



LEYMIN

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now we make music

A case study by Catherine Todd, Training and Quality Manager at Camden Council

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Introduction

Catherine Todd, Training and Quality Manager at Camden Council, reflects on Camden's journey to skill-up practitioners and embed music in early years settings across the borough.

Music in early years should be part and parcel of a good early years provision, but often the musical offer is fairly limited or altogether neglected. However, in Camden, we are working towards making musical provision an integral part of a quality early years setting.

Our musical journey started with our partnership with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment (OAE) six years ago. Based 'just over the bridge' from our office, at Kings Place, the OAE offers a comprehensive Education Programme and were already working in primary schools in Camden. Working with Cecelia Bruggemeyer (lead musician for the project and double bass player at the OAE) and Cherry Forbes (Education Director at the OAE), we came up with a format for an Early Years Programme that made the most of the resources available.

This included:

- An informal get-together to introduce the project to the practitioners who are leading it, and a few OAE musicians.
- A planning visit to the setting where Cecelia has a look round to see what space is available, and agrees with the lead practitioner how the sessions are going to be delivered, building on what the setting already does.
- Two (sometimes three) delivery visits where two OAE musicians come for two to three hours and carry out workshops with the children and staff (and very often parents too!).
- The final get-together session, which is similar to the first but has a focus to go through the activities and songs with a view to ensure the legacy of the project.
- Our very own 'Tots Concerts' at the end of the project. For the last couple of years, thanks to a grant from the John Lyons Foundation, the OAE has organised a Tots Concert (identical to concerts delivered for members of the public) for the participants that have taken part in the project that year. This means that children, staff and parents are able to come to Kings Place and enjoy music making at its best.

Project aims

Our project aims were:

- To make music an integral part of children's development
- To demystify classical music to children, staff and parents
- For sheer fun and enjoyment

The projects have been funded by Camden Council (Integrated Early Years Service), the OAE, and – for the last two years – the John Lyons Foundation.

Outcomes

Every year we have run the project has been different, but invariably it has taken the children, staff and parents involved on a musical journey of discovery. Here is some of the feedback we have received.

From the children

"The violin has a short neck. I like the big, double bass. It was that big."

"I like the songs, the 'hello' one."

From some of the lead practitioners

"The project was a huge success. I know that a lot of my staff hadn't even seen those instruments up close before, so it was a new treat for them too! These visits should continue so that all the settings in Camden can experience it. The children are still talking about the visit and the work that I did with them on the orchestra, despite 2 months passing. They loved it!"

Lead practitioner, Voluntary Sector setting

"It has been a great opportunity to involve parents and together explore new musical styles; it has supported and promoted a stronger partnership with the parents/carers. Parent involvement in the nursery is something we always striving to do and taking part in this project has enforced that."

Head of Children's Centre

"The parents really enjoyed the concert. They were so impressed to have these opportunities on offer to our children. The project inspired one parent to invite some of our children to a concert being performed at his art gallery. Our Head of Centre said that she felt that the way the concert was performed made classical music accessible to all of the different ages and backgrounds of the families that were attending, making it an engaging experience for all."

Project Lead practitioner, Children's Centre

From some of the parents

"My child really enjoyed the session. I liked watching him concentrate. I like the music played."

"The concert visit was fantastic. I enjoyed seeing all the different type of instruments – particularly the trumpet which kept changing! It was so lovely that everyone from nursery could go and it was a great morning out."

From project partners

"It has been a pleasure to work with early years settings in Camden over the last six years on a variety of projects. Players from the OAE are delighted to be involved with the youngest of music lovers to share their own love of music and the instruments that they play. It becomes a cycle of learning with children learning from OAE musicians whilst OAE musicians and sector professionals learn and share their expertise together. For me a phrase that seems really key here is 'seeing is believing' – to see how a young child can be inspired by music is exhilarating and for parents to see how their children react in a concert setting can be a revelation. We look forward to many more collaborative projects in the future which may well unlock doors to learning for many."

Cherry Forbes, OAE Education Director

Next steps

Our musical journey continued, based on two principles:

- That music is good for children's well-being and development, and can deliver on all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).
- That we needed to create a sustainable and lasting musical offer to ensure our investment had a long-term impact.

Our next step was to train early years practitioners to be Music Leaders. The Music Leaders undertook three days of training delivered by Nicola Burke, an early years music specialist and member of the [London Early Years Music Network](#) (LEYMN).

The training covered:

- Children's musicality and musical environments
- Elements of music and composition
- Musical stories and effective auditory environments

No previous musical skills were required from the participants, just lots of enthusiasm and commitment to develop or extend musical activities in their setting. It was very successful and here is some of the feedback we have received:

From one of the participants

"Absolutely fantastic course. Full of well-researched information, helpful tips for resources and practice. Best course I've been on so far. Nicola shares her knowledge in a very interesting and fun way. I felt that every participant was listening and taking things in all the times. I really enjoyed it and everyone at my setting noticed the difference: we're giving children more chances to use different kinds of instruments, learn new songs, games and activities. And it's amazing for all learning areas."

From the trainer, Nicola Burke

"Delivering the three-day Music Leader course for Camden Early Years is a rare and wonderful opportunity. It is great to work with an Early Years' Service that understands and values the importance of creativity and music in early childhood. The time between the training sessions enabled practitioners to develop their music provision, try out new ideas and then come back to reflect and discuss challenges and successes. Throughout the course practitioners deepen their understanding of music making and how it supports all areas of the EYFS."

Future plans

The Music Leaders are now meeting once a term, in a newly created network to keep the momentum going, share their ideas and support each other, as well as keeping up with research and new developments.

Has it been worth it? In the words of one of the Music Leaders, "We used to make a lot of noise, and now we make music." I think that says it all!

For further information, please contact:

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