

Cornwall Music Service Trust
Early Years Music Education Service
Phase 4 Research Project.

Cornwall Childminders EYMES Project Case Study

Written by Ann Stott with contributions from Jenny Crow and Childminders in Cornwall

“To what extent can monthly Music Activities impact on Childminders practice and their recognition of and response to children’s innate musicality.”

In response to enquiries from childminders attending our EYMES CPD events, the CMST EYMES Cornwall Childminders Project was formed. This supported Childminders and their children across Cornwall and was fully funded by CMST EYMES.

Ann Stott (Lead for CMST EYMES) collaborated with Mary-Ann Trethewey (Early Years Childcare Support Assistant, Childminder Support, Cornwall Council) to identify Childminders in Cornwall interested in being part of the project.

Six groups of Childminders across the county took part in the project. Some groups already met on a regular basis, others were formed specifically to take part in the project. Some of the groups met in Family Hubs for free whilst others collectively paid for a venue.

The groups were located in Launceston, Bodmin, St Austell, St Columb, Falmouth and Porthleven. They ranged in size from 3 Childminders and 5 children to 11 Childminders and 26 children. The children in the groups had an age range of 6 months to 36 months and came from a variety of socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds.

The Project

Ann Stott (CMST EYMES Lead) delivered the project across the six groups, assisted by Jenny Crow (CMST EYMES Music Leader) at Porthleven from January 2020.

Ann met with each group in July 2019 to outline the project delivery and research question.

The delivery of the project began on the 9th September 2019 and had been devised to run until June 2020. However with the COVID19 pandemic hitting the United Kingdom and subsequent lockdown the project delivery ended in March 2020.

During the term of the project, each group received a one hour music activities session once a month. All of the sessions were free flowing allowing the children to dip in and out of activities. Each session included singing and music activities led by Ann or Jenny, followed by free time for the children to interact with items for provocation e.g scarves, puppets, recorded music, instruments. There was also time for feedback and reflection from the Childminders about how their children engaged with the activities and the impact on their practice.

Our aims and hopes for the outcomes of the project.

- To support Childminders to recognise and respond to the innate musicality of the children in their care.
- To increase the confidence of Childminders to interact in musical play with the children in their care.
- To increase the repertoire and musical activities used by Childminders in their settings.
- To increase the confidence of Childminders to continue to provide musical experiences for their children post project.
- To support Childminders with access to CPD and Networking post project.
- To network with Childminders and share the CMST EYMES ethos of recognising and responding to children’s innate musicality.

First Steps

In initial meetings with the Childminder Groups, Ann discussed the ethos and approach of CMST EYMES emphasising our child led approach and the importance of recognising and responding to the children's innate musicality.

A baseline questionnaire was completed by each of the Childminders. This gave information about how they used singing and music in their settings, how confident they felt about this and what they wanted to achieve from the project. The majority of responses expressed a lack of confidence in making music with their children and the need for new ideas and repertoire. There were questions from the Childminders about how the children should access the sessions. Should they be sitting in a circle, should all the toys be put away?

It was decided that the best environment was the one that was most comfortable and consistent for the children.

Toys were available for play and the sessions were free flowing allowing the children to access the activities as and when they wished.

Project Delivery

Each Group session began with Ann catching up with the Childminders and reminding them to fill in their Group Feedback book. Each Group had their own feedback book to record activities they had done with the children between sessions, observations they had made in and outside of the music sessions and comments on parents observations. The Childminders also used this book to communicate their ideas and any changes to their practice.

Ann sat down in the venue and began singing, usually with scarves or another prop, whilst the children played.

Gradually the children gathered around her, curious to hear and see what was happening. Initially some children were very shy but became more engaged through the sessions. The childminders were encouraged to join with their children in all the activities. Some found this easier than others but as they became used to how the sessions ran they all joined together with the children in their care.

Some of Ann's initial observations;

As I sang "Flying Colours" and threw the scarves the children gradually came to investigate what I was doing. I invited them to choose a colour, most chose a scarf and sat down around me, some stood with their scarf. All the Childminders joined in with the children.

We played with scarves creating a voice play, movement and peek-a-boo game. I used my scarf as a horses tail and some of the children copied and we galloped around the room.



"Roll the Ball" went down well, some Childminders were more confident in singing individually than others.

There was a lovely moment just as I was about to put the ball away. J (10 months) shuffled towards me and reached for the ball. He gave a lot of eye contact and I rolled the ball to him and sang the song. He tentatively pushed the ball back to me keeping eye contact. This engagement was then repeated again. - The Childminders were very interested in this engagement, a great example of innate musicality and communication!



The provocation worked and the children gradually engaged in Voice Play with the scarves. The children and CM's gradually formed a loose circle around me and we continued with all the planned activities.

L (about 6 months old) joined the group around the giant scrunchy as we sang "Row, row". She rocked backwards and forwards to the pulse of the song. This was a great example of children's innate musicality and I was able to point this out to the Childminders. Later her Childminder pointed out that she was rocking to the Saint-Saens music being played.



Ann shared a range of simple, repetitive, repertoire and music activities throughout the sessions, encouraging the Childminders to record the group singing to help them remember the songs for use with their children in their settings.

At the end of the session some of the Childminders joined together to sing and record "My Big Blue Boat".

The initial feedback from the Childminders groups was very positive and many of them began to use the ideas and activities from the first session in their settings;

"Some practical ideas to take back"

"Enlightening - to see children's musicality in action"

"A really enjoyable session to see and help the children engage with music - lots of useful ideas and rhymes to take back and apply to music sessions within our setting - thank you."

"The 3 yrs old really took to the scarves moving to the music. Will be taking these ideas back to try at home."

"Gave me some great ideas - love the "big blue boat" song. Will make a big elastic band!!"

"Great session - lovely to see the children engaged and some good tips for the adults too."

"Lovely to see children engaged in rhythmic singing, swaying to beat etc. Also a reminder to put on more classical music just to move to. Looking forward to next session."

Project Development

Each month's sessions were planned to allow repetition of songs and activities previously learned, introduce a new song/activity and experience live and recorded music. At the end of each session there was time for the children to play with props, instruments or just relax and listen to music.

Session Log Extracts;

Denise (CM) played with one of her younger children, he began to gently tap the drum with a small maraca then he dropped a small cylindrical, wooden brick on to the drum. It made a soft sound and rolled off the drum. Denise then dropped it on the drum and repeated the game. They took turns for a few minutes, using sound to create a dialogue with each other.

In the freeplay F experimented with the Thunder Drum shaking it and tapping the top which distorted the sound, he really seemed to like that. He moved around the setting with

the Thunder Drum , exploring timbre by tapping the spring against different surfaces eg. metal bead slide, large drum skin.

During the project Ann was shadowed by musicians from CMST, who were training to deliver future EYMES projects. Each of the musicians joined in with the session activities, made observations and shared their individual instrumental expertise with the group. This enabled the trainees to gain valuable early years experience whilst providing the Childminders and children with a first class musical experience.

Session Log Extract 1;



Veronika shared her violin with the children, they were very curious, some gathered around her keen to touch the violin and pluck the strings.

Veronika played several pieces for the children they were mesmerised at first. Scarves and small percussion instruments were put out for the children to use alongside listening to Veronika.

Some children danced with the scarves others played along with an instrument.

“My children were fascinated with the violin, lots of eye contact with the lady.”

“Lovely to see the children's reactions to the violin being played - one of my children was absolutely mesmerised by the sound.”

“The children responded with awe at the violin, noticing the loud and soft “quiet” parts of the song. When it stopped one child said “it’s on again”, another child was moving side to side. One watched and took in all the sounds and sights.”

Session Log Extract 2;



Everyone loved having Jenny there with her guitar.

Jenny had some visual resources to help the children follow her songs, which worked well. The children were engaged throughout the songs.

As part of the guitar activity I shared fruit shakers, small maracas, wrist bells and other small percussion with the group and they played along to Jenny’s guitar.

Jenny gave the children the opportunity to explore her guitar by strumming, plucking and tapping the wooden body.

“Another lovely interactive session. The children love the engaging learning environment and represent it in their own play and within the setting. The ‘real life’ instrument was a hit!”

“The children were really interested in the guitar and loved having a go at playing it. M was really excited to come to group to do ‘singing with the lady’.”

Session Log Extract 3;

Sophie introduced her Flute to the group and played several pieces. The children used scarves and small percussion to interact with Sophie's playing.



“A 15mth responded well to the flute music dancing and using her instruments.”

“My quieter, more reserved 34 mth old loved the flute and did watch intently without much moving but it completely kept his attention.”

“The children sat ready for the session, they were engaged the whole time. Moved rhythmically to the flute playing.”

Project Outcomes

As the project progressed it was apparent, from their feedback, that the Childminders were recognising the innate musicality of the children in their care and responding to it by making changes in their practice.

“2 children stood at the piano at home and gradually moved so that each one had each end. One child was singing very low at the low end and the other child was singing with a screechy voice as he was at the high sounding end.”

“Sent an email to tell you about the drumming on the terra cotta pots at Heligan. The children then realised that using different size pots made different sounds.”

“At home the children are using the instruments more now we have them in a basket on the floor. They will grab them to do singing. They are moving their bodies more to the beat.”

“The children really loved the drums, the different types and the different beaters, exploring lots of sounds and volumes. The children in my setting last week started to tap to the beat which I now noticed - where I wouldn't have before.”

Session Log Extract - Bodmin Group Session 3

Sarah (CM) showed me a video of one of her children playing a keyboard in her setting. She now has instruments out all the time in her setting. When she sings with the children they often choose an instrument to play too.

Denise (CM) sings more in her setting. She is using silly songs that she makes up to help to settle her new children. She is finding that this works really well.

Session Log Extract - Falmouth Group Session 5

Joanna (CM) showed me a video of a child in her setting playing the piano and singing. She had seen Joanna playing with both hands and copied when she played.

Extract from email dated 8th March 2020

I wanted to share with you how the sessions have impacted on my setting and children. Apart from learning the new songs, I have stopped using CDs, YouTube singing etc and we purely have singing at the children's own pace. Instruments are always available to all children. We sing a wider variety of songs rather than just asking the children which song they would like to sing

and doing the same songs over and over. I have also tried singing instructions to the children and that has been working well (E.G. 'Can we tidy up now', 'It's time to wash our hands' etc').

It has also been fantastic for the little boy I bring, he has SEN and health issues and his Mum and teacher for the deaf were concerned about his concentration however I've been able to show he can concentrate in a large group and focus on the adult leading the session without my intervention which is an amazing achievement for him!

An exit questionnaire was distributed to all of the Childminders involved in May 2020 to gain further information of the impact of the project on their practice. We asked;

- 1) What have you personally achieved by being part of this music project?

"A new confidence singing with the children and learning new songs."

"I am enjoying singing and music sessions more with the children. I am more confident in what I am doing."

"I have been more 'tuned in' to the children, whereas before I would have heard a toddler maybe make a sound and not made much of it. Now I give them the time and opportunity to build on it. I show lots of interest and encourage them to expand on continuing their tune."

"Lots of new ideas in experimenting with rhythm, using both instruments and parts of the body as well as voice during music with the children."

"I have become more aware of the children's musicality in their play, singing and instrument use."

- 2) How has being part of this music project had an impact on your practice?

"I now have the musical instruments out for the children to explore when they like and encourage them to sing and make sounds from different objects."

"It's allowed music to be more open ended within our setting, part of everyday interactions."

"We have instruments easily accessible daily I tend to change the tone of my voice more and sing more."

"We are learning new songs and we are singing more, The instruments are out all the time and they are being used and enjoyed more."

The Childminders were asked to think about their development through the project. All of those responding to the questionnaire agreed or strongly agreed that they had;

- A greater understanding of the children's musical tastes.
- Increased their confidence to use music in their setting.
- Increased the number of music based skills they can now use in their setting.

They also agreed or strongly agreed that they were;

- Better able to use a child's participation in music as part of their observations.
- Include music in the planning of activities (except for a setting which did not plan as part of their ethos).

The majority of the Childminders involved in the project were also more likely to attend a music based training event.

We also asked the Childminders to think about the children and describe any benefits they had seen in the following areas:

Language and vocabulary skills

“New language skills, repeated at home and with their parents”

“The sessions really helped a shy child age 3 at the time. The child didn’t like talking in front of others but became more confident in Ann’s group.”

“Language being developed by using different sounds.”

“The older ones have been singing more in their free play. Making up their own songs. One child with SEN has started to say more single words and is showing interest in joining in action songs. (Roll the ball)”

“I think the repetitive themes through the songs have encouraged vocabulary.”

Communication and social interaction skills

“The children are able to sing songs together, taking turns to choose.”

“Being able to interact as part of a group”

“It has been interesting to see how the children have grown in confidence over the weeks. Making friends with other children. Each week they are joining in more with the session.”

“The children are able to communicate how they are playing eg. fast, slow, as well as showing an interest in play with sounds.”

New musical skills

“Beat, rhythm and new songs have all come out of the sessions”

“Both 2 year olds can tap out a simple tune, ie. Peter play with one hammer.”

“More enjoyment of music.”

“Clap to the pulse of the music/song.”

“Tapping out beats and copying rhythm.”

“I found that the children would often sing the songs that went on at group at my setting, including the ones we don’t often sing.”

“They enjoyed trying new instruments at the sessions and learning about the beat.”

Concentration or focus

“They are more focused when doing the sessions. When back at the setting they will ask to do some of the activities that we have learnt at the session.”

“More focus on the instruments being played.”

“The children were engaged both within the sessions as well as music play at home. The engaging songs and rhymes helped to maintain this.”

“More concentration especially when musical instruments were brought to the sessions.”

Motor skills

“The children learnt new ways to play musical instruments that were brought in - strumming the guitar strings.”

“The children are able to use the beaters with control and experiment with the different sounds, using both gross, for larger instruments and finer for small instruments.”

“Moving their bodies in different ways to the music. This shows me if they can jump with both feet or balance on one foot. Being aware of the space around them. I can see this in their play and not just ask them and they feel like I’m testing them.”

“Using the fabric scarves to help with gross motor skills.”

“ They have enjoyed jumping and throwing scarves. Also tapping different parts of their bodies.”

Any other benefits

“My children were very engaged and were able to interact with others, turn taking and enjoying different resources - not just the commercial types.”

“It’s encouraged them to sit with me more for stories as I change my voice and sing.”

“They learnt all about new musical instruments they wouldn’t have experienced in my setting and have learnt new songs and how to play while singing (rolling the ball to each other for example).”

Childminder Support

Although the delivery of the project was shorter than anticipated, due to the COVID19 pandemic, the Childminders were supported by the EYMES team during the UK Lockdown.

All of the Childminders were invited to join the CMST Cornwall Early Years Music Network, a closed Facebook group where they could access links to online resources and CPD events.

All of the childminders were emailed each week with a link to free Early Years Music resources available on the CMST website. The resources were provided, voluntarily, by members of the EYMES team and consisted of a themed folder eg. Colour. Each folder contained a PDF of song lyrics, activity ideas and links to further resources and audio files for each song. Some video files demonstrating ideas and activities were also available. The Childminders were also encouraged to share the resources with the families they supported.

Sharing the CMST EYMES Ethos

CMST EYMES were invited to present an overview of the project to The Quality Childminders in Cornwall Network meetings across Cornwall. In February 2020 Ann presented to the network in North Cornwall. It is hoped that there will be the opportunity for us to present at further meetings in Cornwall post COVID19 lockdown.

It is the intention of CMST EYMES to provide an opportunity for everyone involved in the project to come together to network and share the findings of the EYMES Cornwall Childminders Project when it is safe to do so.

Conclusion

The overall aim of the project was to share our CMST EYMES ethos of recognising and responding to children's innate musicality with Childminders in Cornwall. We wanted to give the Childminders ideas, activities and repertoire to increase their confidence in providing opportunities for musical play with the children in their care.

From the outcomes of the project we have seen the impact that providing monthly Music activities has had on the Childminders practice and on the development of the children involved.

Sarah, wrote about the impact the project had on her childminding practice, her words encapsulate the essence of the project and its outcomes.

'We did singing in the setting but it was often the same songs over and over again. The instruments would live in a box and gather dust. I wanted to do more music with the children.'

'I attended a music session at a toddler group but I found it moved too quickly for the children to truly take part in and benefit from it.'

'This was one of the reasons I joined this music project hoping to get ideas and develop my understanding in how to include more music into the setting.'

'I now have musical instruments out all the time, a small piano, hand drum and xylophone. The smaller instruments are easily accessible on the shelf, which I have noticed the children are using more in their role play and not just when we do a music session. We are making up songs more and so are the children, when they are playing together. We get some lovely performances to watch.'

'Thank you for helping us to bring music back in my setting, the children have so benefitted from this. The parents have said they have enjoyed the music session online. One parent knew it was from the project and was very excited to hear the music.'

The Childminders

We were very privileged to have worked alongside so many enthusiastic, experienced and committed Childminders during this project. Here are some of them.

Claire

I am a Childminder based in Helston and I have been childminding for 14 years. I studied childcare at college before setting off on another path but after having my own children I set up as a childminder, using my college knowledge, qualifications and skills and the rest they say is history! I have worked with lots of different aged children, from 9 mths to 14years old. I love watching the children grow up and progress in my setting, getting to know their personalities and meeting different families. Working with Cornwall Music Service Trust has really educated me in new ways on how to bring music into the children's lives and how to notice their musicality.

Elaine

I've been a childminder for 23 years. I have a cache level 3 in early years. I am always keen to improve my practice to benefit the children in my care. To give you an idea of how committed I am, I recently counted the courses I have done in the past 4 years 92! Even I was surprised. I have achieved outstanding from ofsted 3 times. I have really enjoyed taking the children each month to discover what Ann's next fabulous idea will be. I lead the singing at our toddler group and share the ideas there. It's been a privilege being part of the group Ann has inspired me loads. Thank you so much.

Marianne

I trained as a nursery nurse when I left school and have been working with children ever since, starting with a career in health and education .Then I took up childminding 23 years ago to stay at home with my own children .I have seen many changes over the years with the expectations of Ofsted but I feel strongly that the important part of our role is to keep the children safe and happy giving them an environment to grow and develop at their own pace, offering new experiences.

Samantha and Imogen

We are a mum and daughter childminding team based in Cornwall. Our ethos is learning through the outdoors and providing a very much a holistic approach to play and learning. I have been childminding for 13 years, since my youngest was a baby and my daughter has been working with me for the past 3 years.

Thank you so much for the music project, our children are so musical and thrive on it, we have incorporated a lot of the exercises within music time at our setting.

Joanna

Born and went to school in Cornwall. I played piano as a child to grade 6. I was a Graphic Designer in London for 10 years and returned to Cornwall to bring up my daughter 26 years ago and to be near family. I have been a Childminder for 25 years - which I have loved. My daughter played music to the children - Oboe (8), Piano (7), Singing (6), Guitar self taught, writes music (modern) and has a Music degree. All my family are musical, me less so but enjoy listening to everyone else. I love gardening and growing my own veg which I do with the children. Maybe a new focus on music through the winter months.

Sharon

I am a mum of 2 boys (aged 24 & 22), I have been childminding for 20 years and find that you can definitely learn something new everyday! I plan to retire in 2 years time. I do a lot of training but have never really done much based around music and sounds. I enjoyed taking part in this and found it was much better than I originally thought it was going to be.

Sam

I have been childminding for a number of years and regularly sung nursery rhymes with children to improve language development and number recognition. The sessions have introduced new songs that I like to sing and the children enjoy learning. The early years age group seem to learn songs with actions more easily. Younger children can join in before they can speak and nobody is excluded.

The EYMES Music Leaders

Jenny Crow

Having worked as a classroom primary teacher for 27 years, with whole school coordinator responsibilities for English, creative arts and music, I joined the Cornwall Music Service Trust in September 2018. With CMST I teach curriculum music in primary schools, organise concerts, deliver First Access Ukulele, guitar and recorder and have recently joined the Early Years Team with Ann Stott. Since joining the Early Years Team I have worked with the Childminder's Project in Porthleven and started working with Trailblazers Nursery on the Dalla Project, researching the innate musicality in all children.



Ann Stott



Over the last 25 years Ann has passed on her love of singing to countless children and young people, as an educational practitioner, freelance music educator and currently as Lead for Early Years Music Education for Cornwall Music Service Trust.

Ann's career in education began in Early Years settings and she has seen many changes from Stepping Stones through to the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework in place today.

Ann is a skilled vocal trainer and workshop leader, drawing on her educational experiences, imagination and sense of fun, she has provided tailored sessions for a

variety of Early Years settings. Ann believes passionately that singing and music should be fully inclusive.

