's early development.

Yours sincerely

CHILD'S NAME

PARENT/GUARDIAN'S NAME (PLEASE PRINT)

FLYING START CHILDREN'S CENTRE

Music and Movement for
toddlers and young children and parents at

Southenhay church hall with
Jayne Leaver and Emma Hutchinson

Every Monday
STARTS MONDAY 16TH MAY
(until December 2016)

REGISTER FOR YOUR PLACE NOW!

(directly at Flying Start Children's Centre)



Template	SONGS/POEM	RESOURCES	MOVES/ACTION	SOUNDS	COMMENTS
Welcome (circle activities)					
Warm-up (moving, sounds, song)					
Mini-story (adventure through sounds, moving, dancing, visuals)					
Instrumental & sound play (exploring sounds in solo and together)					
Moving & Dancing (moving around together)					
Reflection & Chill (Recap. and ask questions)					
Farewell (acknowledgement & closure)					

Songs and poems

Sing hello together

Sing hello together, together together.
Sing hello together, he- he- llo.

Can you make a sound like me?

Can you make a sound like me? Can you make a sound like me?
Can you make a sound like me? Can you make a sound like me?

Gallee

Gallee Gallee, galloo galloo galloo,
Gallee, galloo, gallee, galloo, gallee... Weeeee!

Someone is knocking at the door

Someone is knocking at the door, someone is knocking at the door.
Someone is knocking, someone is knocking,
Someone is knocking at the door.

Roll the ball

Roll the ball, roll the ball, roll the ball to...

Roly poly

Roly poly up up up. Roly poly down down down.
Roly poly ever so slowly... brrrrrrrrrr!

Leaves are falling down

Leaves are falling down, leaves are falling down,
Whirly swirly, whirly swirly, leaves are falling down.

Walking by the seaside

Walking by the seaside, walking by the sea.
Walking by the seaside, walking by the sea/in the garden

Hear the little bird

Hear the little bird sitting up a tree. Sang a little song just for you and me...
La la la la la la la la la la...

Sing goodbye together

Sing goodbye together, together, together,
Sing goodbye together, sing goodbye.

Resources

Little Birdsong Treasure basket

comprising: maraca, bells, caxixi, heart and hanky shakers, claves, clatterpillar, agogo, mini-djembe, chime bar, egg shakers, bento shakers, pangi shakers, kenari shakers, cd with songs and booklet.

1 ukulele

Little Birdsong's Treasure basket



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