

# Little Beats

## Overview of project

Improving wellbeing, child development and musical engagement amongst pre-school children in partnership with Suffolk Libraries.

## Who was involved?

### Partners

#### Main

Suffolk Artlink

Suffolk Libraries

#### Other

Magic Acorns

Britten Pears

### Libraries

Ipswich Library

Chantry Library

Lowestoft Library

Halesworth Library

Beccles Library

### Library Staff

Daniela Tudose (Ipswich Library)

Joy Byford (Chantry Library)

Rebecca Giltrow (Lowestoft Library)

Francesca Armour-Chelu (Halesworth Library)

Sarah Sparkes (Beccles Library)

**Melissa Mathews** - Creative Programmes Manager

**Sally Garwood** - Creative Communities Producer

### Emerging Musicians

Sophie Harley

Reuben Kyriakides

### **Music Mentors**

Sophie Fox  
Bryan Hall  
Xenia Horne  
Abby Page

### **Explore Facilitators**

Muntu Valdo  
Rosie Adedeiran (London Rhymes)  
Xenia Horne  
Vanessa Stansall  
Zoe Palmer

### **Early Years Network Partners**

Magic Acorns  
Britten Pears

### **Who we delivered early years music sessions to**

YMCA Nursery Ipswich  
Beccles Children's Centre  
Halesworth Day Nursery  
The Ark Children's Centre, Lowestoft  
Village Rise Children's Centre, Lowestoft

### **Funded By**

Youth Music  
Suffolk Community Foundation

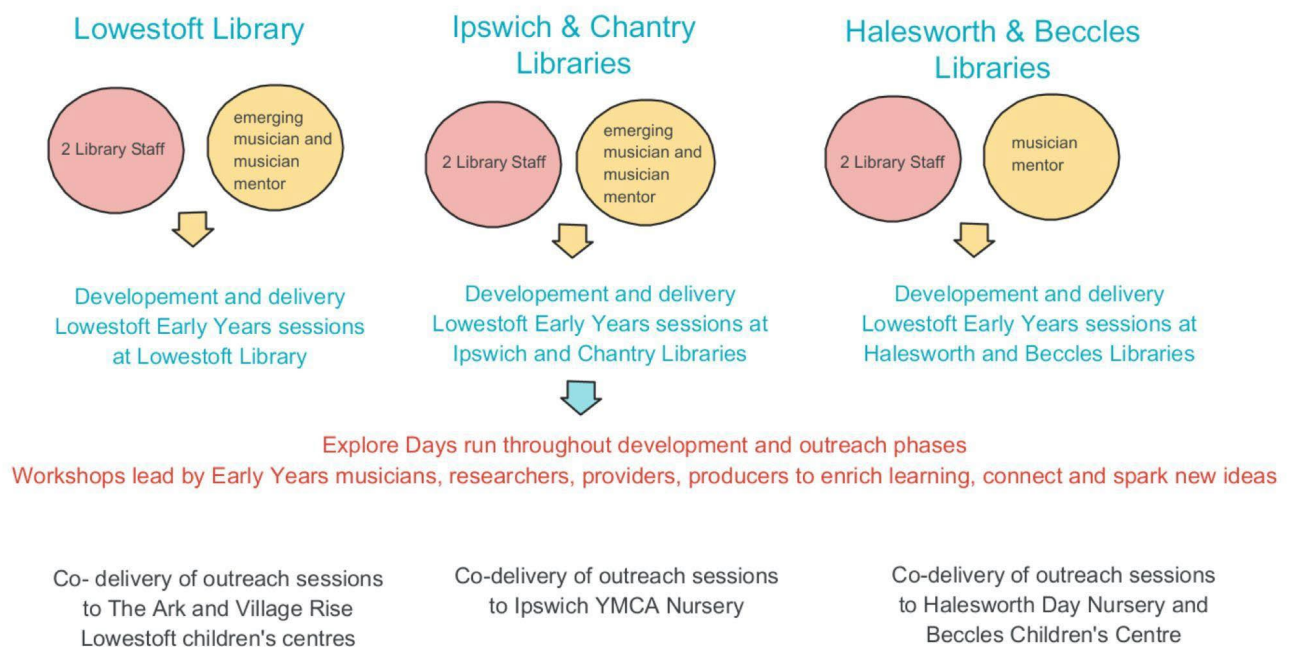
## Little Beats Connections graphics



## Little Beats program schedule

1. Identify Libraries
2. Recruitment of Library Staff
3. Recruit Emerging Musicians
4. Recruit Music Mentors
5. 6 x Development Sessions in the libraries
6. 5 X Explore Sessions (throughout program)
7. 6 X Outreach sessions for local Early Years Groups
8. 3 X Reflective Sessions for library staff and music mentors

## Little Beats project structure graphics



## Development sessions content overview

In our small location groups (library staff, emerging musician and mentor) developed material to deliver to the early years music groups at the identified libraries. The music mentors worked to explore each individual's musical strengths in the group and worked them into the plans for delivery. For example in the Ipswich and Chantry group Joy's clarinet and talent for creating melody was built into the delivery of her sessions. Daniela's strengths were in dance and Rueben's in improvised sound. These strengths were played out in

the sessions that Joy, Daniela and Reuben delivered at Ipswich and Chantry libraries and at the YMCA Nursery in Ipswich. Little Beats is a library project, so each session had storytelling and word play built into the musical delivery of the sessions. Our music offer was often built around a chosen story.



Daniela, Joy and Xenia at Ipswich Library creating new material for the sessions, using a very special book from the library.

### **Ipswich Development session reflection**

#### **Xenia Horne - Music Mentor Ipswich**

*“Working together in the space offered us an opportunity to observe the way that the children and parents chose to engage with the session.....*

*.....Combining Daniela’s imaginative approach to story with Joy’s innate ability to create melody, led to a series of improvised sequences developing through the session. The aim here was to offer more inclusive and easily accessible activities. We considered children and adults for whom English is not their first language, and children in experiencing the earliest development of communication skills.”*

#### **Outreach sessions content overview**

Each location group co-delivered their developed material to the identified outreach groups. For example, library staff Sarah and Francesca delivered their new material which was created through the development sessions to two identified early years audience's at Beccles Children's Centre and Halesworth Day Nursery. The sessions were a chance for Sarah and Francesca to put their new session content and learning into practice outside of the familiar library set up. These sessions fostered a positive relationship between the libraries and their local young community with invitations and signposting to their local libraries early years music offers. The same was applied to Lowestoft library where Rebecca co-delivered new material that she had developed with emerging musician Sophie Harley to The Ark Children's Centre and Village Rise Children's centre in Lowestoft.



Beccles Children's Centre Outreach session

## Explore sessions content overview

The Explore sessions were designed to enrich the learning of our library staff, emerging musicians and also our growing network of musicians and early years practitioners including library staff not on the program, nursery staff, teachers, professional and non-professional musicians with an interest in early years music.

We were lucky enough to have fantastic facilitators such as Zoe Palmer who facilitated a session based on her research project *'Music and Motherhood'* *'Facilitating creative interventions for mothers and their babies'*.

*"Zoe was fantastic, I learnt a lot from her holistic approach and look forward to researching more from her resources."* Participant feedback from Zoe Palmer's Explore Day.

New material, ideas for delivery and background theory from the Explore sessions gave our Little Beats cohort an abundance of material and a grounding context in which to enrich their own delivery and session content for both the development sessions and the outreach sessions.

## **Outcome 1:**

**To improve music leader and library staff's skills and confidence in delivering quality early years music sessions.**

### **Library staff impact : Analysis**

Library staff acquired increased musical skills and knowledge through working together as a group with their paired musicians and music mentors. The library staff learnt new skills by taking part in sharing experience and knowledge with their musician pairs as well as working through ideas with the support of their music mentor.

#### **Increased musical skills and knowledge**

Reflecting on development session with Sarah and Francesca

Sophie Fox, Music Mentor

*"An hilarious morning with Sally, Francesca and Sarah. We asked what would they like to explore and two things came up - transitions and working with babies ( holding attention?) We spent most of the morning exploring and workshoping how to get things out of a basket- using our faces to convey feelings ( surprise, awe? etc )."*

Reflecting on development session with Sophie

Francesca, Halesworth Library

*".....I also loved exploring some of the more unusual instruments and having a practice with a Ukulele. I really look forward to bringing that slowness/playfulness to my sessions story-telling in the library, and bringing the magic of books better to life."*

#### **Increased musical skills and knowledge continued ..**

Attending the Explore sessions which were led by experienced early years music specialists, researchers and musicians really embedded the library staff's learning and gave a great foundation for exploring early years music to greater depths. For example Rosie Adediran ran a fantastic session based around *"Family music making opportunities, creativity and shifting power "*

*“ I found this session joyful, engaging, fun, inspiring and educating! It was so brilliant to be back in the room with other early years facilitators and to share ideas. I found the session was so well structured.”* Participant feedback on Rosie Adediran's Explore Day

Library staff on the Little Beats program experienced really positive changes in their confidence in delivery of sessions, both within themselves and in the musical content that they were delivering.

### **Library Staff impact : Increased Confidence**

Sally Garwood, Suffolk Libraries wrote in her reflection -

*“ This designated time has given the staff space to reflect on their personal uniqueness and characteristics, what this means and how they can incorporate their individual quirks and charms into their delivery.”*

### **Sarah Sparkes Reflections, Beccles Library Staff**

*“I enjoyed the performance of pulling socks out and putting them on ears and head, then feet, then the flippers, the hat and duck whistle before saying the duck rhyme.”*

*“ I feel more confident that it is ok miss parts of the book out and turn it into a more fun interactive performance. Can't wait to next week!”*

Photo below : Sarah delivering a session at Beccles Children's centre.



Holly, Manager at Halesworth Day nursery

*"All the kids absolutely loved it. Music is so important. The music was delightful."*

### **Library Staff impact : Recognising and bringing existing skills in music into early years settings**

The Little Beats program enabled Joy to combine her two previously disparate passions - her knowledge and experience of being a musician and delivering Early Years music sessions.

Joy, Chantry Library Staff

*"Mondays has become my favourite day since the Little Beats programme has been running! I think we have all been challenged to try new things and step out of our comfort zone at times, but for me it's also been amazing to be able to express the musicality within me in the context of the work I do with Early Years in the libraries. I feel that these two previously rather separate compartments of my life are now beginning to converge and even overlap a little!"*

### **Library Staff impact : Learning new ways of approaching early years music**

Little Beats opened up new musical avenues for both library staff and emerging musicians, the program provided a safe space for exploration of new ideas.

Reuben, Emerging musician

*"I enjoyed the music-making/playing the most. I was struck immediately by the maturity of the playing. I thought it would be something that we would need to build up to because improvised music is so much about trust and listening."*

Sophie Fox, music mentor, Reflections on development session

*"We played with slowing it down, allowing time for things (especially when thinking about babies) time for them to notice, time for them to react. Holding an object- looking at the object, looking at our participants, looking at the object again... sensing this as musical rhythms, starting to-use our voices as well--- little micro songs and musical transitions."*

## Outcome 2:

### To Improve the Musical Engagement of Young Children.

#### Improved musical engagement : Analysis

The sessions provided children the opportunity to explore their own musical skills and knowledge with others through movement, making sounds with their bodies, instruments, voice and found sounds. Copying, mirroring and sequence were some of the actions that helped engagement and embed learning. Storytelling was embedded in music and vice versa to use the skills and requirements of the library staff and their settings. Little Beats created opportunities for families to access early years music as well as facilitating time for children to develop their social skills and language skills. The sessions were tailored to each setting's unique needs, making sure that we were always being inclusive and sensitive to children, families and staff.

Kim, manager, YMCA Nursery

*"I saw normally quiet children enjoying the singing and dancing in the garden. It showed that this is a passion of theirs which I think staff had yet to unlock in that particular child!"*

#### Impact : Creating opportunities for families to access early years music.

It became clear that many of the children's centre's in the areas that we were delivering had not yet started up any early years music offers. At Beccles Children's Centre our sessions were the first early years sessions that had been programmed since before the pandemic. The sessions were fully booked instantly. The manager at the children's centre said "It is so nice to have people in the building again." The lack of early years provision had left a lot of young children and families isolated for such a long period of time.

Grandma, Chantry Library

*"I've got all the toys at home but they find it more interesting here with the music."*

## **Impact : Little Beats music sessions facilitated young children's social and emotional development and wellbeing.**

The pandemic and lack of early years groups and opportunities in the area had impacted many young children's opportunities to develop their social and emotional skills through being with other people. Little Beats music sessions provided a great opportunity for young families to reconnect through musical play which is proven to enhance young children's social, emotional, speech and language development as presented in Vanessa Stansall's lecture and Zoe Palmer's workshop.

### **Mum**

*" Her speech and language is getting back on track now after getting out more."*

### **Grandma**

*"Lockdown babies haven't had the chance to socialise, you don't realise the impact. Great to have a face to face offer, something to do that's free and gets you out of the house to socialise. Plus the kids are now going home with books in their bags!"*

## **Impact : Little Beats music sessions introduced children to new sounds and new genres of music.**

We were lucky enough to have musicians and library staff on the project that could bring unique sounds to our early years sessions. Joy played her Clarinet, Xenia played her Harp at sessions and Reuben brought his song bowls. We also carefully picked and supplied instruments and 'sound-makers' that create quality sounds and are engaging for the children.

### **Holly, Halesworth Day Nursery Manager**

*" Your authentic instruments are great. They make real sounds. They have different weights and textures, usually everything is plastic and sounds the same."*

## **Other Outcomes**

### **Benefits to parents and carers of young children**

Early Years music groups are not just benefiting the children. There are many parents and carers that have been completely isolated since before the pandemic. It has been even more challenging for those less confident people to get out to groups. The music sessions provided a safe and supportive space for the parents to get out and be with other people in similar situations. This feedback was from a mum at

Chantry who felt socially awkward and had not been able to connect with any other parents since her child was born in the pandemic.

#### Mum, Chantry Library

*"I sing to my baby but I don't socialise easily. It feels comfortable in this group as we sing together and it doesn't feel awkward."*

### Improving musical engagement of young people : Conclusion

It is clear that the Little Beats program improved the musical engagement of young people through providing thoughtful, tailored and quality music sessions in a variety of settings. Families and Children's Centres that had no provision were given the opportunity to engage in early years music through our sessions. Nurseries were offered well planned early years music sessions to enhance their offer, this also provided an opportunity for their staff to develop new skills in facilitating early years music within their setting by witnessing and working with our musicians and library staff.

#### Kim (YMCA Nursery Manager) Reflections on our Little Beats music sessions

*"I think the project has seen their (children's) confidence level in music and dance increase. It has allowed some of the children with a passion for dance and creativity to really show their personality. They now have a keen interest in music which is something we are planning to enhance and continue moving forward. We are exploring the musical opportunities we give to children and how to enhance this in our provision as a result of your visits."*

*I think it (Little Beats) gave staff chance to see other ways of introducing music/dance etc to the children. It has showed them to move from their comfort zones and get in the moment with the children and enjoy themselves too!.."*

## Additional Activity

### Early Years Network Meeting

Through Little Beats we are growing a fantastic network of musicians and early years music practitioners. The Early Years Network Meeting that was co-organised by Suffolk Artlink, Magic Acorns and Britten Pears was an excellent start to a growing network of people and organisations who are keen to share knowledge, ideas and advance the quality provision of early years music. Musicians, early years specialists, nursery and school staff attended the meeting to share their projects, ideas, knowledge and to connect with others.



Kate Bacon and Tom Veasey - Suffolk Libraries

Kate and Tom talking about their experience on the Little Beats program last year.

### Feedback from Early Years Network Meeting

#### Network attendee

*"It's focused my thinking on my own practice and the work I want to do.  
Hearing other orgs talk about their provision was interesting."*

#### Network attendee

*"It's been really nice to understand the links in Suffolk as a new teacher to this area.  
It's refreshing and helps to reevaluate our practice and support around us."*



Daniela, Joy and Sophie at the YMCA Nursery getting ready for an outreach session.

## Extract from CASE STUDY 2- Partnerships

### Little Beats Reflection

**Project Partner Sally Garwood, Creative Communities Producer,  
Suffolk Libraries**

How has the project benefited the outreach venues such as the YMCA, nurseries, and children's centres?

Little Beats has been instrumental in forging strong and trusting relationships between libraries and other settings working with young children.

We began working with the YMCA Childcare Providence at a particularly challenging time for the nursery. Post-lockdown with Covid-19 still circulating, strategic and structural changes, a high turnover of staff, sickness, and a struggle to recruit new practitioners.

Therefore, we wanted to make our visits inobtrusive and low-key and we were aware that we were not only there for the children, but the staff too. Our activity in the setting meant that we were able to take the pressure off the practitioners for a short while and to allow them to engage and have fun as participants alongside the children.

The offer of music meant that we were able to connect and communicate with the children and staff across social and cultural boundaries and the sessions inspired the nursery practitioners to use more musical play to entertain and engage with their children.

### What have you personally got from the project?

Personally, Little Beats has changed my attitude towards what music is and can be, and it's also highlighted the importance of play and creative time.

I have built deeper relationships with my colleagues and co-workers. This has meant a lot to me. The project has at times compelled us to be quite vulnerable with one another... as we've learnt music is universal but it's also very personal.

The project has also got me thinking about pursuing my own early years music practice!

It has been a wonderful, creative journey of gratification and connection.

## Links to online content

### Making Connections

Please see *Making Connections* presentation for an introduction to the structure of the project and emerging musician Sophie Harley's personal experience on the program.

0.00-9.04 - Overview of Little Beats presented by Kasia (project manager)

9.04-16.40 - Presentation by Sophie Harley (emerging musician)

<https://youtu.be/bldedV8FFg0>