

Tiny Voices

Early Language through Music sessions



CASE STUDY

HOW IT STARTED...

My name is **Laura McCandless** and I am a Speech and Language Therapist. I work for a company called SpeechWise and this year I have been working with Bright Futures Early Years Stronger Practice Hub. After recently having my own son a year ago I've got a special interest in the early years and the 0-2 years baby rooms particularly. I feel that this is often an overlooked age group in terms of providing specific interventions which is a shame as it is such a key time for development.

My name is **Jenny Davies** and I am the Lead Early Years Music Tutor at Trafford Music Service. One of the best parts of my job is encouraging 0-4 year olds and their carers (in an EYFS setting or at home) to engage with music making and to see the benefits it brings. I was really keen to work with Laura on this project and learn strategies specific to early language development that could enhance music sessions.



Together we came up with the idea of taking Jenny's already fabulous music sessions, that she had been running with babies in PVI settings, and developing them to have more focus on developing the children's speech, language and communication skills.

THE MUSIC THEORY PART

'Musical Development Matters' in the Early Years' (by Nicola Burke) is a key document that provides information and guidance to practitioners around using music in the Early Years **"Music interweaves through all areas of learning and development which can be seen throughout this guidance"**. The document separates musical learning and development into 4 aspects:

- Hearing & Listening
- Vocalising & Singing
- Moving & Dancing
- Exploring & Playing

While developing Tiny Voices we took these 4 aspects and made them integral parts of the program's structure.



THE SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THEORY PART

The EEF Evidence Store contains a wealth of information on approaches and practices to support communication and language development in the early years. We have taken some of the key elements and incorporated them into our sessions. For example in the 'Communication and Language' section practitioners are advised to pause and wait when interacting with children **'The adult waits long enough for the child to act, vocalise or talk. The 10 second rule can be followed to give the child time to think and respond'**. We made sure that there are more relaxed and open parts of the session where practitioners are encouraged to follow the child's lead and use strategies such as 'waiting' and 'mirroring'.

HOW IT WENT...

The next step was to try it out. We approached a Nursery and asked if they'd like to be involved with the project. **At this stage we did not have a finished product but we had a structure and lots of ideas we were excited to try out.** We used a questionnaire to find out a little more about them and how they use music in the setting. We found that they already enjoyed using music but had not run any structured music sessions with their youngest children in their Caterpillar room. We got started with the sessions straight away with the idea that we would see how the children responded and make changes and adaptations along the way. The staff at the setting got involved with all 8 sessions that we delivered and we encouraged them to replicate the sessions again throughout the week with the babies.

THE IMPACT

The sessions were a success! We noticed some fantastic changes by the end. In particular with the children's attention and listening and their interactions with us. Some of the children engaged throughout the whole sessions and many started to use some of the new vocabulary we introduced as well as joining in with the singing and signing of some of the more familiar songs

SOME KEY MOMENTS

One little boy that was new to the setting when we first started was struggling to settle in. He spent most of the sessions wandering around the room and would get upset if staff tried to get him involved. It was fantastic to see him grow in confidence and by the final sessions he was spending a lot of the session with the group. Even when not fully engaged we noticed him joining in some of the signs that we used in the hello/goodbye song. This was so fascinating to see that although he had not been one of the children who was super keen and engaged initially, he still got something from the sessions and he was engaging when we did not think that he was. We learnt that we can't expect all the babies in the room to respond in the same way and that's ok.

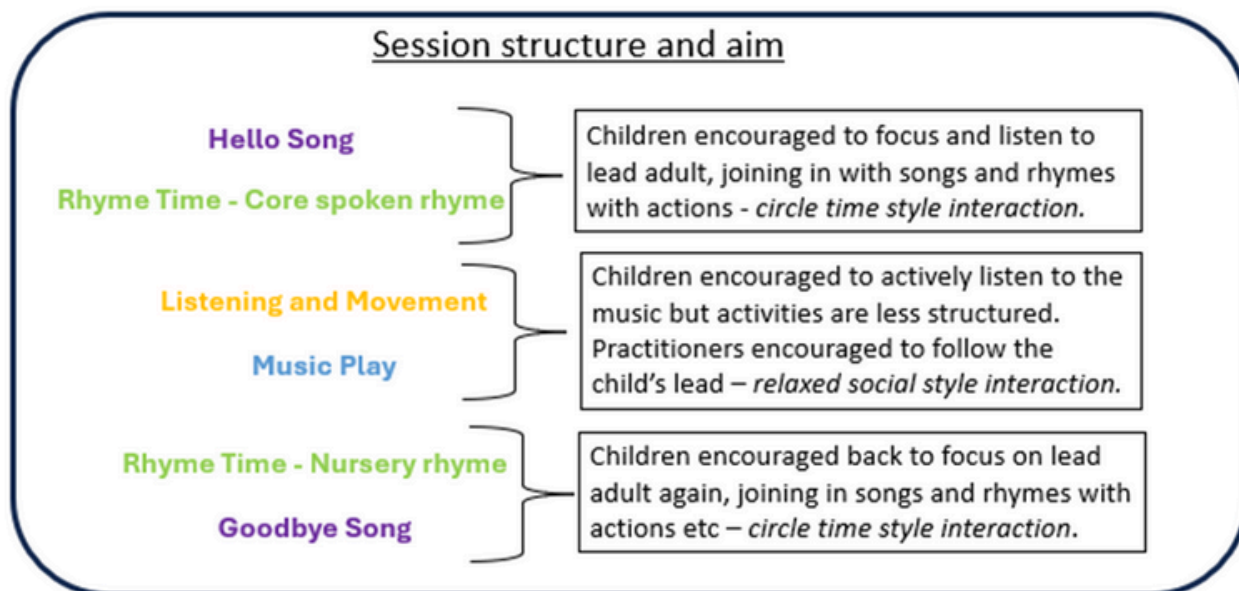
"We played 'Raindrop Prelude' by Chopin when it was raining and the children's responses really surprised us, it created such a lovely atmosphere and we would never have thought to play music like this before"

"We really enjoyed the sessions. The children loved it and we feel confident to continue them"

We tried to get the staff involved as much as we could because the idea is that if adults are enjoying and participating in the sessions the children are more likely to follow. This was highlighted even more to us in the final session where we played some Bhangra style music and one of the practitioners came to life - she explained that she knew the music and it was often played at weddings. Her authentic enthusiasm for the piece of music really rubbed off on the children and they were more engaged with the music than in other sessions, the children were enjoying it so much we had to start the music over again. From this we have now included advice in our handouts to recommend that all staff in the room should choose a piece of music that they enjoy to be used in sessions to try and replicate this fabulous moment.

HOW IT FINISHED...

After each of the sessions at the nursery we would meet and reflect on the session, making changes or adding/taking away ideas. In particular we changed the structure of the sessions by breaking up the times where the children needed to listen and engage with the adult with activities that were more relaxed, where the adults interacted with the babies and followed their lead. This made such a big difference and meant that a lot of the children were able to stay engaged throughout the whole session which was amazing to see.



RESOURCES

We developed a whole pack of handouts that anybody can use in order to run their own sessions. The pack is available on the Bright Futures website and is split into 3 parts:

Part 1

- **The session structure** - including all the rhymes and songs that we use in the sessions
- **Key information sheets** - advice from both the music and SALT world you'll need to run sessions

Part 2

- **More information sheets** - the theory behind it all.

Part 3

- **Session plans, resources and visuals**

On the website you will also find videos of Jenny demonstrating all of the songs and rhymes (with Sign a Long signs) that we use in the 8 sessions.

WEBINAR

Finally we produced a recorded webinar where we talk through the packs contents. We talk about the structure of Tiny Voices sessions and all the key advice and theory. This was a labour of love and we very much hope people find it useful and that it helps get Tiny Voices sessions running in lots of settings.



CHILD MindERS ROADSHOW

Throughout the whole process we always discussed how we thought Tiny Voices would work fantastically for childminders. Although we designed it with babies/young children in mind, with just a few tweaks older children can enjoy the sessions and benefit just as much because all ages love to sing and dance. As childminders often have a variety of age groups altogether Tiny Voices is perfect.

We set out on a Roadshow to meet with childminders to demonstrate Tiny Voices to them and their children and we were blown away by the enthusiasm. We chatted about how the childminders could implement Tiny Voices sessions in their home but also discussed the idea that groups of childminders could come together and run the sessions together in local community halls.

CHILD MindERS CONFERENCE

We were also lucky enough to present to almost 100 childminders at the Bright Futures childminders conference and got some brilliant feedback.



"The Tiny Voices workshop has given me inspiration to offer more music into my setting. Lots of fun ideas and wonderfully presented"

"I cannot wait to implement 'Tiny Voices' into my setting - we do a daily story and rhyme session but I loved this focused structure and so will my children"

This project has been really exciting and dynamic but has also really challenged us at times. **Ultimately we hope the resources provided lead to more children discovering their voice through music.**

If you'd like to know more about running Tiny Voices sessions check out the Bright Futures Early Years Hub web page where you'll find the webinars and the downloadable pack of resources:

www.earlyyears.bright-futures.co.uk/