

COMMUNITY FAMILIES



Interim Evaluation
December 2019
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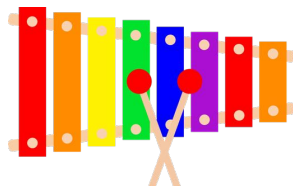
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“It takes a village to raise a child”

AFRICAN PROVERB



Community Families (CF) is an innovative program which combines creative activities with pastoral care to support families with under-fives and aims to embed sustainable, self-governing peer-to-peer networks in some of the most deprived wards in North Westminster. This independent evaluation assesses the six target outcomes to cover the second year of a four-year program.



of parents said the drop-in enhanced their bonding with their baby/child



of parents felt like the drop-in had a positive impact on their child's wellbeing and self-confidence

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

IT SUCCESSFULLY REACHES AND CONNECTS VULNERABLE FAMILIES

The warm, welcoming, inclusive drop-ins foster a strong sense of belonging. They connect excluded and vulnerable parents to their local community, including fathers and parents of twins. This enables them to nurture new friendships across a diverse peer group, significantly reducing their sense of isolation. Parents have set up their own WhatsApp group - continuing the connections beyond sessions.

IT HELPS PARENTS TACKLE CHALLENGES, IMPROVING LIFE CHANCES

Social, musical and school ready skills were developed through these sessions. Parents have become more resilient by acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge to help them cope with pressures at home. Local adults' life chances have been improved through recruitment, training and upskilling via the Champions program. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds are also able to develop skills for school, which may help their educational attainment.

EFFECTIVENESS OF MONITORING TOOLS

The monitoring tools are capturing certain data well which supports qualitative findings but some areas of improvement have been identified.

IT IMPROVES PARENT'S MENTAL WELLBEING, SELF-CONFIDENCE AND ATTACHMENT WITH THEIR CHILD

Parents are able to learn, connect, be active, give, take notice and nurture their child which are all identifiable factors of improving Mental Wellbeing (Wheel of Wellbeing). The clear information, non-judgemental atmosphere and care of the Maternity Champions (MCs), who even continue to support the most vulnerable mothers outside the session also helps to strengthen self-confidence.

PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Communication, language, physicality, focus, listening, social and music-related skills were developed. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the more often and regular the visits, the greater the potential benefits.

EFFECTIVENESS OF MULTIPLE ACTIVITIES

The synergy of Maternity champions and artist practices delivers the outcomes extremely effectively. The talent, skills and musical expertise work in tandem with the individualised care, personal attention and champion's skilled support and are equally beneficial for parents

CHALLENGES

- Encouraging parents to take ownership and lead on the project remains a challenge due to their time pressures.
- Some groups like mobile communities, young parents and certain cultural backgrounds continue to be 'hard to reach'.
- There is room to grow socio-economic diversity. The sessions tend to attract a core group of middle-class parents, which may be deterring more vulnerable families joining.
- Without long term provision and strategy, positive impacts may not be sustainable as many parents face continued challenges of financial hardship and societal inequalities due to race or class.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reviewing the current artistic model to identify possible barriers to engagement, with a view to increasing the socio-economic and cultural diversity.
- Expand arts activities and locations: number of sessions, locations in the Harrow Road & Westbourne areas, more options for creative activities.
- Discrete sessions for fathers and for younger parents.
- Additional professional development for artists (reflective practices) and maternity champions (training in delivering creative/other activities).
- Further research into other peer governing strategies which may involve but not depend on parents leading it.
- Access research funding which can support longitudinal research and an interdisciplinary evidence base to support the positive impacts around Mental Wellbeing, Health and Life Chances with a view to replicating this model.
- Review the internal monitoring and evaluation questionnaires, including scoring.
- Aim for 380 surveys across the four years to increase data reliability.
- Research methods to collect socio-economic indicators.
- Ensure anonymity and framing the questionnaire for the participants.

CONCLUSION

Community Families is proving to be an invaluable program, filling a gap in children's services which faced severe cuts from austerity measures a few years ago. At the time of writing, loneliness and isolation are social epidemics. This program has removed barriers for parents from all backgrounds to meet, connect and build a strong community family. At a time where educational and social inequality is also on the rise, this program champions a model which helps parents tackle everyday challenges and has the potential to counteract many of the negative factors which restrict the life chances of our most disadvantaged communities.

"Many don't have family here in the UK. These sessions are the only time they get to be a part of the community. If it wasn't for the group they would have nowhere else to go meet other parent, share, feel comfortable, and play with their child"

JULIE ISSAC, MUSICIAN

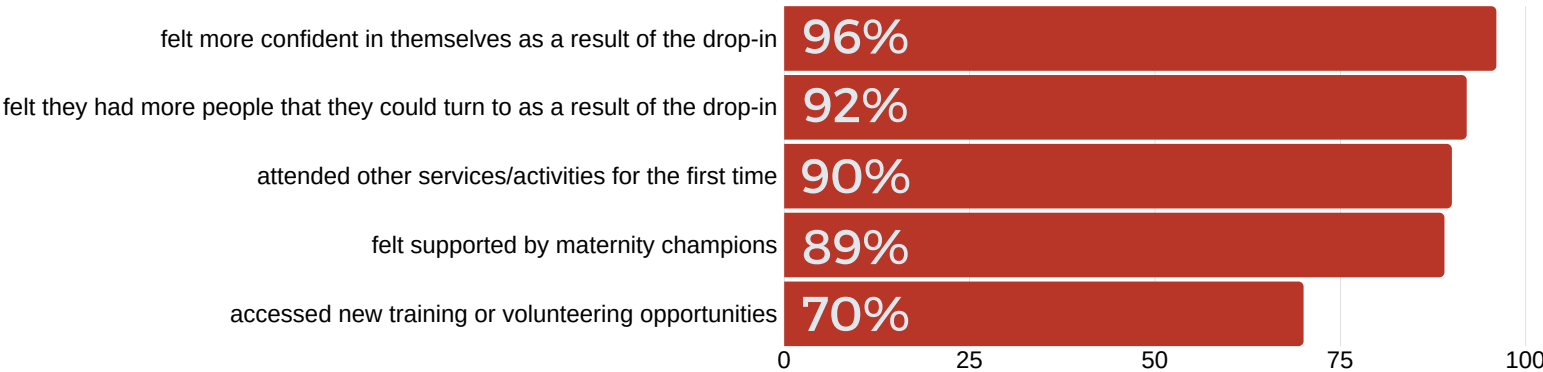
"We don't have a child minder or any other siblings so I see him communicating with others and I don't see that anywhere else. I think that has improved over the time here, he is less hesitant"

MOTHER

"A Champion is a listening ear to help get things off the parents' chest and can link them to services and support that they might be able to get. I think all this really benefits their mental wellbeing."

MARIAM HASSAN
(FORMER) MATERNITY
CHAMPIONS PROJECT
LEADER

Our survey showed that parents:



INTRODUCTION



Building Strong Community Families 2017-2021 grew out of a pilot project and consultation with parents in Queen's Park in 2012. Over four years, it aims to improve the lives of the families, in in four highly deprived wards in North Westminster. It will do this through a sustained interdisciplinary program of creative workshops and pastoral support for parents, and the embedding of self-governing peer-to-peer and family support networks in this area. This year Community Families (CF) accessed

718 parents, 809 children



and they directly supported families through



**254 free, two hour drop-ins
in six local venues.**

Each session provides a range of creative activities and pastoral care designed to reduce family isolation and improve health and wellbeing of parents, babies and children. Provision included; creative play, music-making, yoga, group singing as well as accessing maternity, health and perinatal information, advice and guidance given by trained volunteers.

The project is delivered in partnership by four local community organisations: Paddington Development Trust, Creative Futures, Westbourne Park Family Centre and Westminster Artisans and combines their unique approaches, infrastructure and local connections and understanding





EVALUATION OUTCOMES

This interim report covers CF's second year of (Dec 2018- November 2019) and aims to gauge the program's overall progress towards achieving its goals against the following outcome areas and offers recommendations for further reflection and action in years 3 and 4.

- 1.Connecting Vulnerable and Excluded Families to their Local Communities.
- 2.Lessening Families' isolation, tackling challenges and improving life chances.
- 3.Improving Parents' Mental Wellbeing, Confidence and Attachment with their child.
- 4.Improving Pre-School Children's Health and Wellbeing.
- 5.Effectiveness of Different Activities.
- 6.Effectiveness of Monitoring Tools and other Organisational Administration



METHODOLOGY

The framework was agreed in discussion with Creative Futures and Paddington Development Trust and a mixed methodology design was used including; semi-structured observations, structured interviews, creative focus groups and quantitative data from questionnaires. The interviewees were chosen by PDT, the evidence was triangulated and verified by the researchers to minimize bias. The three researchers specialize in evaluating programs which use the arts to mobilize or spark social change. Data collection included:

- 6 x 2 hour observations across 5 locations.
- Two planning meeting with PDT/ CF and PMG (Jan/May 2019)
- 3 focus groups with parents (June)
- 10 structured Interviews (in person/phone) with professional stakeholders from Creative Futures, Paddington Development Trust, Westminster Artisans, and the Champions program. This comprised: 3 Champions Program Managers, 1 Maternity Champion Project Leader, 1 Maternity Champion, 1 Project Assistant, 1 Musician and 3 organisation leads.
- In house registration, monitoring and evaluation data from 73 respondents across the 6 centres.



LIMITATIONS:

- Due to the budget and timetables, three interviews did not take place.
- The team were not able to observe the Monday session.
- The third focus group was very poorly attended.
- The outcomes are not separate but are all interlinked, overlap and influence each other.
- The sample is 10% of total number of parents (718) this year which is a little low.
- Two centres are underrepresented in this data.
- Most questionnaires were not fully completed.

FINDINGS

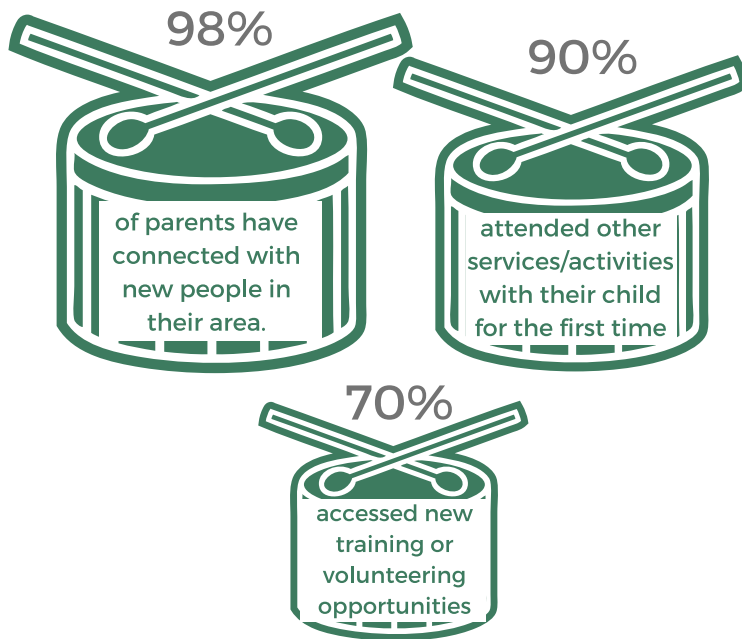


“Our community is quite divided - especially with gentrification. This is the one place where you meet people from different backgrounds because you have kids and it's free. So suddenly you recognise people and start to have conversations, and that can have a knock-on effect for the wider community.”

MOTHER

CONNECTING VULNERABLE AND EXCLUDED FAMILIES TO THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

This programme has been extremely successful in connecting excluded, vulnerable and other local families to their local communities through friendships and peer support networks. The parent survey shows that:



Drivers refers to the factors which enable or underpin positive outcomes

DRIVERS

- Free
- Local
- Regular Sessions
- Support
- Accessible
- Welcoming
- All Year Round
- Shared Experiences
- Diverse Representation in Staff
- Pro-active Outreach by Champions

CHALLENGES

- Gentrification
- Empowering parents to run the group
- Measuring the socio-economic diversity
- Ensuring conversations happen between parents
- Marketing and publicity beyond the "word of mouth"
- Improving diversities in age, culture, socio-economic and disabilities
- Reaching out and motivating mobile populations

FRIENDSHIPS

The music sessions help friendships flourish. Parents reflected on moving from initial shyness to feeling able to strike up a conversation in the session to recognising and connecting with each other when out and about. Some found these sessions helped them deepen friendships with parents they recognised from other classes but had not been able to meet properly., walking to or leaving the session together and even attended other events together.

"We moved here about 5 years ago to the UK and I've been coming here since the birth of my son. At the beginning, I found it quite hard to interact with people, but this year I found a big difference and a lot of easier connections."

MOTHER

"I've met other parents through a couple of baby music making and have seen them again here... it has reinforced friendships that I've already got"

FATHER

"The same mums you meet everywhere - the clinic, with the baby at the park, it's really nice. Even though it might be "hi/bye" it's a little interaction."

MOTHER

DIVERSITY

There is culturally diverse representation in the music sessions which is exciting for parents as there are very few, if any, places in the area where people from differing cultural and socio-economic backgrounds can meet, engage and interact with one another.

Where we live a lot of the mums come with nannies and the conversations are around dealing with cleaners/drivers. But here, it's much more natural, you've got a good range of mums, there's definitely diversity."

MOTHER

"What I love about the free sessions you get a chance to really meet a mix of people, I prefer this to any sort of paid session as that suddenly changes the demographic."

MOTHER

INCLUSION

The music sessions are a place where everyone is invited irrespective of age, race, class, gender, social status and physical abilities. Fathers and parents of twins, experience many barriers to attending such sessions and have been welcomed here by champions, artist and peers..

"There's dads here and I never see any dads anywhere else. Julie even builds it into her songs which is great."

FATHER

"Because I have twins, it's really important to me to be able to bring the pram and have people to help me, otherwise I wouldn't be able to come"

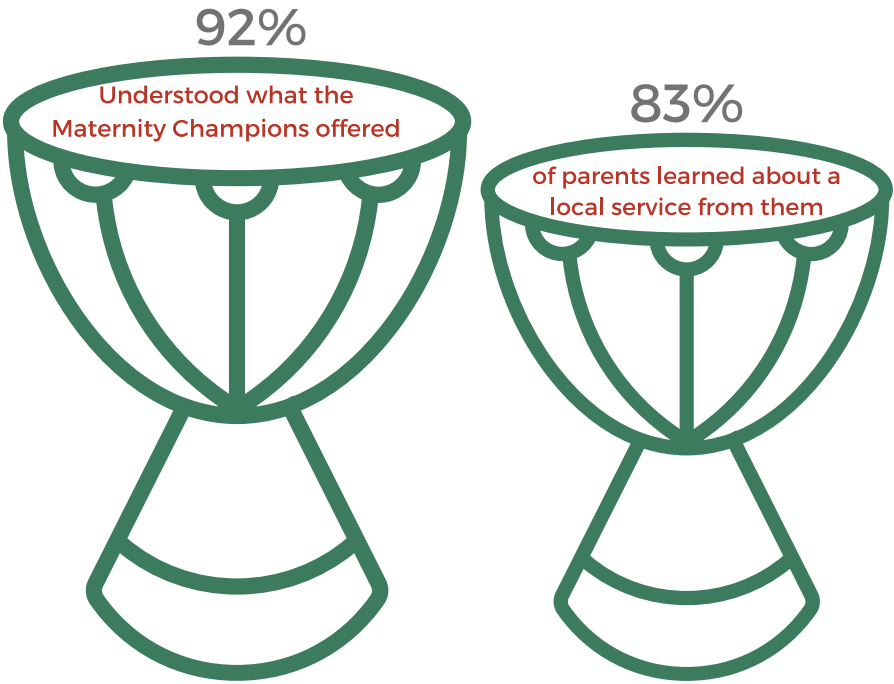
MOTHER

BELONGING

Parents, staff and volunteers commented on the stark contrast between the lack of connection with people on the streets and the music sessions. On the streets people look away, but here they are welcomed with a smile, cup of tea and friendly face who knows your name. Many parents said this was the ONLY place where this happened. These connections and friendships with a diverse community, be they big or small, help parents feel like they are part of a real community, often for the first time.

LESSENING FAMILIES' ISOLATION, TACKLING CHALLENGES AND IMPROVING LIFE CHANCES

The parent's survey showed that:



DRIVERS

- Personalised care
- No judgement
- Listening to parents
- Multiple ways of accessing the music

CHALLENGES

- Loneliness continues to be a huge societal problem
- Financial Hardship prevents access to activities
- There is a lack of welcoming, inclusive, free spaces and activities across the borough.

"This is only my 3rd or 4th class, I've already made friends outside the classes with two other mums and there's two other twin mums who I mentioned the class to and they're here today."

MOTHER

"You've got people who were housebound or feeling low and are now out and about all the time."

KIMBERLEY Durrance,
Paddington Development Trust

KNOWLEDGE

These sessions empowered parents to overcome everyday challenges like entertaining children, difficult behaviour or health related issues. The Maternity Champions' signposting and advice around home activities, strategies to calm a child, deal with teething, weaning and fussy eating helped parents develop agency and confidence beyond the session.

"We want to make sure when they leave they have more information than when they arrived."

Mariam Hassan, Maternity Champions Project Leader

"One lady who had twins would ask loads of questions. One of my champions would take a twin off her so she wasn't trying to juggle two, by the end of the year she really grew in confidence and felt that she was competent mother."

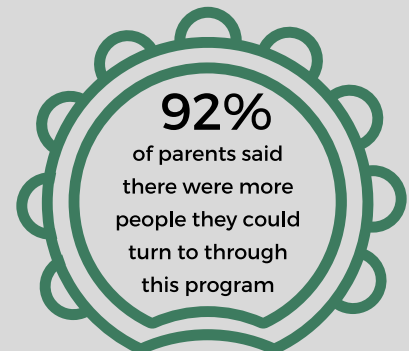
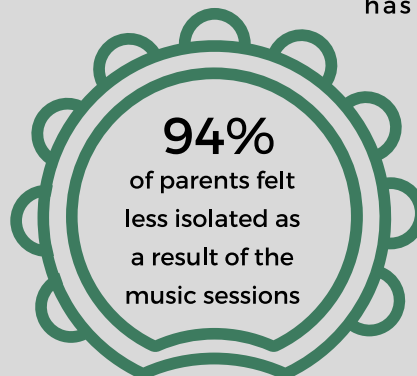
Emma Sweeney, Champions Manager

"If language is a problem, they don't have to learn the song straight away. A lot of the songs are call and response."

Julie Isaac, Musician

ISOLATION

Recent research shows that 82% (Red Cross and Co-op, 2013) of mums feel lonely often or all the time. The benefits of regularly meeting peers, developing friendships and peer support on this project has already been addressed. Parents of twins found the twin buggy parking and adult support particularly helpful in enabling them to attend. However, in addition to this, we found that recently arrived families or those who parents were speakers of other languages, also noticed an improvement in English which has helped to reduce their isolation too.



IMPROVING LIFE CHANCES (ADULTS)

Developing talent and upskilling the local community through the MC program is one of the ways in which this program improves the life chances of local women, creating a strong pathway for employment. Some of the project managers were themselves parents on the pilot project. The excellent training program (25 sessions/yr) includes core topics, as well as responding to emerging issues and interests.

"I gained so much being a maternity champion from the time I trained. It's nice to see the kids develop from when they are born to growing up. You are in their lives. Sometimes when they are out in the street for example they recognize you. It's really important."

*Hyacinth Cato
Maternity Champion*

"I used to be a champion, I lead the Monday drop-ins. Then I got promoted to a project worker and focused my time leading the champions at Church street."

Lina Alchami Community & Maternity Champions, Project Worker

"The more qualifications we can give MCs the more they can do. We don't want to keep people as volunteers forever, we want them to come, volunteer and move on."

*Kimberley Durrance
Health and Communities Project Manager*

IMPROVING LIFE CHANCES (CHILDREN)

Research shows that the educational attainment gap, which influences children's life chances, between students from disadvantaged and privileged backgrounds is nearly 12 months by the age of 16. The Sutton Trusts 'Sound Foundations' report 2014, also stated that there is a 19-month attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children upon entering school at age 4 years, and that this gap widens with age. There is growing evidence which suggests this gap begins at nursery and is attributed to socio-economics disadvantage, poor home learning environments, institutional racism and teacher bias (Boys on Track, LMKO, 2018. Building Futures, 2009, Dept of Children, Schools and Families). Two of the largest underperforming groups have been found to be Black Caribbean and White free school meals children who are a key target group for this project. Whilst the music sessions cannot intervene insystemic factors, it does help develop key skills and experiences which may contribute to educational success at nursery and beyond.

IMPROVING PARENTS' MENTAL WELLBEING, CONFIDENCE AND ATTACHMENT WITH THEIR CHILD

"Sometimes, it is a chat and a cup of tea, small things which are hard to measure and see."

Emma Sweeney, Champions Manager

The quality of care is at the heart of the program's success. It is several places where parents and carers are welcomed from the moment they step in and leave with a smile on their face. This leads to positive outcomes in mental wellbeing, self confidence and attachment with their child.

The inherent mental health benefits of the activities like yoga and group singing have been well researched and have had a deep impact on the parents here. The constant joy and laughter during sessions demonstrated this.

"Mother-infant vocal interactions exhibit striking similarities across a wide range of cultures... Instinctively, mothers and infants co-regulate affect through these interactions, mothers reassuring their infants that they are nearby and attending to them," (Levitin 2009:143)

"many of us resort to music, often in highly reflexive ways. Building and deploying musical montages is part of a repertory of strategies for coping and for generating pleasure, creating occasion, and affirming self and group identity" (DeNora 2000:16)



DRIVERS

Champions creating subtle relationships with parents

No such thing as a "silly question"

The feel-good music

The calming yoga practices

All the props and live instruments

Recognising mother as an individual

Help with holding another sibling/ twin

An un-clinical approach to mental health

Allowing parents and children to share "quality time"

The openness to discuss any issue without judgement

CHALLENGES

Exhaustion

High expectations of being a parent

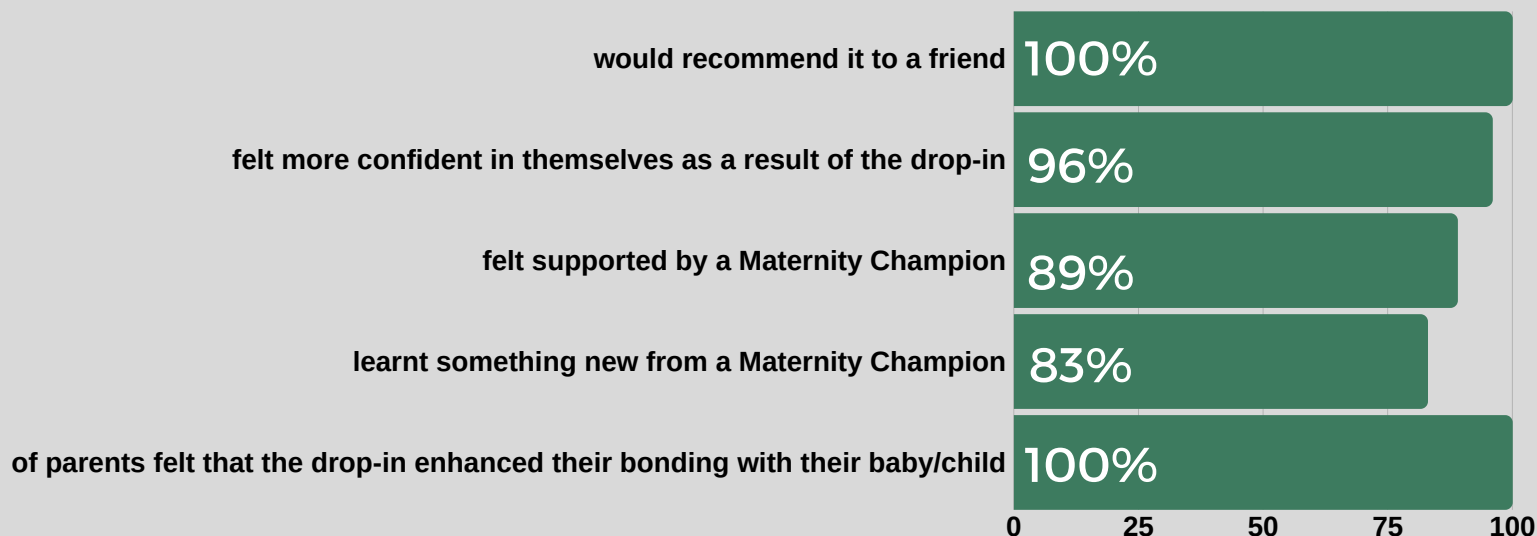
Sometimes there are too many mothers and babies in the space

"The welcome is so important in the beginning as it really determines whether you will come back again or not. We try to ensure that the champions can pick up on someone who is a bit tentative or worried."

MARIAM HASSAN, MATERNITY CHAMPION

"...because our nights are still everywhere, when you see a smiley face it make a difference."

MOTHER



MENTAL WELLBEING

This program speaks to all six aspects of the elements Wheel of Wellbeing (MIND). The sessions are active, with scope to learn new things, to give attention to your child, to connect with a diverse range of people, take notice and care for yourself and your child. Champions are trained in perinatal mental health and use mental health goody bags, which include colouring packs and lavender sachets to start conversations with parents. The CD were also found to maintain a positive frame of mind at home..



"It's really nice for new mums, who may be anxious to have this supportive environment, where we say yeah its normal if your baby cries and its normal if your baby doesn't sleep."

Emma Sweeney

'it's about helping parents to understand that they are their children's first educator. They are the most important thing in their child's life..'

Julie Issac

"A lot of the parents tell us that if it wasn't for the group they would have nowhere else to go."

Julie Issac

"As a parent you have to be switched on all the time, but here it's very relaxing. Even just a sense that you're not on your own constantly."

Parent

SELF-CONFIDENCE

A sense of self is often lost after having a baby and this can be detrimental to a mothers' confidence. The simple act of Maternity champions choosing to call the parents by their own names rather than the child's name and 'mum' helps parents regain a sense of themselves as individuals in their own right. The knowledge parents gain from talking to mother's and maternity champions, singing songs, exploring the interest tables and watching the other parents and children, also boosts their confidence. High expectations surrounding parenting these days can also negatively impact confidence. Parents found these sessions provided them with a rare, safe space to ask questions..

ATTACHMENT & BONDING

There is strong evidence to show that music sessions enable parents to be in the moment so they can give their full attention to their children. There is a lot of reciprocity in eye contact, facial expressions, touch and laughter between parents and children whilst they sing together. It was also a comfortable space for children to explore independently, returning to their parent when they felt they needed to.

"Sometimes I feel so isolated and then I see someone's baby is doing the same thing, and I think okay he's normal - you can't run to them every two seconds."

Parent

"It's a lovely opportunity to communicate with your child. It's quite close, so it's a lovely bonding time. It's different to stay and play where they do their own thing."

Mother

"It's easy to get caught away by other stuff at home or here. But then it's like, okay we're here, time to relax and enjoy."

Father

"I think it's about helping parents to understand that this is a special time for them and their baby."

Mother

Parents are often judged and feel that there are high expectations. We want to create a space where parents can relax and just 'be' without judgement

Julian Knight, Creative Futures

IMPROVING PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING

These sessions were found to enhance numerous aspects of health and wellbeing including: pleasure, communication, physical development, social skills, focus, listening, attachment, musical and movement skills. Behavioural changes were harder for parents of younger babies to observe and some parents were unsure whether the shifts could be attributed solely to the session or natural development. However, the majority of feedback suggests that the more often and regular the visits, the greater the potential benefits.



“I’ve seen the impact in my son. He’s turning 3 and has been singing all of these songs. And that’s leading his speech development as he’s quite delayed in his speech but he loves music.”
PARENT



DRIVERS

- Safe Space to play
- Multi-sensory
- Children seen as individuals
- Skills, talent, energy, charisma of musicians
- Nurturing environment
- Exposure to other children and adults
- Choice of songs
- Actions
- Sitting in a circle

CHALLENGES

- Owning this impact of music
- Parents not realising that the music reinforces and underpins this learning
- Barriers in the education system for disadvantaged children

“Our music approach is rooted in research so that the activities are likely to boost attachment and children’s development.”
JULIAN KNIGHT,
CREATIVE FUTURES

“There is a little girl who was very quiet and attached to her mother. Now she comes up to me and Julie and sings. Some children it takes them longer than others - it all depends on consistency. If the parents are bringing their children regularly it becomes familiar.”
MOTHER

PLEASURE

"She loves the singing, she started a few months ago."
Mother

"My child is so tired, she is teething but we are still here today. She is so happy that she forgets the pain for a little while... if she is happy, then I am too."
Mother

"He loves the music and the different sounds."
Mother

Babies and children loved taking part, were excited and engaged by all the activities. Smiling, laughter, clapping, hugging, jumping were all observed when they recognized their favourite song or rhythm. They visibly relish the more 'performative' songs e.g. appearing from under a gauze scarf.

MUSIC & MOVEMENT

Parents noticed development in children's rhythmic, melodic, improvisatory and movement skills. Whilst these are not direct health and wellbeing outcomes, they underpin many of the positive impact here. Children were able to play drums, sing in different languages, interact with live instruments, show confidence in striking strong physical poses, singing loudly, walking around the room, swaying and responding to the rhythms in their own way. Babies and toddlers used their energy and were exhausted at the end of the sessions which helped them nap in the daytime..

"My son, he sings all the songs as well. This one is starting to sing the songs too - he has pretty good rhythm, so we can attribute that to here."
Mother

"She's very good at drumming, it's hard to know what the influences are, but a few months ago she started swaying to the music in a very rhythmic way. I think it really helps to come here."
Mother

"It's really great for her development, she also recognizes the beats and jumps there."
Mother

"I think that they have covered all the bases - something to play music with, colourful things, touchy texture-y things."
Father

"My little boy, when he first went to nursery, was familiar with the one place then another. I think it's important for children to become more familiar with different environments."
Tonique, Host

"Also the dexterity in his fingers improves as he's used to touching and holding different things so that definitely develops skills that way."
Mother

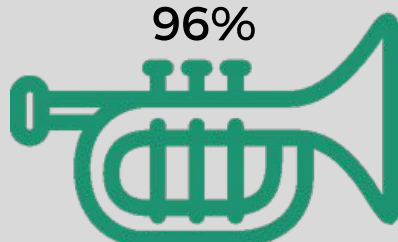
Anecdotal evidence from parents and professionals suggests this program equips children with the necessary skills to adjust to new environments, people and 'learning settings'. The multi-sensory props with different textures, colors, weights and functions maximize babies' potential to understand the world around them. Staff help the parents understand their role as their child's primary educators. Gentle ways of discipline are modelled which they can learn from. Visible changes in dexterity, gross and fine motor skills which are needed to write later on are also developed through using egg shakers, claves and drumming. We also see children taking turns, listening and focusing for long periods of time - all of which will help the adjustment to nursery and formal education.

SCHOOL READINESS

SOCIAL INTERACTION, LANGUAGE & COMMUNICATION

This is the first social setting for many babies. Parents appreciated siblings being welcomed as it enabled them to play outside the home environment and widen their understanding of social dynamics. The different stages of children's social development were easy to benchmark from sitting on and off the lap, taking an object, playing with it, sharing it, establishing eye contact with others, enjoying moments with the group's attention, approaching and engaging with other children independently.

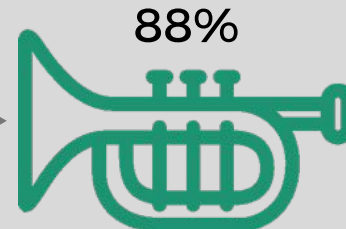
96%



said the drop-in helped their child interact positively with other children

said the drop-in had helped their child's speech, language and communication skills

88%



EFFECTIVENESS OF
DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES

Expert musicians, maternity champions, yoga teachers, the variety of activities (e.g singing, movement, playing and listening to live instruments), the social atmosphere with snacks and tea all play a significant part in delivering a multitude of positive outcomes. The excellent partnerships between practitioners from different organizations is a critical factor in the strength of this interdisciplinary intervention.

A mum had come to one of the smaller groups because it was easier for them to talk. They started a conversation about childbirth and one mum talked about how traumatic her baby's birth was and how she ended up having a hysterectomy and is going through counselling. Naturally, she got emotional and was crying in the session. The maternity champion was so amazing in listening to and supporting her. She said after the session that she felt so much better getting it off her chest. She said "I do go to a counsellor but this has been amazing, coming here and telling you about my experience". They continued that conversation after they left and it was very therapeutic for her. It highlighted how important and essential the maternity champion is in these roles. Someone you can talk to, you see them wearing their t-shirt and recognise them and they are there to help.



DRIVERS

- Reflective Staff
- High quality practices like music and yoga
- Belief in the music & champions practices across the project
- Enthusiasm and passion of Maternity Champions
- Quality of artists
- Cultural Diversity in the room
- Familiarity with musical genres
- Personalizing the sessions for families by using their individual names in the songs
- Responsive Professional
- Development for Champions
- Organic Development of the program over 6 years
- Pool of experienced trainers

CHALLENGES

- Not much time for practitioner's reflection
- The present methodology doesn't acknowledge parents' own knowledge
- Long training program
- Building a coherent team hasn't been easy and has taken time.
- Consistency of Yoga

"The collaboration between our specialist creative artists' input and the support provided by the Champions is the project's greatest strength, and to my mind produces something where the sum is greater than the parts."
JULIAN KNIGHT, CREATIVE FUTURES

MATERNITY AND COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

Maternity champions were often referred to as “saviours”. Their homely presence, friendly demeanour, and consistent ability to interact with parents and children in a warm and calming way was often mentioned as a factor for attending sessions. Parents appreciate the support of the champions in giving them a break but also the information, signposting and reassurance, delivered in the sessions. The Champions' care has exceeded all expectations as some are supporting the mothers beyond the session. One has even spent four hours of her own time supporting a mother with breastfeeding, whilst others have spent time listening to mothers outside the sessions, who may have experienced traumatic births.

“Without them there it just wouldn't be the same. Its something special and there has always been that link with having the champions there as well as the volunteers”
Emma Sweeney

“In some of our other projects its taken longer to get the maternity champions delivery up and running because there hasn't been a “hook” in the way that there is with community families.’
Lesley Derry, Community Champions Program Manager

“My neighbour is a new mum, I spent ages talking to her, supporting her with her baby, helping out at home - I also went to the hospital with her.”
Maternity Champion

“I met and mum with a new baby walking down the street and stopped her and I told her about our Monday drop-in the next Monday I saw her there ”
Maternity Champion

“Maternity champions create a space to just “be yourself and stop” It really makes a difference when you're having a bad day or a bad night and someone comes and asks you if you're alright.”
Mother

“I like everything about being a maternity champion its really interesting because you can interact with mothers and babies. If they have a problem at home they ask you what they have to do. If we don't know, we look up things online and get leaflets or liaise with other relevant parties.”

Hyacinth Coto, Maternity Champion

MUSICIANS

Both music practitioners are a huge attraction for babies, children and parents alike due to their talent, skills, knowledge and execution of different musical genres. We also observed finely tuned pedagogic skills which included alternating between appropriate individualized and group engagement and the personalization of the songs through using every child's name which leaves a lasting impact.

“Thandi normally is always at Julie's side trying to play on the drum and cuddle her. And Julie is so accommodating. It was nice to have a bit of variation with Dan but it's also nice to have the continuity for the kids.”
Mother

“They were together one time. And it was KILLER because you had the bass, the drum, the singing, his energy jumping up and down. It was amazing. You need to get them back together again - the roof would be coming off.”
Father

“I see them smile when they see her. She comes over and she remembers their names... she remembers all these kids names so it's actually massive! She takes the time to say hello and goodbye to all the parents which I think is huge”
Mother

“I think for me they're both great, they're both different and bring something different. They can introduce a song you've never heard of but you can still join in and sing with it... Julie is fabulous/ Really engaged with the kids and her transitions from one song to the other is great. She keeps the music and the beat going even when she's talking to the kids.”
Mother



LIVE INSTRUMENTS AND OTHER 'CREATIVITIES'

The "music" is almost always the first thing that parents say they love about the sessions. The fact that live instruments and music from around the world are used further engages both the parents and children. Children were visibly excited and curious about the live instruments. These are important as they carry vibrations, acoustics are visual, tangible, flexible and encourage children to play.

"Rhythmic concepts of beat, ostinato, and subdivision can be effectively illustrated and experienced with hand drums, wood blocks, and other nonpitched percussion instruments. The visual element assists in teaching highness and lowness of pitch, and melodic steps and leaps. Playing instruments can contribute to perceptual motor and psychomotor development. Perceptual motor development (gross muscle movement) is perhaps most important for very young students. These skills develop through simple percussion strokes and other movements common in general music classes. Psychomotor development (cognitively involved skilled movement) occurs with virtually all instrumental music experiences." (Better Music Education 2003)

It is a gateway to learning about different cultures, languages, greetings, manners, and names. Children develop musical skills and muscle memory through repeating songs and actions each week ("Children learn the body language of music before learning the music itself" (Duran 2011)) Children are experiencing and developing their own creativity, showcasing expressive movement in the sessions and copying the practitioner.

"My favorite thing is the instruments..."
Parent

I like the fact they're bringing in different music from different cultures and countries - that's really nice. It's my first time here with him so that's nice."
Mother

"I love the songs from Africa"
Mother



YOGA

Whilst yoga may not have the same numbers as the music it attracts some different parents, who have found it invaluable helping their body, mind and overall wellbeing. To have a session that gradually introduced parents back into exercise and that included their babies was useful for them.



"The yoga sessions are enjoyable but a bit hard for me."
Mother

"Music and yoga are both absolutely amazing... I go twice a week which I think is really good, it's good they offer the variety, it's awesome."
Mother

CDS & SNACKS

The professionally produced free CDs (also downloadable) of "favourite" Julie songs was greatly appreciated by parents and proved to be extremely helpful at home. Snacks were provided at sessions which meant parents could stay for longer and created a "nice vibe".



EFFECTIVENESS OF MONITORING TOOLS AND OTHER ORGANISATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

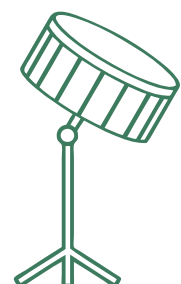
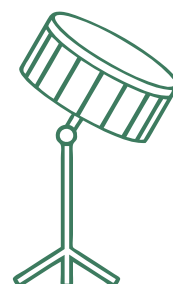
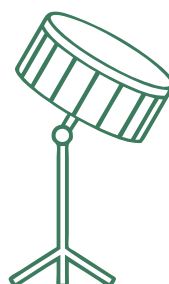
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

- The registration forms provided good general demographic data however there is nothing to indicate socio-economic diversity which makes it hard to ensure it is reaching its' target participants. There was little tracking of socio-economic diversity to ensure it is reaching the target population.
- Have the postcodes been helpful in identifying areas of need?



EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS

- The average response rate on the evaluation data was excellent at around 90% and supported qualitative findings well throughout the relevant outcomes.
- The sample size is good and on track to hit a target of 380 by the end of year 4, which will ensure its robustness.
- There is some data which may not be useful and additional questions which may be helpful (see recommendations)
- There may be some bias' to parents' responses "My baby is 9 weeks old which is why I wrote NA for some items, but change to 10 if it helps with you funding because this program is so beneficial"
- The scoring from 1-10 over complicates the analysis.
- Outcomes 1&2 overlap and there are multiple outcomes conflated in 3&4 e.g. attachment, resilience, self-confidence and wellbeing
- The questionnaire groups discrete outcomes together e.g. confidence and wellbeing which reduces the data's usefulness a reliability.
- Indicators of wellbeing are not in the form, therefore assumptions are being made which also reduces the reliability of the data.



MARKETING

- The sessions have been excellently marketed by a diverse group of champions, who speak many languages and reflect the local cultural/religious demographic. They have used proactive and effective strategies to spread the word and many parents said they wouldn't have attended had someone not told them face-to-face.
- However, the professionals across the project have raised concerns that the reach is not going far enough and hitting the mobile and other "easy to ignore" local communities. There are no posters in shop windows/ lampposts, on walls, flyers through doors which may help the word in order to reach people who don't know someone involved. Information on websites could be updated more regularly, some mothers found info on apps like Hoop but more could be done, especially on social media via the mothers themselves. A new name for the project rather than Building Strong Community Families and a hashtag for the sessions would really help access other mothers.



ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT

- Communication between the many organisations has been done very effectively by the PDT team.
- Sharing of in house partnership resources has been successful
- Creative Futures and PDT have developed a productive partnership despite being very different organisations.
- Making links with statutory services as new projects emerge can be challenging.
- Whilst project managers do attend the sessions on a regular basis but this can be challenging with their other workloads.
- Training champions in batches can be challenging as many leave at the same time.
- There are currently excellent experienced champions who can support and train new recruits.
- A rapid start across multiple venues may have limited the support Champions could offer at the outset.
- The parents steering group was not as effective as had been hoped. This was thought to be due to parents times and staff pressures.



RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSIONS



RECOMMENDATIONS

MANY OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS BELOW REQUIRE EXTRA FUNDING AND RESOURCES SO THAT MAY BE THE PRIORITY FOR THE NEXT YEARS.

Ensuring More Conversations

Make a specific moment in the session when parents are explicitly requested and encouraged to start a conversation with someone they do not know.

Expanding the Arts Practices

Expand upskilling and creative development opportunities for parents and Maternity Champions which may help to expand the provision e.g. baby massage, yoga, music, messy play, dance, drama, forest school.

Research parent-led music models where they 'give' (sing/teach) songs to Julie/ Dan who can adapt and teach them in the sessions, or are confident enough to teach them to the group.

Sustainability

Follow-on funding could be sought to help pay the parents in the steering group. This may help remove some of the barriers to committing their time to this.

Advocacy

Could the parents lead some advocacy for the project e.g. talking to venues, holding the stall at local festivals/ events, writing a blog for social media site and websites for all the organisations involved.

Professional Development

Offer a space for reflective practices for artists.

Offer a space for additional musical training opportunities for artists.

"I want to find more ways to get parents up on their feet. There is always space for improvement maybe separating ages a bit more?"

JULIE ISSAC



Marketing for 'Hard to Reach/Easy to Ignore'

"Our champions are incredibly culturally diverse but I think that we could build on that more in the parents that we see accessing the sessions. I'd like to see more socio-economic diversity in the groups."

LIZZIE FLETCHER

- Parents could give a talk at the free ante-natal classes offered at the maternity departments in local birthing centres and hospitals.
- To continue to work with midwives to ensure that all expecting parents in the area know about it.
- Map the postcode areas and make posters and flyers for the neighbourhoods which are not being accessed.
- Liaise with the council to launch posters on electronic bus stops.
- More groups for Younger Parents.
- More groups for Fathers only.
- More time allotted to monitoring and outreach for project managers to enable them to contact underrepresented parts of the local population.
- Increase presence on social media strategy including a hashtag/ name for sessions.
- Update website.
- Some analysis of whether information is reaching parents in the disabled community.

A Story of Change

PDT and Creative Futures may like to consider developing a 'Story of Change' (or Theory of Change) for this program. We believe this will help create a much stronger, coherent evaluation framework for the future. A Story of Change reviews and organises outcomes into realisable goals which are short, mid-term and long-term and helps highlight their interconnectedness. It will help to create an evidence base for longitudinal research in the future which can show how longer-term goals, such as life-changes, are affected.

Apply for funding for multi-disciplinary teams of researchers from diverse research background such as arts, culture, social justice, health, early years education and psychology to produce a piece of longitudinal research which would demonstrate impact, and a strong body of evidence to recommend this as a national program which goes beyond Sure Start provision.



Internal Monitoring and Evaluation Data Collection

- The rationale for evaluation should be clearly explained, making sure parents understand it is for organizational development and will not influence funding.
- Add a question around how they got to hear about the project (multiple choice list) – this will help to give a clearer idea of channels beyond word of mouth.
- Add a question such as e.g Please give us one word to describe how you felt at the start of the session? Please give one word to describe how you felt at the end of the session? This would help show the immediate benefits to parents and presented as word cloud.
- Additional question around signposting which could support the qualitative findings might be useful e.g If you were signposted to any activities/ organisations by the maternity champions what they are called? (health educational, arts based, counselling etc)
- An additional question around specific support from champions could also be useful and support the qualitative data on outcome 5 e.g. What kind of support have you received from Maternity Champion? (emotional, practical, material etc)
- Change the wording of outcome 2 – remove “reducing isolation of parents” as it is already covered in the first outcome and focus it more on tackling challenges and increasing life chances.
- Review child development questions on the evaluation questionnaire for parents. Instead of separate questions with scaled responses 1-10, create a tick box menu with an additional comment box e.g Did you notice any changes in your child in the following areas (please tick as many as you like) Speech, Language, Self-Confidence, Social Skills, Physical Confidence, Dexterity, Rhythmic Awareness, Music Memory, Dance/Movement, Anything else etc.
- Review the adult development questions in the same way e.g Did this program help in the any of the following areas (please tick any which you feel are relevant): reduced my sense of isolation, increased bonding with my child, helped self-confidence, gave me ideas to help at home, met new new people, found new services, activities, training and opportunities etc.
- Review remaining questions with scales of 1-10. Which questions do you need to assess levels of impact and which could be a simple yes/no/ maybe answer. Should grading be required then it can be limited from 1 to 5 or Agree Strongly, Agree, Neither agree or disagree. Review the four musical outcomes at the end. Do you really need them? If so, they need to refer directly to the project e.g do you think you/your child listens to more music now than you did at the beginning at home? Do you listen to the CD?
- Create a milestone chart/booklet for parents to chart the development of their own child

“A new mother came to the Monday drop-in As soon as she saw me, she said 'I recognised you from Wednesday and handed me her baby straightaway! That was really great and it made my morning.”

Maternity Champion



IN CONCLUSION



"It really connects families and improves community feel in that moment. We have made this happen by all working together in partnership with Paddington Development Trust and Creative Futures because there are two aspects to it: the music and the maternity champions who bring that extra support and sign posting."

MARIAM HASSAN - (FORMER) MATERNITY CHAMPIONS PROJECT LEADER

This project is absolutely vital to building thriving communities particularly at this time where social, economic and education inequality has become increasingly acute across the UK. It is an ambitious project which is proving to give our most valued newest members of society a better start in life and much needed support to new parents. It shares many of the benefits of living in a 'modern' joint family; having a support network around you, wisdom and maternal expertise at your finger tips, someone to talk to, a chance to rest, children at the heart of it, being exposed to a multiplicity of voices to enrich their understanding of the world. It is a project founded in care, compassion, expertise, knowledge, listening and building relationships.

This is an exemplar project which could, with additional funding and research, be expanded across London, other boroughs and further afield. Its varied impacts go much deeper than existing 'stay and play' sessions. Within two years, it has proved to be effective across ALL the interconnected outcome areas: simultaneously helping parents reduce isolation, improve their mental health and wellbeing, connect diverse communities to create strong peer support networks, as well as develop social, emotional, physical and creative skills of babies and children. We look forward to this project reaching more positive outcomes over the next two years.



RECOMMENDATIONS

References

Co-op and British Red Cross (2016), Trapped in a Bubble
 DCSF Publications (2009), Building Futures: Believing in Children, A focus on provision for Black children in Early Years Foundation Stage
 Duran, Lucy (2011) Growing into Music [film] Lucy Durán, Nicolas Magriel, Geoff Baker
 London: SOAS
 LKMCO, Millard et al (2018), Boys on Track
 Levitin, Daniel J. (2009) The World in Six Songs London: Aurum Press Ltd
 The Sutton Trust (2014) 'Sound Foundations' report

Further Reading

- coop.co.uk/loneliness
- redcross.co.uk/lonely
- The Arts as a Catalyst for Human Prosociality and Cooperation - Julie Van de Vyver and Dominic Abrams
- "Will there be music for us?" Mapping the health and well-being potential of participatory Music practice with asylum seekers and refugees across contexts of conflict and refuge - Caroline Lenettea & Naomi Sunderlanda
- Music for healing troubled children - Wendell Hanna
- DEVELOPMENT OF MUSIC ABILITIES OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILD - Goran Sučić, PhD

Data Collection**Interviews**

Emma Sweeney	Maternity Champions Project Manager
Mariam Hassan	Maternity Champions Project Leader
Julie Isaac	Musician
Tonique Lenard	Project Assistant
Lesley Derry	Community Champions Programme Manager, Westminster Council
Hyacinth Cato	Maternity Champion
David Littlefair	Westminster Artisans Manager
Lizzie Fletcher	Health and Communities Programme Manager, PDT
Vanessa Stansall	Creative Producer, Creative Futures
Julian Knight	Creative Director, Creative Futures

Interviews which did not take place

Debora Lauder	Champions Project Worker @ Mozart
Lina Alchami	Champions Manager
Anna Ashenov	Westbourne Park Family Centre
Dan Cundy	Musician

Parents Focus Groups (12th/13th June 2018)

Eva Tsikritzi	Parent
Jen	Parent
Jessica	Parent
Shelesh	Parent
Eleftherious	Parent

Observations

6.7.18	Stowe
14.11	St Jude's / Warwick Hall
22.3.19	Stowe
27.3.19	St Jude's / Warwick Hall
11.4.19	Lydford Hall
23.4.19	St Pauls

Admin Meetings

Jan 2018 Beethoven Centre

June 2018 Beethoven Centre

Example of Interview (Maternity Champion)

Can you tell me a little about your role as a MC?

How often would you visit a session/ your volunteers?

What is your favourite thing about this role?

Is there anything challenging about your role? If so, what are they?

Have you observed anything about how this project helps families (especially those who may be vulnerable/ excluded) feel more connected to their communities?

Do you think your role and the MCs team enable this, if so how?

Have you observed any differences generally about parents' well-being, self confidence, resilience or attachment with their child? If so, what are they?

Do you think regular contact with MCs enables this? If so, how?

Young children are developing all the time but have you observed any changes around pre-school children's personal, social, emotional development, communication or language skills, through this?

If so, what are these like?

What are the most common difficulties parents and carers on this project encounter?

Do you think regular contact with MCs enables them to overcome these?

If so, in what ways?

Optional - Do you think this project does anything to equalise the playing field and address the obstacles due to social differences such as race and class?

Is there anything which is specific about the Community Champions Programme which has enabled it to achieve these outcomes we have spoken of today?

What could be better/ improved?

Is there anything you wish to feedback either about the impact or the running of the project?