





Local Networks and National Plan

SUSAN YOUNG

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- ▶ If, as predicted, the revised National Plan for Music Education will extend funding to include the under 5s, this change will create a new landscape for early childhood music. The Note Weavers network is timely and needed. The network aims to equip all stakeholders [music hubs and partner organisations, early childhood settings, music practitioners] with the knowledge and understanding to drive forward developments in early childhood music. In this presentation I will open out many of the issues within the early years music sector and the challenges and opportunities they present at the local level.

Beliefs

- ▶ Widespread belief that music is a 'good thing' in early childhood – but the rationales are weak and so little of any substance happens.
- ▶ Early childhood music is thought to be 'simple' because the children are musically unskilled – but it's highly complex and requires high level of expertise
- ▶ That 'proper' music education only 'starts' at age 5

Context: Neo-liberal policies

- ▶ Increasing poverty for children
- ▶ Public services cut
- ▶ Welfare state rolled back – including Sure Start Centres
- ▶ Workers' rights are cut [those who work in EY are on poor pay and very poor employment conditions]
- ▶ Services are privatised – creating choice, competition and thereby increasing inequality

Context: EY Music

- ▶ Music for children birth to five years has grown rapidly in last 20 years
Downwards in age and outwards in types of provision.
- ▶ BUT - exploring, evaluating, theorising appropriate models of practice hasn't kept pace. Models from older children 'scaled' down.
- ▶ In the absence of any state funding - the rise of the private sector and franchises. Very fragmented.

The Context: EY music

- ▶ No requirement for qualifications
- ▶ No system of regulation
- ▶ AND SO standards of practice are very low.
- ▶ **This is a HUGE** problem - - and there is a **HUGE** need for training to raise standards of practice.
- ▶ No professional positions in EY music and so almost all work is freelance, low and hourly paid, entrepreneurial. This has seriously affected how EY music has developed. Workers can be isolated but are also used to being individualistic, independent and 'driving their own corner'. The rise of EY businesses and franchises.

The Issues: EY sector

- ▶ Very varied and dispersed nature of EY settings, The sector has been subject to constant upheaval and change.
- ▶ Key people who have any regional oversight can be difficult to find
- ▶ Schools increasingly taking 3 – 4 years [or even 2 yrs]. For music services the issue will be stick with 3-5 provision in schools? - or aim for 6 months – 5?
- ▶ High staff turnover in EY, staff with low qualifications and often little incentive to develop skills. Hourly and minimum rates of pay, and settings just scraping by financially - so capacity for CPD often very limited

Issues: Quality

- ▶ There is very little knowledge of what good practice looks and sounds like
- ▶ Those who 'purchase'/commission – managers of EY settings, parents – and Music Education Hub staff too! – need this knowledge
- ▶ There are a LOT of private providers offering a commercial 'for profit' based on mother and child participation and/or strong adult led model – some of these are national franchises with assertive marketing. Commercial models must appeal to purchasers and so this skews what they provide and how they present it.

Issues: Quality

- ▶ Tendency for lightweight 'benefits' arguments [and now with added neuroscience]
- ▶ We have lost the ability to argue clearly for children's right to a broad and balanced curriculum that includes the arts
- ▶ The curriculum has become instrumental, [what children need to join the workforce] – rather than humanitarian [what children need for a good life, a good society]
- ▶ For the future we need children who are imaginative, thoughtful, creative, can collaborate, think independently - imagination is key
- ▶ Being able to articulate a clear and convincing argument for intrinsic purpose of music education is important

EY Music: 3 Main models of practice

- ▶ Embedded, integrated music play approaches in generalist EY practice
- ▶ The adult led group session – requires MUCH higher levels of skill than is often thought
- ▶ The parent and child commercial ‘edutainment’ session – highly structured, often poorly suited to children’s abilities and capacities

[there are also therapy, arts-performance events, music as intervention]



SW survey of all music hubs found that

- ▶ There was clear recognition that Hubs are not consistent when it comes to Early Years and fewer inconsistencies would be beneficial.
- ▶ 1/3 had some EY music (typically a continuation of pre-NPME days)
- ▶ 1/3 would like to extend their EY music
- ▶ 1/3 had no capacity or interest in providing any EY music

Interestingly – only 1 hub had introduced some EY music provision since being set up, all the others were continuing provision that had been in place prior to the hub being set up.

The types of provision were very varied and involved varied partners

Music Hubs: Patchy and inconsistent

- ▶ There are some real examples of how Hubs were beginning to work effectively with the sector, examples which were wider than the 5-18 funding corridor. They can include musical instrument hire, CPD, bursaries, project work, networking opportunities and shared partnerships. But these are not consistent and not all Hubs would be aware of Early Years child-led, play-based activities and models of integrated practice.

Some suggestions

- ▶ MEHs to identify a strategic lead for EY music (Tri-borough)
- ▶ Dissemination of successful approaches by identified lead MEHs
- ▶ Work with thriving settings and develop beacons of good practice (sounds like the opposite of what ought to happen, but struggling settings have little or no capacity)
- ▶ Find and work with active EY sector 'connectors'
- ▶ Integrated, music as play, approaches will be much more accessible to EY practitioners than specialist models of practice
- ▶ Integrated, music as play approaches are not 'showy' and so purchasers often need convincing of value to children's learning

MERYC: England

www.meryc.uk.co

- ▶ MERYC-England is a registered charity dedicated to raising the quality of early childhood music education by running conferences, setting up training programmes and lobbying/communicating.
- ▶ Certificate for Music Educators: Early Childhood – Trinity Level 4
- ▶ MERYC-England Conferences that combine research and practice