

UKULELE SESSIONS WITH LOCAL FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

Funded by The Babcock Music Services



The project

Following on from the successful language and music project established with support from Soundwaves (TakeArt) the request from the families to continue with ukulele provision was made possible by support from Babcock Music Services.

A total of 12 families wanted to learn to play the ukulele whilst at the same time engage musically with their children through song and instrumental play. Flying Start Children's centre agreed to host

10 weekly ukulele and music sessions. Emma Hutchinson agreed to run the sessions and to establishing an appropriate template that could meet the needs of parents and young children simultaneously.

Recipients

The recipients of ukulele project were families with young children between 6 months and 5 years old. The nationalities included French, Spanish, Chinese, Turkish and English. There were up to 12 adults and 15 children participating each week. Two lead facilitators were interested in learning the ukulele so as to learn a new skill, and to share this skill with the children and other families. One was a parent and another was a French volunteer. Neither had any former training in music, singing or instrumental play.

Where

The weekly sessions were held at Flying Start Children's Centre in Exeter. The room was set up to accommodate a spacious circle with cushions and some other musical instruments for the younger children to enjoy whilst ukulele sessions took place.



Why

This ten week ukulele course followed on from a successful 20 week project with these families and the workforce. They had developed singing skills and an understanding of how music impacts on their children's development and the ukulele had been one of the facilitator's main instruments. Having seen two of the centre's team taking up the ukulele the parents wanted to develop their skills to share and encourage musical learning in their children.

What we did

Every week the ukulele teacher Emma Hutchinson came along for an hour. She approached the lessons from the perspective of 'doing' rather than talking and showing. Every parent and child had a ukulele, or shared one depending on the age of the child. The group was encouraged to hold (or 'hug') their ukulele, and to strum. Using a simple 'up and down' strumming pattern Emma went straight into a "hello" song, acknowledging each person. This activity delighted the children who realised they were part of an 'orchestra' and thus, the song. Emma focused on songs that were age appropriate and familiar. She considered how parents could learn with the material relating directly back to their children. The 'take home' factor of these songs together with learning an instrument would hopefully provide new skills that were relevant, memorable and inspiring enough for the younger children to adopt over time. The repertoire included

Sing hello together

Can you make a sound like me?

Frere Jacques

Row your boat

A ram sam sam

Windy weather

Rain is falling down

5 little ducks went swimming one day

Incy wincy spider

The wheels on the bus

If you're happy and you know it

The grand old Duke of York

She'll be coming round the mountain

Boogie woogie

Twinkle twinkle little star

What happened

By the end of ten weeks all the regular families were able to play three chords confidently. Emma devised and incorporated playful ideas to encourage different ways of enjoying the songs, using an instrument and applying multi-sensory ability to the experience. An example was to lift the ukulele up high and low during *the grand old Duke of York*, to move forward and backwards during *Row your boat* and to jiggle from left to right during *Boogie woogie*. Other examples included turning the ukulele over to knock on the sound box during *Someone is knocking on the door*. Hugging the ukulele was another favourite to silence the chords, and to encourage responses (*Can you make a sound like me?*)

Feedback and outcome

The impact of 10 regular ukulele sessions was hugely positive. The children sang along, listened, copied (their parents playing) and adopted the ukulele as 'their instrument', playing alongside their parent. The parents feedback included:

I love the ukulele!

I've learnt a new skill that I can share with my child

I never thought I could play an instrument

It's so hard but I love it!

Can you carry on teaching us?

I am going to get one to practice at home

Other notable feedback included three people (including the volunteer) buying their own and stating that they would sign up to a ukulele club near Queen Street.

All were disappointed that ukulele sessions would not be able to continue. One of the centre workers has agreed to source funding to sustain lessons as the outcomes for the children were so positive.

The hardest part of running a ukulele club for families was to adapt sessions to engage new families that turned up periodically. This was achieved by insisting that a regular attendee became a mentor for the new person to work alongside. Some of the younger children were an undisputed distraction to the cause of learning a ukulele. However in the spirit of musical play, engagement and learning those parents used the songs and the ukulele to share playful activities thus encouraging participation. By the end of the 10th week the only things that became redundant were the toys.

We shared a mini performance by running through the entire collection of songs and dancing, complete with a bow at the end. Positive outcomes included smiles, laughter and amazement in the realisation that music making was achievable and portable.



THE MUSIC HOUSE FOR CHILDREN 306 Uxbridge Road London W12 7LJ
t 020 8932 2652 e notes@musichouseforchildren.co.uk w www.musichouseforchildren.co.uk
The Music House for Children is a not for profit organisation established in 1994. Company Number: 8294280