

The Haringey Lullabies Project

Music enhancing health and education outcomes in an early years setting

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An evaluation for The Haringey Nursery Schools
Training and Development Consortium

Contents

1. An Introduction and background.....	0
1.1 Deprivation in inner city London.....	0
1.2 Public policy and the arts in England.....	0
1.3 The organisation of pre-school education.....	0
1.4 Music and wellbeing.....	0
1.5 Music and language.....	0
2. Songs for family and child wellbeing: Describing the Haringey Nursery Schools Training and Development Consortium (NSTDC) Lullabies Project.....	0
2.1 The project itself.....	0
2.2 Parents and carers.....	0
2.3 Staff development sessions.....	0
3. Evaluating the Haringey NSTDC Lullabies Project.....	0
3.1 Multiple methods.....	0
3.2 Applying standardised wellbeing scales.....	0
3.3 Evaluators participation in staff development sessions.....	0
4. Findings.....	0
4.1 Music delivery in the centres.....	0
4.2 Transfer of musical skills and attitudes.....	0
4.3 Personal social, emotional development.....	0
4.4 Communication and language skills.....	0
4.5 Closer dialogues between home and centre.....	0
4.6 Attendance.....	0
5. Discussion.....	0
5.1 Personal identity and song.....	0
5.2 Building security through song.....	0
5.3 Songs building personal relationships.....	0
5.4 The significance of creative music making.....	0
5.5 Communication through song.....	0
5. Limitations of the study.....	0
6. References.....	0

1. Introduction and background to the Haringey Nursery Schools Training and Development Consortium Lullabies Project

Music can be very good for you. Plato spoke of its potential to foster ‘the growth of the soul’ and people have been claiming the beneficial effects of music ever since. This paper summarises evaluations and initial research on a music-centred project aimed at supporting the healthy psychological, intellectual and social development of nursery-aged children in a deprived inner city area of England. Its innovative, simple, cheap and immediately effective methods, are presented to health and education practitioners as significant contributions to the care of vulnerable young children. The approach used to describe the Haringey Nursery Schools Training and Development Consortium (NSTDC) Lullabies project is offered as an example of an interdisciplinary evaluation crossing boundaries between health and education, music, psychology and child care.

1.1 Deprivation in inner city London

Poverty and deprivation figures for Haringey, north London are alarming. In Tottenham, Haringey’s eastern sub-division, 88% of the population live in areas classified as within the poorest 20% of the country. In eastern parts of the borough life expectancy for men is almost ten years lower than its wealthier western wards. The population of Tottenham is significantly younger, has poorer health and housing, lower incomes, is more transient and subjected to more crime than London averages (Haringey, 2012 website; Guardian, 2012). 47% of the adults surrounding the toddlers living in these localities are dependent on benefits. Adults have higher rates of mental illness, suffer more often from asthma and other lung problems, have more cancers, heart disease and strokes than those in most other parts of the city. Such conditions impact strongly on the very young. Children’s birth weight tends to be lower, they are more likely to visit accident and emergency centres, have developmental delays, speech, language and communication difficulties and be considered ‘unready for school’.

In his thorough review of the socio/economic determinates of health Sir Michael Marmot (2010) found that many British children, particularly those living in areas of deprivation suffered poor development. Marmot’s direct language states the issue clearly:

....a staggering 41% of children are NOT achieving a good level of development.... we are doing very badly indeed. Poor early child development and socioeconomic disadvantage predict poor performance through children’s whole school careers, (Marmot, 2012).

Further disadvantages exclude many poor communities from culture and participation in the arts. Publicly funded arts, high quality sports experience and beautiful public spaces are rare in underprivileged areas.

1.2 Public policy and the arts in England

Public arts are associated with city centres. Galleries, theatres, museums, concert halls, opera houses, public collections and sponsorships may be part of national identity, but tend to avoid suburbs. The UK government set up Creative Partnerships (CP) as a result of the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE) All Our Futures report of 1999. CP addressed a perceived lack of creativity and creative skills in the young living in economically deprived areas. Between its inception in 2002 and 2011 when direct government funding ceased, CP established 5,800 mostly year-long and arts-based projects in nurseries, children's centres, primary and secondary schools in areas of deprivation throughout England. Working with 1.5 million children CP demonstrated considerable success in improving school attendance, teaching quality and what became known as the 'soft skills' (team work, confidence, imagination, motivation and relationships). More modest improvements were achieved in mathematics, English and science. Despite the measurable economic, social and psychological benefits arising from CP (Roberts, 2006; DCSF, 2008, Durbin et al., 2010), government funding ceased in 2011 and its 9000 skilled and highly experienced 'creative practitioners' (largely arts specialists) returned to seeking employment on a school by school basis.

Central funding for all arts in schools has diminished markedly since 2011. Surviving funds are focused on regeneration projects or the lucrative 'creative economy' (House of Commons, Culture Media and Sport Committee, 2013). Local authorities have similarly cut general arts funding by high percentages. Champions of the arts in the curriculum have tended toward 'instrumental' arguments for the retention of art, drama, dance and music. Research studies have supported the trend towards extrinsic justifications for the arts. For example music making – particularly singing, has been linked to enhanced language formation (Ludke et al, 2012; Brandt et al 2012). New evidence has also suggested that the arts and creative activity generally are good for physical, social, psychological and intellectual health (Fredrickson, 2009). Pro-arts organisations have been quick to use such arguments (Arts Council England website; Lucas et.al, 2013; Barnes 2013), though many educationalists continue to value the arts for their humanizing and developmental role in the lives of children. The Tickell review of Early Years Education (Tickell, 2011) for example recognizes the expressive arts as a key area through which fundamental skills are developed in children.

The art of children's music illustrates the importance of all the arts. Children's music exists in all known societies. It is universally used to express and control emotion, build community, communicate, extend language, structure and provoke movement. Globally children's song follows the patterns of the local language (Brown 1998, in Pinker, 2002), yet music's presence in early years and primary education in the UK continues to be under threat. Lack of teacher confidence, reduced training opportunities, patchy funding and attitudes that suggest it is a subject only to be taught by the gifted (Barnes, 2001), have contributed to the poverty of music experience in many early years settings. Other arts are similarly sidelined.

International agreements provide support for those who argue for increased arts in schools. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (United Nations 1989) established universal rights for children 0 - 19 years. These rights apply to the very youngest members of our communities and include the duty of authorities to respond to children's own views on matters concerning them (article 12), to direct education towards the development of their particular talents and mental/physical abilities (article 29) and to provide opportunities to play, share recreational activities, and participate freely in cultural life and the arts (article 31). Song, drama, dance, drawing, painting and modeling are the earliest vehicles for the expression of children's views, talents, play, socialization and participation. The fact that we play music, play on instruments act in plays reminds that the arts are closely related to playfulness with materials, sounds, movement, line or colour. Play is essential to the balanced child.

1.3 The organisation of pre-school education

Almost half the national workforce in the UK is women. One of the outcomes of the steady rise of working mothers over the last fifty years has been an ever-increasing demand for childcare of 0 – 4 year olds. Three year olds and two year olds in economically challenged areas are now entitled to 15 hours free childcare in a recognised setting. These settings include: private child-minders, independent play schools, local authority or private nursery schools, children's centres, nursery departments of mainstream primary schools and informal play groups. Each institution is subject to Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) inspections, but inevitably quality varies between them.

International research has consistently demonstrated the high value of 'quality' pre-school education. Advanced economies all over the world have spent large sums on improving pre-school education. Concepts of 'school readiness', international comparisons of reading, writing and mathematical ability, gender equality and care for the wellbeing of the most vulnerable have driven policy and administrative decisions regarding pre-school education across the world. In the UK for example pre-school education is intended to encourage:

'...children aged between two and five years old to learn, play and develop. It should build on the learning that takes place in a child's home and should also prepare the child for primary school.' (Citizens Advice Bureau, website).

The benefits of good early childhood care are national (greater employment possibilities, fewer social problems), and personal, (better mental and physical health, better educational development, better integration, fewer risky behaviours, less family violence, less criminal activity among parents, fewer accidents and fewer additional educational needs), (Bennett, 2003). High quality early years education is not equally distributed however. Many staff receive only brief training and recent reports (see Nutbrown 2012: Gooch and Powell, 2013) have called for better and longer training for early years

practitioners. Despite beacons of excellence in some areas of economic deprivation these areas still have less provision, fewer resources and more complex challenges to overcome. On the other hand research has shown that disadvantaged children show faster improvements than those from more affluent backgrounds though these improvements tail off after fifteen or sixteen years of age.

Children's centres where health, social and educational care are available under one roof, were largely a result of Every Child Matters legislation (DfES, 2004) after the tragic death of Victoria Climbié. Each member of the Haringey NSTDC is a Children's Centre offering family support, child care, outreach services and health advice as well as EY education.

The 2008 economic downturn has resulted in cuts to early years spending across the world. In the UK hundreds of government-funded Sure Start children's centres have closed and those remaining face severe financial hardship (Guardian 28th January 2013). As a result privatised child-care arrangements in Britain have become increasingly common and plans to raise national standards of early years practitioner training and pay have not been implemented. These developments have coincided with criticisms from some government spokespeople who have accused nursery schools of allowing young children to be impolite, unruly, 'running around aimlessly' and leaving toddlers unprepared for school life (Guardian, 22nd April, 2013). Many however see EY education as involving much more than school readiness (Tickell, 2011).

1.4 Music and wellbeing

Children's music is a worldwide phenomenon. Lullabies in particular appear to be a universal element in nurture. The coincidence of close, warm eye-contact, holding in physical comfort and security, soothing, rhythmic and repeated, predictable sounds and peaceful surroundings which typifies parent/baby song, also characterises secure attachment behavior (Bowlby, 1958). More recently neuroscientific perspectives have also suggested that such physical and aural closeness provoke feelings we later perceive as love and confidence (Corrigall and Wilkinson, 2003). Music can thus form a basis of the 'secure base' described by Ainsworth, soothing pain or sadness, dispelling fears and softening unfamiliar situations and transitions. The closeness necessary for any paired music making is the basis for music therapy – considered one of the most effective ways of addressing attachment disorders (Zeanah, 2012).

From an anthropological viewpoint, Mithen (2005) conjectures that lullaby-like songs may have developed to comfort a child as it lay vulnerable whilst its mother gathered or prepared food a short distance away. We know that lullabies and other children's music acts therapeutically to calm worried or ailing children (Pickett, et al, 2013) and as children move from home to the care of EY education, their fears and insecurities may be softened through song and familiar music. A mother or carer's use of the singsong voice to their infant, sometimes called 'motherese', (Blechman and Brownell, 1998) appears still to be universal.

Neuroscientists like Panksepp (2004) claim that human creativity, like music making, uses similar neural mechanisms to those other animals use for discovery and problem solving. Involvement in song easily provokes feelings of satisfaction very similar to those

displayed by animals who have found a meal, a mate or shelter. Another neuroscientist Damasio (2003) shows how feelings of joy, often associated with singing, rhythm and pulse are the optimal condition for the efficient and healthy operation of the body.

Singing can be highly involving. In song children frequently enter the condition of 'flow' described by psychologist Csikszentmihalyi (2002) as when the individual is so engaged that they lose their normal sense of time, self-consciousness and worries. Creativity at any level has been shown as a precursor of feelings of happiness and fulfillment (Craft, 2001, Perkins, 2009). In adults researchers from the Sidney de Haan Research Centre have showed singing can positively alter mental states affecting psychological, social and physical wellness (Clift and Hancox, 2001; Clift and Hancox et al, 2010). Amongst children, a wide range of barriers to learning and development have been successfully addressed through other kinds of music making and the music therapies developed since the 1970s, (Bunt and Hoskyns, 2002).

In nursery settings music frequently marks out transitions between places, social groups, or activities with music, e.g. songs like 'this is the way we wash our hands, wash our hands, wash our hands' or 'its time to go to dinner.'

1.5 Music and language

Perhaps there was a time that humans did not speak. Stephen Mithen's archaeological work suggests that speech was not always part of human life. Before 80,000 years ago he postulates, human creatures sang to communicate. From the skeletons and brain cases of various species of human (*homo erectus*, *florinensis*, *homo neanderthalensis* etc) Mithen suggests that speech was not possible. He claims that only with the combination of a specific body and neck posture, a precise position of larynx and relatively recent changes within the human brain. Perhaps, like some species of modern monkey, Neanderthals and other members of the human family used wordless song, prosody, to communicate complex and emotionally significant messages within their tight, collaborative communities. In this theory music existed before words.

Probably our success as a species is founded on our ability to speak. Music, its patterns, rhythms and melodies, remains important but has become incorporated in the language controlling parts of the brain. Children clearly understand the rhythms, accents, tone of their carer's voice well before they understand words, (Trevathen, 2003). Nursery rhymes and invented songs consolidate their tendency to join several words together and make more complex utterances (Goswami, 2002). Some psychologists have gone further, Colwen Trevathen for example suggests that:

Developments in the first year prove the importance of...natural musicality in the emergence of cognitive awareness and show how paired participation in the expressive phrases and emotional transformation of vocal games can facilitate not only imitation of speech but interest in all shared meanings... (Trevathen, 2000, Abstract).

2. Songs for family and child wellbeing: describing the Haringey NSTDC Lullabies Project

2.1 The project itself

Three children's centres are currently involved in the Lullabies Project:

- Pembury House Children's Centre
- Woodlands Park Children's Centre
- Rowland Hill Nursery School and Children's Centre.

Singer songwriter Angeline Conaghan leads the project in each centre. Angeline has been involved in music making with children since her arrival in UK in 2000. Between 2007 and 2011 she was employed by Creative Partnerships as a project co-ordinator and animator and with them worked on a number of CP projects in North London schools, nurseries and children's centres. She also conducts song and community arts projects in homes for the elderly, centres for children with disabilities and other community groups. Since the termination of CP she has continued her association with Haringey nursery schools through the Youth Music funded Lullabies Project (Youth Music website). The project has five clear aims:

- to improve standards of music delivery
- to enhance learning and effective practice through music and share it beyond the project
- to improve personal, social and emotional development of children at a higher risk of delay
- to improve communication, language and literacy in children at a higher risk of delay
- to develop a pedagogy bespoke to the settings that use music as a catalyst for building close dialogue between parents and practitioners

Angeline works to achieve these aims in each centre for half a day a week throughout the year. In that time she meets, one by one, the parents of selected children included in Haringey's 2 year old project in which disadvantaged families are provided with free nursery education for 15 hours a week. Angeline describes what she does: 'I want to make up a lullaby or very personal song for your little girl with all the things that really matter to her in it.' After relaxing them with general chat and reassurances, Angeline asks for the child's 'pet' name, important people in her life, her most treasured things, places and activities. Sometimes parents are shy or reluctant to speak and Angeline provokes conversation using the 'Heritage Bag' belonging to each child which contains photos, toys, maps, flags and objects the child has collected to represent themselves at the nursery.

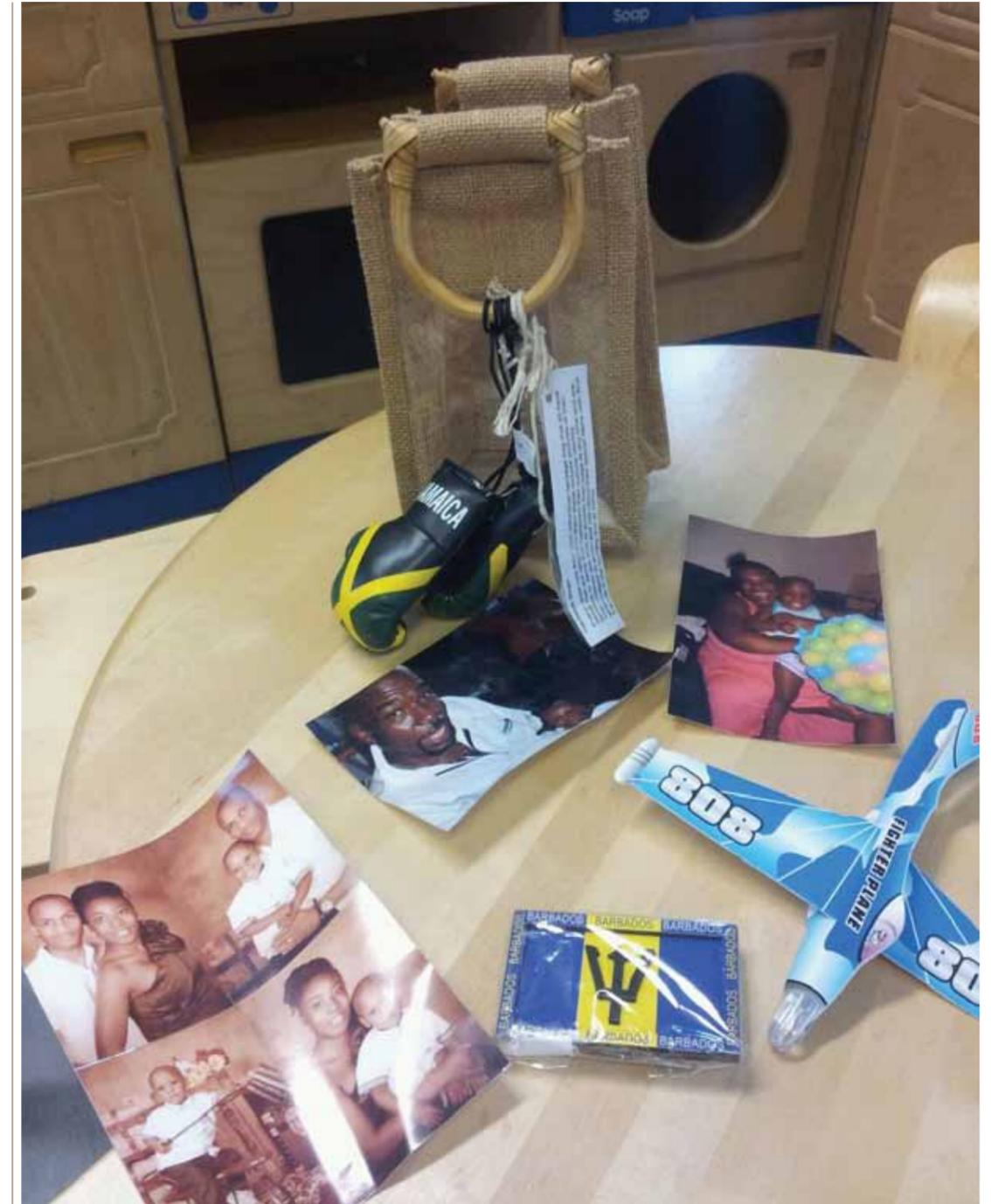


Figure 1: A typical Heritage Bag

During the conversation Angeline constructs a 'spider diagram' to summarise the information shared by the parent/carer - this diagram becomes the basis for the lullaby or song. Sometimes Angeline asks what the style of the song should be: reggae, blues, dance, pop etc.



Figure 2: Angeline talks with a parent



Figure 4: Angeline sings through the Lullaby with a parent to check details

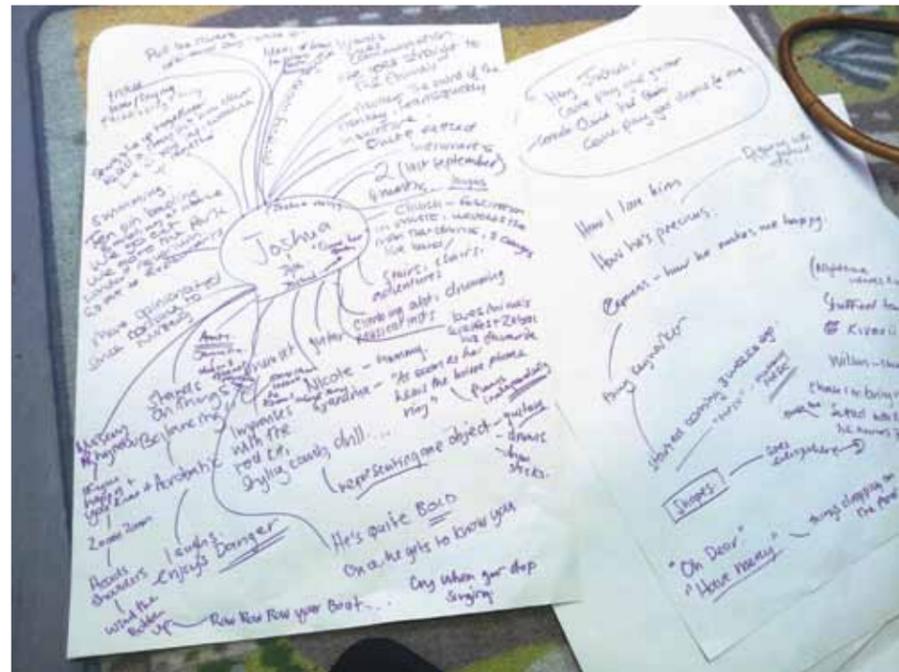


Figure 3: The completed spider diagram, becomes the source for lullaby lyrics

After composing the song, Angeline meets the parent/carer again to sing it through. In this meeting she corrects pronunciations, names and details and when the parent has agreed she makes a recording of the song, prints out the words and prepares discs for the nursery staff and the parent/carer to keep. Usually she 'launches' and celebrates each lullaby by singing it to a small group of children and parents towards the end of a morning. Angeline gives each parent an evaluation form and asks them to monitor how the children use their song and what they feel about it. Angeline makes periodic reports to Youth Music on the progress of the project.

2.2 Parents and carers

Parents are an important part of the life and work of the Haringey NSTDC. They feel welcome to stay with their children if needed and events through the week are designed to involve them socially. An adults and children gardening club, shared lunches, shared opportunities to sing traditional songs with each other are examples of the social events which form a regular part of nursery life. Angeline has built upon this tradition.

Parent and carers are closely involved in the composition and performances of the lullabies. All those asked have accepted the invitation to attend the meetings to discuss the lullaby. Almost all have attended the first or very early performances. Many also attended parent meetings in which they were introduced to the Lullaby process and its research basis. In these meetings parents were taught new songs and musical activities, reminded of the importance of physical contact and playing with their children, given books of music resources designed for the Early Years and introduced to the research background supporting the project. The staff/parent development sessions were conducted by evaluators from Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) as part of the wider aims of the project.

2.3 Staff development sessions

Three special staff meetings were held during the project. CCCU evaluators explained at a professional level, the meaning and research behind the Lullabies project to staff members. In addition, a consortium staff development day was held on 3 September 2013 for over 90 members of staff. Angeline led the sessions which involved practical song writing, 'I want each table group to agree on a child that needs a song and to compose it for them', and several videos of the Lullabies project process. CCCU evaluators provided a commentary on the research behind the project for staff that had not been directly involved and introduced new songs and musical games for pre-school children, This staff development activity was intended to empower key workers, support assistants and teachers to extend the work Angeline started, to build capacity and develop pedagogy and standards in accordance with the aims of the project. Staff evaluated this development session and summarized their responses to the day.

As of January 2014 'key worker' staff (those who have a particular and overseeing responsibility for the learning and development of a particular group of children) in one centre are being supported by Angeline to compose and perform lullabies for their children, themselves.

3. Evaluating the Haringey NSTDC Lullabies Project – methods

The evaluation by members of the Sidney de Haan Research Centre (SDH website) sought to measure the degree to which the aims of the Lullabies project had been fulfilled and to view experience of the project from perspectives of:

- Parents and carers
- Children
- Children's centre staff and curriculum

Evidence collected included: first impressions, feelings, children's physical reactions to their song, reported home/family use of the songs, changes in family life credited to the lullabies, changes in teachers' understanding of and confidence in music making, comments related to general approaches to work with EY children.

3.1 Multiple methods

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to gather evidence. Mixed methods using: observation, questionnaires, case studies, participation and the application of standardized wellbeing scales were chosen to ensure that different viewpoints were given equal strength.

Evaluation method Details	Details
Observation (6 occasions)	Six sessions were observed (two in each centre), while Angeline worked with parents, carers and children to construct, perform or share their personalised lullaby. A large amount of video evidence collected by Angeline was also consulted.
Questionnaire	Questionnaires were given to the parents/carers of all 80 children who had songs created for them. 25 were completed and returned.
Case study	Staff were asked to submit case studies of two children per centre who had participated in the lullabies process. Case studies included descriptions of the child before the project, reasons for selection, noteworthy barriers or benefits and a statement regarding short and long term outcomes for child and family.
Wellbeing scales	Wellbeing measures adapted from the widely used Leuven Wellbeing Scale (LW-B) (Laevers, 1994) were supplied to each centre and applied by (a) evaluator (b) staff member watching video footage of lullabies being shared. A standardised environmental scale (Hames et al.1996) was also used.
Interview (3 occasions)	Interviews were held with three parents involved in the project at Pembury and Rowland Hill.
Participation in staff/parent/carer development sessions (4 occasions)	Evaluators led a parent development session in each centre, 23 parents/carers attended. Evaluators contributed to staff meetings in each centre and to a development day for the 90 staff serving the combined centres.

3.2 Applying standardised wellbeing scales

The standardised EY wellbeing scale (Laevens, 1994) was intended for use by key workers with selected children to measure aspects of child wellbeing. This assessment was to be completed by staff following observations of three children as they took part in the project. Measures are closed and have a 5-point tick-rating that plot the observer's perception of a child's wellbeing, shown in body language, facial expression and relationships as follows:

- 1 'Extremely low' (e.g. the child looks unhappy/shows signals of discomfort)
- 2 'Low' (e.g. the child is tense and seldom enjoys themselves thoroughly)
- 3 'Moderate' (e.g. the child is quite happy with occasional signs of discomfort)
- 4 'High' (e.g. the child shows obvious signs of satisfaction that outnumber moments of discomfort)
- 5 'Extremely high' (e.g. the child takes pleasure in activities and experiences and has close contact with inner self and needs).

The environmental scale (Hames, et.al, 1996) was designed to assess aspects of the ethos of each physical setting involved in the project. This assessment, applied by two evaluators, uses a five point scale to rate aspects of the educational environment. Both physical, social and emotional aspects of children's surroundings are assessed against this scale: furniture and equipment, greeting and departing, helping children understand language, fine motor activity, structure, staff/children interaction, staff continuity etc.

3.3 Evaluator's participation in staff development sessions

The evaluators led staff development sessions and parent/carer development sessions throughout the project. These were planned as part of the project to maximize impact and legacy. The evaluators introduced (a) the theory behind the project (b) ways of building on the project in family and children's centre contexts. These sessions provided opportunities to interact in less formal ways than interviews and observations with parents/carers and staff and to experience aspects of the project 'from the inside'.

4. Findings

The evidence collected on the NSTDC, Lullabies Project suggested impact under the following headings, linked to its aims:

- 4.1 Music delivery in the centres
- 4.2 Transfer of musical skills and attitudes
- 4.3 Personal, social, emotional development (Wellbeing, involvement, confidence, resilience, relationships, family life)
- 4.4 Communication and language skills
- 4.5 Closer dialogue between home and centre
- 4.6 Attendance.

4.1 Music delivery in the Haringey NSTDC Lullabies Project

Responses to the project from staff at the centres were very positive. According to evaluations most agreed that there was, 'much more music', to be heard at the centres since Angeline's involvement. 67/90 staff replied to the evaluation request and of them 67% judged the overall programme 'successful' or 'very successful' in achieving its aims. Most were conscious that the project had started a journey yet to be completed by staff within the centre. 84% of staff felt that the programme and in particular the staff development day, added 'significantly' or 'very significantly' to their professional development and 85% could see 'good' or 'very good' transfer to their daily practice at the centres. Generalised affirmative comments like, 'I would love to do this again', 'You are doing a really good job,' were common on the feedback forms..

Significantly many more responses were specific in citing the roles that music could now play in their work with children. For example teachers, key workers and support staff said they could:

- 'provide involvement through music,'
- 'use musical ways to get the children's attention,'
- 'support a family through music'.

More critical comments centred upon time – 'I don't think time allows us to do it with children and parents [together], or confidence, '...I am hoping to build my own confidence to play guitar with the children.' Three participants asked for more guidance on music with very young children 0 – 2 years old.

4.2 Transfer of musical skills and attitudes to staff

The transfer of musical skills in EY settings where staff have little or no music training depends upon building and atmosphere of trust and confidence. The early signs of transfer were evident in the observations and centre visits made by the main evaluator and via the videos taken by Angeline. Staff positivity towards music is shown in their enthusiastic attendance at the celebration sessions organized after each lullaby has been composed. Observations recorded frequent examples of 'broad smiles' and 'laughter', 'open body language' and 'relaxed, friendly relationships' between the adults in the classrooms. Confident, hearty singing and rhythmic movement with the children during the songs and musical games were further unspoken signals of positive participation. This adult enthusiasm was observed to communicate itself very rapidly to the children whose obvious pleasure appeared to encourage even more involvement and confidence in the adults.

During observed celebration sessions adult helpers were encouraged to share their own songs. In parent development sessions and social gatherings parents were also asked to bring and share songs and those captured on video were shared with centre staff, again apparently building confidence in adults perhaps less used to singing in public. Angeline's ability to include all that is important to the child in their lullaby, means that often the key workers or other helpers are mentioned in the song too – one commented, '...thank you for including us ...it makes us feel so special.'

Adults working in nurseries are busy people with little time for additional responsibilities. They are not automatically open to new initiatives. The transfer of clearly valued musical skills and the child-centred ethos of each centre appeared to be a significant factor in staff willingness to accept the lullaby interventions. Applying the SACERS environmental scale, each nursery scored highly, in 'individualization', 'staff child interaction' and other caring and sensitive categories. Personal involvement of staff in the life stories of each family was evident in a number of observations where aspects of family history were related in the process of constructing the lullabies. One staff member for example remarked after such a session, '...their stories are heavy, heavy stories, so many sad stories.' Other workers expressed similar and detailed care for the families they worked with, frequently commenting on the high relevance of the lyrics assembled by Angeline.

Emotion is a powerful motivator. Several teachers and key workers expressed how moving they found the whole concept of a bespoke lullaby for these children, 'I sit and listen to the songs (when they are recorded) and they move me too...' was a response made by at least four staff during one day's observations. This recognition of the power of song to hold and express children's personal stories meant that several key staff members recognised a new and personal interest in bringing song into their own teaching. A sample of evaluative comments at the end of the staff development day may evidence changes in staff thinking:

- I want to use the lullaby idea wherever possible
- I will make up small games and make up a song about a child in 'island time.' [quiet time at the end of a centre day]
- We can create ... songs with the children in our different key groups
- I will organize ... singing groups with the children
- I want the children to play different sorts of drums.

Staff were also given opportunities to develop new musical skills of their own. Possibly as a result of Angeline's and other CP influence, the SACERS scale showed each centre scored highly on 'sound play'. In sound play children are encouraged literally to play with sounds. Those below 1 year are given sensory baskets filled with dozens of different sound-making materials and objects and 3 year olds are introduced to guitars, drums and a wide range of classroom instruments. In two observed lullaby sessions Angeline gave key workers and other centre staff the chance to lead some of the group singing and musical games. The prospect of more singing in class was embraced happily by some staff, '...I never used to sing before and now I do...lots', said one.

Not all centre workers are as openly positive. Whilst there were no negative comments in evaluations or exploratory conversations with staff, Angeline still felt that it would be possible for music to play, 'more of a part', and that songs could be a 'stronger feature of their practice'.

4.3 Personal, social, emotional development of children

The wellbeing of children involves issues of personal, family, relational and institutional health. Interviews with centre leaders (cl) generated phrases that clearly expressed the child-centred ethos of each setting, in which a holistic view of children's health predominated:

Children's wellbeing is the first priority...

...children are taught to say, "stop it I don't like it",

...their views are just as important as ours', (cl1)

... I love the open minded-ness of the 3 schools, who seek and find ways of working with families. (cl2)

According to two independent applications of the SACERS environmental scale each centre rated well above average in 'promoting communication', 'engagement', 'provision for parents', 'provision for children with disabilities' and 'promoting acceptance of diversity'. Each feature could be argued to be essential in the establishment of a secure base for children

Involvement

The children like their lullabies. Children were almost always highly engaged when listening to their lullaby and this was shown by sustained attention to the song, participatory body language, facial expressions showing joy or recognition of family or pet names and warm eye-contact with parents and others during the singing. Several parents reported that the CD recordings of the lullabies were frequently requested by their children and often calmed, held and entertained them at home.



Figure 5: Children explore the guitar before Angeline sings the new lullaby

But not every parent used the opportunity offered by the project. On one occasion Angeline recalls:

'I made a song for a child and each time I asked the parent if she had listened to the CD at home she kept saying she had forgotten - she had participated so willingly I never really got feedback, sometimes I wonder if perhaps she didn't like it and didn't want to say anything - it's difficult to know. (A. 14. 01.14)

The difficult circumstances of life for some of the vulnerable families involved in the project sometimes cut across its potential for positive change. Occasionally a parent appeared for the first session where the lyrics for the song were arrived at, but did not turn up to hear the song sung to their child. On another occasion a family had moved away before the song could be shared. But according to the centres and to Angeline these were rare events and to be expected in the open and informal context considered essential in building trust and collaboration.

Confidence

68% of parent evaluations and every worker interview used the words 'more confident', when describing the impact of the Lullabies project on children. The children selected for the project were all needy in some way, the result of deprivation, disability, delay or family difficulties. Many showed their needs in what the staff described as 'low self-esteem', shyness, or other problems with language and communication. Confidence is required to address each need, but can be sapped by negative perceptions. Angeline described one of the roles of her songs as supporting families, '...build more positive mindsets around their child'.

In one observation a parent came with her child M to hear their lullaby for the first time, before she heard it she said:

I worry about his speaking, he don'ts much speak....At home is just me and I am too busy, no people, only the nursery where he can see other people, even now he can speak more numbers and words. He likes singing when I took him to the baby play group.

Angeline built on this opening, recalling that indeed M loved singing in class with the others and sang very well. Angeline reflects:

I needed to get her to see M differently. I had to make it (the writing of the lullaby) a positive experience. I heard all the things M does wrong, she laughed a lot, all the time nervously I think, said I am angry sometimes with M...it was like drawing blood out of a stone to get some positive out of her, so I saw it as my role to change her mind through the song. I was encouraging her to come back with a positive mind set, my aim with her even was just to get a rewiring of language to speak about him positively.

Angeline began to sing the new song built from the previous week's difficult conversation:

*M... how I love you
You're so cute
M... how I love to see you smile
Seeing you happy makes it all worthwhile.....*

The parent now with tears in her eyes responded immediately the song had finished:

*'...that's really nice, wonderful... really different...wow, thank you you're a genius... I like everything all together, all of it [laughs]....
Maybe he won't understand it all - he's too young.'*

Angeline answered: 'it's for you as well, to have as a little memory of him as he is now.'

He grows so quickly and I won't remember in two years', replied the parent/carer.



Figure 6: Angeline sings through the lullaby in its first public performance, the subject plays along with her

When M heard his song for the second time (this time in front of his friends) he beamed with pride, gazing strongly and smilingly back at his parent/carer. His teachers report that since then he has gained confidence within the centre, along with his mother.

Another grateful parent spoke of how 'brilliant' the lullaby was and how influential having a positive song about her was on her daughter's self-image.

When her grandpa heard her song he said, "If I'd had a song like that, I think it would have changed my whole life."

'I think every child should have a song like this, perhaps particularly helpful for looked after children and other children in insecure situations or who have a low self image for other reasons.'

Parent E. was impressed with the way in which the project was able to support children individually with their personal needs:

'I was really happy about the project, so was C as it was all about the things and people who were important to him. He plays it all the time and knows all the words to it. It helped him settle into nursery.'

Resilience

For a significant minority of children the songs became important symbols of transition, where changes, new words, verses or changed names represented changes in their life circumstances. For some the songs were used to build specific aspects of resilience in the nursery setting. Several parents, carers and grandparents remarked on the way their child's song had for the first time concretised a cultural identity for their child. One father said he had, '...never thought before of talking about Jamaica,' where he was born and his son's grandparents lived. Others spoke of the 'emotional support' the songs had given their children. Nursery workers in particular noted the stronger growth of 'socialisation' skills brought about not just by the song, but the ways that Angeline introduced them child by child in weekly class sessions.

Angeline told the story of one child who, because of 'development issues,' had been disappointed not yet to move 'up' a class with their peers. The song composed for that child stressed his strength and courage, like, '...one of his dinosaur toys'. The song was felt by centre staff and parent to have helped him with this difficult time.

A senior teacher at Rowland Hill reported that she could, '.... tell the children whose parents had really made the songs a regular part of home life,' by the increased confidence and security of the child and their, '...extra willingness to speak and share'.

Relationships and family life

There is evidence that the lullabies impact positively on family relationships. One parent described the song as 'my "get out of jail free", card,' used to get her out of a difficult situation or when she needed to calm her child. Another, when asked how many times her child had listened to her song, pondered and hazarded, 'two hundred times?' Evidence from interviews, evaluations, observations and teachers reports and from Angeline herself, was rich in examples of improved family relationships. Below are a few examples from the parent/carer feedback forms:

Parent A 'I feel happy about the song that was created, it is lovely.' I will replay over and over, still she start dancing to her song.'

The same parent was surprised at the linguistic progress made through the song sharing with pleasure, 'How she join and put words together.'

Parent B volunteered, 'I couldn't wait to hear the preview of the song.', 'I love it, I plan to make T grow with the song.... I never heard about such thing neither have any family/friends.'

There were different reactions to hearing the lullaby for the first time, one child was described as being, '... shocked and embarrassed/shy about the song.' Though they communicated well through it on subsequent occasions.

Carer C caring for a newly adopted child, gave details of the improved communication resulting from the project. We listen to the song 2 or 3 times a week/sometimes more, usually in the car, sometimes in the front room.' 'She either dances or insists everyone is silent while it's on. She tends to clap bits she likes and point to the rest of us when the song mentions us.

Yes she sings along with her song and she sings it alone in her bed - usually the chorus which is about how her new family love her. We believe it has helped her settle in with us and trust her situation here.'

Some parents told of how younger siblings' communication and language had improved as a result of the lullaby. Parent D recalled sharing the song with grandparents and a few friends:

L has learned how to put it on himself so it is often on at random times. I think most of the things I have said are true for L are true for E too. L beams with joy and pride when his song is played.

E happily tries to sing along with it (which is very hard) and does a funny happy head bob dance. She also has become very proud of her 'sparkling eyes' as the song says. E particularly loved that you used the word 'team' for our family. We loved taking part in this project.'

4.4 Communication and language skills

Children show a wide range of responses when first played their lullaby. For most it is the first time they have heard a personal song. When they hear their name, family nick names and special places, some show strong signs of embarrassment or confusion, hiding their faces, turning away from others, running to their carers. 'Who told you all this?' shouted one three year old, 'How do you know that?' asked another. On second hearing (usually in the 'celebration' session where the lullaby is shared with a group of classmates) almost every child observed showed strong signs of confidence, happiness and deep involvement. They smiled, displayed open body language, danced rhythmically, sang or spoke familiar words, 'stood staring, shoulders back and very tall looking at the rest of the group' or just smiled broadly throughout the song. A short observation of a child with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty (PMLD) captures the impact of these personalised songs:



Figure 7: Children often contribute to the performance

R a 3 year old with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) in a walker, her mum and a support worker come in.

R smiles and mum holds her hand, she looks and smiles at mum and Angeline and then smiles at support worker. (Angeline begins singing)

'R – how you love the bath' (R moves her hands and legs rhythmically, immediately she hears these words and the music R looks at mum and looks like she is listening

'hands on your hips dancing Gangnam style'

R stands up on her weak legs and bounces, gives a big smile and claps hands at the end. R gives a sustained look into Angeline's face...she does not speak

The example above demonstrates plentiful and unambiguous communication, (according to mother and teacher), but the child did not speak. The clear enjoyment and involvement in child R powerfully illustrated a common theme in all observed children – one of increased confidence through interaction with their song.

Closer dialogue between home and centre

In interviews many other positive responses emerged. The growth of an affirmative atmosphere through music and song has been argued by parents and staff to have enhanced relationships between parents and the centers in all three cases. In enquiries about the Lullabies project, the evaluator was twice told by parents that the Lullabies were part of a much wider atmosphere of support and that they did, '... not know what they would have done without the centre'.

A centre leader described how the project involved difficult-to-reach parents in the life and work of the Children's Centre:

I have noticed two parents in particular who have grown in stature since the project. They are more confident, approachable and open to other workshops. One parent is now attending two different workshops a week. The shared experience has helped to form positive and trusting relationship with more parents. (V, personal communication)

In another centre the co-ordinator reflected, 'The project has shown me a unique and amazing way of how we can begin to work and strengthen partnerships with parents.' She went on to give details of how the Lullaby composition process provided a powerful starting point for relationships:

This (the project) has given me an incredible insight of the parents own life journeys. Parents would talk of themselves, where they were from and in some instances would talk of their journey into this country. They would talk of their loss, sadness, hopes and dreams for them and their child. This provoked emotional responses from some parents, especially when recalling their own childhood memories traditional rhymes and songs that were sung by their own parents and grandparents. Tears in parent's eyes always brought tears to our eyes. (cl3 interview November 2013)

Another report from a nursery leader noted that the performance of the child's song made parents feel:

... that they were being acknowledged. They were trusting us sharing with us how precious their child is to them and feeling listened to... Capturing the children on video listening to their song, hearing names of special people in their lives or even their parents voice/singing was emotional for all of us but yet so magical - for some children hearing their song for the first time was overwhelming, for some excited and proud nevertheless capturing these responses gave me an awe-inspiring insight into the child's world (cl S, email, 20th November 2013)

Parents' views

Parents often express the need for reassurance from staff in Children's Centres. The Lullabies project encapsulates many of the core values of the centres, and places the child at the centre. Parent E recognized the role of her son's lullaby in helping him to '... feel comfortable and settled...'. Parent F also saw that the song helped her child relax at school, and gave her opinion why, '...because it was very personal to him and had familiar people in it'. The same parent saw that her son's lullaby could have a beneficial effect on others 'They play it at nursery, it helped him settle in at nursery too, they have played it in groups to encourage other parents to take part'.

Other parents interviewed simply stressed the uniqueness and the beauty of the lullabies themselves.

[parent G] 'It's beautiful I like it'

[parent J] 'I didn't really think it was going to be like this, like adult, it's not just for the children is it?'

[parent C] 'Even the rhythm and the beat was perfect for C.'

One older carer (a grandmother) on hearing her granddaughter's lullaby simply wept and said, 'Thank you , thank you thank you...'

The afternoon sessions for parents were attended by a total of 23 parents or carers. Parents and centre staff ate together, played with their children and learned new songs and musical games. They also were given a brief presentation on the research behind the Lullabies project. As a result some parents asked for books explaining current evidence on the importance of emotions, touch and song in learning and general development. Others enthusiastically took books of musical ideas to use at home, provided by the evaluators and promised to use them.

Views of teachers and other centre staff.

Teachers interviewed about the project were highly articulate in their praise. A short verbatim section of one exchange is typical of many of the discussions and interactions held during the evaluator's visits.

Evaluator: can you give me a pen portrait of this children's centre?

S (staff member) Children's well-being is the first priority. Children are the leaders of learning and it's the work with families that is most important here...there are so many needs, here...

Evaluator: What about the Lullabies? (we had both observed A being sung her lullaby for the first time)

Staff member S: A's mum was overwhelmed, she just couldn't believe it. 'a real healing process'

'It's done a world of good.'

'It's so important for parents and grandparents who are unexpectedly looking after their grandchildren.'

'It's so nice to stop and focus...you can see the change.'

'just look at the end result, such a positive experience, it means that they will take other opportunities in the future, it starts their time here with a positive link.'

'when I played the siblings Angeline's song, they said, 'how did she know all that stuff about our family.'... 'with music there's no competition, no argument about what channel to watch...TV just causes problems in homes with homes with many children.'

*Evaluator: What about your experience of the songs?
I sit and listen to the songs and they move me too*

4.6 Attendance

Centre leaders did not feel the project had made a significant impact on attendance. Attendance was already very high in each of the centres probably because of the existing work and welcome of centre staff. Many of the parents interviewed expressed the feeling that their Children's Centre made vital and positive contributors to their personal and family lives. Several staff members emphasized that the lullabies project was just part of the lively, inclusive, and family supporting ethos of each centre.

5. Discussion

It was difficult to find negative responses to the Lullabies project. Parents, carers, teachers, helpers, heads of school, visitors, local authority officers and Ofsted inspectors were generous with highly focused praise for both process and product. Evaluation must ask however whether the beneficial effects of this programme were the result of the project or something else.

Individualised attention, intervention from an outsider, the sensitive and wise character of the lead artist were all essential to the project in addition to the songs. Perhaps the changes in children and families ascribed to the songs actually resulted from the focused attention they received. The addition of a new member of staff with time to talk to each family for an extended period was certainly seen as a benefit to each community. The existing ethos of the centres, their high quality staff training and established programmes of social activities may have generated the fund of good will and confidence credited to the Lullabies project. Certainly their atmosphere was perceived as positive and welcoming during the frequent visits of the evaluators. The style and personality of Angeline fitted well into their child-centred, sensitive, inclusive and supportive philosophy. The considerable financial and organizational commitment to the Lullabies project itself is also evidence of the imaginative and adventurous attitude of the centres. A financial commitment also means that the centres are likely to seek out 'value for money'. However teachers, support staff, local authority officials and other visiting artists claim that the Lullabies Project delivered unique positive contributions to the lives of children and families. The evaluator heard no dissenting voices, despite deliberately seeking reports of difficulties or problems on five separate occasions.

Confidence, belonging, resilience, communication, sociability and sense of being loved are commonly seen as indicating the wellbeing of young children. These benefits would no doubt have appeared and grown in the lives of many children without having a personalised lullaby composed and recorded for them. However current evidence outlined in the introduction to this evaluation shows that for a very significant minority, these developmental expectations do not follow the expected trajectory. Poorer than expected development in some 0-3 year olds is one of the drivers of the Two year old programme, of which the three Children's Centres are a part. Children referred to the Lullabies project are those whose social, linguistic and psychological development cause particular concern.

In practice, evidence from the wellbeing scales was not collected from teachers. Very few scales were completed. Staff found little time and opportunity to administer them in their busy days. Their job already required them to complete long written summaries of each child's activities on a daily basis, discretely supervise every movement and conversation and fulfill a host of other caring, teaching, playing, parenting and administrative roles during the day.

Because of the lack of significant response from the centres it was decided to administer the wellbeing scales at the Sydney de Haan research Centre. Using videos of Lullabies sessions three independent EY teacher/assessors were asked to make judgments against the LW-B scale at the beginning, middle, and end of four unedited 7 – 10 minute Lullabies sessions. The highest readings were recorded towards the end of sessions. In one case there was agreement that an observed child moved rapidly from level 2 to level 4 within the space of ‘their’ lullaby and that a positive frame of mind remained with them for the remainder of the session whilst other songs were sung. We found a remarkable agreement between these independent assessors who knew nothing about the centres or the project..

Observation, interview and scrutinised video evidence suggested that the process of composing, presenting, performing, recording and frequent replaying of personalised lullabies provided significant and specific benefits to the children and families involved. Benefits corresponded to many fundamental attributes of the healthy child, for example evidence of a sense of personal identity, security, positive family relationships, creativity, communication and confidence.

Whilst each characteristic of healthy development flourishes in settings that encourage, resource and build them, the Lullabies project is unusual in that it uses music - making, performing and sharing - to build and extend them. Music is a highly emotional art form, Mithen, an archaeological anthropologist argues that music, especially sung music, ‘speaks’ to us at an emotional level beneath the level of words or rationality (Mithen, 2005). In the Lullabies project the artist uses the emotional strength of song to build bridges between all the stakeholders of a Children’s Centre. The warm, secure and uncritical medium of lullaby has according to the experienced EY practitioners at each centre, been especially successful in highlighting important aspects of infants’ social and psychological wellbeing among hard-to-reach and vulnerable children and families. This discussion sets out the supporting case for these claims under the following headings generated by the evidence:

5.1 Personal identity and song

5.2 Building security through song

5.3 Songs building positive relationships

5.4 The significance of creative music making

5.5 Communication through song

5.1 Personal identity and song

Each lullaby in the NSTDC project is personalised to the child and addressed to them. It is bespoke, containing nicknames, first words, pets, toys, family names and many other unique references. The lullabies arise from intimate conversations between musician and parent/carer. Observations confirmed that the lullabies captured unique aspects of each child’s life, instantly recognisable by two and three year olds as well as their primary carers. Evaluation showed that both parents and children heard themselves accurately captured in the songs. The findings suggest that the songs provided a function beyond that of simple records of a child’s life, for many children they confirmed or built an enhanced sense of identity. The child who wanted the words of a song to record the names of her new adoptive parents rather than her former foster parents, or who wanted to change words to include her beloved cat who had died or the mother who used the lullaby to give their child a message they had found difficult to put into words, all recognized the importance of the song in their emotional life. The grandparent who mused that such a song in their childhood might have changed their life course, suggested that songs can have an influence, beyond momentary entertainment. Equally the parent that guessed their child’s lullaby had been played at home, ‘...two hundred times already,’ since being recorded three months earlier, attested a major significance for her child. Evidence of this kind supports claims that these songs may help firm-up the fragile beginnings of identity.

5.2 Building security through song

Lullabies are traditionally used to comfort. The face-to-face, emotionally supportive and gentle communication between primary carer and child has been shown to provide secure attachment. For some children the personalised lullaby resulting from the NSTDC project, acted as what Winnicott (1971) called a ‘transitional object’ – a sonic security blanket traveling with them through early life. Two sampled children insisted upon other members of the family having copies, or on taking their CDs from place to place with them on journeys and family visits.

The evaluation provided evidence that the lullabies provided a source of security for many unconfident children. One video shows a very shy child hiding behind a care worker whilst her song is being sung for the first time. She gradually relaxes, her feet begin to tap rhythmically to the tune and when she hears a reference to her mummy in the song she stands and smiles and runs happily to her mother sitting across the room. Other videos focus on children beaming with pride, swaying or gently dancing in front of their peers as they listen intently to their song. Such vignettes and the spoken evidence of parents, teachers and other carers, strongly suggest that the songs help develop confidence and security especially in shy and fearful children.

5.3 Songs building positive relationships

The case studies and quotations collected in the Findings section suggest numerous occasions where the lullabies have provoked improved family relationships. Angeline usually asks if the parent has something important they want to say to their child through their song. This question can be seen as the beginning of an ever-deepening link between the lullaby and personal relationships within the family unit. Some parents described the completed and recorded lullaby as providing distraction for restless or misbehaving children. For others the song became the focus of family 'get-togethers' or children's parties. Other parents gave evidence of the songs becoming important 'heirlooms' being sent to distant family members, shared with friends or placed on a every family member's computer. Some credited the lullabies with even more significance, changing a child's behaviour at home or giving them a new sense of importance and confidence within the family.

The findings provide evidence that the lullaby process also helped build bridges between families and the children's centre. The development of relationships between parents/carers and the centres was not always smooth, however. Some parents found it difficult to talk about their child at first. Perhaps they were wary of authority or simply strangers, but the gentle, sensitive questioning by musician and their own familiar key-worker gradually established a satisfactory dialogue in every case that centre leaders could remember. Remarkably when asked for negative stories, neither the centre leaders nor the musician could think of any.

Music therapists use songs to deepen relationships. The introduction showed how personalised songs for and with children are part of the stock-in-trade of music therapy. Such therapeutic use of song continues an ancient and universal tradition of sung music for children. Starting with 'mothereeze,' the often wordless communication used between mother and baby, continuing through traditional, culturally generated lullabies, songs and rhymes, as Brown (2002) found, children's music is universal. The Lullabies project could be seen as providing for children those personalised and culturally meaningful songs lost in the 21st century through lack of parental time, motivation, knowledge or example.

Therapists do not perform and celebrate their songs in public. In the 'lullabies project the public sharing of the song is central to the experience. In each observation as the new song was sung and its chorus learned by peers, relationships were strengthened. Improved relationships were shown in the ways children gave space to the child being sung about, the combined and consistent focus of each group on the musician and the relaxed ways the adult helpers sang and danced with their children.

5.4 The significance of creative music making

Democratic definitions see creativity as an essential feature of human being (see Barnes and Scoffham, 2007). Creativity and creative teachers do not survive in educational settings that marginalize them (Cremin, Barnes and Scoffham, 2009). Most research on the relationships between creativity and wellbeing has been done with adults and the few that focus on young children (eg Barnes in Clift and Camic, 2014) are speculative. This evaluation represents an early step in establishing a link between creative practice in music and the psychological and social wellbeing of children in their early years.

If we define creativity as Imaginative activity to produce an outcome that is both original and valued, (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, (NACCCE) 1999), both process and product of the NSTDC Lullabies project are creative. Each song is a demonstrably original, valued and imaginative product. The process involves child and parent/carer(s) in acts of collaborative creativity with the musician. The performances generate spontaneous and shared creative responses: dance, mime, conversation or drama. The discovery of areas personal creativity can even be life changing. If as Csikszentmihalyi (2013, p.1) suggests, creativity is a, '...central source of meaning in our lives', then involvement in authentic creative activity like the Lullabies project may be received as highly satisfying, providing 'job satisfaction' to centre staff and a deeper sense of belonging to children and their parents. Such a claim supports suggestions that the discovery and development of areas of personal creativity is central to sustaining a life in education (Barnes 2013). This project also suggests that involvement in playful and creative activity may be crucial to the developing child. In the testimony of many the children's special songs seems to have changed them, but what could be special about song?

5.5 Communication through song

Musical elements are necessary for much human, verbal and non-verbal communication. Pulse, rhythm, tone, pitch, stresses, intonation, melody and structure are found in every sentence; we can often understand the meaning of an utterance simply through its prosody. If, as Mithen (2005) posits, early humans sang their messages of joy, sadness, encouragement, contentment, anger, peace and love, then it should not be surprising that music suggests such emotions affect us profoundly.

Several participants backed Trevarthen's claims by noting improvements in their children's spoken and emotional communication shortly after the composition and sharing of their lullaby. Parents/carers also commonly remarked on increased family closeness. Their direct involvement in the creative processes of writing the lyrics, and deciding upon the melodies of their lullaby, clearly encouraged their commitment to the product, but also arguably influenced the sensitive and generative ways they used the lullabies at home.

Linguists, neuroscientists and speech therapists describe how the simple, repeated, rhythmic forms of nursery rhymes help the development of language. In their frequent use of catchy choruses, familiar catch phrases, pet-names and nonsense words Angeline's lullabies continue the nursery rhyme tradition. Teachers remarked a number of times on the ways that children with language delays joined in the lullabies when repeated in class sessions and how they helped articulation, expression and the lengthening of sentences.

For educationists the observations in this research illustrate the particular power of music to involve, include and support emotional development and develop community. The findings suggest that at least with children in EY efforts should be made to use music and particularly song more widely and in more personally targeted ways. This evaluation reminds of the importance of allowing the child and those closest to them, to lead thinking about their emotional and social development. It has argued that the Lullabies project offers an unthreatening and warm method of provoking holistic conversations and reflections centred on the wellbeing of young children. These interactions appear to have a strong and positive effect upon the healthy development of children in their early years.

6. Limitations of the study

From the outset it was difficult to remain objective as an evaluator. The gentle, caring, and secure ethos in each of the children's centres was evident and consistently reasserted by parents and visitors. A bespoke lullaby for each needy child is a touching and clearly effective means of getting close to the families and children concerned. The simple but emotionally powerful songs designed for each individual were highly affecting to evaluator, parents and centre staff. In order to provide balance to the risk of positive bias in the evaluator, it was decided to widen the range of responses to include verbatim records of children's, parents', teachers', key workers' and independent observers' responses. This lengthened the report but ensured that a range of voices were represented.

Being observed affects those being observed. Open scrutiny can be especially influential during observations of practitioners with a powerful interest in a project being seen in the best light. This well-known 'observer' or 'Hawthorne' effect' does not so easily apply to children of two and three years old who quickly forget they are being watched. Infants are much more driven by their emotional and immediate needs; less likely to sustain expected behaviour just for the sake of an evaluator. Observing the responses of these children in videos, in real time and through the reports of their carers provided the most robust evidence of the socially-connecting, personally-engaging, confidence-building and language-enhancing effects of the lullabies. Children's longer term positive response to these lullabies was also evidenced when on a number of re-visits, previously observed children were seen joyfully responding to incidental renditions of 'their' song during the normal day.

The Hawthorne effect aside, there was a quite remarkable consistency in the inclusive and caring atmosphere created by Angeline in every one of the 11 visits made to the centres whilst she was working. During the research the evaluator listened to a random choice of 30 of the 80 composed songs. Without doubt each lullaby was unique, specially tailored for an individual child and telling their story within its own melody, structure and accompaniment.

A relatively low percentage of responses to our questionnaires was disappointing. We had hoped for more parents' views. The low response to questionnaires was not altogether unexpected, many parents themselves have difficulty with English and a significant number reported losing or forgetting their papers.

Perhaps the chief difficulty after only a year of the Lullaby project is to be confident about its longer-term impact. The grandparent's comment that such a song would have, 'changed his life', is a credible long term expectation for some, but a longer term study would be needed to know how common such an effect might be. A longer term study following a sample group of children over perhaps three years would show whether individual lullabies were remembered, changed, still played or forgotten. Follow up in the centres would show whether the idea of composing bespoke songs for individual children had transferred to staff and become part of their practice. Such a study would need funding and in times of increased financial hardship for all organisations extra funds may be difficult to come by. However it is the firm conclusion of this evaluation that the Haringey NSTDC Lullabies project offers a low cost, high impact route towards significantly improved social and psychological health for vulnerable young children and their immediate family. It provides important additions to the professional development and training of staff in each centre and powerfully demonstrates new and beneficial functions for quality music making in early years settings.

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