Musical Learning and Development

Sing Up 2007-2011
Programme Evaluation
Theme 6

sing up
Help kids find their voice

Sing Up 2007-2011
Programme Evaluation

Sing Up 2007-2011 was the Music Manifesto National Singing Programme, led by Youth Music, with AMV-BBDO, Faber Music and The Sage Gateshead, supported by Government. It aimed to raise the status of singing and increase opportunities for school children throughout the country to enjoy singing as part of their everyday lives, and to support all primary schools to become 'singing schools'.

Sing Up commissioned the Centre for Use of Research & Evidence in Education (CUREE) to undertake an external evaluation of the whole programme. The evaluations are presented as follows:

- Synthesis Report including Executive Summary
- Probe & Case Study Report
- Themed Reports:
  1. Communications
  2. Health & Wellbeing
  3. Impact on Schools
  4. Learning Across the Curriculum
  5. Management of Change
  6. Musical Development
  7. Partnership
  8. Speech, Language and Communication
  9. Transition
  10. Workforce Development
  11. Youth Leadership

The full set of reports can be found on the Sing Up website: www.singup.org

Further information about CUREE can be found at: www.curee-paccts.com

Introduction

'Those children who have participated in the Sing Up programme are approximately two years in advance developmentally in their singing compared to their peers of the same age outside the programme.'

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Sing Up operated through four main strands of activity: a national PR and advertising **campaign** highlighting the benefits of singing; singing **resources**, through the twin vehicles of a website www.singup.org (including a 'Song Bank') and a free termly magazine with CD; a **workforce development** programme to build the confidence and expertise of primary school teachers, musicians and others in leading and supporting children's singing activities, with a supporting network of 30 Sing Up Area Leaders; **funded programmes**, supporting the development of singing activity around the country.

By March 2011 Sing Up had engaged with over 95% of state primary schools and over 90% of all schools with primary school-aged children in them.

Background

1.For the purposes of this report, a project was defined as an aspect of activity carried out as part of the Sing Up programme. Projects therefore range in nature and include specific interventions; their types (e.g. Sing Up Awards); organisations and areas, leading a variety of strands of work; various communications activities and their analysis, etc.

2.Welch et al (2010) Researching the impact of the national singing programme Sing Up in England. Main findings from the first three years (2007-2010).

This report is based on those Sing Up reports and documents which were identified as likely to yield data relevant to the theme of Music Learning and Development. As the Plymouth Music Zone (PMZ) evaluation report explains, this is a 'highly individualised subject.' For example, they point out, some children may learn to understand the cause and effect of their own voice. Others may begin to learn to sing for the first time and then go on to advanced singing qualifications. The report will take account of this range in its interpretation of project[1] outcomes related to music learning and development.

For the programme as a whole the advances in singing development for young participants is not in question. The main findings of the large-scale, quantitative evaluation by Welch et al (2010) were unequivocal. 'Those children who have participated in the Sing Up programme are approximately two years in advance developmentally in their singing compared to their peers of the same age outside the programme.'[2] But as the Sing Up Phase 2 Report (2009) shows, musical advances were not necessarily a direct goal of the programme. The quality of the singing opportunities and experiences for participants and of the leadership

of these were of great importance. This report goes beyond the documentation of reported advances in musical development to describe the nature of the leadership learning relative to such advances for example and the processes involved.

The aim of this report is to synthesise the impact data relevant to musical learning and development from across the projects, and to differentiate them, where possible, for different groups of children and adults. The report starts by contextualising the data in the aims of the projects themselves and the key processes and strategies employed. It then reports on outcomes and leadership learning relevant to musical learning and development.

Aims and Objectives

The aims of the projects reviewed for this theme varied. They included whole-school singing interventions integrated with curriculum support, for example Sing Up Burton, Spitalfields Music and the Award Schools. Many targeted specific groups of young people such as boys, children with behavioural problems, children with special needs, gifted and talented children, children from deprived areas, children of particular cultural backgrounds and looked after children. (For example Greenwich, Sound Minds, Pie Factory Music [hereafter referred to as Pie Factory], Plymouth Music Zone (PMZ), Supersing Liverpool, Sing Up Southampton, Music and the Deaf, Drake Music, Whitewood and Fleming.)

Other projects – such as the Voices Foundation - focused on training programmes to extend the spread and reach of Sing Up and subsequent sustainability.

Many of the projects had multiple aims. Glastonbury, for example, aimed to provide singing tuition and a performance at the same time as raising brand awareness and generating publicity for the wider Sing Up programme. Investigating peer mentoring, the role of parents and learning from Beyond the Mainstream (BTM) practice were part of the overall agenda for the Spitalfields Music project. Sing Up Southampton's aims included developing health and wellbeing through learning to sing and singing with others.

ICT played a vital role in many contexts too. For example PMZ aimed to use voice reactive software to create a resource for use with children with special educational needs (SEN); similarly Drake Music aimed to develop accessible resources from the Sing Up Song Bank using assistive music technology. Music and the Deaf also used ICT to develop assistive technology. Other projects, while not aiming at technological development per se, made appropriate use of existing technology to promote the aims of the project.

Processes and Strategies

Despite the range and scope of the projects, there was a striking degree of consistency in the range of strategies employed to achieve the reported outcomes.

The key strategies employed by the projects included:

- staff training, leader training;
- workshops;
- performance (and rehearsals);
- classroom-based singing;
- group work, peer/pair working;
- resource development;
- mentoring, shadowing;
- development of and/or use of ICT;
- leadership training;
- individual support for young participants;
- song writing;
- instrumental support;
- movement;
- artwork/writing;
- celebrating participant input;
- joint planning with school/setting staff; and
- awards/accreditation.

This is not to say that every project enjoyed the same success with such strategies. For example Spitalfields Music initially struggled to implement peer mentoring effectively, concluding that their project had begun with too many objectives. Sing Up Southampton struggled to get participants to out-of-school workshops; Pie Factory reported challenges in embedding singing in a unique setting (the Launch Pad.) All reported that they had devised strategies for overcoming such obstacles.

Findings and Outcomes

Children and Young People as Participants and Audience

The range of outcomes related to children's musical learning and development was extensive. It included the hard-won steps made by the children and young people who got engaged with singing for the first time. Alongside were the experienced singers from choirs, for example, whose musical advancement was described more in terms of technical skills and related to pitch control, high levels in unaccompanied singing and two part singing (Sing Up Awards Schools.) The following brief descriptions of the different musical achievements across the projects helps our understanding of the nature of musical advancement across the programme as a whole.

Songwriting

Particularly collaborative songwriting, emerged as a key area of musical learning, linked in some cases to song recall. Sound Minds, Spitalfields Music, PMZ, Greenwich, Sing Up East Kent, Music and the Deaf, Sing Up Bedfordshire and Vocal Force Prisons are strong examples of projects where songwriting was identified as a marker of participants' musical development. Song construction, lyric writing, rhyme and imagery were identified by Greenwich as key components of musical learning related to songwriting.

Warm Ups

Learning and/or devising musical warm ups was a particular feature of musical learning for singing leaders, but also singled out by young participants as an area of singing they particularly enjoyed. In Sing Up Coventry, for example, children had opportunities to both lead warm ups and devise their own ones. Pie Factory also highlighted learning vocal warm ups as an important area of musical learning and development.

Technical Skills

All projects reporting varying degrees of learning in relation to technical skills. Examples of the range include:

'Furthermore, it is important to understand that 'singing' may not be 'singing' in the more conventional sense of using language and set pitches and learned 'song' but more the ability to consciously or intentionally vocalise in some way during a given musical activity.'

- Looked after children, whose musical development 'exceeded expectations. They sang in tune, in key, and on time' (Whitewood and Fleming).
- Tone and quality when holding notes, vocal action in singing style and delivery. Learning vocal warm ups and techniques; ability to see weak and strong points as singers; timing, harmonies and pitching (Pie Factory). Pie Factory also noted the impact on musical progression from one on one sessions.

'One on one workshops have definitely allowed improvement in actual singing skills. Time can be taken to work in areas of diction, pitching, breathing techniques etc. It definitely speeds up the progression process a lot quicker than the group lessons. The positive knock on effects are some more skills being introduced to the dynamics of the bigger groups'.

At PMZ, autistic children and children with challenging behaviours developed their abilities to sing songs as well as engage in songwriting. At the other end of the spectrum children with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) also developed their singing skills as a result of this project. PMZ notes that

'...the development and change in these children is often on a long-term basis and this change may often be deemed as 'minimal'. However, these little steps may have a large impact on the lives of an individual for whom so much is challenging. Furthermore, it is important to understand that 'singing' may not be 'singing' in the more conventional sense of using language and set pitches and learned 'song' but more the ability to consciously or intentionally vocalise in some way during a given musical activity'.

In addition to songwriting and warm ups, Spitalfields Music highlighted musical development in harmony/rounds and solo improvisation. Cheltenham reported improvements in fluency, competence and harmony. Sing Up Burton, in addition to songwriting and warm ups, found that musical learning encompassed singing specific notes, rhythm development, volume control, pitch, use of equipment, breathing and composition.

In Greenwich, the range of musical development was broad and progressive over phases. Participants gained practical skills in singing and performance and have come to understand singing as a 'physical discipline, learning about singing technique and the human body.' Children learned to develop a musical language. Early years children could count the first five notes of a major scale and learned to differentiate between high and low, loud and quiet, fast and slow. KS2 children learned major scales and harmonies, acquired an understanding of musical terms such as tempo, beat, melody, harmony, bass line, counter melody, legato, crescendo and diminuendo. They also learned song construction, lyric writing, rhyme and imagery. Older groups learnt the difference between major and minor scales and harmonies, Phrygian mode, how to create harmonies as well as how to lead vocal jams etc.

Sing Up Southampton reported improvement in the quality of singing and responding to direction, learning and performance. They highlighted listening skills, blending, balancing and memorising as part of the learning for all children. Sing Up Bedfordshire highlighted participants' creative development; in Sing Up East Kent children were reported to have improved in pitch matching and quality, with SEN children learning pitch skills and inverting melodies. Music and the Deaf reported that participants' learned how to sing, sign, compose and perform.

The rich diversity of achievement across projects highlighted in the Sing Up documents help to contextualise and illustrate the overall cross-programme advances for children and young people found by Welch. They also help to illustrate the PMZ contention that advances in musical development and learning are part of a wide spectrum.

Progression
There was some evidence of attention to progression across the projects, particularly in one-on-one working. Pie Factory noted in particular that one on one workshops speeded up the progression process in improved vocals and improvement in singing skills through one on one workshops faster than the group lessons. Generally attention to progression was most strongly evidenced in the projects which were working with young people with SEN – including Drake Music and PMZ.

Progression in the wider environment

It is also worth noting the impact of the young people's musical learning and development on their subsequent progress within the wider musical environment. The following examples illustrate this:

- A singer from Sing Up London was asked to sing at the British Red Cross VE Day Gala celebrations at Royal Albert Hall and then auditioned for and was successful in achieving the part of Michael Jackson in the West End Theatre production of Thriller Live.

- Sing Up Flagship: City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO) reported that some of the children successfully auditioned to become members of the CBSO Children's Chorus and CBSO Boys' Choir.

- A boy from Pinchmill Lower School (Sing Up Bedfordshire) was accepted as a choral scholar at one of the colleges at Oxford University.

- A girl from Sing Up London (Newham) was offered a place in the Royal Opera House Children's choir following a solo she sang in a Sing Up performance at the Royal Festival Hall.

- A boy from Sing Up Flagship Association of British Choral Directors said that 'It's certainly affected my reputation and made me more popular, I have even sung a solo on the radio with my school choir as part of the Big School Sing Up. I sang a song that Mrs Churchley provided for me which was given to her on a Sing Up course. My singing has enabled me to gain a place in the Cornwall Boy's Choir and I have appeared on television on the programme Songs of Praise. It's given me new opportunities and changed my life so much'. (Constantine School)

Children and Young People as Singing Leaders

Musical learning and development for this group went hand in hand with their learning about leading singing. For examples trainees in one project learned specific skills such as how to build up vocally, decide what would suit different voices, songwriting skills, vocal and physical warm ups, and 'how to bring people out of their shells'.

Yorkshire Youth and Music Young Leaders learned about conducting at the same time as they developed their own musical knowledge. They also learned how to teach people to sing a song, how to choose the appropriate song (e.g. high for young children), posture and techniques for leading a choir.

Adults as Trainers

Some project leaders reported on the impact of their own involvement in Sing Up and the difference which it had made to their professional knowledge, skills and values. For example, Sound Minds trainers learnt:

'...workshop leaders have been powerfully affected by the difference they have made to young people. It has made them think outside the box about ways of teaching and communicating with young people. They have had to work in areas that are not always comfortable for them'

• techniques for helping children work in a group, such as sharing resources and activities;

• to choose, on an informed basis, when to alternate between group work and individual exercises; and

• knowing how to be strategic when simultaneously running a workshop for young people, offering trainees a chance to make inputs and trying to demonstrate the value of the work to sceptical professionals (e.g. mental health workers).

Pie Factory reported that

'...workshop leaders have been powerfully affected by the difference they have made to young people. It has made them think outside the box about ways of teaching and communicating with young people. They have had to work in areas that are not always comfortable for them'.

They also commented on the value of Sing Up's away days:

'Opportunities to share and network have increased cross project learning and project delivery improved as a result of that shared learning'.

Trainers involved with Music for the Deaf described (among other things) the impact on the Singing Leader's compositional technique through working non-vocally. This has developed understanding of the 'visual and emotional impact music can have on people when it is signed'.

Adults as Participants

Chat on the Sing Up website offers a flavour of some of the learning for participant staff in schools. For example one assistant head described how she used daily, simple, warm up songs with all the children in the hall with which all the school staff joined in. They focused on pitch and listening to each other sing.

Other school-based staff shared their strategies for encouraging participation: for example 'finding out what sorts of music they listen to at home' and 'using pop songs as a motivator for older boys'.

In terms of specific musical skills, the Voices Foundation reported that staff had acquired basic repertoire and the musical skills for the early stages of music teaching using their singing voice. They learned about their singing voices and their own vocal development, about singing in harmony and music elements such as pitch, rhythm, pulse and structure. They also developed skills in listening, thinking,

memorising, musical vocabulary and the appropriate use of instruments. In the process they acquired 'a huge range of songs and singing games'. Importantly for their students, they also developed their understanding of the musical learning process and the progression of skills. Other projects also commented on different aspects of the musical development of school staff. In Cheltenham, for example teachers became 'more knowledgeable about harmonies and singing in parts'. PMZ reported that school staff were included in the process of developing the resources – 'this helps them to improve their own professional development and delivery to the participants'.

Leadership Learning

Some of the project leaders detailed the learning from their work specifically for the benefit of other Sing Up project leaders. For example, Cherry Trees is a local authority maintained special school for primary age boys who have BESD (behavioural, emotional and social difficulties but trainers in the project believe the learning would benefit mainstream settings too. In such settings, their experiences have taught them that success requires the full backing of senior leaders and the full involvement of key staff in school planning, agreeing joint aims and objectives together with the music trainers. They also benefited from the opportunity to observe a school day prior to starting the project. Training sessions for staff prior to the team starting work were essential.

Other aspects of leadership learning across the projects clustered around a number of key learning areas.

Sustainment

Many of these related to embedding the intervention and sustaining activities over time. These included:

- daily planning meetings with the whole teaching team staff. Also, Music and the Deaf, like Spitalfields Music, found it essential to have the support of teachers and teaching assistants 'no matter how many ideas you come in to school with';

- the musicians becoming part of the whole school for the duration of the project, and fully involved in the daily activities;

- two weeks (every morning) for the whole school to be taken 'off curriculum'; and

- lesson plans were drafted by the workshop leaders and shared with the teaching team at Cherry Trees so that the school could contribute to how the sessions were developed and give advice on what works best in terms of engagement, access and personal learning plans for the young people.

Communication

Communication was another key aspect of leadership learning. Examples included:

- clear communication of concerns by teaching staff so that these could be addressed during the project;

- time allocated for debriefing at the end of each day;

- a mid-project formative evaluation meeting which set out the plan for the following week of the project; and

- Music and the Deaf emphasized the need for regular contact. 'The more frequent the contact the greater the transformation'.

Motivation

Leaders noted the importance of eagerness to learn new ways of working and benefiting from the professional expertise from all people involved, whether teachers or musicians.

Supporting musicians when difficulties were encountered during sessions was also an important part of sustaining motivation.
The role of the Spitalfields Music Management Team as facilitator and co-ordinator of meetings was regarded as key to the organisation of the project.

Further reflections from other projects help enrich this learning. For example Choir of the Year emphasised the need for localism for ease of co-ordination and reducing travel expenses. They would also have benefited from more rehearsal time and more opportunities for visits to individual schools by Young Leaders.

Finally Drake Music emphasized the need for student ownership and agency. They recommended that project leaders learn to 'take the lead from the participants'. Planning was important but leaders should be prepared to ditch or modify their plans in the light of student voice. Student voice and ownership, they learned, was essential to making the projects work.

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Organisational Impact

Organisations providing project leadership reported impacts from their participation in Sing Up, as well as the impact on the schools and settings with which they worked. For example, PMZ felt that the project has 'helped to encourage music leaders, SEN teachers and support staff to deliver music making sessions in their schools'. Pie Factory believed themselves to have benefited from the opportunity 'to try different ways of providing singing and music making activities to young people they haven't reached before'. This has helped their strategic planning for workshops and wider audiences in the future.

Voices Foundation reported that the programme had affected the whole school: 'all teachers in the school improved the quality of their music teaching. Children walk around the school singing; the office reception staff sing'. Supersing Liverpool also reported an increase in the singing culture of the schools; greater involvement of the children – especially boys – and an increase in the quality of the singing.

Drivers and Inhibitors

'One headteacher was so impressed by the impact of Sing Up on her SEN students that she extended training to all staff, including training assistants. She also funded two more twilight sessions for teaching staff.'

Amongst the challenges encountered by Sing Up were the physical barriers and communications barriers faced by many of the children and young people they worked with. Learning techniques such as signing and music assistive technology (AMT) were found by Drake Music to be central to working with such students. They used the Song Bank to take apart the songs to use with Clicker 5. They also worked in partnership with the Paediatric Communication Aid Service to adapt the resources. The ordinary microphone was a commonly used tool, sometimes adapted with a relay or echo.

One of the drivers for the projects was student enthusiasm. For example Vocal Force Selby was able to capitalise on initial student keenness, irrespective of their singing prowess.

School leaders themselves could become drivers for the projects. One headteacher was so impressed by the impact of Sing Up on her SEN students that she extended training to all staff, including training assistants. She also funded two more twilight sessions for teaching staff.

Musical Learning and Development: Connections to the Wider Evidence Base

In terms of musical learning and development the evidence from the wider (international) knowledge base highlights the links between particular types of strategies, across a range of interventions. These range from whole school, cross-curriculum, singing interventions to performance based interventions. The following specific strategies were associated with successful music learning and development:

- effective use of tools and resources, including guidance in their selection and use according to the developmental needs of the young people;

- paying careful attention to progression (including making progress and next steps explicit to teachers and children);

- training and CPD: using best evidence about effective CPD (including the use of modelling and sustained input) when training adults unused or unconfident about singing;

- peer to peer collaboration;

- effective use of technology;

- training class teachers in primary school for delivering singing because they have better knowledge of their pupils than itinerant specialists;

- sustaining the intervention over time; and

- devising methods of measuring success.

There was some evidence of attention to progression across the projects, particularly in one-on-one working and in the SEN projects, including Drake Music and PMZ. Progression in terms of the wider musical environment was also evidenced in a number of projects. Training and CPD were strongly evidenced in all the projects, both through the process data and through the impact on participants.

'It was clear overall from the project reports that the use of pre-selected Sing Up resources, in some cases coupled with innovative technologies, was highly instrumental in music learning and development for participants, including adults.'

In terms of resources, most projects made effective use of the Sing Up Song Bank, adapted for their own needs and purposes. Warm up resources were singled out, particularly by Young Leaders and school staff, in many of the project reports. In the case of several of the BTM projects, the Song Bank was mined for its resources which were then mediated through technology for use by children with special needs. It was clear overall from the project reports that the use of pre-selected Sing Up resources, in some cases coupled with innovative technologies, was highly instrumental in music learning and development for participants, including adults. They were also a key tool for trainers and singing leaders.

Much of the learning across the projects reported by leaders related to sustaining the intervention over time.

It was not clear from the evidence what measures were in place in individual schools and settings for measuring success relative to the overall aims of the individual projects in terms of musical learning and development. But many of the projects reported substantial impact on young people and on adult participants relative to where they started from. These were particularly evident in the development of technical skills and in songwriting.

There are also strong links between the music pedagogies employed in the projects (e.g. peer working, group working) and the international evidence base about effective pedagogies linked to raised achievement.

Methods

Ninety-nine project reports and related evidence, ranging between internal evaluations and external assessment, were selected by Sing Up as a basis for a number of synthesis evaluation reports. The documents were coded by a team of CUREE researchers as likely to yield evidence for each of the themed reports. The data were then extracted by the same team, using Nvivo software, for each of the themes identified by Sing Up. The data extraction framework, based on questions focused on both impact and processes for each of the themes, was agreed in advance with Sing Up. The resulting data was then analysed and synthesised so that the key messages for each theme could be reported.

The current report is based on the documents which were identified as containing data relevant to the theme of Musical Learning and Development. A total of 23 projects had information relating to the theme.

Data gathering across the projects reviewed in this report came from a variety of sources. Most commonly, Project Leaders used surveys and/or interviews to collect perception data from participating or leading adults. In the majority of projects this was triangulated with music specialist perceptions and, in a few cases, the collected views of young participants and Singing Leaders. Individual case studies also featured in the project documentation and, in three projects parental perceptions were also collected.

Observations by external specialists (including Area Leaders or the Music Service, for example) or by school or setting practitioners were also recorded in several projects. In one case (Spitalfields Music) detailed diaries were maintained and in another (PMZ) an elaborate evaluation toolkit encouraged participant self evaluation as well as external assessment.

Glossary

Sing Up Awards
The Awards have helped schools to embed singing throughout their school life, encouraging them to celebrate their singing. There are three different levels of Award: Silver, Gold and Platinum. The Awards are specially designed to work across different types of school, including SEN settings.

Beyond the Mainstream (BTM)
Sing Up made a commitment to ensure that its work impacts upon all primary aged children, including children in SEN schools, Pupil Referral Units, looked after children, children with mental health issues and many others early in 2009, and the stream of work that underpins this commitment throughout the programme is called Beyond the Mainstream. BTM broadly focuses on children who can't access primary mainstream school (in SEN or PRU settings) as well as those who have difficulties accessing primary mainstream (including looked after children, children with EBD, children with mental health difficulties etc).

Sing Up Clusters
Sing Up Clusters have helped secondary schools to lead innovative singing projects with their feeder primary schools. The programme aims to train and inspire singing leaders and enables schools to work positively with pupils' transition issues. Clusters work with 240 schools across the nation, introducing exciting singing opportunities to over 7,500 pupils.

Sing Up Flagships
Sing Up Flagships are leading singing advocate organisations that work to share and develop best practice through projects, performances and resources. Nine organisations have worked as Flagships, with most programmes typically lasting 2 years. Thousands of children, practitioners and singing leaders have benefited nationwide from their work.

Sing Up Communities
Sing Up Communities have been run by arts organisations and music services that work with primary-aged children. They aim to place singing at the heart of the community. Each project has run for two years and aims to reach over 2,000 primary-aged children. Work includes the development of young singing leaders and encouraging singing out of school hours.

Vocal Force
Vocal Force was originally a project based on the innovative Vocal Union programme devised by The Sage Gateshead, before becoming part of Sing Up in 2008. Vocal Force aimed to foster a peer support network for sharing learning and exploring ways of sustaining networks. It has created over 60 bespoke projects to increase the skills, confidence and repertoire of more than 3,000 singing leaders.