

Sound Connections

Case study

innovate 2014:

MWAH CIC – South Sounds

Written by Nicola Kelly

June 2015



National Foundation for
Youth Music

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LOTTERY FUNDED

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MWAH CIC overview

[MWAH \(Multicultural Wellbeing and Healing\) CIC](#) is an ideal-driven community development business which exists to reduce isolation and increase community cohesion through caring for the self and, in turn, caring for the community. We work with a wide range of participants – from babies to elders and anyone in-between – and deliver high quality projects which use art, wellbeing and intergenerational activities to build social networks and increase resilience.

South Sounds (Year 6 transition project)

Aim

We wanted to create an opportunity for children and their families to talk about the idea of transition in a fun and non-threatening way. We set out to create sound and music workshops which would lead to families making soundscapes which explored the theme of transition. We would enable a space for safe, playful and meaningful interaction between parent or carers and Year 6 children.

Objectives

- **Test new ideas** – we had invested in a number of training courses delivered by Sound Connections and the British Association of Sound Therapy (BAST), and we wanted to use these new techniques, skills, research and knowledge
- **Enable children to try something different** – we wanted to provide an opportunity for children and their parents/carers to learn, play and understand each other through music and sound
- **Develop our skills** – we wanted to use the Innovate funding to experiment, reflect, and critique our model, collate feedback and tweak our practice so that we could evidence the need for this work in our locality

Our Journey

Croydon Youth Arts were really supportive and promoted our activities to all schools on their mailing list. Unfortunately, none of these schools recruited participants, and the sessions we had planned were cancelled. In November 2014 I contacted the schools and asked them to give me feedback into why recruitment had been unsuccessful:

- Parents were unable to attend sessions after school due to work commitments or looking after younger siblings
- Problems with the timing of the project within the school year, e.g. clashes with the children taking exams or viewing secondary schools
- Teachers were busy with their workload, and therefore could not fully commit to the extra work needed to get parents on board
- No schools took up the option of weekend sessions

In January 2015, having consulted Sound Connections, we opened the sessions out to other organisations and South London boroughs. We contacted:

- Lewisham Education Arts Network (LEAN)
- Launcelot Primary School, Lewisham
- Forest Academy, Croydon
- Horniman Museum



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- Merton Voluntary Service Council (MCVS)
- Haslemere and Benedict Primary Schools

What happened next?

We decided to utilise our networks and offer bespoke workshops to different types of organisations. The workshops detailed below have been instrumental in helping us grow, establish networks, test out idea, build confidence, and create a portfolio of work.

Crystal Palace Overground Festival, June 2014

We used drums and percussion in rhythmical games to be spontaneous in the moment. The session catered for 7-11 year olds and their parents or carers. We had seven families (16 participants) attend the session which lasted for one hour. Feedback from the participants was really positive, with many of them asking where we ran our weekly session.

Sutton Housing Partnership, August 2014

We delivered a three-week pilot programme of hand drumming and meditation called 'Drumming for Health' for older people from the Sutton Housing Partnership. The group of seven participants expressed a great desire for the programme to continue; their impact assessments showed an increased level of wellbeing, and the feedback showed that the participants loved taking part in a structure activity and found the social connection of being together very important.

Baby Rhyme and Time, September 2014

We took the instruments into MWAH's own intergenerational project. Parents and older people created magical soundscapes that were played around the babies. This session was really successful and attracted three new members to our project.

Anthony Roper Primary School, January 2015

We put together a workshop called 'Sounding Beauty' for their Year 4 pupils. Three sessions took place during normal school hours, had 30 children in each session, and lasted an hour and a half. We used the story of 'Sleeping Beauty' as inspiration to create our soundscapes. The students had lots of fun spending time together playing unique instruments from around the world, ranging from gongs, to singing bowls, drums and percussion.

This was a really fantastic experience and gave us the opportunity to test out ideas and develop our skills as practitioners. One teacher said that the sessions had showed her how she could bring music into her lessons, as this was something she had never done before and had not felt confident doing. The children loved the instruments; they found the sound of the 'wah wah' very funny and were amazed at how the bowls could sing. The feedback from the children was really positive:

"We love music"

"This is epic"

"The thunder drum is the best"

Launcelot Primary School, March 2015

We ran sessions for two families (two adults and seven children). We asked them to create sounds that represented how the family might feel the night before their children started their new school. In the following weeks the families discussed what it was actually going to be like on



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the first day at their new schools, focusing on feelings, concerns, nervousness, getting lost, meeting new people, eating in the dinner hall, having fun etc. The children rose to the challenge in their soundscapes, slamming doors to represent getting lost in their new school, and scribbling on paper to represent working in class. They also added laughter and running around to emphasise play time.

Evaluations from both the children and the parents were extremely positive. A recurring theme was that there should be more local creative activities for children to participate in. Parents had also found it useful to spend time with their children discussing the theme of transition in a fun and not a 'heavy' way:

"This [project] has been great as we got to spend time together in a fun way. We got to speak to each other... using music to talk was brilliant because that is what the kids do, they listen to music and that is how they communicate.. There should be much more of this."

Next steps

- MWAH with Launcelot Primary School have just applied for funding to deliver the 'Community All Star' project, a creative family venture that includes musical activities. We will also be piloting a 'Carer for the Carer' programme, through which we will deliver sound baths and meditation sessions for teachers
- MWAH with Sutton Housing Partnership have applied to the People's Health Trust to develop a weekly drumming and wellness programme for older people
- MWAH has partnered with Paxton Green Time Bank and are delivering a community choir
- MWAH in partnership with This Way Up Wellbeing have been awarded funding from HeadStart Lewisham, an initiative funded by the Big Lottery, to deliver a series of wellbeing activities aimed at young people. Activities include sound therapy, music workshops, laughter yoga, art, and tai chi.
- We will hopefully be working with Benedict Primary School after Easter 2015 to deliver our South Sounds sessions
- We have updated our website and will be promoting our unique and fun activities for schools
- We will keep in contact with the Horniman Museum and Croydon Forrest School with the hope of working with them in the future

Further Comments

I would like to thank the team at Sound Connections for all their support during this journey. What we have gained as an organisation is invaluable in terms of being able to experiment, networking, and developing our skills. We are much more confident in what we are able to deliver. We know that our South Sounds Session has real potential and we feel that with a bit of tweaking we have a really special activity for families to engage in. During the year we also developed our 'Sounding Beauty' workshops. This was a truly amazing experience and has lead us down a path of creating soundscapes around other fairy tales and fables.



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