

# SING FOR JOY AND LEARNING

Practice note for early  
learning and childcare  
services



## Singing, music and dance

*'By regular, rhythmic movements - and this is of special importance - the parent/carer/practitioner brings this life within the child's conscious control when they dandle them up and down on their hand or arm in rhythmic movements and to rhythmic sounds'. (Froebel 1898:70)*

Many opportunities for young children to engage in communication and play, have been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. High quality early learning and childcare (ELC) can be a major driver towards influencing early language skills development, as can language used in the child's home and in social activities, such as meeting with friends. During the pandemic children have spent significantly less time in their ELC settings and less time with friends and family than they normally would have. To support children in their development as we move forward, singing, music and dance should be a regular activity in a setting.



We know there are many benefits for children from singing naturally in their play and learning experiences.

The Scottish Government advisory subgroup on education recognise the importance of singing for children's health and wellbeing as well as for their social, physical and cognitive development.

Further information is available on the [Scottish Government website](#).

The purpose of this practice note is to promote creative singing experiences. Providers and staff should make decisions based on risk assessment, scientific advice, the latest guidance and the needs of individual children.



# Benefits of children singing

*"These all form an important part of the journey towards literacy, coordinating sight, sound and movement and contributing towards future reading and writing."* (Bruce and Spratt 2011)



## Aids brain development

- Children singing causes the brain to perform multiple tasks at once. This helps to develop memory. From remembering lyrics to remembering a cue to start singing, the brain learns to handle more tasks that is required to perform simultaneously.
- Children singing encourages deep breathing, getting more oxygen to the brain.
- Children singing teaches opposites, from fast and slow to loud and quiet. A child will learn to differentiate between opposite tasks.
- Children singing gets the endorphins flowing in the brain. This causes the body to feel good and increases brain activity.
- It helps a child learn to concentrate on a task.
- One of our favourite benefits of children singing is that it can help to develop a child's imagination and creativity.

## Aids language development

- Self-expression.
- Vocal imitation.
- Self-confidence and helps aid a child to communicate with others.
- Helps to strengthen the lips and tongue and aids muscle memory.
- Helps a child speak more clearly and develops variety of vocabulary.
- Children develop rhythm and learn how to rhyme words.
- Children learn the importance of listening in order to learn their favourite songs. They learn how to enjoy listening to things and how to think about things while they listen.
- Being part of a group can give children a feeling of belonging and can help them make friends.

Children develop their language and communication skills through play and interactions through daily activities. Supporting early language development is a key factor in promoting children's readiness to learn to read. In recognition of this, Save the Children published 'Ready to Read' (2015) as part of the 'Read On. Get On.' campaign. This practice note looks at boosting children's early language skills and narrowing the attainment gap to improve life chances for all of Scotland's children.

Our '[Getting ready to read](#)' resource identifies that singing promotes early language development and looks at the foundations of supporting children to learn to read. This practice note can be used to identify singing experiences and resources to promote early language development in indoor and outdoor environments.

## Use the following suggestions to encourage children in your setting.

### Suggested experiences

#### Singing - 0-3 years

Background music, songs or sounds (allowing for quiet periods at points across the day).

Song washing lines, song bags, baskets, tree (for instance, peg up photographs, images or other objects that prompt children to think of songs they already know or songs they can make up).

Active songs inside and outside. These could be enhanced with materials such as play-dough or sand so they can carry out physical activity alongside singing.

Interactive songbooks or props.

Virtual singing resources in partnership with significant others such as parents, grandparent, keyworker or siblings.

[Makaton](#) singing session.

Video children singing and play back for repetition, enjoyment and understanding.

#### Singing - 3-5 years

Interactive whiteboard singing, dance or movement sessions.

Pre-recorded songs from key staff members to share with families at home.

Virtual singing sessions with other settings including intergenerational.

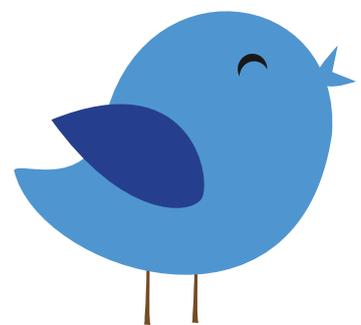
Song baskets, bags or tubs with props for singing.

Laminated song cards or velcro song board.

Wooden spoon song props (decorate spoons as characters from songs).

Song books, sheets or cards.

Stories that include song, for instance 'There was an old lady who swallowed a fly'.



## **Singing 5- 12 years**

Resources to support creativity in older children.

Microphone, dance floor, video technology, song sheets or karaoke machine.

Create a choir.

Produce a music video.

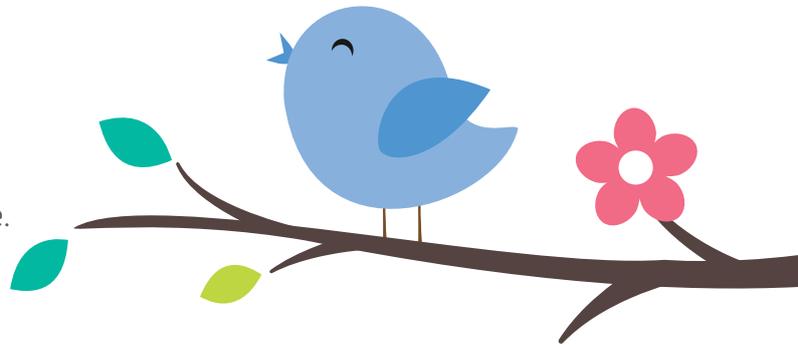
Plan a talent show session.

Write lyrics to songs and perform.

Encourage the children to teach you songs they like.

Missing lyrics competition.

Name that tune. Play an introduction to a song or just a few notes to encourage children to guess the song.



## **Rhyme 0-3 years**

Egg shakers, rain makers, keyboard, selection of drums, wrist or foot bells, maracas, xylophone, tambourine, drumsticks.

Interactive rhyme books, taking turns or sharing for social development.

Wooden spoon and loose parts materials for exploring rhyme, beat, words and sounds.

Malleable materials to follow rhyme beat, rhythm, and support expression of emotion.

Marching, stamping and clapping out rhyme and beat.

Guess the rhyme game (for instance, props in a bag).

## **Rhyme 3-5 years**

Make own fun rhyme or act out

Finger puppets, hand puppets, wooden puppets to spark children's imaginations.

Magic bag rhymes with variety of props for choice or child led.

Clap, stamp, jump, roll out rhymes for active participation and fun.

Rhyme box, tent or tree (photographs, images or other objects that prompt children to think about having fun with rhymes).

### **Rhyme 5-12 years**

Make own rap song and perform to an audience.

Competition to make a rhyme about an object.

Make rhymes about interests, friends or animals.

### **Dance 0-3 years**

Background music.

Video links.

### **Dance 3-5 years**

Create a dance stage or platform.

Use materials for free flow dancing, scarves, silk ribbons or shakers.

Shadow dancing outdoors.

### **Dance 5-12 years**

Dance competition – different genres.

Dance fads through the years.

Learn a new routine.

### **Music 0-3 years**

Egg shakers, rain makers, keyboard, selection of drums, wrist or foot bells, maracas, xylophone, tambourine, drumsticks, scarfs, ribbons, bean bags.

Feel the music – vibrations from different objects.

What is that sound game?

Music from around the world. You could have related props.



## **Music 3-5 years**

Music sound lotto.

Range of musical instruments displayed attractively.

Music stage, curtains, lighting.

Encourage children to experience traditional music from different cultures and styles and different time periods.

## **Music 5-12 years**

Provide the resources for children to plan and organise a Karaoke party.

Develop a musical theatre.

Encourage children to set up a dance school or class.

Ballroom dancing set, costumes, makeup artists, music.

Make loose parts musical instruments.

Investigate musical instruments and cultures of the world.

Research the history of music for instance, rock and roll, blues, pop, heavy metal, hip-hop, dance.



## More practice suggestions to share

- Copying funny faces to different types of music.
- Fun breathing games to different types of music with the adult talking children through it rather than doing it.
- Relaxation to music and breathing deeply.
- Outdoor singing opportunities.
- Parachute games.
- What is that sound?
- Talking rhymes.
- Clapping rhythm games.
- Following the leader to music.
- [Makaton](#) to spoken rhymes.
- Music on a digital source – CD player / Smartboard / tablet
- Recording of adults singing or videos of adults singing.
- Musical instruments – following the rhythm games.
- Storybooks which encourage movement, such as 'The enormous turnip'
- Outdoor singing in groups, on walks. For example, 'We are going on a bear hunt' and other action songs that children can act out, the Gruffalo song.
- Musical tales.
- Musical storytelling where they say the story or song and act it out, for instance, the wheels on the bus, Santa got stuck up the chimney.
- [Makaton](#) rhymes and learning new signs.
- Sound stories with facial expressions, animal sounds.
- Peek a boo.
- Finger puppets and puppets.
- Dressing up.
- Making up stories to different music – using imagination.
- Musical statues, musical bumps, dancing to music, instruments and sounds using a variety of music, from pop to classical, for children to dance to.
- Dancing with props hats, balloons, wigs, teddy bears.
- Mood music, a collection of songs depicting different emotions – anger, happiness, sadness, and fun.
- Dance like an animal or be the animal in a story.
- Expression, dancing to music using scarves, voile, paper wands, streamers, ribbons.



- Mindfulness / mediation.
- Positive affirmations.
- Make your own musical instruments, for instance, drums crafted out of old containers, guitar crafted out of an old shoebox.
- Provide opportunities for children to express music through their creativity. For instance, set music next to an easel, and observe how this is expressed in paint.

## The Environment

*'Adults admire their environment, they can remember it and think about it; but the child absorbs it'* (Montessori, *The Absorbent Mind*, 1949:63).

### Q1 2.1 Quality of the setting for play and learning:

- children benefit from high quality, care play and learning settings
- staff enable children to influence the design of the setting and the provision of appropriate resources and how they use them.

(Draft quality framework for daycare of children, childminders and out of school care)

An environment with access to a good range of appropriate resources is important for stimulating early speech, language and communication.

Things to think about:

- How does the service ensure that the environment, both indoors and outdoors, promotes early language, speech and communication for children in the setting?
- Where can staff sit comfortably with children?
- What height are resources displayed at?
- How do resources stimulate creativity?
- How do noise levels and the atmosphere impact on children's experiences?
- How well does your environment celebrate cultural and language diversity?

Health and Social Care Standard 5.21: **I am able to access a range of good quality equipment and furnishings to meet my needs, wishes and choices .**

## References

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