

## Report on Suffolk Artlink and Youth Music- Little Beats Programme

### What did we do?

#### Mini Lab

The project started with a 7 session CPD course that ran weekly online. Library staff and lead musicians attended masterclasses delivered by music practitioners from different professional backgrounds, a movement artist and also an Early Years Music educator. The sessions culminated in an evaluation session where we shared our reflections and learning.

### Delivery groups:

#### 1 Tot Rock with Tom Gt Cornard Library

Tom Vasey (Library staff member) worked with lead musician Sophie Fox. 14 preparatory sessions were used to develop content for online sessions. The first sessions were used to work out how to deliver to EY group using Zoom. 8 weekly Zoom sessions were then delivered to a live EY audience, the sessions were recorded and edited for later viewing on YouTube. Reflection sessions were held after each live session.

#### 2. Me, Myself and Baby group Ipswich Library

Four weekly sessions were held online over Zoom. Musician Catherine worked closely with Kate Bacon (library staff member) to develop and deliver the sessions. Catherine instilled confidence in Kate's delivery and introduced her to new material and inspiration, including the use of less familiar songs suitable for 0-5, props, backdrops and instruments.

#### 3. Homestart Lowestoft

Four weekly sessions were held online with the intention of creating a new online music group for Homestart that could be taken on by a volunteer. We finished with a further online training session for Tracy so that she could confidently continue to run the music sessions with a Homestart volunteer using the format and content that had been developed by our lead musicians Bryan and Catherine.

#### 4. Lowestoft Library staff

Musicians Bryan and Catherine worked with Sarah and Debs from Lowestoft library for 8 weeks to build their confidence to deliver online sessions to a live audience. Sessions covered song-writing and session planning, using the library book stock as inspiration. Musical tracks created by Bryan were used as the basis for the themed sessions. The sessions culminated with Sarah and Debs writing their own EY session plan.

### Wider training / dissemination:

We created workflow plans and checklists for working in a digital environment. Bryan developed engaging musical tracks for the Little Beats online sessions and in future for use by Suffolk Libraries

and Homestart. Rhythm, pace, textural and thematic sounds were composed into audible landscapes that transported the groups to different environments. Bryan also led brainstorming sessions with the groups (library staff and musicians) to maximise the use of existing experience and knowledge and to share new ideas.

Kate Bacon (Suffolk Libraries staff) led an online CPD course for library colleagues to disseminate the learning from the Little Beats project to the wider organisation. Dr Jessica Pitt (EY specialist) and Jack Ross (Musician) also attended, offering a wider academic perspective and practical skills around exploring stories and music. 14 members of staff participated.

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Networks: We aligned ourselves with online EY forums as the project progressed and we assigned early years academic researcher Dr Jessica Pitt as project mentor to consult on the development of the project. Staff attended online training sessions, including sessions led by ECME, MERYC: Musical Development Matters and SALT Music.

COVID: All of our planned face to face delivery was moved online. It was hoped that eventually we would get to deliver face to face but due to the closure of the libraries for COVID restrictions all delivery became digital.



Differences it made?

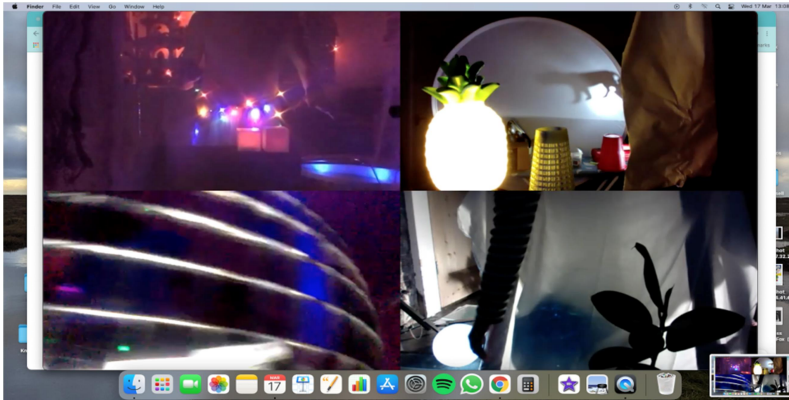
**Outcome : To improve the skills of music leaders and library staff in delivering early years work**

Using the session notes that were recorded after every session, you can clearly see the development of skills and confidence from the staff involved including the music leaders. The recordings of the evaluation sessions clearly demonstrate that the library staff and music leads have increased their knowledge base for delivering EY music both online and face to face from taking part in the Little Beats project. Some extracts from library staff, music leaders and project officer feedback is below.

Kate Bacon Reflections after Mini Lab-

*"So, to wrap up, I feel attending this course has increased my knowledge about early years music, made me look at what I and my colleagues do in practice and reflect on that. I think it is important to acknowledge that not all staff are professional or amateur musicians or have a qualification in early years practice, but we are committed to providing a warm welcoming fun session underpinned by the knowledge that having fun with play, rhymes, stories and music and modelling that, can have positive benefits for all, however new ideas and greater knowledge provided by courses such as "little Beats" keeps us on our toes, makes life more interesting and challenges us to think more broadly about our offer in an effort to strive for excellence and keep it a positive and exciting experience I enjoyed the experience, found parts challenging, but came away with ideas that I hope to try out."*

- Kate Bacon



Lead Musician Sophie Fox was able to share her prior experience of making spaces visually and audibly engaging with the use of props, light and sound. Sophie was also able to use the project to creatively explore this for online settings which was a new area of learning for her.

Sophie overall project reflections-

*"For me this project came along at the perfect time - just a week after handing in my final dissertation for my MA in Early Childhood Music. The mini-lab section provided a series of different approaches, perspectives and offers and set the tone for a reflective and exploratory project. It also provided a gentle way for the artists and librarians to get to know each other, and a shared experience to refer to. It was also interesting for me to see other practitioners running sessions online on zoom and to consider the limitations but also the potential of online spaces. Just before Christmas I managed to get a face to face visit to Gt Cornard Library to meet Tom who I had been paired up with - this was a brilliant opportunity to hang out together, talk about EY music and to have an initial play at setting up a space for zoom sessions in the library.*

*After Xmas and the lockdown in place we moved back to zoom and stayed on Zoom for the rest of the project. Working with Tom and Sally felt like being part of a team - willing to try things out, gently challenge and a lot of reflection. As our relationship developed through working together we began to play more - and our reflection meetings became creative sessions too. One of the stand out moments for me was when Tom sent me a photo of the zoom set he had created at his home and I realised Tom was probably up for anything! I learnt so much from working with Tom and Sally, and also from the challenges of working online that we approached light-heartedly and negotiated*

*together. One of the most enjoyable aspects for me was the developing relationships that grew through the project - and playing with sounds and shadows online in experimental musical play.” - Sophie Fox*

My learnings as PO- Kasia Posen

*“Through my role as PO I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to immerse myself into the world EY music education. It was inspiring to join up with EY networks such as ECME and MERYC and was in the fortune position to have the opportunity to get feedback about the project from Dr Jessica Pitt who, after leading one of the Mini Lab sessions offered to be my project mentor. Throughout the project several of our Little Beats cohort attended the rich and varied available online conferences that opened debates, discussions, learning, shared research and theories which all went into forming the delivery for Little Beats.”*

*– Kasia Posen, Project development officer.*

The whole project was very collaborative, which meant that we all got to learn and grow our ideas and output together. We (library staff, lead musicians and PO) managed to form a great support system for all involved, yet not once did we all get to meet in person! I would certainly hope to run projects collaboratively in the future with a hybrid of digital and face to face. Zoom facilitated opportunities for connections with the wider EY network that would have potentially not happened otherwise. Being able to be responsive to changing priorities/restrictions/pressures allowed the project to achieve maximum impact in a challenging environment aided by the reflective approach which identified areas for development during the delivery of the project.

*“We’re so please at Suffolk Libraries to be working on the Little Beats project with Suffolk Artlink. So many family’s first interactions with early year’s music is in a library setting and we are excited to be working with some absolutely incredible musicians and staff on this project. This year has been particularly tricky for all of us and working on this project with our staff has raised spirits and given us all something exciting to look forward to for the future.”*

*Melissa- Suffolk Libraries*

### **Outcome: To improve the musical engagement of young children (0-5 yrs)**

The results of parent/carer feedback using the musical development scale showed a high level of engagement with the musical content of the sessions. There were great results from Tom’s group in Gt Cornard and the Me, Myself and Baby group. 71.4% of parents found their child exploring sounds using objects, toys or musical instruments and 85.7% of parents noticed their child copying actions to songs. This was also backed up with the feedback from parents/carers as well as observations recorded in the review and reflection sessions by music leaders, library staff and the project officer.

Although we adapted the sessions to suit the ages in the group on reflection some of the questions in our feedback form that used the Musical Development Scale for the Me, Myself and Baby sessions could have been further broken down into age range, ( for example 0-1, 2-5). In hindsight some of the questions were not appropriate for the age 0-1 In contrast to Tom's group this group was very young and the babies were too young to display evidence of copying actions to songs.

'My survey responses are based on my child's age, if he was older there would have been more participation (dancing, moving along) from him. It was a great, interactive online session.' - Quote from mum, Me, Myself and Baby group.

Through these review and reflect sessions we identified some areas as being key to creating a successful EY music group:

1. Parent-child dynamic and instilling confidence in parents.
2. Giving the groups ownership
3. Making time for holding a space (quietish, focused) to allow for creative contribution.
4. Encouraging parents / carers to get up and dance around with their children during the sessions, the helped to lift mood and to better bond with baby + help focus parents + allowing baby to feel rhythm through parents movements.

Wilson loves all singing and dancing. He loves to watch and copy Tom playing his guitar. He enjoys all props, animals and actions. - Mum, Tot Rocks with Tom

### Learning

A collaborative approach to learning and project development and delivery is the best method. Provides a fantastic and reliable support network, fosters enthusiasm for learning and provides fertile ground for creativity and sharing new ideas. It gives the whole group a feeling of commitment, pride and ownership of the project. Each person was able to work to their strengths and feel supported where they needed it.

By the end of the project everyone involved had learnt an enormous amount about the online space. We enabled ourselves to deliver professionally, with confidence; we ironed out technical issues both audio and visual. We purchased equipment such as the correct type of microphones; Sophie and Tom built a set so that all props were screen height, visible and within comfortable reach when delivering live. Bryan taught himself how to use a green screen with cut-outs and props to create visually stimulating scenes. Bryan then went to Lowestoft Library to teach Sarah and Debs how to use a green screen that the library had purchased for their EY sessions. We explored the technical aspects as well as differences between delivering to an online audience vs. face to face. We explored 'dressing your space' using props, lighting, positioning and how to successfully encourage audience participation. We reflected on self-presentation, the need to slow down and leave space when delivering online.

