

# A QUALITY FRAMEWORK FOR USE IN MUSIC-MAKING SESSIONS WORKING WITH CHILDREN IN EARLY YEARS SETTINGS

DO...

REVIEW...

IMPROVE...

**YOUTH  
MUSIC**



ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND  
LOTTERY FUNDED

Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

## Do, Review, Improve...

### A quality framework for use in music-making sessions working with children in Early Years settings

#### What is the quality framework?

A quality framework is a tool to help you understand, measure and evaluate quality in your work. Youth Music's Quality Framework – *Do, Review, Improve* – gathers together the criteria necessary to deliver high-quality music-making activities. It's based on evidence we've been gathering from the projects we've supported since the charity was founded in 1999. The framework has been designed to promote a common understanding of quality, to provide the language to explain it and to help **individuals** and **organisations** improve their professional practice.

We ask all organisations funded by Youth Music to use *Do, Review, Improve* to reflect on their practice. We ask anyone applying to us for funding to show how they will build it into their project. However, it's not just for those holding Youth Music grants: the quality framework can be used by anyone leading music-making activities for children and young people.

You can use *Do, Review, Improve* for planning, peer observation or self-reflection. It's not intended to be a test, and you don't need to score yourself or rank yourself against others. Instead, the Quality Framework is designed to help you think about your practice and the principles behind it, and to identify areas you may wish to develop.

## Why have we created a new version for projects delivered in Early Years settings?

Youth Music's quality framework is flexible and can be used for any kind of music-making project. However, the criteria might look different in different kinds of settings.

Early Years music-making is a key priority for Youth Music. We recognise the unique potential of music-making to help shape the musical lives of all children aged 5 and under, giving them a positive start at an early age.

The Early Years version of the Youth Music Quality Framework has been produced following feedback from grantholders as well as consultation with academics, music leaders and other experts in Early Years music-making. In this version of the framework we have made some changes to make it more suitable for an Early Years context, with acknowledgement of the unique differences and challenges that are specific to working with this age group.

## Using the framework

The framework is intended for planning activities, observing the delivery of music sessions, and reflecting afterwards. It can be used by practitioners, organisations or project managers. Music sessions and activities don't usually take place in isolation, and the evidence for some criteria may emerge over a longer period of time. Therefore this framework should be considered a tool for ongoing discussion and reflection.

We encourage you to use the Quality Framework in a way that's appropriate to the capacity and starting point of your organisation or you as an individual. Examples of how others have used *Do, Review, Improve* include:

- For planning and termly reflection sessions among the music leader team
- For peer observations between music leaders
- To observe the music leader team to prioritise workforce training needs
- As part of training and induction for music leaders
- To help identify professional development needs in appraisals or supervision
- As a source of evidence for workforce outcomes
- As an initial planning tool for those organisations and individuals new to Early Years music-making.

## Glossary

**Music leader** – the person who is leading the music activities.

**Project staff** – this refers to other adults who are involved in leading or supporting the project and could include: project managers, Early Years practitioners, pastoral support staff, supporting music leaders, trainee music leaders or volunteers.

**Babies and young children** – the participants in the activities, aged between 0-5.

**Accompanying adults** – adults who may accompany babies and young children to activities, for example parents, other family members and carers including childminders. As well as supporting their babies and young children to engage with music-making they may also be participants themselves.

**Activities** – this refers to the tasks or processes the babies and young children undertake (what they will **do**) - the 'content' of a music-making session.

**Learning outcome(s)** - the skills, knowledge and understanding that will be gained or enhanced from the activities. Activities should be planned to enable the babies and young children to achieve the learning outcomes.

**Innate musicality** – the natural and untaught musical skills babies and children have.

**Progression** – this refers to the broadest interpretation of the social, personal and musical development of the babies and young children.

**Progression routes** – this refers to the 'next steps' a participant might take following engagement with the music-making activities. This might be engagement with new music activities or groups, or continuing with activities in the setting or at home.

**Child-centred** – A child (or baby) centred approach encourages and supports children to take learning into their own hands, as opposed to being directed or prompted by an adult. Children make their own choices about what they will learn and explore.

## PART 1a: Organisational responsibilities

Health and safety of all	Contracting and support for music leaders
<p><b>H1</b> Appropriate Health and Safety policies and procedures are in place.</p> <p><b>H2</b> A Safeguarding and Child Protection policy is in place to protect the welfare of babies and young children and staff (including conducting <a href="#">Disclosure and Barring Service checks</a>).</p>	<p><b>C1</b> Contracts include time for structured reflection and evaluation activities, with key staff or volunteers involved in planning and delivery.</p> <p><b>C2</b> Contracts include clear expectations around music leader planning; including short, medium and long-term planning. Plans should be flexible and adaptable.</p> <p><b>C3</b> Roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the planning and delivery of sessions are clearly outlined.</p> <p><b>C4</b> Organisations support the emotional wellbeing of staff with regular catch-up/supervision sessions.</p> <p><b>C5</b> Organisations seek to support music leaders' training and development needs.</p>
Pastoral and progression needs	Planning and evaluation
<p><b>PP1</b> Appropriate pastoral support is provided for babies and young children (and their accompanying adults as appropriate)</p> <p><b>PP2</b> When participants (including babies and young children and their accompanying adults) are referred by another organisation, information is requested to inform planning and communication - for example about musical ability and experience, pastoral needs, special educational needs and/or disabilities.</p> <p><b>PP3</b> Organisations enable music leaders to develop up-to-date knowledge of progression routes, so that babies, young children and their accompanying adults can be signposted to relevant opportunities beyond the programme.</p>	<p><b>PE1</b> Programmes are planned to ensure that duration of contact time and frequency of engagement are sufficient to achieve the intended learning outcomes.</p> <p><b>PE2</b> Evaluation activities are devised and scheduled before delivery commences.</p> <p><b>PE3</b> Organisations ensure that evaluation activities are carried out as planned.</p>

## PART 1b: Organisational responsibilities explained

### Health and safety of all

**H1 Appropriate Health and Safety policies and procedures are in place.**

**H2 A Safeguarding and Child Protection policy is in place to protect the welfare of babies and young children and staff (including conducting [Disclosure and Barring Service checks](#)).**

#### Early Years considerations:

- Relevant statutory guidelines are adhered to.
- The health and safety of all accompanying adults, and how their involvement may impact on safeguarding and child protection procedures, is taken into account.
- The needs of expectant parents are considered.

### Contracting and support for music leaders

**C1 Contracts include time for structured reflection and evaluation activities, with key staff or volunteers involved in planning and delivery.**

**C2 Contracts include clear expectations around music leader planning; including short, medium and long-term planning. Plans should be flexible and adaptable.**

**C3 Roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the planning and delivery of sessions are clearly outlined.**

#### Early Years considerations:

- The role of all adults is carefully considered with recognition of the different skills and knowledge they bring - for example an Early Years practitioner's understanding of childhood development or a parent/carer's understanding of their child's unique needs.

**C4 Organisations support the emotional wellbeing of staff with regular catch-up/supervision sessions.**

**C5 Organisations seek to support music leaders' training and development needs.**

#### Early Years considerations:

- Consultation with Early Years setting staff, parents and carers, and other specialists dependent on the nature of the programme (e.g. speech and language therapists) is undertaken during planning phases.
- Organisations take time to build knowledge and understanding of Early Years music-making and/or early childhood development, and ensure that appropriate support and training is in place for music leaders.
- Consultation with, or support from, external organisations/individuals with Early Years music-making and/or early childhood development expertise is in place as needed.

## **Pastoral and progression needs**

**PP1 Appropriate pastoral support is provided for babies and young children (and their accompanying adults as appropriate).**

### **Early Years considerations:**

- The pastoral needs of accompanying adults (who are often active participants in activities) are considered, as well as the key role they will play in providing pastoral support for their babies and young children.

**PP2 When participants (including babies and young children and their accompanying adults) are referred by another organisation, information is requested to inform planning and communication - for example about musical ability and experience, pastoral needs, special educational needs and/or disabilities.**

**PP3 Organisations enable music leaders to develop up-to-date knowledge of progression routes, so that babies, young children and their accompanying adults can be signposted to relevant opportunities beyond the programme.**

### **Early Years considerations:**

- The role of accompanying adults and setting staff in providing progression routes is discussed and agreed.
- Progression opportunities might include:
  - signposting to other groups or activities
  - supporting Early Years practitioners to continue providing high quality musical activity in their setting
  - supporting parents/carers to provide music-making activities in the home and other spaces.

## **Planning and evaluation**

**PE1 Programmes are planned to ensure that duration of contact time and frequency of engagement are sufficient to achieve the intended learning outcomes.**

**PE2 Evaluation activities are devised and scheduled before delivery commences.**

**PE3 Organisations ensure that evaluation activities are carried out as planned.**

## Part 2a: Session criteria

Baby and young child centred	Music leader practice
<p><b>Y1</b> Music-making reflects the babies and young children’s interests, with recognition of their existing musical identities.</p> <p><b>Y2</b> Babies and young children experience equality of engagement and no participant is discriminated against. Their input is integral to the session.</p> <p><b>Y3</b> The babies and young children’s musical, personal and social development is monitored, and achievements are celebrated and valued.</p> <p><b>Y4</b> Babies and young children receive clear feedback on their music-making, identifying next steps for individual improvement. Comparison to others is only made where appropriate.</p> <p><b>Y5</b> The music leader and/or project staff identify the need for any additional pastoral or other support, and seek to provide or signpost to this.</p>	<p><b>M1</b> The music leader has relevant musical competence, and is both an able practitioner and positive role model.</p> <p><b>M2</b> The music leader has a clear intention and has planned the activities accordingly, while retaining room for flexibility.</p> <p><b>M3</b> The music leader plans activities that enable babies and young children to make progress and nurtures their understanding of what it means to be a musician.</p> <p><b>M4</b> The music leader regularly checks babies and young children’s understanding. They reflect on their own practice: activities are reviewed and adapted according to how the babies and young children respond.</p> <p><b>M5</b> All project staff and accompanying adults are actively engaged with activities. Music leaders, other project staff and (where appropriate), accompanying adults communicate before, during and/or after the session and collaborate in planning activities. Roles and responsibilities are clear to all involved.</p>
Activity content	Environment
<p><b>S1</b> Activities are engaging, inspiring and purposeful. They are clearly explained and/or demonstrated to the babies and young children and accompanying adults.</p> <p><b>S2</b> Ownership of activity content is shared between the music leader, babies and young children, and accompanying adults. Participants contribute to decision-making and have the opportunity to take on leadership roles where appropriate.</p> <p><b>S3</b> Babies and young children are supported to create and make their own music, and broaden their musical horizons over time.</p> <p><b>S4</b> Activities are designed and delivered in a manner that is accessible to all and tailored to each individual whenever possible, taking account of their starting points and aspirations. Group dynamics and pace of learning are considered.</p>	<p><b>E1</b> There is a suitable ratio of babies and young children to adults, taking into account any accompanying adults.</p> <p><b>E2</b> Consideration has been given to the physical and auditory space, with available resources being best used to make it accessible and appropriate for the target group.</p> <p><b>E3</b> There are sufficient materials and equipment to support the activities</p>



## Part 2b: Session criteria explained

### Baby and young child centred

**Y1 Music-making reflects the babies and young children's interests, with recognition of their existing musical identities.**

**Early Years considerations:**

- There is recognition that music is woven into babies' and young children's everyday play/lives. Music leaders are open to broad interpretations of what 'music' is and they tune into what babies and children are doing.
- There is acknowledgement of babies' and young children's innate musicality and the music that they are engaging with at home and in other settings. Asking about and exploring what music babies and young children are listening to and engaging with at home can support their existing musical identities.
- Apparent disinterest shown by children in musical activities (e.g. walking away) is not necessarily as a sign of disengagement, as babies and young children don't conform to behavioural norms of adults. Careful observation of behaviour over time may be required to assess levels of engagement.

**Y2 Babies and young children experience equality of engagement and no participant is discriminated against. Their input is integral to the session.**

**Early Years considerations:**

- A child-centered approach, where adults respond to what babies and young children are doing supports equality of engagement and ensure that their views are included.
- As parents and carers are often active participants in sessions, care is taken to avoid discrimination and take their views on board.

**Y3 The babies and young children's musical, personal and social development are monitored and achievements are celebrated and valued.**

**Early Years considerations:**

- Music leaders have knowledge of early childhood development and an awareness of how babies and young children develop.
- Music leaders understand that musical development doesn't happen in isolation; that babies and young children's musical skills are developed alongside, and intertwined with, the development of other skills.

**Y4 Babies and young children receive clear feedback on their work, identifying next steps for individual improvement. Comparison to others is only made where appropriate.**

**Early Years considerations:**

- Feedback is used in its broadest sense. It may include giving positive responses to children's engagement; and celebrating achievement verbally, through facial expression, body language, or by copying and extending musical activities initiated by children.
- Music leaders check babies and children's understanding through both observation and communication with other adults.
- Feedback (where appropriate) regarding babies' and young children's progress may be given to other adults, with support to help them understand next steps needed for individual babies and children's improvement.

**Y5 The music leader and/or project staff identify the need for any additional pastoral or other support, and seek to provide or signpost to this.**

**Early Years considerations:**

- The pastoral needs of accompanying adults are considered in combination with the needs of the babies and young children.

## Music leader practice

**M1 The music leader has relevant musical competence, and is both an able practitioner and positive role model.**

### Early Years considerations:

- The music leader is knowledgeable about best practice in Early Years music making and/or is committed to developing their knowledge.

**M2 The music leader has a clear intention and has planned the activities accordingly, while retaining room for flexibility.**

### Early Years considerations:

- The music leader is skilled in delivering and enabling adult-led, child-led and spontaneous music-making activities, choosing activities according to the children's needs and the intended learning outcomes.
- While most sessions will have a recognisable structure, this will often include flexibility for spontaneous and open-ended music-making, where music-making may not be a distinct activity from other things happening in the space. The music leader identifies, supports and values this music-making.

**M3 The music leader plans activities that enable babies and young children to make progress and nurtures their understanding of what it means to be a musician.**

### Early Years considerations:

- The music leader has a broad understanding of what it means to be a musician, including what it means to be musical and/or musically expressive, and has an ability to recognise these qualities in babies and young children.
- The music leader supports other adults to see babies and children as musicians - musical and musically expressive.
- The music leader plans age-appropriate and developmentally-appropriate activities, including planning for differentiation in mixed-aged group settings.

**M4 The music leader regularly checks babies and young children's understanding. They reflect on their own practice: activities are reviewed and adapted according to how the babies and young children respond.**

### Early Years considerations:

- The music leader uses observation and reflection to check babies and young children's understanding.

**M5 All project staff and accompanying adults are actively engaged with activities. Music leaders, other project staff and, where appropriate accompanying adults communicate before, during and/or after the session and collaborate in planning activities. Roles and responsibilities are clear to all involved.**

### Early Years considerations:

- The music leader involves all adults, recognising and acknowledging their expertise.

## Activity content

**S1 Activities are engaging, inspiring and purposeful. They are clearly explained and/or demonstrated to the babies and young children and accompanying adults.**

### Early Years considerations:

- Sometimes activities may involve a deliberate lack of explanation, allowing children to make their own decisions and improvise - e.g. percussion instruments might be made available in a space for children to explore at their own pace.
- Support is provided to all adults in the space to further their understanding and engagement with the activities.

**S2 Ownership of activity content is shared between the music leader, babies and young children, and accompanying adults. Participants (babies, young children and accompanying adults) contribute to decision-making and have the opportunity to take on leadership roles where appropriate.**

**Early Years considerations:**

- A mixture of adult-led and child-led activities supports shared ownership. Choice of activities is informed by careful observation and being responsive to babies and children's reactions.
- The role of all adults in the space is carefully considered - with recognition of the unique skills and knowledge they bring.

**S3 Babies and young children are supported to create and make their own music, and broaden their musical horizons over time.**

**Early Years considerations:**

- A child-centred approach can give children the freedom to express and create and 'find' their own music.
- Consideration is given to the central role adults will play in supporting babies and young children to broaden their horizons - through opportunities to explore a variety of musical worlds, instruments and genres.

**S4 Activities are designed and delivered in a manner that is accessible to all and tailored to each individual whenever possible, taking account of their starting points and aspirations. Group dynamics and pace of learning have been considered.**

**Early Years considerations**

- Babies and young children don't make distinctions between different art-forms, and they rarely experience music in isolation. Consideration is given to the multiple ways that babies and children engage with music-making and stimulate a range of sensory experiences. This might include dance and movement, singing, storytelling, exploring instruments and other sensory materials, or drawing and painting to music.

**Environment**

**E1 There is a suitable ratio of babies and young children to adults taking into account any accompanying adults.**

**Early Years considerations:**

- Relevant statutory guidelines are adhered to.

**E2 Consideration has been given to the physical and auditory space, with available resources being best used to make it accessible and appropriate for the target group.**

**Early Years considerations:**

- The space and resources supports the multiple ways babies and young children engage with music (for example, space for dance and movement, singing, talking, exploring instruments, exploring other materials and toys) and may look different for adult-led, child-led and spontaneous music-making.
- Music-making can take place in both outdoor and indoor environments.
- The physical space needs to be appropriate for the age/developmental stage of the babies and young children.

**E3 There are sufficient materials and equipment to support the activities**

**Early Years considerations:**

- Resources are appropriate for the age/developmental stage of the babies and young children.

## Guidance and resources

[Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework](#) sets the standards that school and childcare providers must meet for the learning, development and care of children from birth to 5.

[Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\) by Early Education](#) is non-statutory guidance to support practitioners in implementing the statutory requirements of the EYFS.

[Musical Development Matters in the Early Years](#) by Nicola Burke has been written to complement Development Matters, providing support for practitioners, teachers, musicians and parents to see the musical attributes of young children, offering ideas as to how they can support and nurture children's musical development.

[Sounds of Intent in the Early Years](#) is a framework which explains how young children develop musically. It gives ideas for activities suited to children at different stages of musical development and provides a simple way of recording achievements and monitoring musical development.

## Qualifications

[Centre for Research in Early Childhood \(CREC\)](#) specialises in early childhood research and delivers two qualifications in Early Years music making.

**The Certificate for Music Educators (CME): Early Childhood** is a flexible, part-time, distance-learning qualification in early childhood music and is a recognised National Qualification validated by Trinity College London.

**MA in Education (Early Years):** CREC offers a music pathway through their postgraduate qualification. The Early Years music education module can also be taken as a standalone module.

## Regional networks

**East of England:** [ACORN East](#) is an under-5s arts network for the East run by Magic Acorns.

**London:** [London Early Years Music Network](#) (LEYMN) is run by Sound Connections.

**North West:** [Note Weavers](#) is a community of learning for Early Years music-making in the North West.

**North Yorkshire:** The [Early Years Music Network](#), run by NYMAZ, is open to all those working in North Yorkshire with children aged 0-5.

**South Yorkshire:** [South Yorkshire Early Years Music](#) is run by Music in the Round.

**South West:** [The SoundWaves Network](#) run by Take Art is for everyone involved in the education of young children through music in the South West.

## Online communities

There are lots of online communities for discussing Early Years music-making; a quick search on Facebook and Twitter will bring up many useful results. Here are some to get you started:

[Early Years Music](#)

## [Early Years Music Training Opportunities](#)

### [Youth Music Network](#)

A free-to-join online community for everyone whose work involves making music with children and young people, including those in the Early Years music-making community. Members can write and comment on blogs, share news about events and job opportunities and browse resources.