



Sing & Learn Covid-recovery Project Report

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Executive Summary

The underlying purpose of producing this report and delivering the Sing & Learn Seminar on 28th February 2023 is to keep these children and the impact of the pandemic in our minds and to continue to ask ourselves about what they need from us. This is an ongoing question, and the approach we have used in this project is just one way to tackle this issue. What will we see in ten- or twenty-years' time has been the impact of the pandemic, particularly for children in families where socio-economic and other factors already affect their long-term educational prospects? At this stage the evidence already points to a widening of the inequality gaps that bear down on life and employment opportunities from the earliest age.

The project clearly did achieve its objectives in terms of securing improvements to the speech and language skills and personal, social and emotional development of children, as observed by the teachers and nursery practitioners, the music leaders and Dr Mabel Encinas who has contributed to the monitoring and evaluation process. 90% of the teachers/ nursery practitioners believed that the project had led to specific improvements both in individual children and in their class as a whole, and they all believed the project had generally led to improvements in the social, emotional and behavioural skills of their class as a whole, with 90% noting improvements to individual children.

What stands out more than anything is the need for the children (and staff) involved to have experiences in their lives that support and sustain their wellbeing, and this is evident in the observations and data collected.

“These sessions have uplifted the staff team as well as the children. Because the adults joined in the children enjoyed it more. Lots of happy moments.” Commented one nursery teacher. **88% of parents/ carers said that ‘Music lifts my child’s mood’,** and an even larger **92% asserted that ‘Music makes us happier’** and they all reported **‘We have fun dancing to music at home’**

According to Dr Encinas, “In this project, Musiko Musika’s intervention offered a holistic approach that maximised the presence of musicians in the setting, and the support offered to practitioners in various ways, i.e. via modelling of sessions, an app for practitioners to use with the children, and an app for parents that extends the impact to home activities that support children’s learning and development.”

“Thank you for helped my child to make his word clear – you change our mood”

(EAL parent)

This report has been compiled and written by Rachel Pantin (Joint Artistic Director, Musiko Musika) and Dr Mabel Encinas (Senior Lecturer in Early Childhood Studies and Education at London Metropolitan University).

A big thank you to the very talented and committed music team that delivered the project, led by Oluyemisi Obasaju, to the staff at all the schools and nurseries and most importantly to the children and families that participated. The team at Piota, our app developer partner has also had a crucial role in ensuring we can deliver our digital aspirations.

We are very grateful for the funding from the Peter Sowerby Foundation for making this project possible and Arts Council England which funds and supports Musiko Musika as a National Portfolio Organisation.



About Musiko Musika

Musiko Musika (MM) is committed to generating happy, safe and trusting environments for people of all ages and origins using the cultures and music of different communities to inform and respect each other and to contribute to the future of a society that will respect the right of everybody to live in a peaceful and equitable manner.

To achieve this we design, develop, and deliver innovative music projects, programmes, and events with a social and cultural impact including creative & instrumental workshops, ensembles, training, family learning, audio and video content and publications. We mostly work with children, young people, families, education practitioners and musicians, particularly of the Global Majority and socio-economically challenged backgrounds, improving educational achievement, cross-cultural understanding, and life skills. We are an artist-led organisation, jointly directed by the musicians Mauricio Venegas-Astorga and Rachel Pantin, funded by Arts Council England as a National Portfolio Organisation and are one of the Lyric Partners based at the Lyric Hammersmith.

There are two main strands to Musiko Musika's programme of work:

The **World Music Academy** strand provides world music programmes through participatory projects, the Voces Festival, performances, residencies, training, and touring projects and the **ECCO** (Ethnic Contemporary Classical Orchestra) ensembles for young people.

The **Sing and Learn** projects work in the UK and in Chile with children at early years, primary and secondary level as well as with families and teachers, using music to support the development of strong speech and language skills and other areas of the curriculum including personal, social and emotional development. Our Songo publications were finalists in the International Book Awards, children's educational category.

Digital: Both strands are supported by an extensive digital resource of videos, audio, publications and our apps available for Apple and Android devices (Sing & Learn and World Music Academy).

The Covid-recovery Project was developed and delivered as part of MM's Sing & Learn programme and has its roots in many years of working within early years education including the projects *i am here!!*, *WE ARE HERE!!* and Songo's Wellbeing Project for Young Children, and work with the Speech and Language Specialist Helen Ayres. Sing & Learn is founded on the belief that early intervention in promoting successful language acquisition alongside social, emotional and personal development are essential to educational achievement and enabling children to become fully inclusive participants in society as they grow up.



Section One: Project overview, activities, and context

1.1 Project Aim and Objectives

The aim of the project was to provide music workshops, training and family activities for nurseries and schools to address the severe impact of the pandemic on young children's learning and development.

Objectives:

1a. Reduce children's learning and developmental deficits by securing better developed speech & language skills and improved listening skills

1b. Reduce children's learning and developmental deficits by securing improved social, emotional and behavioural skills (PSED)

For the purposes of identifying and evaluating the project's impacts in a more focussed manner Objective 1 was split into two objectives.

2. Improve the skills of early years practitioners and digital resources to support children's learning/ development in SLC & PSED
3. Improve and strengthen the learning partnership between home and nursery/ school
4. Improve the content and accessibility for practitioners and families of the Sing Songo app
5. Increase the effectiveness and thematic reach of the Sing & Learn programme and its impact on wellbeing

1.2 The work that was delivered (timeframe, activities, participant numbers and profile data)

The project was delivered between mid-May and mid-December 2022 in three nurseries and two schools (Reception and Year 1 children) in the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham and two nurseries and two schools in Andover reaching around 540 children/families in London and Andover.

Since the project took place in both the summer term and autumn term two cohorts of children participated in each setting, although some children participated in both terms at the schools if they were in the Reception class in summer 2022 and then Year 1 in the autumn term.

In Hammersmith & Fulham each nursery/ school participated in:

- Six workshop visits
- Two Family Workshops
- Two CPD sessions for staff
- Two performances by the children of the songs they had been learning



In Andover each nursery/ school participated in:

- Two workshop visits
- Two Family Workshops
- Two CPD sessions for staff
- Two performances by the children of the songs they had been learning

All the nurseries/ schools received on-going support from the MM team and access to the Sing & Learn resources (on the App and webpage) to enable staff to implement the programme themselves effectively and confidently.

The project also included development work to improve and extend the digital resources provided. This produced and launched a significant upgrade of the Sing Songo app which was rebranded as the Sing & Learn app containing the original version for families to use at home and a new version with extended features for practitioners to use in their settings. Alongside this a parallel web-based version of the resources was produced and released to respond to the varied access to technology that is available in settings, meaning that at times or locations where practitioners are unable to use a tablet or phone to access the app they can easily use this desktop solution.

Profile of the participants and delivery team

In Hammersmith & Fulham the children in all but one of the settings were living in families with levels of economic deprivation between 36% and 45%. Levels of special educational needs (SEN) differed over the two terms and were as high as 24% in some settings, averaging 17% overall. As expected, there were high numbers of children with English as an additional language (EAL), averaging 53% of children, with as many as 85% in some settings. The data from the settings in Andover reflects the different profile of the local population with a much lower level of EAL (between 7% and 21%, and increasing year on year), and levels of SEN between 6% and 16%. Accurate socio-economic data was not available.

Musiko Musika's delivery team for this project were all highly experienced practitioners with excellent musicianship skills, led by Oluyemisi Obasaju and including Rachel Pantin (Project Manager), Natalia Pelaez, Margarita Salazar and Rastko Rašić. The song repertoire was planned and developed with supporting activities to focus on the areas of speech and language development, personal, social and emotional development, and wellbeing.

1.3 Context and need for the work

The early years of a person's life constitute the foundation years for the rest of their life (Hansen et al., 2010; UNESCO 2020). Following the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become evident that lockdowns have disrupted education, which has had an impact on children's learning and development at all levels (Benner and Mistry, 2020; Ofsted, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c). These pandemic conditions have created a gap between early years children's actual development and the expected outcomes, particularly for children in challenging circumstances (Ofsted, 2022c; Pascal et al., 2020). Although some progress has been achieved in tackling the gap, this is still a work in progress in the early year's sector (Ofsted, 2022c; Spielman, 2022). It is foreseen that this problem can have long-term consequences for children's futures if unaddressed (UNESCO 2020).



The Cultural Learning Alliance (2022) underlines that an arts-rich early years environment addresses social justice as children become more resilient, healthier, and do better in school. This organisation also maintains that arts-rich-early years environments have a long-term impact on children's future lives. This project offers support to children in challenging circumstances who could have been affected by the pandemic lockdowns, and beyond.

The children this project reached included those currently in nursery who were either born during the pandemic or were under twelve months old in March 2020, and the oldest would have been in nursery when the first lockdown took place. This means the pandemic has affected their experiences from their earliest development, with much of their families' access to children's centres, early years services, nursery education and other key early developmental experiences disrupted by the lockdowns of 2020 and 2021.

To put this into perspective, most of the children in Year 1 in summer term 2022 lost at least one third of their nursery education and many other developmental opportunities and experiences, followed by a high level of disruption to their Reception year in 2020/21. The children that our team met in nurseries in spring 2021 when in-person sessions resumed were shy, unused to new people visiting the nursery and audibly/ visibly much less vocal and communicative than previous cohorts.

In researching the need for this project Hammersmith & Fulham early years practitioners and services reported to us:

- Significant increases in speech and language delay (rates of up to 34%) - children previously confident speakers of English had lost their English language skills
- Increased difficulties in attention, behaviour and emotional control
- Children are not socialised and have poorly developed play and social skills.
- There is an increase in the number of children who find it difficult to self-regulate their emotions, or cope with social situations such as "carpet time" at nursery
- Lack of independence and increased anxiety
- Children regressed in their development – children previously able to tie their own shoes being unable to do so
- Parents reported children experiencing nightmares, sleep/ eating problems, and other emotional/ social issues

This observation from a local H&F EYFS teacher added further evidence:

"Children in the Reception year have considerable demands on them as they begin the journey of learning in a school setting. The lack of 'typical' preschool experiences such as nursery provision, playgrounds, nursery rhyme session has caused a notable impact for the current cohort."

As referred to above, this local evidence we gathered was supported by findings of OFSTED and researchers such as the Education Endowment Foundation, Times Education Supplement and Sutton Trust which have all flagged up the importance of urgently addressing the learning and developmental delays in children under five that have been caused by the pandemic.



1.4 Our partners and participating settings

The planned consultancy role of Dr Mabel Encinas, Senior Lecturer in Early Childhood Studies and Education at London Metropolitan University expanded into support on monitoring and evaluating the project and has now led to MM formalising a five-year partnership with London Metropolitan University.

The participating settings were:
Hammersmith & Fulham

Bayonne Nursery
James Lee Nursery
Brook Green Nursery
Melcombe Primary School
Brackenbury Primary School

Andover

Finkley Down Farm Nursery and Pre-school/ Finkley East Anton Nursery
Appleshaw St. Peter's CofE Primary School
Vernham Dean Gillum's C of E Primary School



Section Two: Impact and outcomes

The projected outcomes we devised for the project were formed by our research and development work and driven by our significant experience of work in this field. Our holistic approach made the inclusion of objectives and corresponding outcomes beyond those that were specific to the learning and development of the participating children essential. Each outcome supports and links with the others to deliver change for the children involved and embed long term benefits to the extent to which a project of this length and scope is able to do so.

In discussion with Dr Encinas Outcome 1 was split into two outcomes 1a and 1b to facilitate a better focus to the monitoring and evaluation.

Outcome 1a:

Reduce children's learning and developmental deficits by securing better developed speech & language skills and improved listening skills

The observations of the teachers and nursery practitioners of the project's impact on this area of development was overwhelmingly affirmative. 90% of them believed that the project had led to specific improvements both in individual children and in their class as a whole.

Specific song repertoire and activities focussed on the development of the children's speech & language skills. Examples of songs and how this was done include:

Hello – children could take solo roles to develop their vocal confidence, and secure their verbal skills, adding their own suggestions by contributing the word "hello" in another language (including their home language if they were EAL)

Walking in the Jungle – developing their speech sounds, particularly consonant sounds, and vocabulary

First Thing in the Morning – developing vocabulary and sharing verbal interactions with the teachers; using the song to learn how to sequence events and ideas to tell a story.

Henry's Tail – learning the lyrics of this call and response story song; taking the role of leading the call.



Evidence from teachers/ practitioners included:

Isobel (Nursery teacher):

The children learn how to sing a "call and response" song which is quite a difficult task. Singing is such an inclusive activity, and **it is very satisfying to see that children with speech difficulties are not shy about singing when we all do it together**. As they built their confidence some children were keen to sing on their own as well.

Hannah (Reception Class teacher):

Child X is a child who joined us with little English. He is very young in the year and finds it tricky to access the curriculum. He now often hums and sings the Musiko Musika songs to himself during choosing time and often requests this. The actions and songs together have supported early language acquisition. This project has meant I sing far more with my class, and they have generally developed a sense of rhythm.

Project Manager observations from the performances included:

"The verbal interactions were strong; Focus and attention very good; Enjoyment is clear"

Qualitative evidence collected during observations and project review meeting

Dr Mabel Encinas

Child participation and engagement

Children feel excited about the music sessions, according to the music educators. "They are signing the songs, they are making requests, they are asking questions, they are participating" (min 12:30). "If you do not do it right they correct you" (min 13:30)

Children were enthusiastic about singing and dancing with the music educators. Later, it was surprising to learn that specific children did not speak English or had special educational needs, because they were actively singing during the session. They love the songs, and some specific segments of certain songs: "Henry, Henry, where did you go?" Children also showed interest in the challenges, such as singing with different volume levels. Even quiet children, that are for example sitting on the teacher's lap, engage in whatever the musicians are doing (14:45)

Most of the children engaged in the activity. Very rarely children left the activity. Often in this case, they were children with special educational needs. The musicians observed that these children sometimes seemed disengaged, but they were actually observing and then answer a question or participating from a distant corner. Also, they talked about how the small group sessions offered the possibility to support them, ensuring that all children had the opportunity to participate. The musicians also point out the interest of children with special educational who needed to touch the musical instruments.

The sense of belonging the songs give is important. This includes their language and culture in a multicultural context, but also, a general feeling of 'this is us', and all the children being included: 'we found the dog', although one child was the one that found it. The sense of sharing the task and being part of a community.



Outcome 1b:

Reduce children's learning and developmental deficits by securing improved social, emotional and behavioural skills (PSED)

All the teachers and nursery practitioners believed the project had generally led to improvements in the social, emotional and behavioural skills of their class as a whole, with 90% noting improvements to individual children ('Yes, definitely' 54%; 'somewhat' 36%).

Making music and singing together are inherently social activities that encourage and develop emotional development and engagement. The song repertoire and activities included some that focussed on the development of PSED. Examples of songs and how this was done include:

Good Morning – singing the song to a partner; children sharing and talking about how they are feeling that morning.

Here's a Seed – sharing and planting the seeds as the song progresses.

I've Lost My Dog – learning how to look and search for the dog and to self-regulate emotions when they are not the one to find the hidden toy dog.

Evidence from teachers/ practitioners included:

Nora (Nursery teacher):

I have seen children start to form relationships with their peers. A big increase noticed in some children's confidence. Because we mixed all ages I noticed older children interested more in the younger children and vice versa.

Paula (Nursery teacher):

We have seen a big change in some children's confidence and through the music were able to express themselves and be part of a group.

Project Manager observations from the performances included:

"The children (Reception and Year 1) were having fun – interacting/ interjecting/ dancing etc, but then come back into focus and were quiet eg Heads, Shoulders – following 'freeze' instruction. Likewise with Walking the Jungle – running away from a tiger etc."

"How Many Trees song was adapted to give expressive range: How many leaves? was very gentle = dynamics/ expression; How many squirrels in the park? = fast and noisy"

"I particularly noted the difference in the children's behaviour and social interactions compared with the music sessions when lockdowns first ended and MM went back into the Nursery in March 2021. These are different children of course, but there was a totally different atmosphere today – more fun, children were much more verbal and interacting freely with each other and the adults in the room."



Qualitative evidence collected during observations and project review meeting

Dr Mabel Encinas

Child participation and engagement

In the experience of one of the musicians who has worked in the project for some years, it was clear that after the pandemic children showed lower skills in this area in relation to their observations before the pandemic (min 07:30). Children participate singing, shouting, dancing, and laughing (with a sense of humour).

The two music educators followed the children's initiative. Sometimes children started dancing spontaneously when singing, and they were encouraged to dance by improvising a dancing segment of the song following the music of the guitar. Children were invited to participate in various ways; and they also spontaneously participated via their own initiative. The two music educators expressed their pleasure in observing the children's participation and engagement.

The music educators observed the children's learning process through the sessions. This was particularly evident in relation to their communication skills (listening, vocabulary, and attention span – min 06:30) and confidence (PSED – min 06:00). Some children show a very different behaviour as the sessions take place. One child that was disengaged and almost sleepy at the beginning, became quite active in all the songs. Children that are speakers of other languages (EAL), such as Russian or Ukrainian, demonstrated very evident changes in their communication skills (min 16:00). Other skills were also developed. For example, in the song 'I lost my dog' even older children did not know at the beginning how to look for the dog. Younger children were more able to look for the dog once they had the experience.

Outcome 2:

Improve the skills of early years practitioners to support children's learning/development in SLC & PSED

The teachers/practitioners attended two training and development sessions each. In both locations these were split into separate CPD sessions for the nursery and Reception/ year 1 teachers so that we could focus on relevant skills and approaches.

None of the teachers or nursery practitioners were specialists in music, and only one of them had attended previous training that we have provided for other projects.

In the feedback questionnaire when asked if the music project had helped them to support the children's learning in SLC and PSED 45% responded 'Yes definitely', 27% 'Quite a bit' and 27% 'A little'. ('Not significantly' and 'No' were the other available response options). And 45% are using the project's songs and activities 3 or more times a week and the rest at least once a week, demonstrating that the work is being embedded in the regular activities of the schools and nurseries.



Observations by the Project Manager of the progression of the skills and confidence of the teachers/practitioners was noted:

"Staff progression was evidenced by them adapting the songs:

"I've Lost My Dog – they adapted the activity to pass the dog around the group and 'find it' when the song ended.

"Who's That Walking – the teacher developed new lyrics with the sister running"

"Ownership and commitment to the project was in evidence here – they had booked a room for the performance and were well prepared, including photocopying lyric sheets for the parents attending"

"Nursery teacher A is embedding the work in her practice and applying the skills (evidenced in the training session by her ideas about planning and using the songs and activities)"

"Nursery teacher B has relaxed more and developed her confidence to use the songs – we see her smiling and making more contributions to discussion in the training sessions."

Dr Mabel Encinas

Pedagogic approach – observing the leading musicians (music educators)

The pedagogic approach used by the music educators constitutes a core element for the professional development of practitioners, because it models the kind of interactions the practitioners can have themselves when working with children with music, either using the app, the CDs or the webpage.

During the observations, it was clear that the songs and the pedagogic approach of the music educators comprised a wide range of modes of participation from the children. For example, the use of body language while singing, the repetition of long segments of oral text in a rhythmic manner, 'call and response' patterns, movement and dance, challenges that expand children's skills (for example, singing with low volume or counting), and the use of percussion instruments, among others. Additionally, the same song was used in different ways in different sessions. For example, 'call and response' songs could involve half of the group singing the 'call' and the other half, the 'response', or it could involve two children being at the front of the group to play the role of calling.

Additionally, the pedagogic approach involved engaging in dialogue with the children, offering an opportunity for all children to participate, through questions in anticipation, questions that pointed to the recollection of their experience and culture, or experience they have had in previous sessions. The music educators emphasise the importance of creating an environment where children can participate individually as well as in the group. In relation to individual participation it is important to create a space in which children can try and make mistakes (min 59:00).

In their observations, the musicians discussed the importance of remembering the children's names and thought that having at least the list of first names would be helpful.



Dr Mabel Encinas

Practitioners' participation and professional development

In general, the practitioners actively engaged in the activity singing along with the children and supporting and engaging with children for whom participation was more challenging. Sometimes their intervention involved encouraging the child to do certain tasks (like taking a 'seed' that was offered to them) or supporting the overall working of the situation, for example, indicating to children to come closer or to open a space for a new child to join the activity. "Teachers are having fun, they are singing with the kids, they are laughing" and they also make requests (min 14:00)

During participants' training sessions and conversations with practitioners, it was clear that they were more aware of children's musicality, and they could describe instances in which they observed differences in children's abilities that they could link to the programme.

The musicians reported that it is very important that practitioners develop 'a heart for the project' and commented that new practitioners were not as engaged as those that participated from the onset.

A difficulty was reported in relation to the programme in that it could create some stress to the practitioners when the programme schedule clashes with certain school activities, such as Christmas events. We learned that the timing has to be aligned with those calendar needs of schools and settings.

Sometimes the environment becomes not adequate for learning. The music educators reported a case in which the teacher was stressed and felt they had to control the children. However, practitioners in general contributed to the creation of a very amicable and friendly space (min 66) and they are highly engaged with all the activities. It is clear that some of the practitioners sing with the children between the sessions.

In primary schools, when teachers are too stressed things do not seem to work as well. That happened and it was noted that the commitment of the school/ nursery's senior leadership to the project can make a difference for schools/nurseries.



Outcome 3:

Improve and strengthen the learning partnership between home and nursery/ school

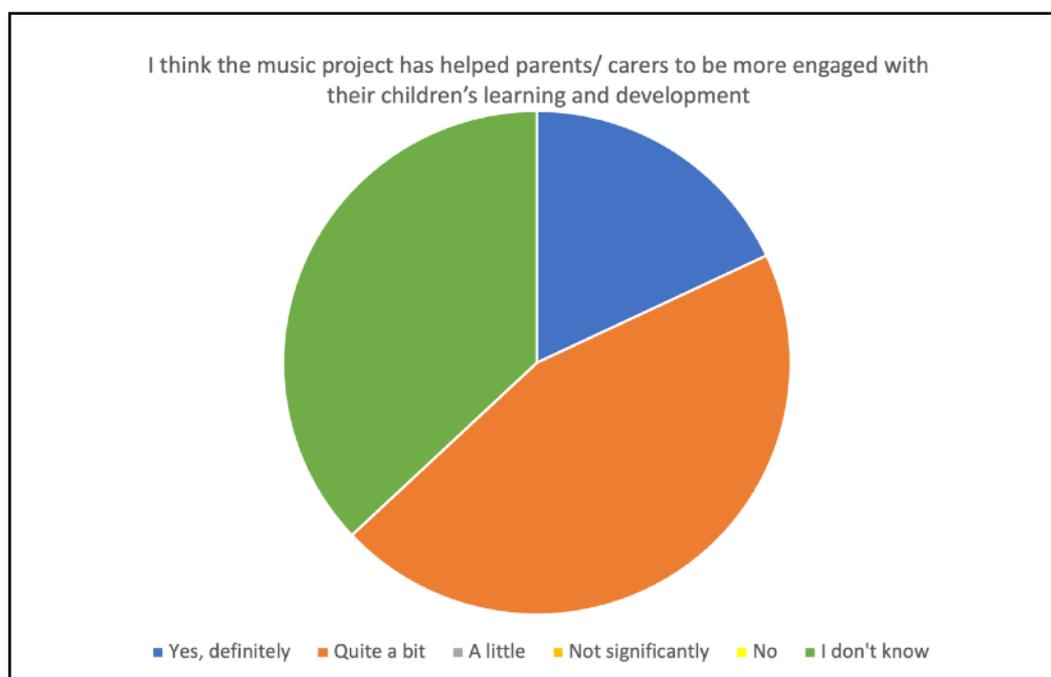
The mechanisms the project employed to improve and strengthen the learning partnership between home and nursery/ school were:

- The Sing & Learn app for families to use at home (connecting them to the songs being used in school/ nursery).
- Printed information about the app given to parents/ carers to encourage them to download and use.
- Family music workshops at each setting
- Performances attended by parents/ carers

Each of these interventions was carefully designed to make them easily accessible for parents/ carers and to engage and motivate the families to support their child's learning at home with an understanding of how that would connect with learning at school/ nursery.

Between 1/5/2022 and 22/2/2023 there were 653 downloads of the App on Apple devices (919 downloads over lifetime of the app), and Android analytics show 59 active devices. The YouTube videos had 6.3K views over that period, a 38% increase compared with the 10 months preceding the project (4.0K).

All the settings were committed to this aspect of the project but as the questionnaire results show some of the teachers and nursery practitioners involved did not feel sufficiently informed to be able to comment on whether the project had succeeded in making a difference in this respect. 18% responding 'Definitely', 45% 'Quite a bit' and 37% 'Don't know'.



The feedback questionnaires for parents and carers showed a very positive engagement with 96% agreeing to the statement 'I think music helps my child learn', and 80% with 'I think the music project has helped my child'. There were strong indicators of music making at home with 92% selecting 'I like to sing or make music with my child every day', 'I sing with my child quite often', 'I sometimes sing with my child'. The two parents/ carers who did not give any indication that they sang at home with their child nevertheless showed they enjoy and value music by selecting the statements: 'I think music helps my child learn', 'Music makes us happier' and 'We have fun dancing to music at home'.

Additional comments included:

"My child loves singing the songs from the music project at home"

"Thank you for helped my child to make his word clear – you change our mood"

Dr Mabel Encinas

Parents' participation

Parents came to the sessions organised for them. They also engaged.

It became evident from the beginning of the programme that some parents struggled with English as a second language. In the sessions with parents the musicians observed that parents felt happy, refreshed and excited while participating. According to parents and practitioners "this really works" (min 07:00).

For parents that do not speak English, speaking English may not feel good/ comfortable (where they may feel more exposed), but singing in English is good (min 44:00). And children and parents can sing together in English in the events with parents and then at home with the app.

For the parental participation the way in which the musicians respond to the concrete circumstances of the situation is important. This is also very important for children (min 35:00).



Outcome 4:

Improve the digital resources available to support children's learning/development in SLC & PSED and their accessibility for practitioners and families

The improved digital resources we produced were:

- A new album of 6 songs – Songo's World of Music Album 2 – released on all major digital platforms and the Sing & Learn app.
- The transformation of the Sing Songo app into the Sing & Learn app, a container app with the new Sing Songo Practitioners with specialist pedagogical information and resources for use in schools and nurseries alongside the original version of Sing Songo for use at home.
- A new desktop version of Sing Songo Practitioners as a parallel resource for use alongside or instead of using the app on a mobile device.
- A new collection of songs and activities 'Songo's Wellbeing Collection' released on the Sing Songo Practitioners app and webpage.

In addition, the app has benefited from the upgrade of the platform by the developers Piota to include the new Google Translate feature. This really helps accessibility of the app for parents for whom English is not their first language.

Teachers and nursery practitioners were asked to rate the quality and effectiveness of the Sing & Learn programme's digital resources (app and webpage). 90% rated them as being 'Good' to 'Excellent' and 10% 'OK'. None regarded them as 'Not great'.

Comments collected during the app and webpage development phase included:

Tina (EYFS teacher)

"This is a very useful tool for early years practitioners. Teachers look for webpages and apps that are easy to navigate and this does that. The webpage has useful 'how to video' which provides clear expectations of how to deliver a session. This helps to make to greatest impact on the children's engagement and learning and development. It was great to see a focus on early phonics. This supports early reading which is high on most school's development plan."

Nora (Nursery teacher)

Really love using the app. The children love the songs. There are relevant, fun and easy for the children to learn. Keeps them interested also because of the repetition.



Outcome 5:

Increase the effectiveness and thematic reach of the Sing & Learn programme and its impact on wellbeing

Many of the songs selected for the project and the activities placed an emphasis on wellbeing. In the context of the project and the needs of the children we found it helpful to categorise the concept of 'wellbeing' into four themes:

- 1) Having fun, being playful – I've Lost My Dog was much enjoyed by the children who could run around the room searching for the missing dog. And a playful attitude was the foundation of the delivery by the Music Leaders.
- 2) Social interactions and learning how to share – Here's a Seed would involve taking turns to pass a flowerpot and plant the seeds; There's a Hungry Caterpillar likewise required children to share the caterpillar guiro and pass it to one another.
- 3) Emotional wellbeing – As we see in the comments from the teachers and nursery practitioners music overall generates an atmosphere that supports children in their emotional wellbeing and gives a boost to people's mood. The song Good Morning with its phrase 'how are you today?' was used by practitioners as an opportunity to give space for children to speak about how they were feeling – happy, sad, OK, grumpy, anxious etc.
- 4) Imagination and creativity – These characteristics of developmental play are an important part of the wholeness of what it is to learn and develop as a human being. Songs like Look at the Sky gave children the chance to explore different instrumental sounds and Cornelius with his friends took the children into the imaginative space of an underwater garden.

Dr Mabel Encinas

The two music educators expressed how the session contributed to the wellbeing of children and practitioners (min 17:00), as well as of parents (around min 07:00). They were very pleased to observe how children and practitioners engaged and showed how positive they felt about the project as it progressed. Children participate in various ways: singing, shouting, dancing and laughing (min 41:00). With joy, children learn a lot (min 42:00)

The project supports teachers and children do not feel stressed; on the contrary the project aims for everyone to feel comfortable. The music educators consider this to be an important aspect of the children's wellbeing (min 20:00). The musicians talked about a child that was very stressed, shouted and moved around, but after some sessions, the child progressively engaged. This child particularly liked the song "Walking in the Jungle".

Overall, the project is good for all people involved: the parents, the teachers and especially the children, according to the musicians' experience (min 34:00).

The new selection of resources created during this project is called Songo's Wellbeing Collection. Based on the four areas identified above the collection provides six songs and guides for activities and extension work that teachers and nursery practitioners can use to improve the wellbeing of children in their classrooms.



Section Three: Methodology and evidence used in evaluation

This report has used a number of sources of evidence and indicators of its impact and delivery of outcomes. The data collection points were scheduled on the project's monitoring and evaluation plan.

Evidence sources:

- Two school/ nursery staff questionnaire delivered via the Impact and Insight Toolkit
- School/ nursery staff observations
- Music Leaders' observations from session notes and team meetings
- Attendance registers and training session content details
- Training session observations and notes
- Project Manager observations at performances
- Details of content and resources produced
- Quantitative data from app/ YouTube views
- Details of new accessibility features
- Details of new content
- Parent/ carer questionnaire delivered on paper at family workshops and performances
- Feedback from practitioner user group

In addition, external sources have been used to contextualise the data and provide additional insights. In past projects we have also collected tracking data on areas such as Speech and Language and PSED via the progression tracking that settings regularly undertake. We had initially planned to include this, however decided not to do so for this project. The main reason was that the scheduling of the project was not a good fit for the points in the academic year at which settings are collecting data. An alternative would have been to create a tracking system for the settings to administer at the start and end of the project, however with the substantial variations between the size of the settings and the different groups of children involved (nursery, reception and Year 1) over two different terms and academic years the data would not have been of high quality.

As an organisation we have been undertaking focussed work on monitoring and evaluating our projects and regularly undertake team training to improve and update the techniques and approaches we use. There are obvious limitations to the evaluation of a project's impact when working at this scale and without the use of a control group for comparison. Our plan to engage Dr Mabel Encinas (Senior Lecturer in Early Childhood Studies and Education at London Metropolitan University) as a consultant to work with us on developing the new resources turned out to be the first step in what is developing into a very productive partnership as Dr Encinas offered to extend her involvement in our work by undertaking research into its impact and outcomes. The nine months of this project have therefore been a journey for us in developing a collaborative approach with Dr Encinas to the monitoring and evaluation of the Sing & Learn programme and the benefits are already evident in the production of this report.



Section Four: Academic references and literature links

Prepared by Dr Mabel Encinas

The main purpose of this section is to provide some wider academic context to our observations and to give an indication of where someone can go if they are interested in following up and finding out more.

In early childhood education, there is ample and compelling evidence of the impact of active engagement with music on the development of aural perceptual processing systems that in turn play a role in the development of language phonological awareness (Peynircioğlu et al., 2002; Schwarzer, 2011; Hallam, 2015), literacy (Anvari et al., 2002) and second language (Slevc & Miyake, 2006). Music contributes to speech perception, rhythm perception, auditory working memory and sound pattern learning (Lipscomb et al., 2008; Tierney and Klaus, 2013), which support children's language development.

Intervention studies provide powerful evidence of the impact of musical activities on language skills (Hallam, 2017). For example:

- Using a combination of observation, music and language tracker tools, and interviews and written reports from the early years practitioners, parents and workshop leaders, the Soundplay project, ran in four early years settings in Sheffield (2014-2015). The evidence of improving practitioners' confidence with music was compelling, while language skills among those children who had been identified as being at risk of developmental delay was higher than average (Pitts, 2016).
- The 'Music for Change' project (2015-2017) explored the impact of specially devised weekly music sessions on the all-round development of 1320 children aged 0-4 participated in 11 nursery settings, in a deprived area in London (Knight, et al, 2018). Practice was based on vocal play, singing, using sound-making objects, musical games, listening and aural discrimination, movement, songs and stories, and children-led free musical play activities. The findings show learning through music, in several areas, including communication skills, as well as professional development of nursery practitioners in terms of confidence and competence.
- 'SALTmusic' in Norfolk, engaged in a project with practitioners working with families with children (24-36 months) with communication difficulties. findings (see Pitt, 2019). The results show that children developed their language skills (Pitt and Welch, 2021), and practitioners had developed relevant pedagogic skills.

The two projects above their work through inter-disciplinary collaborative work that combined the practices of the two disciplines through action research: Speech and Language Specialist (SLS) and musicians/music educators. In the same way Musiko Musika has created their interventions through collaboration with a SLS and the musicians/music educator team.

In this project, Musiko Musika's intervention offered a holistic approach that maximised the presence of musicians in the setting, and the support offered to practitioners in various ways, i.e. via modelling of sessions, an app for practitioners to use with the children, and an app for parents that extends the impact to home activities that support children's learning



and development. Also the use of the app becomes a tool that strengthens the partnership between practitioners and parents working together for the benefit of the children.

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Section Five: Further evidence

5.1 Narrative feedback from practitioners

Change in skill: School/ nursery staff observe/ report improvements in speech and language and listening skills in children. Do you have any examples to share? (comments could be either about the class as a whole or individual children)

Shaneen:

The use of toys supported the children's language development, helping them to understand new vocabulary.

Nora:

I have seen children who would not normally sing because they are shy, join in with the singing.

I have noticed through the music and songs children have learnt new words quicker. children really enjoy the songs.

Cheryl:

EHCP child's engagement- Coming out of their shell and speaking more.

Helen:

Confident to perform in front of others.

Isobel:

The children learn how to sing a "call and response" song which is quite a difficult task. Singing is such an inclusive activity, and it is very satisfying to see that children with speech difficulties are not shy about singing when we all do it together. As they built their confidence some children were keen to sing on their own as well.

Hannah:

Child X is a child who joined us with little English. He is very young in the year and finds it tricky to access the curriculum. He now often hums and sings the Musiko Musika songs to himself during choosing time and often requests this. The actions and songs together have supported early language acquisition. This project has meant I sing far more with my class, and they have generally developed a sense of rhythm. We often adapt and amend the songs too, and it has been lovely to see some of the most confident children do this independently.

Danielle:

Acquire new vocabulary.



Change in skill: School/ nursery staff observe/ report improvements in social, emotional and behavioural skills (PSED). Do you have any examples to share? (comments could be either about the class as a whole or individual children)

Shaneen:

The call and response songs, such as Henry's Tail, helped to develop the children's listening and turn-taking skills.

Nora:

I have seen children start to form relationships with their peers. A big increase noticed in some children's confidence. Because we mixed all ages I noticed older children interested more in the younger children and vice versa.

Myriam:

A SEN child was drawn in by the musical instruments and therefore joined in the group and listened to the song.

Helen:

Working with other children and especially with children from another class.

Paula:

We have seen big change in some children's confidence and through the music were able to express themselves and be part of a group.

Isobel:

The singing time is so much fun that we find shy and reserved children are happy to be there. They might not join in the session, but we get reports from parents that they sing the songs at home.

Hannah:

This programme has given us the tools to sing often as a (mood) regulation strategy e.g., after lunch, before the end of the day. Lots of the shy children lose their inhibitions with the exciting songs and are inclined to join in, which is great! The songs are easy to follow for EAL learners.



**Behavioural change: Practitioners/ music leaders observe/ report improvements to wellbeing of children. Do you have any examples to share?
(comments could be either about the class as a whole or individual children)**

Shaneen:

The children loved learning the songs, particularly I've Lost My Dog, and enjoyed practising them every day at school!

Nora:

These sessions have uplifted the staff team as well as the children, because the adults joined in the children enjoyed it more. Lots of happy moments. Children definitely had fun looking for the dog etc. We noticed the children looking forward to the sessions on the day and after their mood was better. Children happy and more energetic. Lots more conversations.

Myriam:

The children were always eager to participate in the session.

Helen:

We had a lot of fun learning the songs and doing the actions.

Paula:

The music brings the group of children together and it brings a smile to their faces. They enjoy the songs, the music and the extension games around each song and they look forward the session each week.

Isobel:

*The children's faces tell the story when they are singing.
When singing the "Hello song" there is always lots of enthusiastic suggestions of how to say "hello" in different languages.*

Sonia:

Some children come in walking to school singing the good morning song to each other without any prompting

Hannah:

The children enjoy the opportunity to be creative and adapt the songs. This gives them a forum and a starting place to develop their own songs and rhymes.

Danielle:

Their love for singing.



And finally, do you have any other comments or feedback you would like to share with us about the project?

Shaneen:

We really enjoyed the project and would like to experience it again. Next time, the children would have liked Henry's Tail to be included in their final performance.

Nora:

Loved been part of this project. I would love more signing i.e. (Makaton) to be used. It would also be good to have a selection of different musical instruments for the children to be inspired by.

Helen:

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to be part of this great project. It has been a huge benefit to the teachers and the children.

Paula:

This is such a wonderful project that helps not only the children and the families but also our staff to get more confident using music as a powerful tool to support the children's development. Thank you for your hard work.

Isobel:

The staff, children, and parents all thoroughly enjoy taking part in the project. Our performances for the parents are always well attended and, this term in particular, the parents seemed to enjoy taking part in the singing as well. I hope the project can continue to come into schools as it makes a positive impact on the school day.

Sonia:

It would be good to have instrumental versions of the songs that can be played as it gets distracting hearing talking and other singing from the YouTube videos. Having a rehearsal that is not on the day of the performance would be more beneficial. If this was to carry on further, I think it would be good to think of ways to progress their learning as they would already know the bank of songs taught. Some songs that involve counting or animals would be good for autumn term but when the children grow and know more learning, the songs need to follow maybe?

Hannah

Thank you so so much! 😊 Wonderful team. Thoroughly enjoyed and feel upskilled. If you were ever writing more songs, then songs to support routines would be fab e.g., the hello song is used in the morning, maybe a lunchtime or tidy up song? Some of the children with SEND might also benefit from practical resources e.g., they loved the animals in the jungle song.



5.2 Case studies

Provided by the Music Leader

1) Engagement with EAL children

At one nursery two girls joined the nursery during project who did not speak any English. One of them happened to arrive for first registration on the same day as a music session. She initially just watched with bright eyes as the other children took part in the songs. We sang the Hello song and included the word for hello in her own language and made eye contact with her. That immediately made her smile and you could see that made her feel part of the class even though it was her first day. Then with the other activities she followed the actions for the songs by watching and copying the other children and within three weeks she was singing the songs with them.

We noted that the other child who also joined the nursery during that term without English skills was requesting her favourite song from the repertoire within a few weeks.

They were both particularly enthusiastic and involved in searching for the hidden dog in the song I've Lost My Dog, an activity that requires no words to understand what is going on.

2) PSED development

The first term we noticed one child in the class who was always hanging on to the teacher or sitting on her lap. The second term we came in she was the one child who was interjecting, with suggestions. Her hand was always up offering to participate, and she also led the call group in the call and response song Henry's Tail. And she danced. We were really amazed at the progression in her skills with us, even the head teacher commented on it to us.

5.3 Examples of family questionnaires

Names have been redacted

Musiko Musika
Covid-19 Recovery Project Family Questionnaire 7/12/22

Please help us by completing this feedback form. By completing this form you are giving Musiko Musika your permission to use your answers to evaluate the project and share information with the project funders and other organisations.

1) Circle as many as you want

- I like to sing or make music with my child every day
- I sing with my child quite often
- I think music helps my child learn
- Music lifts my child's mood
- Music makes us happier
- I think the music project has helped my child
- We have fun dancing to music at home
- I sometimes sing with my child

2) I have downloaded the Sing & Learn app and use it at home: Yes / Not yet

3) Do you want to tell us anything else about the music project?

Thank you for helped my child to make his word clear and happy - you change our mood.

Thank you!!!



Please help us by completing this feedback form. By completing this form you are giving Musiko Musika your permission to use your answers to evaluate the project and share information with the project funders and other organisations.

1) Circle as many as you want

I like to sing or make music with my child every day

I sing with my child quite often

I think music helps my child learn

Music lifts my child's mood

Music makes us happier

I think the music project has helped my child

We have fun dancing to music at home

I sometimes sing with my child

2) I have downloaded the Sing & Learn app and use it at home: Yes / Not yet



3) Do you want to tell us anything else about the music project?

my child loves singing the songs from the music project at home

Thank you!!!

Please help us by completing this feedback form. By completing this form you are giving Musiko Musika your permission to use your answers to evaluate the project and share information with the project funders and other organisations.

1) Circle as many as you want

I like to sing or make music with my child every day

I sing with my child quite often

I think music helps my child learn

Music lifts my child's mood

Music makes us happier

I think the music project has helped my child

We have fun dancing to music at home

I sometimes sing with my child

2) I have downloaded the Sing & Learn app and use it at home: Yes / Not yet



3) Do you want to tell us anything else about the music project?

i loves showing her family the songs she learn

Thank you!!!



5.4 Questionnaire Responses

