

NPO IMPACT REPORT

Early Years - Q1 23/24

Activity

Sustainable Early Years Music (SEYM). Music provision for Early Years children in challenging circumstances and/or with SEN/D. Three core interrelated key areas of activity: collaborative facilitation, knowledge-exchange, analysis/evaluation.

Outputs

Our work in supporting the needs and development of young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities has developed over 5-6 years. We will expand on this through a music engagement programme for Early Years children with complex needs. This programme will comprise interventions that build confidence and skills of EY practitioners in EY settings and childminders in community based environments, enabling children to thrive. Key partners will include Hampshire Portage Service, Southampton City Council Early Years and Childcare Service, Parent Carer Forum and Childminders.

Targets

60 children and 20 staff. Weekly music activities combining 1:1 and group-based, introducing resources/methods aimed at engaging children with complex needs. A child-centred approach, SEYM will promote music engagement as sensory, social, interactive and expressive experience. Impact areas: child's social/emotional well-being and creative self expression, EY practitioners' confidence to facilitate music and frequency/recurrence of music activity as independent activity, or integrated to other areas of pedagogical intervention. Impact evaluated through our Impact Measurement Framework.

Q1 23/24 Data

Sessions

Location	Type of Session	Number	Details
Spots and Dots Childminding	Group 1:1	1 1	Co-facilitation of inclusive music engagement
Over the Rainbow Childminding	Group	3	Co-facilitation of inclusive music engagement
Wizkidz Childminding	Group 1:1	10 10	Co-facilitation of inclusive music engagement
Tracy's Teddy Club Childminding	Group 1:1 Mentoring	10 9 1	Co-facilitation of inclusive music engagement Mentoring session was attended also by Wizikidz childminding practitioner
Paint Pots 10 nursery	Mentoring	1	Meeting with Paint Pots apprentice
Paint Pots 2 nursery	1:1 Group	2 1	Co-facilitation of inclusive music engagement
Paint Pots 9 nursery	Consultation - strategic development	1	Meeting covered our apprenticeship scheme with Paint Pots providers, cash match funding, setting visits to support school transition of children with SEN, and a future collaboration to run a Stay and Play facility.
The Shore Weston	1:1 Group	14 7	Co-facilitation of inclusive music engagement
The Shore Woolston	Consultation Group 1:1	1 2 3	Co-facilitation of inclusive music engagement

Start Point EY and Childcare Centre	Meeting with EYATs member	1	Discuss participant nurseries in SEYM in the coming 3 years Training sessions attended by nursery practitioners and family hub practitioners
	Twilight training session	1	
Planet Sounds SoCo	Mentoring and consultation	1	Mentoring and consultation meeting with SEN home support trainee/apprentice
Hightown Studio SoCo	Strategic meeting	1	Strategic meeting - SoCo CEO and Early Years Lead
YMCA Nursery	Group 1:1	1 2	Co-facilitation of inclusive music engagement
Peartree Green reserve (forest pre-school)	Group 1:1	1 1	Co-facilitation of inclusive music engagement
OASIS Academy Weston (Parent Carer Forum)	Open session (multiple groups and 1:1)	4	Event Organised by the Parent Carer Forum

Participants

Location	Type (i.e. YP/Staff)	Number
Childminder settings	Staff Children	4 18
Nurseries and Pre-schools	Staff Children	12 17
EY Centre premises	Children	20
SoCo premises	Staff	1

Q1 23/24 Data - Narrative

Summary of Activity

SEYM project activity is based on an activity framework that combines co-facilitation, knowledge-sharing, and development and research.

Co-facilitation in SEYM includes a combination of settings that are new to the project, and those where we keep supporting their emergent independent music facilitation on a rotational basis. The current quarter has included a higher number of short-term visits to settings attended by children with additional needs who are about to go through a school transition. Our professional links with both the EY service and the special school system enable us to play a relevant role in supporting children's transition to new pedagogic environments. By the end of this quarter, we expect to have completed facilitation in 12 different settings.

Knowledge-sharing, understood as a multi-directional learning curve that involves multiple project participants, includes professional mentoring, as well as several consultation meetings and other activities aimed at obtaining useful information concerning EY practice (see reporting on ACE investment principles for a summary of the SEYM knowledge exchange approach). Knowledge-sharing activity has included mentoring sessions with childminders and SEN home support practitioners, as well as multiple consultation meetings at several settings.

Research and development activity in SEYM consists of obtaining and processing different types of data to evaluate project impact, identify and explore issues of interest, as well as constantly updating, improving and expanding the depth and range of operational models and frameworks that compose the SEYM project design. See Research section of ACE Investment Principles section for more details.

Partnership Activity

SEYM has over the years developed partnerships in multiple ways; namely, through interactions with senior administrative or leadership teams, interactions explored and developed 'in the field' through practical collaborations, and a combination of both approaches.

The last quarter has seen the development of the following partnership areas:

- Partnership with independent childminding communities. See the 'highlights and unexpected outcomes' section for more details.
- Increased partnership with the Paint Pots childcare provider. This partnership includes an ongoing apprenticeship scheme, our support of several settings, as well as the potential to co-run a stay and play facility.

We have continued our partnership with the Parent Carer Forum, by providing open session in their day events, and disseminating the parent-support branch of SEYM.

Ongoing partnership with the local EY and Childcare Service has been key for us to identify and select settings for the project to run in the next 3 years.

Highlights and unexpected outcomes

A highlight of SEYM, as a community engagement project, has been our growing understanding and collaboration of childminding professional communities created by practitioners. These communities develop independently from social or professional activity organised by administrative and development teams of the local service. We have been astonished at how energetic, fertile and relevant these communities are - within a generally depressed Early Years sector. Reason for this, we believe, is that these small communities of childminders are often created out of 'ground level' collaborations, which flourish as a first-hand response to clear needs. Through collaborations with these communities, we have extended support to children's centers co-run by childminder partnerships.

More generally, a highlight of our project has been the very positive reception it has had across the childminder community. This was a new area for us, and it led to a new project strand (SEYM III), which we will continue to develop for the next 3 years.

Case Study(s)

Community of Practice Development Case Study:

As a continuation of SEYM III, in January we started to work with a new childminder setting, Spots N Dots. During this work we explored different approaches, combining Early Years pedagogy with child-led music facilitation, and a small number of adult-led activities. In our reflective sessions, a common topic of discussion was how the experience of lockdown had affected the physical development of many children. This led to an expansion of activities combining music and developmental movement, and initial discussion of the potential of implementing those approaches in the context of outdoor learning.

Very similar issues were raised in reflective meetings during an initial period of co-facilitation at the childminder setting Tracy's Teddy Club. In this case, our discussions included links between children's speech development with activities combining music and developmental movement.

In both settings it was reported that outdoor learning was also conducive to more positive children engagement, and generally higher wellbeing - children seemed highly engaged by forest school activities and less preoccupied by the availability, and possession of, conventional resources.

In network events, consultations meetings and mentoring sessions, the SEYM project lead had the opportunity to learn from both practitioners about their approaches to outdoor learning, and their plan to start a forest pre-school. Hosted in a local natural reserve, the forest school would initially provide for children who are currently taking part in SEYM projects in the childminder settings.

As preparation for this, a music facilitation session was organised in the outdoor learning area where the forest school will take place. The session was a success, with very high levels children and practitioner involvement and well-being. More strategically, it has initiated SEYM's incursion into the field of outdoor learning, and expanded our partnership with these highly skillful and experienced Early Years providers.

Specific reporting on ACE Investment Principles

1. Knowledge-exchange with key partners to support the development of skills, confidence and practice, growing the credibility of our work and supporting the sector. (A&Q SD1)

Knowledge-exchange (KE) is part of the SEYM project activity framework. KE connects with co-facilitation and research activity, and informs how we update and expand our project operations and strategic thinking. We understand KE as a complex, socially situated process which we design and manage in line with the key issues that affect how knowledge is produced, transmitted and expressed. These issues are addressed in the different areas of the SEYM Knowledge Sharing and Inclusivity Approach, which is used to coordinate and supervise our KE activity. Briefly, these areas are:

Relating: knowledge-exchange happens in the context of relationships between different project participants and stakeholders. These relationships are mediated in different ways as they are criss-crossed by other professional relationships and practices. The approach addresses how relationships and relationship-mediation can be mapped, understood, improved, and on which specific relationships to focus on for different KE purposes.

Knowing: there are different types of knowledge, and these types are acquired, used, expressed and shared in different ways. Some forms of knowledge are more visible and aligned to formal learning processes than others; this often translates into a type of knowledge having higher status than others. The approach addresses how to map out knowledge types across project participants, how to understand different types of knowledge, improve links between them, and on which type of knowledge to focus on for different KE processes.

Doing: KE happens in the context of activities, some of which are specifically designed for the purpose of knowledge sharing, in others knowledge sharing is more effective as a concurrent activity. Key to this principle is that top-down CPD approaches are often ineffective as they do not build on existing knowledge, or allow for enough dialogic feedback to adapt to the needs and priorities of participants. The approach addresses how to map out social events where KE happens, how to understand and improve them, and on which KE action to focus on.

Locating: KE activity happens in different places and settings. These locations can be more or less accessible to different participants, and can make participants feel more or less invited and empowered. The approach addresses how to map out locations where KE can happen, addresses how to understand and improve KE location, and what locations to focus on.

Leading: KE activity entails fluid participatory dynamics where different contributors have different levels of leadership depending on the specific KE process. Inclusivity does not entail the collapse of all hierarchies or positions of power (you cannot hear all voices if they all speak at the

same time), but their realignment along the lines of a common goal. The approach addresses how to map out different leading dynamics across different participatory groups, what leadership and ownership might look like in different KE scenarios, as well as where and how to empower leadership and ownership of learning processes.

Reflecting: KE outcomes can be elusive to assess and understand in detail, as they might be the result of both formal and informal or planned and unplanned activity, and relate to intended and unintended learning processes. The approach addresses how to use reflection tools to gauge the effectiveness of KE activity, the assemblage of formal or experiential reflective cycles (where appropriate), and how KE reflection links to wider project evaluation and data collection.

During the April-June period our knowledge exchange activity has focused on reinforcing a cross-setting community of practice for childminders. In this ongoing KE activity we are addressing three key areas of practice: the implementation of forest schooling principles, mentoring approaches (two participant childminders are involved in the EY mentoring scheme currently run by the DoE), and the creation of a childminder-specific music facilitation networks across project participants.

KE activity also included increasing contact with parents of children across different settings; we are seeing this as a strategic step in our development of a comprehensive parent support strategy - which is part of the remit of the fifth SEYM project strand. Within this strand, KE activity included a growing collaboration with an EY SEN home support practitioners, concerning the different social spaces where practitioners can engage with parents, as well as what mentoring looks like in the home environment.

2. Carry out regular research/evidence reviews of creative practice and talent development to generate new thinking and perspectives that enable us to continue to be an innovative and agile organisation. (A&Q P3)

SEYM research activity in the last quarter has included the following areas of thinking and development:

- Updating of implementation and reflection templates as well as guidance documents used for co-facilitation and knowledge-sharing activity.
- Development of the SEYM Community of Practice Development Strategy (CPDS). Based on perspectives from social learning research and practice theory, as well as on non-clinical intervention approaches in social psychology, the CPDS identifies and elaborates on the different stages communities of practice go through as they mature. Building on clear links with our project activity framework, our sustainability models and guidance documents, the CPDS maps out the activities, interactions and project feedback that occur as an identified community of practice matures and develops.

- Improvement of our remote data storage; in particular, how we support practitioners to keep, organise and use music engagement footage that is kept in their settings.
- Development of facilitation approaches and activities based on outdoor learning - in collaboration with childminders.
- Collection and analysis of ethnographic data concerning how childminders work and how they organise themselves according to cross-setting communities.

3. Collaboration with partner organisations to build meaningful relationships with underrepresented communities, ensuring equitable access to creative opportunities (I&R P&R2)

In line, with the SEYM community engagement approach, we seek to develop and strengthen our relationship with underrepresented communities both through collaborations with partner organisations, but also by identifying, approaching and supporting informal professional communities created independently by different participants.

In particular, we have sought to increase our relations with organisations and communities associated with childminders and parents. Currently, this is including collaborations with parent-led organisations, organisations that work with parents, as well as aligning efforts with partners' parent outreach programmes.