

YOUTH MUSIC *SPOTLIGHTING* PROGRAMME

**Earlyarts Strand:
*Professional Development Days***

EVALUATION REPORT

**SALLY FORT
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www.sallyfort.com

“I’ll take away the sense that major funders like Youth Music do respect and listen to our experience, that they build programmes the same way we do and consequently that it isn’t just case of jumping through hoops to get the funding; that our experiences really matter; and matter most of all when we share them all and work together with the support of Youth Music and Earlyarts” *Candida, Suffolk Art Link*

INTRODUCTION

Earlyarts contributed to Youth Music’s Spotlighting programme by filming and evaluating its professional development events for early years, arts and creative practitioners. The sessions offered a range of training activities and presentations around music and other creative interventions in early years work; and the changing educational, funding and wider strategic landscape. The events aimed to increase colleagues’ understanding of the values and applications of music and creative practices in their work with very young children, and help the attendees feel more confident, equipped and resourced in their work.

Youth Music’s Spotlighting initiative aims to provide examples of practice, partnership and learning to which others might look for their own advocacy, development and inspiration. Spotlighting explores these themes in music making for under 5s:

- engaging parents and families
- harnessing technology
- co-constructed learning
- continuing professional development (CPD)
- effective use of resources and packs
- and enabling professional musicians and ensembles to work in early years music making.

Youth Music and Earlyarts devised these intended outcomes for the series of events.

Youth Music Taken from Spotlighting’s <i>Music Making Ingredients</i> framework	Earlyarts
Being open to new ideas	Early Years, Arts and Cultural Professionals feel more confident and skilled in using creative approaches to support young children’s ideas, thinking, communicating and learning
Creating inspiring and nurturing environments Self Reflection	Early Years, Arts and Cultural Professionals feel that the PDDs have given them an opportunity to discover their own creative potential
Integrating creativity, culture and curriculum Combining music with other artforms Using appropriate approaches for learning	Early Years, Arts and Cultural Professionals understand why and how creative processes are important in helping to unlock children’s routes to social, emotional, educational and cultural development
Co-working between musicians and practitioners Using local networks Having instruments and tools Building on previous development	Earlyarts has helped professionals to find information, resources, partnerships and people that are relevant to help extend and develop their creative practice
Integrating creativity, culture and curriculum Communicating with partners Documenting, reflecting and evaluating	Earlyarts PDDs have enabled professionals to embed creative pedagogies into their planning, observation, teaching, assessment and general practice on a daily basis
Connecting the setting with home Working with familiar things	Early Years, Arts and Cultural Professionals feel better able to act as local advocates for nurturing children’s creative potential with children and families.

THE EARLY ARTS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Earlyarts is an award winning professional development network that helps to *connect people, resources, ideas and information to nurture creative children*. The three events focussed on in this spotlighting work was part of the series of professional development days Early Arts runs through its Pathfinder programme.

Earlyarts [Pathfinders](#) play an important role in connecting up the myriad of creative early years activity that currently exists across the country. Earlyarts provides the platform and tools for Pathfinders to run training events, encouraging their local communities to share ideas, contribute knowledge, discuss opportunities, challenges, learning and collaborations in ways that help them feel supported and connected in their own networks.

Each event comprised a combination of practical activities, local networking, and discussion of the strategic landscapes involved in creative early years development.

Event one: University of East Anglia's School of Education & Lifelong Learning (Norwich) hosted an event run by [Theatre of Adventure](#) with [The Priory Children's Centre](#) (Great Yarmouth). The theme of the day was [playfulness and imagination within creative early years pedagogies](#).

- After introductions and welcomes some contextual understanding of the sector was provided by:
 - Hannah Foreacre, Relationship Manager, Engagement and Participation Arts Council England who talked about the Arts Council's Bridge Organisations and how they would fulfil their role of bringing together arts and education
 - Maureen Brookson, Senior Lecturer in Early Years at University of East Anglia who presented research around the subject of "Play to learn: why we need the imagination and playfulness of artists"
 - Lyndall Rosewarne, Regional Officer for Youth Music who outlined an overview of Youth Music's work in developing and funding creative music projects for under 5s
- Time for information sharing then followed, including speed networking, key events coming up in the sector, review of the latest research and publications, and raising awareness of the Earlyarts [Put Yourself on the Map](#) Campaign
- After a networking lunch, Charlotte Arculus, Early Years music and playfulness specialist ran her "Communicative Musical Funniness" workshop which explored how children's musicality is central to language development; developing ways to support children's communication by tuning into their music making; how we respond and lead with playfulness; and the musicality of playfulness
- A second workshop, 'Little People, Big Stories' led by Suzanne Arnold, Story specialist, puppeteer and social entrepreneur, invited the participants to build their practice-based skills at the same time as developing clear links into the early years creative pedagogy. This included ways of working with very young children; building stories as a community; early years and family work; and story making in education.
- The event closed with participants sharing experiences and feeding back to one another.

Event Two: Sutton Ecology Centre in South London hosted a session which focussed on [exploring the outdoors as a stimulus for creative early years development](#).

- Following an introduction to Earlyarts and the Sutton Pathfinder, practitioner Mary Buckton led a practical workshop sharing her experience of working at the ecology centre and how to use the environment to extend children's creativity through sensory activities. This included reference to local good practice and case studies/experiences from local settings.
- Karin Andrews Jashapara then led a hands-on exploration of storytelling in a session called 'The Name of the Tree'
- An information sharing and networking session then followed, focussing on local news, creative early years opportunities and events

- In the final session Rebecca Moody facilitated an outdoors workshop introducing elements of forest school practice and how to extend children's experiences of the natural world
- The event closed with participants feeding back and sharing their reflections on the day

Event Three: This event was run by West Sussex County Council in partnership with East Sussex County Council and held at St Leonards Children's Centre. It focussed on the theme of [Beachcombing for Creativity](#) – meeting today's challenges for early years creativity using found objects. It shared the adapted Forest Schools approach for use in beach environments, 'Beach Schools' as well as important insight into the latest changes in early years education and what impact this will have on nurturing children's creativity.

- After an introduction and speed networking event, the day started with an investigation of the [Early Years Foundation Stage Tickell Review](#), asking "What will be the effects on creativity?" The discussion was led by Carole Somers; Children's Centre Senior Early Years Teacher and Jennette Abel; Teacher leading on 0-2s provision.
- A visit to St Nick's Nursery followed to explore the practices used there, with Kirsty Halvey – Early Years Service Manager for Fellowship of St Nicholas.
- The final session of the morning offered updates on local and national practice and the national network, led by Clare Halstead – West Sussex County Council Earlyarts Pathfinder Partner
- The afternoon workshop 'Beach School' provided a series of practical activities in small groups with practitioners from Hastings & St Leonards Children's Centres. Activities included rock pooling, building fires, making shelters, assessing risk, and identifying differences of beach flora and fauna. As well as awareness of tides and weather conditions.
- A feedback and reflection session closed the day.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Earlyarts commissioned an independent evaluator and an independent film crew, to create a range of documentation and information gathering tools.

Earlyarts created a **learning journal booklet** for participants to make at the event to prompt their ambitions and learning for the days. It was intended this booklet would gather the hopes, challenges and successes of the delegates for evaluation purposes, and become a tool for on-going reflection on the day and beyond, tracking any changes in their practice as a result of the training.

Documentary filmmakers attended each of the days to illustrate the activities of the day on **film**, and the responses of the participants in action. They also worked with the evaluator to capture short **vox pop** interviews.

A series of more **in-depth telephone interviews** was also carried out with a (self-selected) number of participants.

A total of 50 people took part in the programme.

Analysis was based on

- 29 Vox pops
- 13 in-depth interviews
- 10 learning journals

Chart A illustrates the division of data.

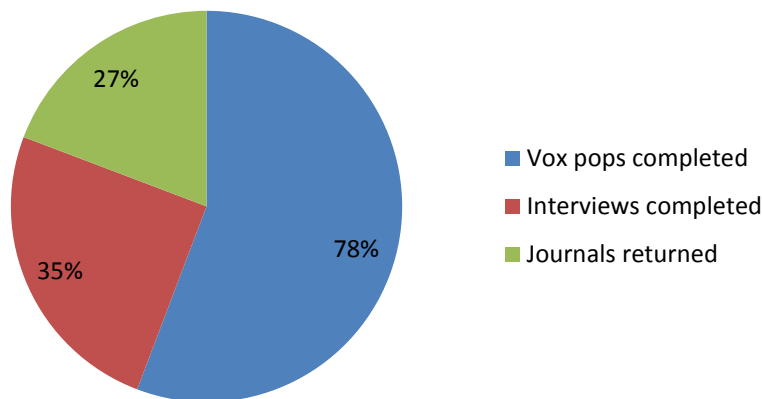
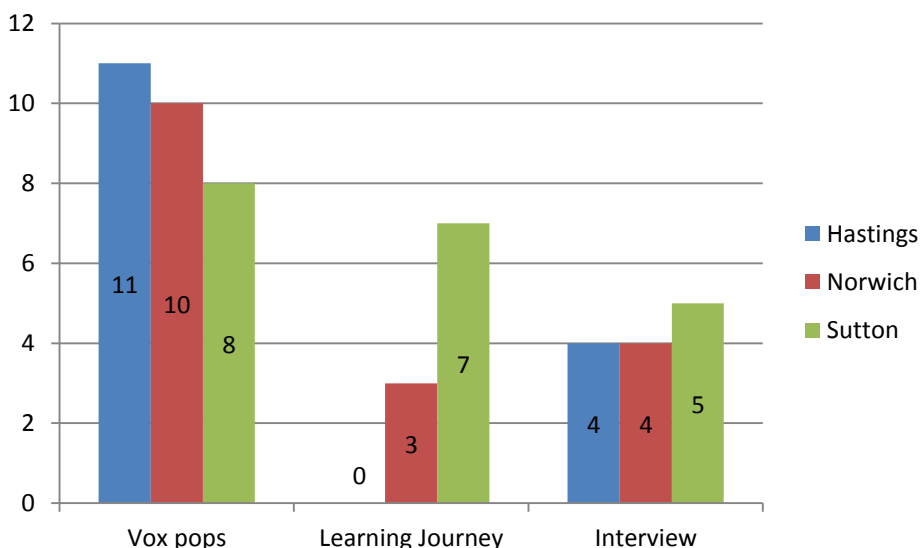


Chart B shows the geographical balance and quantity of data collected

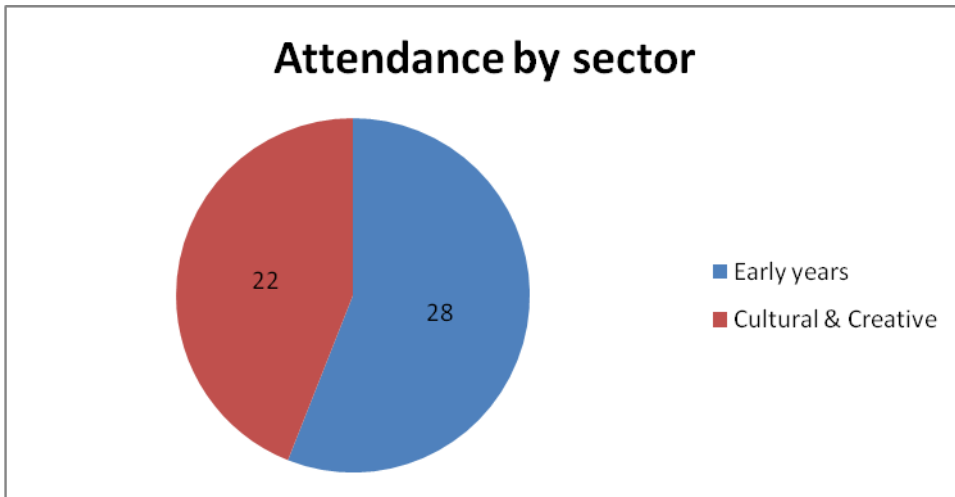


- Vox pops, journals and interviews used open-ended questions to enable participants to say what was important to them
- Their responses were then examined against the two sets of objectives
- A code was created for each objective, and wherever a comment reflected one of the objectives, the code was noted
- The codes were then tallied to see how many instances participants provided evidence of having met that particular objective, thus providing a quantitative analysis of the qualitative responses
- Since the vox pops show the largest and most evenly spread representation of feedback, these have been used for the majority of analysis
- Learning journals contained concise reminders of 'key messages' and moments of inspiration from the day, which were also coded
- The in depth 'phone interviews expand on information and place feedback within the wider context of early years arts and creative practice

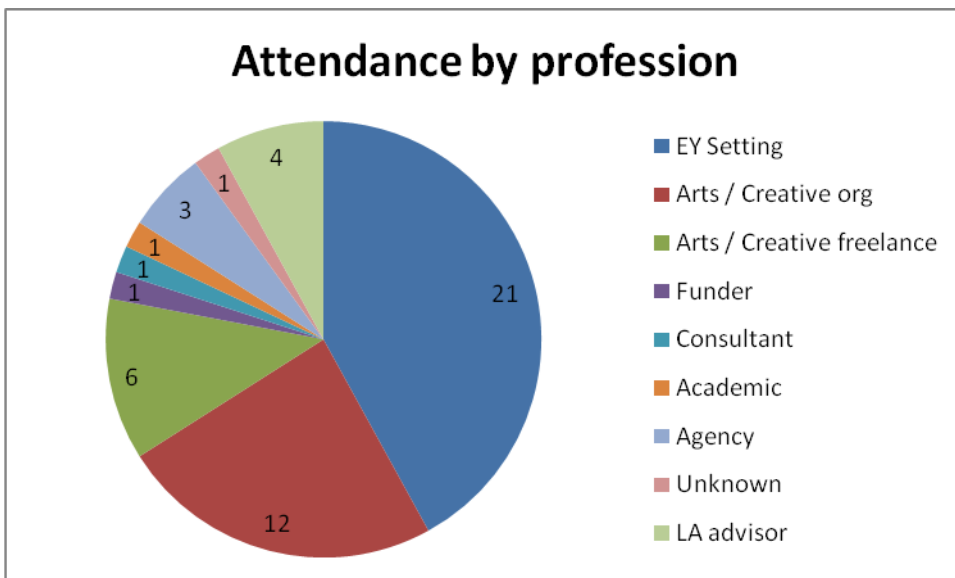
PARTICIPANTS AT THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAYS

Youth Music states, of spotlighting, that, “We hope that this process will have many benefits: spreading effective practice and learning across the sector, helping people to see value in different ways of working that they may not know about, raising the profile of spotlighting organisations and their work, and bringing people together to share experiences and develop their own practice.”

Therefore the mix of professions and practices attending these events are a vital element of the success of this programme. The Earlyarts events attracted an almost equal balance of professionals from early years and creative / cultural sectors



Within this, a wide range of professions were present including Children’s Centres and nursery staff, freelance creative practitioners, arts and creative organisations, local authority advisors, funders and arts development agencies.



REFLECTING ON THE EVALUATION TOOLS

Documenting and capturing methods of reflection and practice sharing is also a key feature of the Spotighting programme. A review of the different types of methodologies used to document and support reflection follows.

Learning Journals:

The learning journal format was not widely adopted. It was hoped that these would provide a place to make focussed notes about what participants wanted to learn or develop, what they did learn or develop, and how this was and is applied in their practice. Not only that it would document their experiences of the training day, but that they could use it to prompt and note on-going learning.

Two reasons were identified for the difficulties in this being achieved:

1. Earlyarts produced the learning journal template and asked their Pathfinders to brief participants about the ethos and purpose of the method, to include time to make the journal and to prompt people to use them throughout the day, and beyond in their own practice. Speaking to participants in follow up interviews it seems that though they were made and used briefly, the potential value of them was not emphasised much during each session. It is possible the journals were not valued as a method of documenting learning in this environment, but rather were seen as adding a level of complexity to an already packed programme, as demonstrated further by difficulties encountered in accessing them for evaluation.

2. One participant commented that for those who needed notes to follow up on later, they would naturally make their own and refer back to these. As a result he felt the journals were unnecessary. The wider ethos of them, and their purpose in evaluating progress, had not been part of his understanding of them.

Vox Pops:

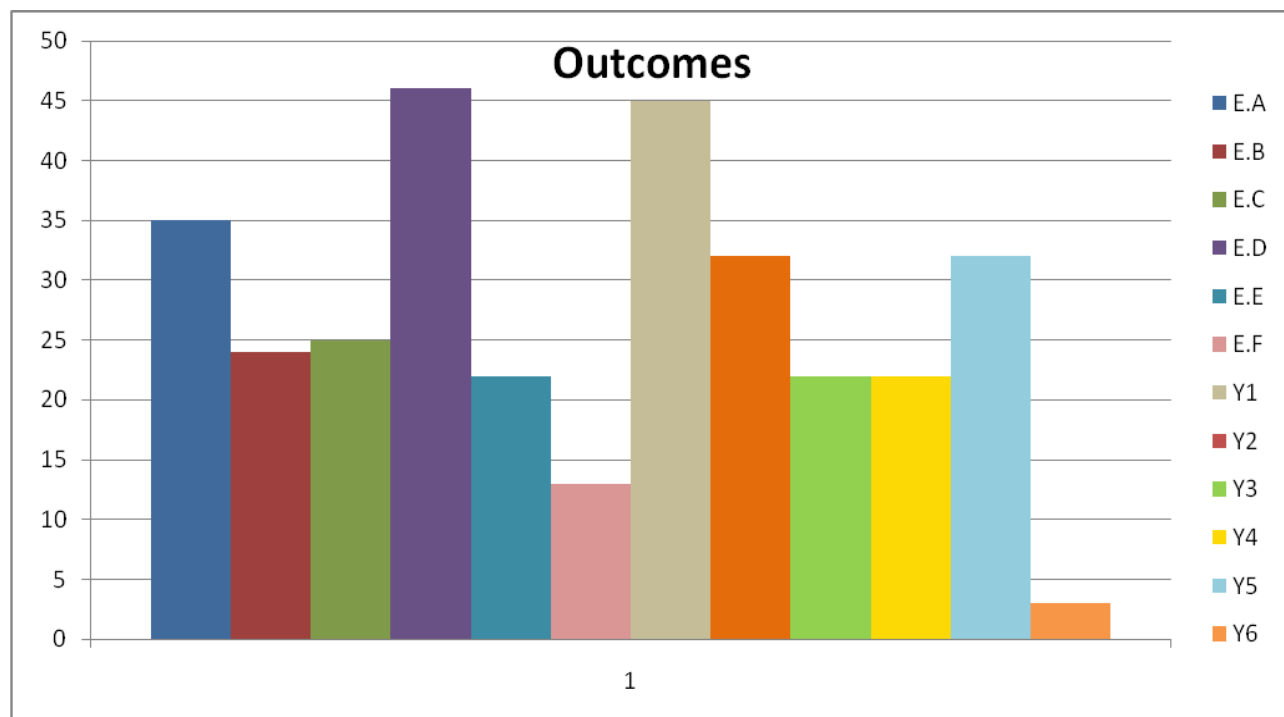
The vox pops were more resource intensive, requiring an interviewer and film maker as a minimum. Not everyone was confident about speaking on film, and participants self-selected into this method. However even those who set out feeling nervous in front of the camera soon forgot their nerves, and their desire to communicate their ideas and reflections took over. It was evident watching the unedited interviews that the process of being asked the questions resulted in additional reflection, as participants paused to think and form new opinions. Vox pops were quick, and able to catch the thoughts of a large number of the participants. Only a small number of questions were asked but this ensured that taking part did not disrupt the rest of the day's agenda, and also for the information provided to be focussed which made for easier evaluation analysis. The skill and sensitivity of the interviewer and camera operator were vital to this way of working.

Interviews:

Follow-up telephone interviews were effective at drawing out more in depth responses and placing these within the wider context of creative early years practice and the contemporary economic and educational landscape. They also prompted additional reflection as participants were asked to articulate values and learning which had often been intrinsic or subconscious beforehand. Although these were more time intensive to set up and carry out, and attracted a smaller number of responders than the vox pops, they provided a valuable angle in terms of being able to look at wider and deeper aspects of professional practice, which has helped give clearer context to the shorter and more focussed answers of the vox pops. Again, participants self-selected into the 'phone interview process and it emerged that freelance and cultural / creative staff were more likely to be interviewed than those in early years settings.

OUTCOMES OF THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAYS

All the intended outcomes from Earlyarts and Youth Music were met to varying degrees.



KEY

	Youth Music		Earlyarts
Y1	Receptive and Confident to take on New Ideas	EA	Early Years, Arts and Cultural Professionals feel more confident and skilled in using creative approaches to support young children's ideas, thinking, communicating and learning
Y2	Safe and nurturing, rich and inspiring environment Self Reflection	EB	Early Years, Arts and Cultural Professionals feel that the PDDs have given them an opportunity to discover their own creative potential
Y3	Making the most of music in the curriculum Music and other artforms together Child constructivism	EC	Early Years, Arts and Cultural Professionals understand why and how creative processes are important in helping to unlock children's routes to social, emotional, educational and cultural development
Y4	Co-working between musicians and practitioners Local networks and collaboration Access to instruments and tools Cumulative Development	ED	Earlyarts has helped professionals to find information, resources, partnerships and people that are relevant to help extend and develop their creative practice
Y5	Integrating Creativity and Culture into the Curriculum Partner consultation, reflection and learning Capturing, documenting, reflecting valuing	EE	Earlyarts PDDs have enabled professionals to embed creative pedagogies into their planning, observation, teaching, assessment and general practice on a daily basis
Y6	Strong continuing links between the home and elsewhere Making it feel native	EF	Early Years, Arts and Cultural Professionals feel better able to act as local advocates for nurturing children's creative potential with children and families.

Outcomes which emerged particularly strongly were that

- professionals had been helped to find information, resources, partnerships and people that are relevant to help extend and develop their creative practice
- professionals had been supported to be receptive and confident to take on new ideas

Finding information, resources, partnerships and people

Practical ideas were only part of the information and resources participants enjoyed developing, and more detail of this is provided further down. The other strong element of this outcome was the networking and peer learning which resulted in feelings of increased confidence, reduced isolation, being part of a movement, and having a better understanding of funders and agencies.

“I made several new connections. Course offered good networking opportunities” *Anonymous learning journal*

“There are all sorts of people in the room who want to make stuff to happen” *Mark Lowe, Community Music East*

“There are organisations out there to be able to help that I didn’t know anything about” *Woodland Sure Start Centre Staff*

“As an artist you're quite isolated, you need to come to events like this to connect with professionals and sometimes it's easy to lose touch with things like the new papers that come out so that's been refreshing for me to meet lots of professionals in this area and reconnect.” *Catherine Grimaldi, Artist*

“It's a nice feeling of a group working together, all very concerned about the same issues in early years education.” *Michelle, Norwich Castle Museum*

“If we're all part of this creative network it makes you feel part of the wider community as a class teacher” *Katrin, Nursery Teacher*

“I found the first talk from Youth Music very helpful, overlapped with some things I've found out in the past and consolidated other things” *Julie, PRESMA*

Confidence to take on new ideas

Over 50% of participants made comments which demonstrated “*being receptive and confident to take on new ideas*” (Y1) and “*more confident and skilled in using creative approaches to support young children's ideas, thinking, communicating and learning*” (EA) and when asked what key messages or learning they would take from the day, they described these more than any other element. In terms of practical hands on creative practice, participants shared a long list of the benefits of the events, from partial suggestions, to increases in confidence, ideas about how to develop activities in classrooms and settings, and refreshed enthusiasm...

“It's heightened my awareness of what I can do, brought back the joy of doing of stuff outside” *Beth, Nursery Teacher*

“I've enjoyed the activities, I've thought of where I can go from them.” *Elaine, Nursery Teacher*

“Getting ideas, and I really liked the storytelling, I thought that was really interesting” *Alice, Nursery Teaching Assistant*

“It's given me ideas about how we could use different settings to spark off stories from children rather than bring a ready-made story to them, to use simple objects you might find, to use that as a questions, a starting point, a bit like the spark that starts the fire; how we can ignite that whole series of different stories.” *John, Polka Theatre*

“In storytelling to keep them simple, use repetitive language and rhymes; involve children in repetition” *Anonymous learning journal*

“I really enjoyed the craft bit, whittling wood and learning that little children can work tools and to allow them to use these sorts of skills to make things” *Jana, Sutton Ecology Centre*

“I thought it was very refreshing and got some brilliant new ideas.” *David, Drama Resources*

“Using sounds and repetitive rhymes and also playfulness and humour to keep children actively involved in learning process.” *Anonymous learning journal*

“To implement / create a story / music box for outdoor story telling” *Anonymous learning journal*

“I’m going to create a box of instruments that reflects nature so they can take that out with them if they’re doing a story, so they can look in it and think “right I’m doing a story about whatever, what instruments can I use?” so it’s there and they’ve just got to pick it out. And perhaps put some story books with those instruments in mind, that they can just learn about the story or read the story with the instruments.” *Elaine, Reception teacher*

Impact on children

The key test of the effectiveness of the training is really, has it made a difference to the way participants will enhance children’s development? Though this is one of many outcomes listed, it is ultimately the core purpose of all work in this area. One Youth Music ingredient (Y3) and two Earlyarts outcomes (EA and EC) were specifically focussed around this area of investigation.

Although these outcomes individually appear to emerge relatively equally amidst the others, the individual outcomes show the quantity of responses split into three. When looked at as a whole, the response is significant, taking up 57% of responses to Earlyarts outcomes, and 25% of total feedback.

Participants mentioned that:

“I notice if practitioners and musicians, educationalists and so on are those creative enthusiastic people, it inspires them to learn more about how children learn, to inspire children - through that the children become inspired.” *Daphne, Nursery Teacher*

“It’s heightened my awareness of what I can do, brought back the joy of doing of stuff outside and the joy I’ve enjoyed hopefully the children will enjoy too.” *Beth, Nursery Teacher*

“It’s given me ideas about how we could use different settings to spark off stories from children rather than bring a ready-made story to them” *John, Polka Theatre*

“I think we were able to put ourselves in the child’s place, and I think that’s the best way to learn.” *Michelle, Norwich Castle Museum*

“I’ll take away the importance of going with the child and just see what happens and having the confidence to do that.” *Jane, Herts Music Service*

“It’s reinforcing the key skills about listening to children and that it’s about the process not the end product.” *Janette, Early Years Consultant*

“In my own practice I’d like to work more as a person who stands back lets the children take more initiative.” *Hayley, Nursery Deputy Manager*

Links with the home

The one outcome which was met, though to a significantly lesser degree, was:

- Strong continuing links between the home and elsewhere; Making it feel native

This is one of Youth Music's 'ingredients' and can be attributed to the fact that very few of the participants have developed targeted delivery to extend their early years work beyond the children out to the wider relationships with families. Those who did specifically discuss this area of their work felt very strongly that the sessions would help them work towards this.

"I think I would like to change my practice in terms of seeing parents come down here with the children, I think that would be an interesting angle in getting them engaged. Breaking down what they expect from traditional parent toddler groups. On the widest level it's about changing family life." *Anonymous Hastings vox pop*

"I would echo that thing of getting families here, breaking their view of what parent toddler groups do" *Anonymous Hastings vox pop*

"So many families don't sing or don't pick up an instrument or do arts and allow that or messy play so it's providing those nurturing environments for that to happen; and encourage the parents – it's not embarrassing to sing." *Anonymous Norwich vox pop*

GOING FORWARD

1. Stimulating professional development and reflection

When asked about the most useful ways for practitioners to learn about creativity in the early years:

- Any methods that involved person-to-person sharing (practice-based workshops, discussions, networks, meetings) scored over 80%.
- Visual learning methods (for example videos, packs, websites, presentations) came second, scoring in the 70% range.
- Text based methods (documents, brochures, learning journals) were the least effective, scoring in the 50% range and 60%.

This is further demonstrated by the experience of the learning journals but also in feedback from interviews:

“I think one main thing that I've noticed in every single school or setting I've worked with, is that there should be more time for the staff for them to have space to be creative and communicate with each other, to have training or support and there should be professional artists in all settings - it really informs everyone and inspires the children and staff and it's really effective.” *Jenny Staff*

Recommendation: Reflection and learning is most effective when it is clearly structured and facilitated in the first person, for example through conversations and practical activity.

2. Understanding longer term impacts

Had the learning journals achieved their intended aims it would have been possible to see a more cohesive picture of how the training permeated practice beyond the short term, and this is an area of research which could be explored again in the future. However, in follow-up interviews which took place between one and four weeks after the event, participants said overall, they felt 70% more confident in changing their practice as a result of the day's training. Attendees of the Sutton and Norwich days highlighted new practical skills, ideas and resources as being some of the most beneficial learning; whilst those at the Hastings event felt that their own ideas and imagination had been awakened or increased as a result of the day.

Recommendation: Examine and test other methods for monitoring medium to long term development of practice arising from the professional development days.

3. Understanding settings

There were two other areas practitioners felt particularly strongly about regarding what their needs are in future for further support, development, practice sharing and learning:

a. Understanding the ethos of settings

Freelance practitioners mentioned repeatedly that what would make a difference to their work in a setting or organisation, would be a thorough knowledge of that setting's approach to child development. Ideally this would be the creative ethos, though if settings are new to creative approaches, then the other values that permeate their way of working would be enough. Also practitioners felt it was vital to gain a clear picture of the depth this ethos was felt throughout the organisation – if managers, practitioners, and operational staff all understood and shared this

approach. Without this, visiting practitioners would feel reluctant to become involved with that organisation or feel unable to work to their best ability.

b. Site visits

Practitioners felt strongly that the other area of support which benefits their own professional development is visits to settings which can share inspirational practice. Freelance artists particularly wanted to be able to see creative early years settings in order to better understand the pedagogies in action and the landscape of activity in settings. They were keen to point out that these need not be high profile, time or cost intensive visits, but that visiting small centres and simply shadowing over a day, perhaps with a half hour's discussion at the end would be ideal.

Recommendation: Explore accessible opportunities (i.e. low / no cost one-off days) to develop shadowing schemes between arts / creative / cultural practitioners, and early years practitioners to increase practice sharing, pedagogies, methodologies and reflection in action.