Quick tips for using this PDF

• Press the ESC (escape) key to exit full screen mode

• On the contents page click on a section title or page number to jump straight to any page

• Click on the home button in the top right corner to return to the contents page

• On the chapter introduction pages click on the coloured circles or page numbers to jump to the section you want

• To get back to the chapter introduction page of the chapter you are in click on the page title or number in the top bar

• Use the left and right arrow keys to move between the pages

• To zoom in and out press: ctrl + or ctrl - (on a PC) or; ⌘ + or ⌘ - (on a Mac)

• All web addresses are live links
All together now...

An in-depth guide to the benefits of accessible learning networks, including how to recognise and develop your own
Foreword

Sing Up is founded on a vision of distributed leadership – developing and supporting learning networks woven throughout the diverse communities of practice working with children and young people in and through singing. Right from the programme’s inception in 2007, peer to peer learning and open, mutual support between practitioners at a local level – as well as across the country – has underpinned the evolution and sustainability of practice change and consequently improved outcomes for children and young people – or to put it more simply, we’ve invested in and valued people doing it for themselves.

The Sing Up approach to building networks has been based on research evidence about effective networks as well as three years experience of partnership working with specialists to make singing accessible to all children. It has included a strong emphasis on learning and Continual Professional Development, with a mix of specialist input aimed both at developing new knowledge and skills and in facilitating and designing effective collaborative learning processes.

This evaluation report sets out what we’ve learned about networked professional learning through the accessible learning networks - we hope it will inspire and support you to create and sustain your own networks.

Through our accessible learning networks, we’ve been able to secure the value of the investment made in skilling up an accessible singing workforce, and make our contribution to fulfilling the moral responsibility we all have to work with ALL children, as reflected in the recent publication of the National Plan for Music Education.

Whether you are interested in access to new ideas: high quality training and resources; meeting like minded colleagues; being part of a supportive practice community; collaboration or all of these good things, then you’ll find useful information here to help you. You’ll also learn more about the challenges that networks have faced and overcome, and the importance of purpose in securing and motivating participation in networks.

So please use these reports to help you listen, talk and reflect together. What we can be sure of is that we all have more to learn from each other than we can ever know, that we can enjoy ourselves in learning, and that we can go on to create and share that sense of joyful learning as a community for all the children and young people we serve.

Katherine Zeserson
Learning and Participation Director, The Sage Gateshead
Board Member, Sing Up Ltd.
Who is this document for?

Commissioners
For funders and strategic managers who want to establish an inclusive learning network model underpinned by an accessible learning ethos.

Creative organisations
For people and organisations who want to investigate how a learning network model can be used to develop a skilled accessible learning workforce.

Artists and practitioners
For individuals who want to investigate the benefits of learning networks which bring together artistic practice/skills and specialisms in accessible learning.

All material comes from network participants and leaders and Sing Up accessible learning network managers. It includes the real experiences they faced ranging from primary and secondary classroom settings to training residential settings and virtual conversations. We hope we’ve captured the breadth and depth of learning, from those sparkly moments to the more testing times.

Contents

1. Why use Network Learning?
This section includes research about the benefits, trends and interpretations of network learning.

2. Sing Up & Network Learning
This section includes analysis of the key strengths of the networks, learning points and formal recommendations about how to set up and sustain a learning network.

3. Case Studies
Network Learning in action
This section tells the story of the five accessible learning networks. You will see examples of ideas and processes that were seen to be effective in facilitating network learning.

4. Tool Kit
Build your own Learning Network
This section is drawn directly from the research and analysis in the networks and suggests ways to get network learning happening.
Background
There is a long history of collaboration between schools, organisations and individuals to improve pupil outcomes in the UK and internationally (Lieberman 2000, McLoughlin and Talbert 2006). Bell et al’s (2006) systematic review found that networks can be highly effective vehicles for improving teaching, learning and attainment. Continuing professional development (CPD), together with a clear focus on particular outcomes for identified groups of pupils, particularly those who are vulnerable socially and economically or at risk of exclusion from the curriculum due to their special needs, was found to be the key to effective learning networks. The formulation of partnerships and use of external expertise, matched to network needs, directly supported the achievement of network goals. Highly effective networks attended to the quality of the collaboration, and were organised and structured to include everyone who had a contribution to make to reach the network’s goals.

This review
This review is based on key international studies of networks in the education environment, including a number of recent international research reviews and evaluations which have explored both the impact of networked learning and the structures, functions and activities of the networks and their participants. It aims to investigate the key processes and impacts of networks and to distinguish their professional development capacity from that of more conventional models of CPD.

Most of the studies on which this review is based were concerned with teacher or school networks. However as the systematic review of networked learning (Bell et al 2006) found, their findings are directly relevant to all professional networked learning which is ultimately concerned with improving outcomes for vulnerable groups of children.

The report is structured around the questions posed by Sing Up (www.singup.org) in relation to the evaluation of their accessible learning networks.
Benefits for Individuals
Lieberman and Grosnick (1996) found that networks engage educators in better directing their own learning. They allow them to sidestep the limitations of institutional roles, hierarchies and geographic locations and encourage them to work with different kinds of people. Members have a sense of being part of a special group or movement. Networks offer members a voice in creating and sustaining a group in which their professional identity and interests are valued. Working actively with others strengthens the investment participants have in the network. Connecting with other members across schools, institutions, roles and geography enables participants to develop more complex views of the issues they are concerned about and encourages them to take different perspectives and different ways of knowing into account. Specific benefits include:

- opportunities to articulate, label and share the tacit knowledge developed through their work;
- flexibility to organise activities first, letting structures follow;
- ability to shift their learning away from prescription toward challenging involvement and problem solving;
- increased opportunities for members to take leadership roles (site coordinators etc); and
- cultures based on mutual knowledge, learning and collaboration replace the simple transmission of knowledge.

Benefits for Schools
On the practical side, Muijs et al (2010) suggest that schools collaborating with each other and with external agencies can provide a full service to pupils, addressing the social, health and psychological needs of pupils in ways that would not be possible for individual agents.

More profoundly, collaboration has been shown to be a practice that can both transfer existing knowledge and, more importantly, generate context-specific “new” knowledge. Lindsay et al (2007) found that networks can combine the expertise to be found in different schools and settings, thus providing a greater potential for professional development and impact. Hadfield and Chapman (2009) found that networks can provide greater consistency of practice between schools and other organisations, help them improve standards and increase their capacity to innovate and be creative. They can also act as a ‘store’ of capacity and resources and help them balance competing internal and external agendas. Additionally, they suggest that:

- practitioners find it motivating to connect with others outside of their school or setting;
- networks seem to improve the overall quality of the professional development on offer; and
- innovative practitioners who can often be overlooked in their own schools or settings may achieve a degree of recognition within a network.
**Question 2**

In what ways is the learning process in a network different to learning through training?

---

**Collaboration**

Collaboration emerges from all the studies and reviews as the distinctive element of networked learning as opposed to more traditional forms of CPD. Katz and Earl (2010) found that collaboration allows people to address tough problems of teaching, build commitment through group understanding, solve issues of mutual concern and spread innovations beyond individuals and single sites. They suggest that collaboration can be a powerful mechanism for changing ideas and practices, particularly when it involves joint work that includes a balance of personal support with critical inquiry about present practice and future direction. Changes in pupil learning related to network involvement depend on ideas and processes promoted by the network penetrating into the working lives of the professionals working with those children. Networks of schools and other organisations can provide support, encouragement, new ideas, enquiry and challenge to promote and foster changes that will enhance pupil learning and outcomes.

Lieberman (2000) suggests that networks attract school staff and other professionals because they provide opportunities to create as well as receive knowledge. They become members of a community where they are valued as partners and colleagues, participants in an ongoing effort to better the learning process for themselves and their pupils. Lieberman and Grolnick (1996) suggest that one of the fundamental differences between conventional professional development and networking activities is that in the latter both outside knowledge and the knowledge of the participants are acknowledged as important sources of agenda building.

---

**Networks create new knowledge**

Earl et al. (2006) found that networks provide a process for cultural and attitudinal change. They provide an opportunity for shared and dispersed leadership and responsibility, drawing on resources in the community beyond education. This builds capacity insomuch as they are able to produce new knowledge and mutual learnings that can then feed back and inform policy or organisational strategies and actions. Networks which are focused on learning intentionally seek out and/or create supporting activities, people and opportunities to push them beyond the status quo. Lieberman (2000) found that networks attract school staff and other professionals because they provide opportunities to create as well as receive knowledge. They become members of a community where they are valued as partners and colleagues, participants in an ongoing effort to better the learning process for themselves and their pupils. Lieberman and Grolnick (1996) suggest that one of the fundamental differences between conventional professional development and networking activities is that in the latter both outside knowledge and the knowledge of the participants are acknowledged as important sources of agenda building.

---

**Structures and Values**

Lieberman and Grolnick (1996) found that successful networks share purposes and direction; build collaboration, consensus and commitment; promote activities and relationships as important building blocks; regard leadership as cross-cultural brokering and facilitating. Their description of network characteristics provides a succinct account of the key differences between learning in networks and traditional CPD or ‘training’. They have:

- agendas which are more challenging than prescriptive;
- learning that is more indirect than direct;
- formats that are more collaborative than individualistic;
- work that is more integrated than fragmented;
- leadership that is more facilitative than directive;
- thinking that encourages more multiple perspectives;
- values that are both context-specific and generalised;
- structures which are more movement-like than organisation-like, and responsive - developing additional activities to provide support for the participants as they try to apply what they have learned in their own contexts.

Earl et al. (2006) quote Fullan (2004) who found that networks marry the world of moral purpose and collective identity: “By working together differently, the goal is to produce quality ideas and practices on an ongoing basis and to inspire collective effort to the extent that it becomes possible to achieve breakthroughs never before experienced.”
Question 3
What processes are needed for an effective network?

What processes are needed?

Built in activities offering opportunities for collaboration
Collaboration is now widely recognised as central to effective professional development (Cordingley et al. 2005-7, Coughlin and Kajder 2009, Earl et al. 2006). And effective professional development, as a systematic review by Bell et al. (2006) found, is at the heart of effective learning networks which make a difference to pupil outcomes. Whilst building relationships is important (see below) Katz and Earl (2010) found that collaboration goes well beyond relationships. They describe it as intensive interaction that engages educators in opening up their beliefs and practices to investigation and debate.

The review by Bell et al. (2006) considers impact in relation to children’s attainment, achievement, and well-being. Developing a strong adult learning culture within and between practitioners in a network was found to be one of the key ways of improving learning opportunities for pupils. Lieberman (2000) found that networks are “flexible, borderless and innovative” able to create collaborative environments, focus their efforts and develop agendas that grow and change with their participants.

Katz and Earl (2010) found that collaboration is a powerful tool for changing ideas and practices – particularly when it involves joint work that includes a balance of personal support with critical inquiry about preset practice and future direction and sustained scrutiny of practice. Systematic analysis of the situation and professional reflection are core activities for both individual and collective construction of meaning. Their analysis of collaborative activities which promote learning is as follows:

- Participants collectively question ineffective routines, examine new conceptions of teaching and learning, find generative means to acknowledge and respond to difference and conflict and engage actively in supporting one another’s professional growth.
- Participants work together, searching for and considering various sources of knowledge (both tacit and explicit) to investigate practices and ideas through a number of lenses, to put forward hypotheses, to challenge beliefs and to pose core questions.

Earl et al. (2006) suggest that joint work that challenges thinking and practices is the critical core of collaboration and that collaborative inquiry is itself an important new skill.

Leadership and Commitment
Earl et al. (2006) suggest that network foci need to be shared and that formal leadership is important. West (2010) suggests that incentives (common improvement goals) are important in establishing networks and that networks need to have a sense of collective responsibility for bringing about improvements in all the partner organisations. Leadership also needs to be distributed across networks.

Earl et al. (2006) offer the metaphor of threads and knots, whereby threads represent the relationships in the network and knots the activities, structures and content of collaboration. The knots of collaboration are the vehicles through which networks conduct the work of improvement. Activities have to be compelling enough to keep people coming back for more, no matter how meaningful or well intentioned the purposes of the network.

They found that the strength of participants’ attachments to the network is important; changing thinking and practice is the key and relationships and collaboration are the beginning, not ends in themselves.

The processes involved in collaborative inquiry involve questioning, reflecting, seeking alternatives and weighing consequences – all of which promote the ‘transparency’ of what otherwise might remain unobservable facets of practice, making tacit knowledge visible and open to scrutiny.

Lieberman and Grallnick (1996) found that the nature of the activities and the growth of relationships within the group appear to be the crucial elements in cementing the commitment of the participants.
Question 4
What conditions are needed for a network to flourish?

Common Purpose
Lieberman and Grolnick (1996) emphasise the importance of a strong sense of commitment to the innovation and a sense of shared purpose. Earl et al (2006) also stressed the need for a common goal, as did Muijs et al (2007) who further identified the importance of a sense of moral purpose. Some of the most powerful research reviewed by Bell et al (2006) focused on how the identification of goals and target groups ultimately impacted on pupil learning. Highly effective networks had a clear focus linked to identifiable groups and a strong sense of moral purpose.

Strong Leadership
According to Lindsay et al (2007) high quality leadership was central to effective networked learning. Where inclusion was a key factor, leadership was also characterised by a deep and sustained commitment to the right of all children to inclusive education. Chapman et al (2011) found that strong leadership had been a key feature of successful federations. Lindsay et al (2007) found, conversely, that lack of clarity about the role and status of the federation leaders was a key barrier to successful networking. Unequal partnership and uncertainty about sustainability when funding was withdrawn at the end of the programme were named amongst other barriers.

Peer to peer support

External support
Bell et al (2006) found ‘expert’ input to be a key condition for effective networked learning, while Lieberman and Grolnick (1996) stressed the need for an effective facilitator, voluntary participation and equal treatment.

Question 5
What can specialist trainers offer to the network?

Bell et al (2006) found that collaborative CPD with specialist/expert input was the principal conduit for network activity. Their review found that ‘experts’ contributions ranged from training to strategic advice and facilitation, while the experts themselves ranged from collegiate mentors to career specialists and parents. Many studies also mentioned the importance of network facilitators – both for co-ordination and for supporting the learning of others, including inquiry skills. The key finding of a systematic review of the evidence about specialist contributions to CPD (Cordingley et al 2006) was that they both introduced new knowledge and/or skill and they employed a repertoire of support mechanisms to help embed learning and bring about changes in practice. From the instruction element, practitioners gained new knowledge, skills and understanding - learning more about their subject, how to learn and ways of teaching. Techniques and strategies for supporting professional learning included the use of modelling, workshops, observation and feedback – plus strategies for supporting peer working. Specialists played a key role in creating the opportunities for practitioners to discuss their learning and in fostering a culture of dialogue, sustainability, commitment, motivation and ownership.

These findings are supported by Nelson et al (2010) who found that most practitioners are inexperienced with evidence-based dialogue, so facilitation in supporting evidence informed learning conversations is an important specialist skill. West (2010) found that external help from ‘credible consultants/advisers’ who also have the disposition to learn alongside their work-based partners to be a key factor in effective networks.
Question 6
What sort of impacts can professional involvement in networks have on the life chances of children?

Muijs et al. (2010) found that the extent to which children are directly impacted by professional collaborative activities within networks can vary. Their research led them to conclude that the evidence is strongest that networking can help to widen opportunities and help address vulnerable groups of learners, moderate that collaboration is effective in helping solve immediate problems and modest to weak that it is effective in raising expectations and pupil performance.

The review of studies by Bell et al. (2006) found evidence that networks can be highly effective vehicles for improving the life chances of vulnerable groups of children. Where the life chances of pupils were measurably enhanced, the networks had focused on specific aims, particularly on enhancing the experience of young people.

Such evidence was also cited by Earl et al. (2006) and Katz and Earl (2010) who found that networks can provide support, encouragement, new ideas, inquiry and challenge to promote and foster changes that will enhance pupil learning and success. They found sufficient positive relationships to conclude that there is a connection between the participation in a network and improvements in pupil attainment.

West (2010) concluded that the balance of evidence seems to be that collaborative arrangements can impact on pupils, though not all do.

References


Background

Between 2009-2011, Sing Up built a number of partnerships with specialist organisations around the country and developed projects, training and resources to encourage singing with children who either weren’t in mainstream education, or children who found accessing mainstream education difficult. A number of the projects involved working in partnership with specialist organisations and were designed to enhance outcomes for specific groups of children and young people, including those who:

- were looked after or in foster placements;
- had behavioural difficulties;
- might have missed out on singing because of disruptions in their school lives, such as young carers, gypsy and traveller children, young refugees;
- were hearing impaired;
- had learning and autistic spectrum disorders; and
- had movement and coordination difficulties.

Through its accessible learning strategy, Sing Up aimed to make sure that all training and resources it offered promoted an inclusive approach to singing in the classroom – be it in mainstream, Special Educational Needs (SEN) or Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) settings. Sing Up also aimed to build on the resources already available on the Song Bank, and develop packages of training in partnership with specialists in this area and build upon the success of the work developed in the first chapter of the programme (2009-2011).

In March 2012 the Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE www.curee.co.uk) was commissioned by Sing Up to explore the operations of three school learning networks and five accessible learning networks. Sing Up was keen to learn from the experiences of the networks and to share this learning, in an accessible format, with key audiences. Previous evaluations of Sing Up’s work have demonstrated the positive power of singing for children’s learning and engagement and Sing Up invested in the accessible learning networks as a means of promoting and developing the professional skills needed to extend singing to children at risk of being excluded from its benefits. This report focuses on the following networks:

- Drake Music (www.drakemusic.org);
- Music and the Deaf (www.matd.org.uk);
- Makaton (www.makaton.org);
- Pupil Referral Units (PRU); and
- Autism.

The report is intended to create understanding of and enthusiasm for effective networked learning in order to promote and support accessible singing.
The Autism network consisted of its leader (who is also a specialist trainer) and eight members. Members came from a range of different backgrounds and starting points in terms of experience and readiness to work as trainers. One member, for example, had less of a musical background (drama), another had a particularly deep understanding of autism before joining the network. The network members came from across different regions, with the exceptions of the south west and the east of England, which were not represented in the network. The network was established in January 2011.

The Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) network was first set up as a Sing Up project in 2010. In 2011 the Sing Up accessible learning team noticed its potential as an emerging network of trainers. The current network, consisting of two network leaders and eight members, was established in January 2012. It aimed to develop a team of trainers across England who would be able to support PRU practitioners and other professionals in the use of singing and voice work with primary-aged children with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD). The network members were selected on the basis of their previous experience in PRUs and EBD units, their singing abilities and experience as professional trainers, and their regional spread. Most of the trainers in the network had an emotional pull towards working with children who had challenging behaviour. Some were primarily singers; others primarily musicians or producers.

All Sing Up accessible learning networks were designed in a similar way. Network members were supported both by specialist trainers, experts in their particular field, who became network leaders, and by Sing Up accessible learning managers. The latter had various roles, including supporting the network leaders in designing the programmes of professional development for network members in accordance with the evidence about effective Continual Professional Development (e.g. introducing placements or collaborative resource development activities), facilitating training sessions, brokering access to other specialists, helping organise residencies, etc.

Autism

The Autism network consisted of its leader (who is also a specialist trainer) and eight members. Members came from a range of different backgrounds and starting points in terms of experience and readiness to work as trainers. One member, for example, had less of a musical background (drama), another had a particularly deep understanding of autism before joining the network. The network members came from across different regions, with the exceptions of the south west and the east of England, which were not represented in the network. The network was established in January 2011.

Drake Music

The Drake Music network was led by two specialist trainers from Drake Music (Bristol), a charity organisation that develops ways of using assistive technology to help disabled children to access singing. Its five members were based in different locations around the country – the north east, north west, London and the south west. They were recruited by Drake Music in the period up to Christmas 2011, and four of the network members had already worked as Drake Music Associates. All were experienced musicians/singers with skills in using technology for music, and had worked as music leaders in Special Educational Needs schools at some point.

Makaton

The Makaton network, created in partnership with the Makaton Charity, comprised of eight members, one of whom has taken a lead role in resource development, in an ongoing collaboration with the original Makaton Trainer. Amongst the network members, there were music services professionals, a music therapist and teacher, a community musician, and a musical trainer. Geographically, the network covered the north west, north east, Yorkshire, west midlands and south east.

MatD

The Music and the Deaf (MatD) network was led by the founder of the Music and the Deaf charity. Members joined the network between 2009 and 2012 and were spread out geographically from Gateshead in the north east to Cornwall in the south west. They had a range of singing and signing skills: some were primarily professional singers, but were interested in learning sign language; others had strong signing skills and were interested in developing their singing skills further. All were passionate about the value of signed singing for both hearing and hearing impaired children.
What did the networks want to achieve?

When setting up the networks, Sing Up aimed to create training packages, underpinned by high quality resources, and develop skilful trainers able to support teachers and other professionals in their use of singing for all children. This clear sense of moral purpose and a commitment to make singing accessible, for its potential to improve children’s lives and learning, was common in all networks.

To ensure quality and consistency of professional development in order to support singing for all children, Sing Up developed and used its Principles of Good Quality Vocal Leadership (PGQVL). Understanding and embedding these in their practice became one of the core aims for all networks, eg. the MatD network aimed for its members to be:

“confident in referring to the Principles of Good Quality Vocal Leadership and able to relate these to practice.”

At the same time, each network’s aims were distinctive and particular to their specialism, reflecting the context they worked in. Individual networks’ Core Standards were created to capture this specificity yet retain the quality and general Sing Up principles and approaches. The Autism network, for example, was concerned with its members’ knowledge about the autism spectrum and their understanding of how music/singing can be used effectively to work with autistic children; whereas the Makaton network was concerned with its members’ skills of ‘signing the whole vocabulary accurately’. All networks had their specific resources e.g. Drake Music’s songs streamed into the Clicker and VOCAL\textsuperscript{2} assistive technologies or MatD’s signed songs), and ability to use and develop these, which became part of their standards and aims.

All networks included in their Core Standards their members’ ability to use other Sing Up resources (such as the Song Bank) and to convey their specialist knowledge to others.

Both PGQVL and each network’s own sets of Core Standards were used to baseline the network members’ knowledge and skills and define their individual and group development trajectories. They were used to shape the network goals and to track progress.

Goals

Professional development of its members was the key activity in each of the networks.

Needs analysis

In-depth understanding of network members’ starting points was the first stage for all networks. Despite some network leaders knowing the people that joined the networks as members, a detailed needs analysis was carried out. During this needs analysis, the network leaders used the outcomes of the participants’ self-assessments, complemented by their own observations and reflections.

The resulting overview picture of what network members knew well and what they needed to develop was used to personalise their learning journeys. One of the network leaders explained that she used the outcomes of needs analysis to differentiate and tailor the network members’ professional development. Examples of this included her providing additional opportunities (resource development) to more experienced members, organising mainstream school placements for those who didn’t have such experiences and introducing new content (input from other accessible learning networks) that members felt they needed in their practice.

Formal training opportunities

The accessible learning networks had structured collaborative opportunities for interaction that engaged their members in opening up their beliefs and practices to scrutiny, debate, new ideas and new practices.

During one of the residentials, the Drake Music network members spent time working together to share views about the range of issues that had arisen. In this way the members learned each other’s views, reflected on their own views and came to a consensus about how they should approach the issues as they undertook their work of delivering CPD. The network leaders were keen that members should be able to exercise their own flexibility and judgment while also maintaining a common approach.

Similarly, during one of the MatD residentials, the network leader arranged for the network members to develop their own signed version of a song in groups of three in order to show that there can be different ways of signing particular words. When each group performed their
signed song to the others, they found that other groups had arrived at different ways of signing the same song. This exercise helped network members realise that the exact signs are not important so long as they make sense within the context of the song. Parallels were drawn with regional sign variations for particular words (like dialects) where the differences are regarded as variations rather than wrong.

All networks made use of residencies for the face-to-face elements of the networked learning; they also made use of electronic communications and social networks to stay in touch between learning sessions.

Using and developing resources

As well as the interactive and collaborative acquisition of new knowledge, attitudes and ways of working, much of the network CPD involved support for members in the understanding and use of specialist resources and, in some cases, working together to develop new resources or adapt existing ones. For each specialism, resources included purposefully selected/adapted songs, plans, activity sheets and props. For example, in the PRU network, members were supported in the use of the ‘Sitting in the classroom’ resource, co-constructed with them for delivering training to PRU/EBD staff and music leaders.

Support for putting new knowledge and skills into practice

Effective CPD that feeds through into benefits for children and young people also involves practitioners having an opportunity to apply what they have learned in the networks.

The leader of the Autism network, for example, paid particular attention to this aspect of professional development. Even though most network members were based in settings where they were able to apply their new knowledge and skills, she recommended that they gained experience of supporting autistic children and staff working with them in either mainstream, special or specialist schools too.

This was arranged as placements for the network members, taking place between January and March 2012.

Between their first and last residencies, participants in the Makaton network incorporated what they had learned into their own practice. One of the members carried out a pilot project involving young and older people learning together. The network member developed her own resources for the setting, collected and analysed data on the impact, and shared the outcomes with the rest of the network. Two other members jointly ran a workshop for PGCE students. One of them delivered two further training sessions for Early Years practitioners as part of their work for a local music service.

Members felt that Yammer (the network’s online communication tool) was essential during this period as a source of support, and as a channel for exchanging resources, news and ideas. Members of the other networks also found opportunities to put their new skills into practice in a variety of contexts, including Early Years settings and PRUs.

"Delivering Makaton training myself meant that I became more confident about addressing a group of adults, … I am aware of what I knew and could do. I realised I could do it.”

Benefits reported by the networks seemed to fall into three main categories:

**Access to new expertise** was a strong feature of networked learning.

**Access to new expertise** was a strong feature of networked learning.

Members of the Drake Music network, for example, were introduced to and supported in using new ways of using assistive technology by the specialist trainers from Drake Music.

The MatD network members particularly valued their leader modelling his knowledge and skills in a school setting. They could observe him delivering actual training sessions for school practitioners and their classes and then discuss how the session went afterwards. The network members found that the experience has had the added benefit of helping them to learn ways of working effectively with children, for example:

- being aware of any learning or behaviour difficulties within the group, then catering for them without being patronising;
- having a plan, but not necessarily sticking with it if it doesn’t seem to be working; and
- ensuring that as a leader you make clear that you enjoy singing the songs, even if asked to sing a song you don’t like.
For the PRU network members, working on the ‘Sitting in the classroom’ resource enabled them to learn from each other’s experiences of working with children with challenging behaviour. Experiences/ideas shared included:

- the appropriateness of songs such as, ‘What do you do with a drunken sailor’ for children in challenging circumstances who may have witnessed drunkenness and its effects at home;
- the need to be flexible – that if a song or activity doesn’t seem to be working, move on to another activity or song that is more likely to work;
- being as inclusive as possible, for example, the language and repetitiveness in the song ‘London’s Burning’ allows children who don’t feel comfortable about speaking to join in with the rhythm;
- the importance of talking to teachers beforehand so that the selection of material is both appropriate and relevant to the curriculum; and
- being mindful of teachers’ possible stereotypes, linking singing in the classroom with lack of teacher control and abandoning of existing structures and expectations. This was addressed through offering a flexible, but structured session that starts and ends calmly, and through modelling self-control and being positive throughout the session – eg. saying ‘well done for staying in the room – it’s nice to have you here’!

Peer support

Peer support is an essential element of CPD that is effective in changing practice.

In the Autism network members felt that the approach to training and the peer support had given them “freedom to speak openly, to test their own doubts and questions in a supportive environment and to develop trust”. Members of the Autism network reported that they felt better able to learn and progress as a group than as individuals. Network sessions provided a “safe environment to do things and try things out.” Being part of the network also prompted “reflection on practice as we know we’ll have to share our experiences with the network”.

A member from Drake Music network commented that:

“...getting together with the network is very valuable. I am usually the person in my organisation that is the most knowledgeable when it comes to working with children with learning disabilities; in this network I am with peers who have the same knowledge as me, if not more.”

One Makaton member commented that the network was a “great leveller – no matter what skills you have, we’re all in this together, learning something new.”

This approach to building relationships was a deliberate part of the Sing Up approach. As one of the Sing Up managers for accessible learning networks commented:

“Honesty and clarity is really important within Sing Up’s relationship with its accessible learning networks... I wanted to share as much information as possible with them and answer any queries they have in person, as in my experience discussion promotes better understanding than reading documents ever will…”

Extended learning

A member of the Autism network reported that:

“A teacher I worked with on supporting learning for a child with autism became very interested in the condition and learned more about it. She found it emotionally very difficult working with this particular (KS2) pupil. As a result of me working with her, she became more positive and this had an impact on the class as a whole.”

Autism network members also reported several examples of impacts on pupils: for example one child who was reticent about joining in class activities took to the use of visuals, which helped him say the words in the song. He became more confident to participate and generally more outgoing. Similarly, the MatD network reported that a great many children had discovered the fun of signed singing and many deaf children have been able to share singing with others, enabling equality and understanding.

The Makaton network member’s project, involving children and older people learning together, was carefully evaluated. Everyone learned new songs and the adults and children quickly lost their inhibitions, became more comfortable in each other’s company and began to mix freely. Levels of self-esteem and achievement rose as a result of participation in the project. One member also reported that her work with an Early Years practitioner was being used with under fives and carers in all the EY sessions.

The PRU network reported that staff in PRUs that they had worked with were learning to overcome their fears and to try singing activity with pupils who have challenging behaviour due to emotional difficulties. The network members reported that many teachers and members who have already worked with children in challenging circumstances have been able to demonstrate positive outcomes, including:

- an elective mute joining in with clapping games and singing along quietly;
- children making eye contact for the first time, and
- children who didn’t normally like being in close proximity or touching other children, becoming so engrossed in clapping and tapping rhythm games followed by passing a squishy ball along that they didn’t notice when they accidentally touched someone else.
Learning and development within the networks: Why and how it worked?

Systematic reviews of evidence about networks and processes of transfer of learning and taking practice to scale (which was one of the key aims for the accessible learning networks and Sing Up as a whole) emphasise in particular the importance of attending to:

1. purpose
2. depth of learning/engagement
3. sustainability of learning
4. ownership
5. spread or range of participation

The examples which follow, of the use of networked learning to support the transfer of effective engagement in and with singing, illustrate the mix of approaches and issues involved in harnessing the power of networked learning. The learning was, in most cases, double faceted: network members were learning about new techniques and approaches and they were learning how to facilitate the use of these approaches in the learning of others.

1. Purpose

The evidence about networks that have positive impacts for learners highlights the importance of two aspects of purpose:

- the depth of moral purpose – the stronger the moral purpose the greater the depth of engagement, ownership and sustainability
- the importance of the reach of the goal – goals need to be broad enough to engage all targeted participants yet specific enough to enable tracking of progress.

All of the networks were focused on a common purpose: using singing to promote singing and inclusivity. They wanted to ensure that children were not excluded from participation in singing by virtue of their circumstances. So all of the networks shared a strong and explicit moral driver and this intense moral purpose enabled relatively fast paced progress across the many boundaries spanned by the networks involved.

In all the networks, initial activities and goals were initiated by the specialist trainers, but were refined and adapted collaboratively once network members had begun to participate. The Autism network was a good example of this. Members were presented with a training resource developed in 2011 by Sing Up and the network leader. The network members and leader then revisited the resource in light of Sing Up’s transition year to see what changes/improvements could be made. The network members were able to identify what improvements could be made and how they could achieve this together. Each network member was able to focus their energy on developing different sections of the new resource such as Vocal Health tips and games.

The network had not deviated from its overarching purpose, but it had enabled members to develop their own goals and priorities within this.

2. Depth of learning/engagement

Research and practice highlight that deep learning and engagement goes beyond acquiring structures and procedures, such as using a particular approach or resources to support or deliver singing. Deep learning and engagement in network activities can be visible through changes in not only members’ knowledge and skills, but also in their beliefs, values and understanding of the underpinning principles. Examples of how this was achieved in the accessible learning networks included:

Sharing practice

For example, Autism network members felt that the network had provided a “greater sense of status and value” for their work and that they had become more creative through sharing practice.

PRU network members with more PRU experience shared with the group issues they had come across in their work and how they had overcome them. One explained how many of the children are self-conscious, but that she had found that taking on a character, with a special name, gave them the freedom to express themselves. Another talked about how children may use inappropriate behaviour towards you. For example, one child had wanted to sit on her knee. She turned the situation around by suggesting ‘Let’s do a high five’ so that she wasn’t put in a position that could be misconstrued.

Co-construction

Another form of collaboration which promoted depth of learning involved joint resource development. For example, when trying to apply their learning in the school context, Makaton network members noticed that school practitioners found some of their resources too limited for Early Years. They set as a priority developing the resources further so they included songs which would be more relevant. The network used observation of practice evidence and feedback from others, as well as Makaton, in developing the resource.

Specialist input

Whilst peer collaboration is a strong feature of networked learning, the research evidence also shows the importance of specialist/expert input in promoting deep learning. Specialists both introduced new knowledge and/or skill and they employed a repertoire of support mechanisms to help embed learning and bring about changes in practice. For example, one way in which the Drake Music network leaders supported members’ learning was to create a focus on pupil learning and encourage participants to “engage with pupils as practitioners” by including sessions with pupils as part of the training. Other networks, such as the MatD and PRU, made use of specialist modelling, whilst Autism and Makaton specialist trainers also made use of mentoring and coaching, and observations and feedback. In some cases the specialists were not only modelling practice in terms of the technology, they were also modelling how to deliver CPD through the way they structured the learning of participants during training.
Ownership

3 Ownership

Structured discussion and consensus building

Participants taking ownership of the learning in which they are engaged is one of the aspects of successful networked learning. It enables participants to make lasting changes to the way they do things. Traditionally, CPD tended to take the form of professionals being “developed” by outside “experts” rather than participating in their own development. There is plenty of research evidence that networks, by contrast, are organised around the interests and needs of their participants. By mobilising and motivating participants to take ownership of their learning, networks can offer key leverage for professional development and change by creating strong incentives to make it all work, as these quotes highlight:

“... I would always ask for the network to bring a song, a new resource, something to share so that they learnt from one another. This helps to build equity and trust between the group.”

(Autism network leader)

“I felt empowered by making a contribution to resource development. I had ownership – we and teachers can adapt this approach to support EAL, SEN and EY learners.”

(Makaton network member)

Opportunities for structured discussion in training sessions in the Drake Music network, often using common questions from teachers, enabled the network participants to share reflection and come to a jointly owned consensus about how to respond in practice.

Meeting individual needs

All the networks, partly because of the intensely interactive way in which they were constructed, took account of participant needs both at the beginning and throughout the course of the training processes. Close attention was paid to participants’ subsequent learning needs through personal contact and feedback during training sessions in the light of their experiences.

For the PRU network, for example, an initial needs analysis showed that some members needed more support around vocal health or music technology, whilst others needed support with working with children with challenging behaviour.

In between the face to face meetings, networks were provided with the means to keep in touch with each other and to share new ideas and experiences of implementing new practice. Given the geographical dispersal, this was an important part of the networking process. However the main method of communication between the members in the MatD network has been two-day residencies. They felt meeting face to face was important although they do telephone or email each other if they want extra support. But advice on signing is not easy to give in this way because signs are visual and hard to describe in words. Three examples of the communications established by the networks were:

- Social Media: The Autism network used both Facebook and email, supplemented by Skype meetings to decide who does what in resource development and how they take it forward. The Facebook page was found to be particularly good for referring others to articles, news, ideas tried out, testimonials and photographs.
- Online Resource development: For Drake Music, communication between regular meetings was by email and telephone. Where participants lived or worked near each other they shared experiences directly. There was also an online Dropbox providing supporting resources and documents for delivering CPD. This took the form of menus covering all the relevant areas including for example, PowerPoint presentations for different situations. The online resource was designed to be in continual development by all.
- Online Forum: Yammer was the main channel of communication between the 4th residential (spring 11) & 5th (March 2012) for the Makaton network. This forum was “like a chat over coffee.” It included discussion threads, posting of resources, asking for help and sharing ideas. Discussion was open, everyone’s views counted, with agreement and disagreement welcomed. Online support and mentoring was provided by the Makaton senior tutor, and one member commented: “This was informal but she gives help and advice. I ask for help and reassurance, get it off my chest, then she follows up my questions with finding out more information.”
- A DVD resource: For MatD network members and its leader, being able to support own development and each other between meetings was a challenge, as signing is very much a visual experience. During one of the residencies, the network recorded a professional video of signing sessions. Members found it was helpful in more ways than one: not only could they use it as a memory aid, helping them remember the songs they had learned during their training weekend and the signs they had used, but they also could reflect on different (including own) signing techniques.

4 Sustainability

Participation

5 Spread or range of participation

Sing Up’s aim in establishing the accessible learning networks is to build on the work it carried out in partnership with specialist organisations through a foundation of networked professionals in many parts of the country. Members of the five accessible learning networks were recruited on a regional basis, as far as possible, to ensure that the initiative had the potential to extend its reach for beyond the initial five networks. The smallest network had five members and the largest ten or more.
Meeting challenges and overcoming obstacles

**Distance**

The main challenge for the networks was forming a cohesive group when they live and work miles apart from one another. They addressed this through residential training, which was carefully structured to provide plenty of opportunities for mutual bonding. In the Autism network:

“Arrival time was on a Friday evening, with drinks and food in the hotel so that people can connect and have conversations and so that an early start time on Saturday morning could be part of the weekend. Good food, drink, light and facilities are always key. Investment in the individuals through these means shows that we value who they are and the commitment they are making to the programme.”

The electronic communications systems which enabled members to seek and find support and continue to share their experiences was also an important element in sustaining learning over these distances.

**Convincing others of the power of singing for children with a particular need or circumstance**

Some network members see this as an ongoing challenge. For example, some PRU staff need persuading to become involved as they do not, in the main, regard singing as an activity they can do with children who have challenging behaviour. Many feel uncomfortable about singing and/or are concerned that the children will become out of control. However having skilled trainers, who can demonstrate and share approaches that work, is beginning to encourage some PRU staff to overcome their fears and try singing activity for themselves.

**Lack of experience amongst members**

Members had different skills and different amounts of experience. For some this impacted on their confidence:

“… having to choose to stay in the network when I have the least experience led to a slight crisis of confidence, but shadowing others and direct working with children and young people have increased my confidence.”

**Managing Expectations**

Networks which were working with external organisations, such as the Makaton Charity, have found their expectations and differences in working practices challenging at times. As the network leader explained:

“I have overcome these by developing strong professional and personal relationships with the individuals involved, listening to them, making a clear effort to be flexible and responsive to their needs and demonstrating and articulating absolute conviction and commitment to the partnership and the uniqueness and importance of the work we are doing together.”

With overall regard to the challenges, one of the Sing Up managers for accessible learning networks said:

“I have learnt that where there is trust and a strong working relationship it is possible to find a way around barriers and obstacles, and that this is necessary to ensure that all the hard work and effort to date is valued and taken forwards into the new Sing Up. I think we all try to work on equal terms with our network members and partners towards our shared goals and this approach has been a significant element of the overall success of Sing Up, and of the partnership-led development of the accessible learning networks.”
The Sing Up approach to building networks was based on research evidence about effective networks as well as three years’ experience of partnership working with specialists to make singing accessible to all children. It included a strong emphasis on learning and CPD, a mix of specialist input aimed both at developing new knowledge and skills and in facilitating and designing effective collaborative learning processes. The support systems put in place by Sing Up also:

- built commitment and enthusiasm, by means of a combination of close and supportive facilitation and expert specialist input. Specialist trainers ‘cascaded’ their own enthusiasm to participants, built commitment through co-construction and effective support systems and recognised the value of effective communication systems;
- supported individual needs within groups. For example, helping individuals deal with particular problems by encouraging and focusing group discussion so that participants could explain what they found difficult and discuss strategies and practicalities together. One to one meetings with Sing Up network leads were very effective in helping overcome individual anxieties or difficulties; and
- supported partners through processes of change by providing a ‘safe’ environment in which they could experiment with new repertoire, ask questions and take risks.

It is clear that networked learning, centred around a strong moral purpose, has provided participants with the space, structures and support for in-depth learning through collaborative activity and specialist input. Importantly, it has enabled them to extend their learning beyond the networks as specialist trainers and peer support help them spread their new knowledge and skills to practitioners who work with children on a daily basis.
Part 3 • Case Studies • Network Learning in Action

Background

Networks were created in order to develop a core accessible learning workforce who could provide specialist training. In this section you will read some incredible stories about the highlights and hurdles of collaborating in a network. Some of the key learnings include:

• The role of the facilitator
• The benefits of peer support through online networking
• The balance between modelling and coaching
• How network learning can arise from a shared sense of purpose
• The importance of being part of a team of experienced professionals
• Learning taking place in a supportive, yet challenging environment.

This resource should enable you to quickly get a sense of what happened in each network so that you can find meaning before applying it within your own setting.
Case Study 1

Autism Accessible Learning Network

Key outcomes
Key outcomes for the network have been:
• a strong sense of cohesion among the members, emanating from the support they have given each other, and a sense that as a group their work as professionals counts for more than if they are working in isolation;
• a rise in confidence among members linked to freedom to experiment in a supportive environment;
• exchange of practical ideas and resources;
• examples of improved practice among teachers; and
• increased engagement and confidence among children and young people with whom network participants have worked.

Background and context
Established in 2011, the Autism network consists of the network leader (who is also a specialist trainer) and eight members. The network is spread evenly across the regions, with the exceptions of the south west and the east of England. The Autism network was established to develop a community of specialist trainers who would support schools subscribing to Sing Up’s membership package.

The network aims to date have been to:
• develop underpinning knowledge about the autism spectrum and how music/singing can support the learning of children with autism;
• develop skills in conveying this information to others;
• acquire an understanding of the principles of the Crackers Maracas resource;
• gain experience in delivering Crackers Maracas in at least two settings;
• gain experience in training others in the Principles of Good Quality Vocal Leadership;
• learn how to adapt songs/resources to suit settings;
• understand the skills needed to provide good quality training sessions in a variety of ways and settings; and
• be aware of the range of resources on the Sing Up website.

Over the course of 14 months, the network met during five residential weekends, the first three taking place between January and June 2011, the fourth in January 2012, and the fifth in March 2012. Between residential weekends, members either sought to implement their learning in their own practice or worked on placements to learn from each other.

Network activities
The main network activities have centred on the members:
• learning to interact with and engage children and young people with autism in singing activities to support their learning;
• creating appropriate resources;
• advocating Sing Up;
• developing skills in using multi-media for song-based learning for children with SEN;
• using the Song Bank and sharing resources and songs; and
• working with music services.

The initial residents were planned to provide members with knowledge and skills in adapting learning to support children and young people with autism. They focussed particularly on issues around communication and interaction. These were based on the experience of a specialist (a composer who had run autism workshops for teachers) and the network leader. Alongside this, members familiarised themselves with the Crackers Maracas resource to support song-based learning for children with autism, and later worked on developing this.

Members of the network felt that the residents were particularly well facilitated by the Sing Up accessible learning networks manager. She paid attention, for example, to everyone having the opportunity to work with everyone else, ensuring that the network worked as a whole and did not split into friendship groups, and that learning could be personalised through 1:1 mentoring. For her part, the Sing Up accessible learning networks manager was careful to exploit all opportunities the weekend offered for members of the network to bond with each other and become familiar with each others’ work and perspectives. Time was allocated for members to work in pairs, for example, to find out what they had done since the previous meeting and what they had learned.
Professional learning within the network

The residents were organised to provide members of the network with specialist input on autism and approaches to supporting learning for children and young people with autism, as well as with opportunities for developing and trying out new approaches with each other.

In addition to the network leader, specialist input was provided by:

• a trainer from Drake Music, who used video and activities to familiarise the group with lessons from research his organisation had undertaken to develop multi-media approaches to engaging children with SEN in song;
• a trainer from Makaton®, and
• members of the network who already had training experience.

Activities at residentials included adapting songs to make them more accessible to children with autism. This would be modelled by the network leader, and then members worked in pairs or small groups to adapt a song of their own. The group would then test these, providing critical feedback, based on principles of accessible communication, asking how the song could be introduced using props instead of words, for example.

For the final residential, the Sing Up accessible learning networks manager and the network leader arranged a workshop by a representative from Drake Music at the request of members. Members watched video clips and discussed singing interventions which Drake Music had carried out during a research and development project, and related it to their own contexts.

They shared their experiences of using technology, where it had and hadn’t worked, and exchanged resources in the form of apps. Members also experimented with some of the resources Drake Music had developed, to see how they could support teachers to adapt songs to suit their learners.

In order to stretch and challenge some of the more experienced members, the Sing Up accessible learning networks manager and the network leader agreed it was important for them to get involved in resource development as part of their learning.

They commented on the drafts, contributed their own ideas and provided feedback. They also used a dedicated Facebook page for referring each other to articles, news and ideas.

From the beginning, most network members were based in settings where they were able to apply their new knowledge and skills. In addition, the network leader recommended that most network members gained experience of

supporting autistic children and staff working with them in either mainstream, special or specialist schools. This was arranged as placements for the network members, taking place between January and March 2012. In some cases experienced trainers from the network modelled practice for members with less experience, and observed and fed back on their developing practice.

Members felt they benefitted from the supportive but nevertheless challenging environment, which they needed on occasions when they were experimenting with new approaches, or had dips in confidence. Several found that working in the network confirmed skills and knowledge they already had, and this in itself was valuable. Experienced members of the network felt they benefitted from observing and mentoring others during training – for example asking themselves deep questions about the ethical dimensions of training others in working with children and young people with SEN.

There was a sense among the members that being in the network led to them feeling less isolated as professionals. They felt they supported each other, and that it was a safe environment in which to speak openly and question practice. Because members of the group came together with different starting points the development of trust among participants was essential in order to provide and receive sometimes challenging questioning constructively. On the whole, members felt this had been accomplished well, largely because of the way residential meetings were facilitated. As a result they reported a rise in confidence over the period of belonging to the network. They also felt their contribution went further as part of the network than if they were working as individuals.

As members implemented the skills they had been developing in their own practice they observed a range of impacts on both adults and children they worked with. In one case a network participant worked with a teacher to help her understand the nature of autism and changes she could make to her practice that would support the child’s learning more effectively. The teacher progressed from finding it emotionally stressful working with the child, to feeling she could take control of the situation, leading to a better learning environment for the class as a whole. In another instance, an autistic child engaged in processing the communication and interaction happening during the session, by role-playing leading a lesson in front of dolls and puppets.
Challenges and overcoming them

Members came from a range of different backgrounds and starting points in terms of experience and readiness to work as trainers. One member, for example, had less of a musical background (drama), another had a particularly deep understanding of autism before joining the network. Building strong relationships and being open in communication from the beginning were important factors in helping the network gel and ensure effective professional learning. This was accomplished by the way residentials were facilitated, close contact with the network leader (members spoke of how important one-to-one conversations with her were), and joint working on placements. Thorough needs analysis undertaken by the network leader was another crucial factor. It enabled her to differentiate and tailor training, eg. by providing additional opportunities to more or less experienced members, or introducing new content (such as Makaton training).

Some members of the network experienced fluctuations in confidence, noticing that dips occurred during periods between residentials. Sing Up set up an e-networking facility in the form of a Facebook page, to enable contact and ongoing support between meetings. Members used this to refer each other to articles, news items, ideas they had tried out, and to post testimonials and photographs. In addition, members used Skype and e-mail to organise resource development between residentials.

Lessons learnt

The main lessons for the network have been the importance of:

- co-constructing resources to create a sense of ownership, draw on a wide range of experience and increase the confidence of members in deploying them;
- planning network development over a longer period to allow more time for members to digest their learning and embed new practice with support;
- adequate funding to ensure good quality and sustained facilitation of the network;
- making links across networks to exploit the potential for learning across specialist areas; and
- building trust and building strong working relationships.

Members felt confident that the network would continue in its work, but for many this also depended on the prospect of providing training for schools signing up to Sing Up Membership. They felt part of a strong team of professionals, and believed that contributing to resources development had been a motivating factor for continued participation in the network.

CUREE would like to thank the network leaders, all the network members, specialists and Sing Up staff who contributed to this report for generously giving their time.
Case Study 2
Drake Music Accessible Learning Network

Key outcomes
The main outcomes so far have been:
- the recruitment and training of five network members,
- the development and use of inexpensive technological resources to make music accessible to disabled children; and
- the creation of new songs for Sing Up’s Song Bank. (www.singup.org/songbank)

Background and context
The Drake Music network is led by two specialist trainers from Drake Music, a charity organisation based in Bristol, where training takes place. The five network members who are participating in training are based in different locations around the country – the north east, north west, London and the south west. They were recruited by Drake Music in the period up to Christmas 2011, and training was completed at three whole-day sessions, two in February and one on 22nd March 2012. The network members are now taking part in five half-day sessions gaining experience of delivering accessible singing sessions in schools. Four of the members had already worked as freelancers for Drake Music. All were experienced musicians/singers with skills in using technology for music, and had worked as music leaders in SEN schools at some point. Drake Music staff had first come into contact with Sing Up four years ago. They knew of the successful work Sing Up was doing with mainstream pupils, but were not aware of any approaches aimed at including disabled children who were non- or only partially vocal. Drake Music had long desired to get disabled children involved in musical activities using assistive technology (AT). The initial link up between Sing Up and Drake Music in 2008 provided Drake Music staff with the opportunity to both open up new ideas to Sing Up and to create a training system which “empowered teachers to use equipment and their teaching skills to broaden the scope of singing to include disabled pupils.”

Network activities
The main activities so far have been:
- Drake Music’s recruitment of five experienced musicians with experience of leading music activities in SEN settings;
- the delivery of a training programme for the five network members, aiming to develop their own skills of using AT and be able to train others;
- the development and use of technological resources (such as Clicker) to enable school staff teachers to make music accessible to their pupils;
- the testing out of the Drake Music approach to teaching staff by two of the five trainees; and
- the creation of accessible resources for 15 songs for Sing Up’s Song Bank.

By 2011, there were already 15 songs that could be streamed into the Clicker and VOCA (Voice Output Communication Aids) technologies in the Song Bank. The network activities intended to build upon the success of the early resources. Drake Music have taken part in a SEN/accessibe learning resource evaluation – as have other accessible learning lead partners such as the Makaton Charity, PRU lead partners, Autism lead partner and Music and the Deaf, resulting in them all being commissioned to do further resource development.

There was further network ‘crossover’ in that Drake Music has trained members of other networks (eg. the Autism network). The network members learnt about accessible ICT resources that are widely available in SEN settings and can be used for very disabled children in singing, including Clicker 5, and VOCAs software. The training also covered other approaches to accessible singing, including the use of microphones, signing, symbols, and ‘multisensory’ resources.

Communication between network members was carried out by email, telephone and through regular meetings. Where the network members lived/worked near each other they shared experiences directly. There was also an online Dropbox, which contained most of the supporting resources and documents the members would need when they delivered CPD in schools or at off-site centres. This took the form of menus with sub-menus, covering all the relevant areas including for example, PowerPoint presentations for different situations. The online resource was designed to be in continual development in light of members’ experiences. The network members were encouraged to add to the resource themselves.
Professional learning within the network

The training was organised in a number of stages, which linked to each other. There were three training days and placements in schools over five half-day sessions in which the trainees tried out their skills by leading CPD for teachers. During some of the half-day sessions it was planned that one of the network leaders would monitor trainees. The approach taken by the leaders in training the members involved modelling how they hoped the network members would themselves deliver CPD to teachers and support workers. Whilst the network leaders provided some “pathways” as models they believed the really important part was to encourage members to use their own experience and thinking, in a collaborative context, to generate new responses. The training and work of the network was guided by Sing Up’s Principles of Good Quality Vocal Leadership and the Drake Music Network’s own Core Standards.

The principle of “not telling people what to do” ran through the approach trainees tried out in schools with teachers, support workers and pupils. Drake Music’s working philosophy was that school staff and support workers already had knowledge and understanding of working with severely disabled pupils, so the network’s job was to help them become more adaptable in meeting the needs of their pupils in terms of increasing their access to music and singing. Drake Music saw the role as provider and facilitator rather than “experts”.

As part of the preparation for the training the network leaders tried and tested their approaches to pupils’ learning in schools. They wanted to be able to create a realistic picture of the difficulties and issues that would emerge when the network members themselves delivered CPD to teachers and support workers. One of the network leaders commented: “We didn’t want the process to appear mechanical.” They used videos with trainees and gave them opportunities to work with pupils as part of the training sessions. The main ideas running through the approaches advocated by the network involved: being adaptable, stressing inclusion, supplying teachers with some possible pathways but not being prescriptive, building on what teachers could and couldn’t do, and getting to know as much about the school(s) concerned as possible, in advance. The leaders stressed how important it was to get the balance right between modelling for teachers and coaching them: “Some delivery is clearly important (via modelling) but the trainer could overpower them.”

Part of the training consisted of network members learning what being an accessible singing leader meant. It included identifying the knowledge and understanding necessary for helping pupils to access singing and music making, and being aware of the flexibility they would need to show. Part of the training consisted of network members learning what being an accessible singing leader meant. It included identifying the knowledge and understanding necessary for helping pupils to access singing and music making, and being aware of the flexibility they would need to show. It was important for network members to be able to “engage with children as practitioners”.

Later, the trainees moved into a different situation – learning to work with and develop teachers and support workers. This included developing a thorough understanding of the software such as “Clicker” and how it could be adapted depending on the available technology a school had, the level of staff expertise and the needs and capabilities of their pupils. There was a fine dividing line between being a “trainer” and being a “coach”. It was regarded as important that teachers worked out for themselves, with support, what they could do for themselves with the resources they had. The trainers would help teachers and support workers identify what their pupils needed from them, and trainers would seek to develop with them a “toolkit” they could work with and adapt further.

Specialist support was provided by the two network leaders on three training days, and continuously as needed. This support was a mix of coaching and instruction and was designed to enable the network members to provide specialist coaching and some instruction to teachers and social workers through CPD. At this stage network members were to try out their skills in a series of trial sessions (five in all).

The final session of the training was specifically focused on peer learning and support. Network members fed back and shared their experiences of school placements to the group. Time was spent working together to share views about the range of issues that had arisen. In this way the members learned each other’s views, reflected on their own views and came to a consensus about how they should approach the issues as they undertook their work of delivering CPD. The network leaders were keen that members should be able to exercise their own flexibility and judgment while also maintaining a common approach. It was clear that there was extensive peer support among the network members both during training and informally at other times, via the website, through emails, telephone conversations and meetings.

Network members described a number of benefits of working in a network. These included:

- feeling part of a team of experienced professionals;
- experiencing a strong incentive to make it all work, arising from a shared sense of purpose;
- developing a close focus on pupils’ learning;
- sharing learning and acquiring a “consistency of response” (as one network member put it);
- being able to access high quality training and support, and
- developing a sense of empowerment.
Challenges and overcoming them

At the start of the life of the network, Drake Music network leaders were aware of the differing conceptions of professional development existing among practitioners. They were keen to avoid the expectation that they were there to “provide answers”. By contrast Drake Music network leaders saw themselves as facilitators whose role was to help teachers and other educational practitioners build on what they knew and could do already in order to provide their pupils with access to music/singing.

One challenge during the training was that the network leaders found it difficult to visit network members while they were rehearsing their skills with teachers and support workers. This was overcome to some extent by offering members the opportunity to feed back on the final training day, and through telephone conversations.

Lessons learnt

The network leaders were keen to make the training really practical. Next time they would like to go further than they did by including more practical activities to illustrate the key points and provide learning opportunities for the network members at the earliest possible stage.

Where next

This year the main focus will be on developing the training sessions so that the network members have what they need in order to provide a major component of the Sing Up Membership package to schools. A key idea is that the network members will be fully aware of the schools’ contexts, including the issues surrounding the teaching and learning of music/singing, availability of technology, level of ICT support and so on.

Conclusions

This case study was based upon a number of methods of data collection, including:

- interview with one network leader;
- discussion with five network members;
- observation of a training session;
- watching a short video clip of a teaching session supported by a Drake Music network member;
- documents – planning, evaluation of resources, teachers’ feedback; and
- interview with a network member.

CUREE would like to thank the network leaders, all the network members, specialists and Sing Up staff who contributed to this report for generously giving their time.

Methods

At the start of the life of the network, Drake Music network leaders were aware of the differing conceptions of professional development existing among practitioners. They were keen to avoid the expectation that they were there to “provide answers”. By contrast Drake Music network leaders saw themselves as facilitators whose role was to help teachers and other educational practitioners build on what they knew and could do already in order to provide their pupils with access to music/singing.

One challenge during the training was that the network leaders found it difficult to visit network members while they were rehearsing their skills with teachers and support workers. This was overcome to some extent by offering members the opportunity to feed back on the final training day, and through telephone conversations.

Lessons learnt

The network leaders were keen to make the training really practical. Next time they would like to go further than they did by including more practical activities to illustrate the key points and provide learning opportunities for the network members at the earliest possible stage.

Where next

This year the main focus will be on developing the training sessions so that the network members have what they need in order to provide a major component of the Sing Up Membership package to schools. A key idea is that the network members will be fully aware of the schools’ contexts, including the issues surrounding the teaching and learning of music/singing, availability of technology, level of ICT support and so on.

Conclusions

This case study was based upon a number of methods of data collection, including:

- interview with one network leader;
- discussion with five network members;
- observation of a training session;
- watching a short video clip of a teaching session supported by a Drake Music network member;
- documents – planning, evaluation of resources, teachers’ feedback; and
- interview with a network member.

CUREE would like to thank the network leaders, all the network members, specialists and Sing Up staff who contributed to this report for generously giving their time.
Case Study 3
Makaton Accessible Learning Network

Key outcomes
The main outcomes so far have been:

- an improved repertoire of approaches to teaching and learning of song through the acquisition of Makaton knowledge and skills;
- embedding singing and Makaton practice in local music services, and within individual practice; and
- a range of evidence that children, young people (and older people) enjoyed, engaged with and benefited from this approach as part of their learning, especially in their ability and willingness to communicate with others.

Background and context
The Makaton network comprises seven members, one of whom has taken a lead role in resource development, in an ongoing collaboration with the original Makaton Trainer. Other network members feed into this process. The network covers a regional spread of north-west and north-east, west midlands, Yorkshire and south-east, and includes music services professionals, a music therapist and teacher, a community musician, and a musical trainer. The network was established in January 2011 with the aim of ensuring its members:

- had a good command of Makaton, the underlying principles and evidence for its use, its place in the signing world and the way Makaton symbols compare with other symbol systems;
- understood how it could be applied in a variety of contexts to meet the needs of different user groups;
- were able to recommend the Makaton Language Programme where appropriate, and
- had attained the necessary standard to become licensed (Local) Makaton tutors, able to provide training workshops for parents and carers.

The Makaton network was established to develop a national network of trainers to support schools subscribing to Sing Up's membership package. The initial training and assessment was completed by March 2011. The network was reconvened in March 2012 to develop content for Makaton focused Sing Up Membership training sessions, but members had continued communicating with and supporting each other in the meantime via Yammer, an online professional networking resource.

Network activities
The main network activities have centred on the members:

- developing skills and knowledge related to Makaton;
- developing skills to deliver Makaton Training to others; and
- creating Makaton-based Sing Up resources.

The development of Makaton-based resources and increasing the training capacity for practitioners to effectively use them provides Sing Up with a powerful tool for supporting singing activities for learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Members of the group have also seen the value of the Makaton-based approach for other groups of learners, for example those in Early Years, and with English as an additional language. Network members initially met for three residential meetings, during which they underwent intensive training. At a fourth residential the members focused on singing development based on Makaton. In addition one of the network members set up a Yammer account, which members used to post resources, ask each other for help, and share ideas. Between them, members also delivered a series of four Makaton-based workshops to practise and assess their developing skills. The peer support the group provided for each other via online networking was also a key feature of residential meetings. Members spoke about the value of observing others deliver training and receiving feedback on their own presentations. Several members felt improved presentational skills to have been a real benefit of participating in the network. Specialist support was also important. Members drew on mentoring support of one of the network leaders in particular, learning from her approach to training, and feeling they could rely on her for good quality advice, support and reassurance when trying out something new.

There was a general sense across the network that members had improved their skills – not least the acquisition of Makaton skills from scratch to competent. Members felt confident about delivering lessons themselves using Makaton, believed that participation in the network had contributed to this confidence, but felt at differing stages of readiness about delivering Makaton training to others. One member felt that she had overcome a lack of confidence in training other teaching professionals by actually leading a workshop. She had found the prospect intimidating, but soon found she knew and could do a lot with Makaton that others found useful and empowering. At the time of writing, the network was in the midst of creating a new Makaton-based Sing Up resource. Members felt that contributing to this in itself was an empowering experience, giving them confidence in the value of their skills and knowledge, and to take a leading role in a project. Other network benefits identified by members included improved vocal skills, and focussed reflection on their own practice.

The development of Makaton-based resources and increasing the training capacity for practitioners to effectively use them provides Sing Up with a powerful tool for supporting singing activities for learners with Special Educational Needs.
Professional learning within the network

The core professional learning in the network was organised to ensure its members were familiar with Makaton resources and that they developed the skills to incorporate Makaton into teaching and learning. This was the main focus of a series of three residential weekends which took place between January and March 2011. The training was led by a senior Makaton tutor, and engaged participants in activities they could use themselves in teaching and training, for example:

- playing ‘I went shopping and in my basket I put’, using signs;
- using graphic scores with pictures to represent sounds; and
- conversations describing pictures without words.

During the workshops, members of the network observed the senior Makaton tutor model teaching practice, and observed each other teaching a song and provided feedback.

In the 12 month interval between the fourth and final residential, the network members incorporated what they had learned into their own practice in various ways. One of the members carried out a pilot project in which young and older people learned together. She developed her own resources for the setting, collected and analysed data on the impact, and shared the outcomes with the rest of the network. Two other members jointly ran a workshop for PGCE students. One of them delivered two further training sessions for Early Years practitioners as part of their work for a local music service. Members felt that Yammer was essential during this period as a source of support, and channel for exchanging resources, news and ideas.

The fifth residential was an opportunity for members to develop Sing Up resources and training for the Makaton network. In particular, members used their real world experiences of using Makaton resources with song in a number of settings to co-construct additions to existing resources. The discussion during planning sessions reflected the range of contexts members of the network were familiar with and the issues they had come across. They discussed, for example, the value of basing a song on children getting ready to go outside or preparing materials for a lesson. They considered the extent to which the songs could be used with mainstream learners as well as those with SEN, and to what extent teachers would find them accessible and easy to use.

The fifth residential was a chance for members to catch up with where the network stood in relation to the overall Sing Up programme. The Sing Up accessible learning networks manager updated the members on developments within Sing Up and how networks would function in future. She included sessions to ensure that, alongside familiarity with Makaton, the network had a firm understanding of the Principles of Good Quality Vocal Leadership, and how these can be applied in practice. She was also keen to promote learning across networks, and for this reason, a member from the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) accessible learning network joined the group to raise their awareness of the needs of this group of users and techniques which the PRU network had developed.

Members of the network pointed to a number of ways being involved in the network had an impact on them individually and the people they worked with. The initial training meant that members had good skills and knowledge with regard to Makaton itself, and were confident users. They also felt that being able to use Makaton meant that they could improve their practice with a number of groups of learners besides those with SEN, including those with English as an additional language, and with Early Years children:

“Makaton has greatly affected how I teach songs and my awareness of children with SEN, in terms of song accessibility.”
(Music therapist and teacher)

When it came to being confident about training others in the use of Makaton, some members felt there was further to go. From the perspective of one member, however, this seemed to be a question of ‘having a go’. Once she had delivered one workshop to teachers, she felt more confident in her own skills and ability to train. Members did feel that they had improved skills in presentation, as well as in their vocal skills.

Members also noticed positive impacts on learners when they or their teachers introduced Makaton with song, not least in terms of greater engagement in group activities. In one setting children who were otherwise reluctant to join in in class began singing to their teddies and older siblings. One member had carried out a pilot project which brought children and young people together with older people from a care home to come closer through musical activities. Observation and photographic evidence showed children, adults and elders enjoyed getting to know each other through song and signing, that everyone learned new songs, that participants were expressing themselves better, sometimes feeling safe to express emotions, and that generally levels of self-esteem rose.
The main lessons for the network have been the importance of:
- building trust and building strong working relationships;
- planning for the network on a longer-term basis to create a more even distribution of activity, learning, and a clearer sense of direction from the early stages;
- engaging with each other remotely via an effective networking resource, but possibly setting out ground rules for its use so that communications stay focussed on the work of the network; and
- the importance of co-constructing resources so they meet the real needs experienced by members of the network.

Lessons learnt

This case study is based on the following evidence sources:
- observation of a residential workshop in which network members participated;
- focus group conducted with five members of the network;
- telephone interviews with two members of the network; and
- documentary evidence, including completed self-assessment tools, Core Standards document and evaluation report of a pilot project.

Challenges and overcoming them

Their role as a Sing Up accessible learning network has evolved over the course of 15 months as the landscape of Sing Up has changed and plans for the networks developed. For members this has translated into an uneven experience of highly intensive training in the initial stages, followed by a long period of little activity, before convening to take the work forward in 2012. The Sing Up accessible learning networks manager has worked closely with members of the network and feels that clear and honest communication has been the key for the network moving forward. For network members engaging with two organisations has required at times effort and perseverance, mainly because of the differences in culture and way of doing things. However both organisations’ commitment to this work and everyone’s investment in developing strong professional and personal relationships across the partnership including at the final residential having a director present during resource development, has resulted in greater understanding of these differences and fostered a feeling of security and positivity which it is hoped will support clearer communication in the future. Members have also found the rigidity surrounding the use of Makaton resources set out by the charity itself to be difficult. This has been more keenly felt as members felt the existing resources were limited in their appeal to very young learners, based as they are on nursery rhymes. For them there is a contrast between the accessibility of Makaton resources and those made available by Sing Up, and a sense that Makaton would benefit from making its resources more freely available in terms of the enthusiasm it would generate. The network’s answer to this has been to develop more resources of its own, but even here considerations of copyright and permissions were never far from the discussions.

The Sing Up accessible learning networks manager has worked closely with members of the network and feels that clear and honest communication has been the key for the network moving forward.

Where next

For several members the continuation of the network depends on the benefits they feel it can bring them in their current roles. The success of the Sing Up resource and training packages will play a role for those who see this as a potential source of business, but who also value the support they feel they can draw from and provide to each other. Members are agreed that they are in a ‘great pool of people’, and that together with links across the accessible learning networks there is the potential for them personally to draw on a wide range of specialist expertise. This has the potential to be very useful, for example, when individual members need to put together a team to bid for or carry out their own projects.

Methods

This case study is based on the following evidence sources:
- observation of a residential workshop in which network members participated;
- focus group conducted with five members of the network;
- telephone interviews with two members of the network; and
- documentary evidence, including completed self-assessment tools, Core Standards document and evaluation report of a pilot project.

CUREE would like to thank the network leaders, all the network members, specialists and Sing Up staff who contributed to this report for generously giving their time.
Case Study 4
MatD Accessible Learning Network

Key outcomes
The Music and the Deaf network’s work on developing signed songs is enabling the network members to develop the skills and knowledge they need to successfully deliver training for school practitioners that will help them to engage both hearing and hearing impaired children in signed singing, thus promoting inclusion. Increasing numbers of schools are now involving their children in signed singing, which allows a large number of children to access singing who would not have done so in the past. The educational world as a whole is beginning to see that hearing impaired children can take part in signed singing alongside their peers and that all children benefit greatly from the experience.

Background and context
The network of signed song trainers was first set up at the end of 2009. In its current state, the network was initiated in autumn 2011. In spring 2012 it comprised the network leader, who is also a specialist trainer, and ten members, some of whom only joined the network in January 2012. When considering who to invite to be part of the network, the network leader focused on interested individuals he felt had the skills and confidence to deliver quality training. Most of the network members were already known to him largely through working with him on previous signed singing projects. The exception was a recent recruit, a student in his final year of university who had approached the network leader at the suggestion of one of his tutors because he was an accomplished signer, had a good knowledge of British Sign Language and was enthusiastic about promoting signed singing in schools.

Increasing numbers of schools are now involving their children in signed singing, which allows a large number of children to access singing who would not have done so in the past.

Network activities
The primary focus of the network is to enable the network members to successfully deliver training to teachers and music leaders in signed singing. To do this, the members of the network were supported in ways that will help them to gain:

- an understanding of what makes a good signed song so that they can convey it to teachers and other music leaders in a clear, informative way;
- an understanding of British Sign Language and its application to signed song, which they can articulate to teachers and other music leaders; and
- knowledge of a range of songs and activities which they can make use of in training sessions.

The network members are spread out geographically from Gateshead in the north east to Cornwall in the south west. They have a range of singing and signing skills: some are primarily professional singers, but are interested in learning sign language; others have strong signing skills and are interested in developing their signing skills further. All are passionate about the value of signed singing for both hearing and hearing impaired children.

The network is keen to promote the view that, contrary to what some people might think, deaf children can take part in singing activity. Furthermore, the network believes that signed song has value for all children, not just the hearing impaired, as it encourages children to think about communication and reinforces the development of language, linguistics and meaning alongside musical elements.

The network members are primarily professional singers, but are interested in learning sign language; others have strong signing skills and are interested in developing their singing skills further. All are passionate about the value of signed singing for both hearing and hearing impaired children.

The primary focus of the network is to enable the network members to successfully deliver training to teachers and music leaders in signed singing. To do this, the members of the network were supported in ways that will help them to gain:

- an understanding of what makes a good signed song so that they can convey it to teachers and other music leaders in a clear, informative way;
- an understanding of British Sign Language and its application to signed song, which they can articulate to teachers and other music leaders; and
- knowledge of a range of songs and activities which they can make use of in training sessions.

The main method of communication between the network members to date has been residential. They felt meeting face to face was important and residents were preferred to one day training events by all the network members due to the large amount of travelling involved in getting together. They felt they learned most when they all got together because between them the network members have a good mix of skills to share. The network members sometimes phone or email each other if they want extra support, but advice on signing is not easy to give in this way because signs are visual and hard to describe in words – another reason for wanting to meet with each other in person.

The network members are spread out geographically from Gateshead in the north east to Cornwall in the south west. They have a range of singing and signing skills: some are primarily professional singers, but are interested in learning sign language; others have strong signing skills and are interested in developing their signing skills further. All are passionate about the value of signed singing for both hearing and hearing impaired children.

The network is keen to promote the view that, contrary to what some people might think, deaf children can take part in singing activity. Furthermore, the network believes that signed song has value for all children, not just the hearing impaired, as it encourages children to think about communication and reinforces the development of language, linguistics and meaning alongside musical elements.
Professional learning within the network

The network has held several training weekends. The most recent took place in January 2012, the residential before that took place in October 2010. The January 2012 residential provided the network members with an opportunity to:

- polish up their knowledge of signed songs learned previously;
- learn new signed songs;
- learn how to identify appropriate songs for signing;
- improve individual skills in signing and singing;
- discuss Sing Up’s Principles of Good Quality Vocal Leadership and consider how the Core Standards for their network could reflect singing and inclusivity; and
- develop an appropriate training model for delivering signed song.

During the residential, the network leader modelled how to run a training session in signed singing with the network members. He started by asking the participants to guess the sign for ‘apple’ and other easy visual words. The network members realised that they already knew more than they thought about sign language. They were also able to see how they could use this approach with school staff new to signing to help them feel confident about their ability to learn sign language quickly and easily. Another activity involved the participants copying what the leader was signing in silence. They started with the simplest part of a song and repeated the actions until everyone had memorised them before moving onto another section. In this way, the participants quickly learnt all the signs they needed for a song.

There were opportunities for network members to ask how to sign particular songs they would like to use with children or in training sessions. This enabled the network leader to demonstrate what was possible with regard to signing songs. For example:

- It is not possible/necessary to sign every word separately, it is better/easier to concentrate on creating a picture, for example, rather than sign all the words in the phrase ‘the man walked over the bridge’, ‘just sign a bridge and make the person walk over it’; and
- some songs might seem easy to sign and therefore good candidates for signed singing, but in practice are not, for example, with the song ‘Let’s go fly a kite’, the phrase is repeated too frequently, meaning the same hand movements are repeated over and over.

To show that there can be different ways of signing particular words, the network leader arranged for the network members to develop their own signed version of a song in groups of three. When each group performed their signed song to the others, they found that other groups had arrived at different ways of signing the same song. This exercise served to demonstrate that the exact signs are not important so long as they make sense within the context of the song. Parallels were drawn with regional sign variations for particular words like dialects, where the differences are regarded as variations rather than wrong.

The creation of a film of the network members signing and singing songs, by a professional cameraman, was particularly welcomed by all the participants. The cameraman filmed different groups singing and signing the same songs, then created a split screen to highlight the differences in signing. Everyone was given a DVD version of the film as a visual record to help them to remember the songs they had learned during the weekend and the signs they had used. But the filming had another, unanticipated benefit for several of the network members. Watching it later enabled them to reflect on their own signing techniques in comparison with others and see how they might improve them, for example, through doing the signs higher up to ensure everyone can see.

As well as the residential training, the network members were also offered opportunities to observe the network leader delivering actual training sessions for school practitioners and their classes if they wished and if in convenient locations for them. The network leader tried to discuss how the session went with them afterwards. The network members have found that the experience has had the added benefit of helping them to learn ways of working effectively with children, for example:

- being aware of any learning or behaviour difficulties within the group, then catering for them without being patronising;
- having a plan, but not necessarily sticking with it if it doesn’t seem to be working, and
- ensuring that as a leader you make clear that you enjoy singing the songs, even if asked to sing/sing a song you don’t like.

The network members feel their work has made an impact in several ways:

- all of the network members feel more confident about their ability to lead signed song training sessions using the model they have experienced themselves, and feel they have plenty of good repertoire to draw on plus a good knowledge of signs;
- many teachers and music leaders have been helped to develop some of the skills they need to teach signed singing;
- the network members have made a good start on producing quality resources, and the Sing Up communications and resources teams are now more aware of the importance of having signed songs on the Sing Up website;
- the network is beginning to get the message across to the education world that music and hearing impaired people do mix—increasing numbers of schools are now involving their children in signed singing and many have started to create signing choirs (finding they are popular with the children); and
- a great many children have discovered the fun of signed singing and many hearing impaired children have been able to share singing with others, enabling equality and understanding.

Those network members who have introduced signed singing in their area have found that it has had benefits across the board. They have found that boys in particular seem to prefer singing that involves signing, partly because the kind of songs that are suitable for signing are more visual and non-threatening with peers, which boys seem to enjoy, and partly because boys seem to enjoy the physical nature of signing and moving their bodies to the music. At the same time, school staff have been pleased to see how engaged the children are when taking part in signed singing and are pleased to see them learning new skills. Signed singing has proved to be a good medium for teaching children to see beyond deafness and also for helping hearing children to learn how to communicate with their hearing impaired peers.
Challenges and overcoming them

The network members cover a huge geographical spread and some of them were concerned about having to work alone – particularly those who did not feel they had strong signing skills. This barrier has been largely overcome through the creation of the DVD resource during the residential (which acts as a memory aid) and also through increasing their confidence in, and experience of, signed singing during the residential. The residential also helped the network members to establish strong friendships with each other, such that they feel able to ask for support from others in between the residentials by phone and email. The network leader is hopeful that the network members will take this further by getting together with other members living/working in the same region to lead events together or at least meeting up with regional colleagues and act as mentors/buddies to one another. The accessibility of the signed singing resources however remains a concern for the network leader. Using YouTube, where the signed singing videos were made available, is difficult in many schools and creating DVDs for schools with signed singing resources is not always possible. The network therefore is still looking for effective ways of making signed singing resources more accessible to schools.

Reconciling a number of passionate voices and important ideas, often in tension with each other, about how to best promote signed singing and support the network members, was another difficulty experienced by the network and the Sing Up accessible learning managers. This inevitably led to selecting some ideas over others in order to make progress. Achieving compromises wasn’t always easy and there is still a need for Sing Up and the network to continue developing effective communication and other mutually beneficial ways of working.

Lessons learnt

The biggest area of learning was the importance of sustainability of signed singing work: the network members realised that if teachers aren’t given the confidence and resources to do signed singing for themselves, then it won’t continue to happen in schools.

Conclusions

Despite considerable achievements, the network leader and its members, passionate about engaging both hearing and hearing impaired children in signed singing, believe that more can and should be done. As Sing Up is moving into the new phase of its development the network is waiting to see how the new membership approach would accommodate the needs of vulnerable children and those supporting them. The MatD network (alongside other accessible learning networks) is eager to fully participate in shaping the new systems and has a number of concrete suggestions that could make Sing Up increasingly more and more inclusive.

As for the continuing development of its members, the network is keen to sustain and develop its work in this area. For example, it will be looking for more opportunities for cross discipline learning between the different accessible learning networks. The network members believe there is much they could learn from each other.

Where next

Despite considerable achievements, the network leader and its members, passionate about engaging both hearing and hearing impaired children in signed singing, believe that more can and should be done. As Sing Up is moving into the new phase of its development the network is waiting to see how the new membership approach would accommodate the needs of vulnerable children and those supporting them. The MatD network (alongside other accessible learning networks) is eager to fully participate in shaping the new systems and has a number of concrete suggestions that could make Sing Up increasingly more and more inclusive.

As for the continuing development of its members, the network is keen to sustain and develop its work in this area. For example, it will be looking for more opportunities for cross discipline learning between the different accessible learning networks. The network members believe there is much they could learn from each other.

Methods

A CUREE researcher reviewed documentary evidence and video clips of training sessions, and interviewed the network leader and five members of the network.

CUREE would like to thank the network leaders, all the network members, specialists and Sing Up staff who contributed to this report for generously giving their time.
Case Study 5
PRU Accessible Learning Network

Key outcomes
The PRU network is helping practitioners who work with pupils in Pupil Referral Units and those supporting children with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) in specialised units to see that singing can be a successful activity. The network also aims to reach staff in mainstream schools who work with pupils with challenging behaviour due to emotional problems. Network members are developing the skills and knowledge they need to deliver training that would show teachers how children in these units and also those with challenging behaviour can benefit from and enjoy singing.

Background and context
This network developed from a ‘Vocal Force’ project within the original Sing Up programme. The network’s two leaders identified suitable professionals within different regions of England to ensure national coverage. The eight network members, who were already known to the leaders, were selected on the basis of their previous experience in PRUs and EBD units, their singing abilities and experience as professional trainers, and their regional spread. A number of network members have an emotional pull towards working with children who have challenging behaviour. Some are primarily singers; others primarily musicians/producers, all with varying amounts of PRU experience. In time, the network leaders hope to expand the network to include PRU music teachers. A key purpose of the network was to enable its members from around the country to support each other and exchange information in ways that would enable them to achieve the network’s aims.

The network members are being supported in developing their own skills of leading music in PRU contexts to a high standard as well as supporting the development of PRU staff etc. in leading music through sharing useful repertoire, ideas and experiences with each other. In short, the network expects to act as an on-going learning, sharing and support resource for all the members involved.

To date, the main method of communication between the network members has been through two-day residential meetings. One was held in February 2012, the first residential for many of the network members, as they only joined the network in January 2012. Another residential is scheduled for April 2012.

Network activities
The primary focus of the network is to enable the network members to successfully use the ‘Sitting in the Classroom’ resource developed with and by them for delivering training to PRU/EBD staff and music leaders. The resource provides guidance on how singing can be used in a PRU context. It currently includes the music and lyrics for fifteen songs and suggestions for why each song has been chosen, and activities such as how to extend each song through rhythm and through telling the story behind the song. It also provides advice on running a music session, which covers setting up the room, structuring the session, ways of sustaining engagement and extension activities, etc.

The network members are being supported in developing their own skills of leading music in PRU contexts to a high standard as well as supporting the development of PRU staff etc. in leading music through sharing useful repertoire, ideas and experiences with each other. In short, the network expects to act as an on-going learning, sharing and support resource for all the members involved.

To date, the main method of communication between the network members has been through two-day residential meetings. One was held in February 2012, the first residential for many of the network members, as they only joined the network in January 2012. Another residential is scheduled for April 2012.

Network activities

The network members are being supported in developing their own skills of leading music in PRU contexts to a high standard as well as supporting the development of PRU staff etc. in leading music through sharing useful repertoire, ideas and experiences with each other. In short, the network expects to act as an on-going learning, sharing and support resource for all the members involved.

To date, the main method of communication between the network members has been through two-day residential meetings. One was held in February 2012, the first residential for many of the network members, as they only joined the network in January 2012. Another residential is scheduled for April 2012.
The February 2012 residential aimed to:

- identify the collective and individual needs and desires of the group in terms of their own development and that of their network; and
- work on developing the ‘Sitting in the classroom’ resource.

An initial needs analysis showed that some members needed more support around vocal health or music technology, whilst others needed support with working with children with challenging behaviour.

The residential was highly structured by the network leaders and included:

- a discussion of Sing Up’s Principles of Good Quality Vocal Leadership because every trainer needs to know them and how to apply them;
- the participants working in groups to design a training package for people working in challenging circumstances, which played to the trainers’ strengths; the group’s ideas were then brought together, thereby creating shared ownership of the resource; and
- the network members sharing musical ideas with each other, for example, teaching a song to the group and leading a discussion about it.

The aim was to create a balance of practical sessions of skill sharing led by the network members in their area of expertise (such as vocal health, beat boxing, soundscaping) and theory (such as the kind of behaviour that can be expected in a PRU). Working on the ‘Sitting in the classroom’ resource was particularly useful for enabling the network members to learn from each other’s experiences of working with children who have challenging behaviour. Issues raised included:

- the appropriateness of songs, such as ‘What do you do with a drunken sailor?’ for children living in challenging circumstances who may have witnessed drunkenness and its effects at home;
- the need to be flexible – that if a song or activity doesn’t seem to be working, move on to another activity or song that is more likely to work;
- being as inclusive as possible, for example, the language and repetitiveness in the song ‘London’s Burning’ allows children who don’t feel comfortable about speaking to join in with the rhythm;
- the importance of talking to teachers beforehand so that the selection of material is both appropriate and relevant to the curriculum; and
- being mindful of teachers’ possible stereotypes, linking singing in the classroom with lack of teacher control and abandoning of existing structures and expectations. This was addressed through offering a flexible, but structured session that starts and ends calmly, and through modelling self-control and being positive throughout the session – e.g. saying ‘well done for staying in the room – it’s nice to have you here!’

The activity also enabled network members with more PRU experience to share with the group challenges they had come across in their work and how they had overcome them. One, for example, explained how many of the children are self-conscious, but that she had found that taking on a character gave them the freedom to express themselves. She encouraged the children to choose a special name (which could be their own name said backwards) and to become wizards or explorers going on a journey using sounds. Another talked about how children may use inappropriate behaviour towards you. For example, one child had wanted to sit on her knee. She turned the situation around by suggesting ‘let’s do a high five!’ so that she wasn’t put in a position that could be misconstrued.
The main challenge for the network members is the difficulty of forming a cohesive group when they live and work miles apart from one another, such that the members are able to support each other, develop ideas and resources and share their experiences of delivering music in PRU contexts in ways that enable everyone to learn from them. Having a residential has been particularly helpful for overcoming the challenge through providing the network members with the opportunity to meet at length and talk with each other in both structured and informal situations. In the words of the network members:

“We need to be able to update and refresh how we deliver training.”

“Exchange of information and support is vital in this kind of work.”

“Residencies keep you going for a long time.”

The on-going challenge is convincing PRU staff to see that singing is an activity that they can do with children who have challenging behaviour. Many staff feel uncomfortable about singing and/or are concerned that it could make the children’s behaviour more difficult to manage. Having skilled specialist trainers who can demonstrate and share approaches that work is doing much to encourage PRU staff to overcome their fears and try singing activity for themselves. Network members who have already worked with children in challenging circumstances have been able to demonstrate many positive outcomes, including:

- an elective mute joining in with clapping games and singing along quietly;
- children making eye contact for the first time; and
- children who didn’t normally like being in close proximity or touching other children, becoming so engrossed in clapping and tapping rhythm games followed by passing a squishy ball along that they didn’t notice when they accidentally touched someone else.

Challenges and overcoming them

The on-going challenge is convincing PRU staff to see that singing is an activity that they can do with children who have challenging behaviour. Many staff feel uncomfortable about singing and/or are concerned that it could make the children’s behaviour more difficult to manage. Having skilled specialist trainers who can demonstrate and share approaches that work is doing much to encourage PRU staff to overcome their fears and try singing activity for themselves. Network members who have already worked with children in challenging circumstances have been able to demonstrate many positive outcomes, including:

- an elective mute joining in with clapping games and singing along quietly;
- children making eye contact for the first time; and
- children who didn’t normally like being in close proximity or touching other children, becoming so engrossed in clapping and tapping rhythm games followed by passing a squishy ball along that they didn’t notice when they accidentally touched someone else.

In time, the network expects to share among the network members:

- research and other evidence that highlights what music can do to transform the lives of children with challenging behaviour;
- information on funding, resources; and
- other relevant training, opportunities and information relevant to working in PRUs and EBD units.

So far, the main method of communication between the network members has been the residential that took place in February 2012. In time, the network anticipates:

- setting up a Sound Cloud account where sound clips are uploaded to enable everyone to agree on repertoire and exercises; and
- organising regular Skype sharings focused on repertoire and trouble shooting.

The first residential involved only the network members and leaders. The residential planned for April 2012 will include a talk from an external specialist – the headteacher from the first PRU to get a Sing Up Gold Award, during which the headteacher will share details of the PRU’s journey, the impact that singing has had on their pupils and the teachers’ practice, and the issues surrounding singing in PRUs. The network also expects this residential to firm up how the trainers (network members) will deliver the training when working with PRUs by creating a template plan to follow that also allows for creative freedom.

As the network members start to become involved in delivering training sessions to PRU staff and other practitioners (as part of Sing Up Membership package), the network leaders are expecting to provide mentoring support to discuss issues that have been encountered on an on-going and individual basis.

Where next

CUREE would like to thank the network leaders, all the network members, specialists and Sing Up staff who contributed to this report for generously giving their time.
Tool kit

How to build a Learning Network

Effective networking tools

Purpose
The tools aim to help make the network as productive and effective as it can be by creating an engaging structure for early discussion, joint reflection and agreed action planning amongst network members. Importantly, the tools are designed to develop ownership and commitment to the network amongst its members.

The focus of the tools
There are five different research based tools focussed on defining/establishing the:

• goals of the network;
• effective forms of communication between network members;
• quality of professional development activity;
• steps to embedding learning; and
• ways of monitoring impact/progress.

Who should lead on using the tools?
The tools require some facilitation. A network leader, an external facilitator or one of the network members could take on the facilitative role. This can change between the tools.

The facilitator’s role includes introducing the activity and its purpose, time keeping, splitting network members into smaller group (if applicable), making sure everyone contributes, bringing ideas together and summarising decisions and action points. The facilitator needs to be familiar with the activity described in the tool in advance and to ensure enough time is allocated for the members’ discussion.

How are the tools organised?
Each tool comprises numbered activities/stages. Usually, the tools help the network members to analyse how things currently are and help them think about next steps. The additional resources required have been kept deliberately simple, such as post it notes, A4 paper, pens, highlighter pens and a flip chart, and are clearly identified.

When and how to use the tools
The tools are presented largely in the order we anticipate them being used, although we don’t expect them to be used straight after each other! For example, tool 1 (goals) would be appropriate for your first meeting, while tool 3 will work best after some Continual Professional Development (CPD) activity has taken place. Tools 1-4 can be integrated into the agenda of ongoing meetings and we suggest allowing 20-30 minutes. You may find it useful to identify a recorder for the results/outcomes of each tool and to circulate the notes afterwards. Tool 5 involves collecting evidence from schools/other settings, ideally at regular intervals, and sharing the outcomes during network meetings.
Look at the common areas of focus you have identified as a group and decide which, if any, you think you can resolve on your own and which you think require everyone to focus on as a network. As a group, record the network areas of focus and level of response required on separate pieces of A4 paper.

Networks that have positive impacts for learners as well as network members often have goals that are characterised by:

- strong moral purpose – the stronger the moral purpose the greater the depth of engagement, ownership and sustainability
- balance of spread and clarity – goals need to be broad enough to engage all network members yet specific enough to enable tracking of progress.

Aim of the tool
To help the network members to agree on goals that would unite them, make network activities meaningful and purposeful, respond to individuals’ needs and are likely to make a difference to their learners.

Resources
- Post it notes and pens
- Flip chart and marker pen
- A4 paper
- At least one copy of the next page to guide the network members through the activity

How to:
Please see the next page

Identifying goals together

1. Brainstorm in pairs, key areas of focus you are facing regarding singing in your setting and/or of particular groups of children – things you would like to try to resolve or improve upon. Record pairs’ thinking on post it notes, then, as a group, identify common key themes. Record on a flip chart.

2. Look at the common areas of focus you have identified as a group and decide which, if any, you think you can resolve on your own and which you think require everyone to focus on as a network. As a group, record the network areas of focus and level of response required on separate pieces of A4 paper.

3. As a group decide how long it will take to tackle each of the areas of focus recorded on the A4 sheets meaningfully and organise into order (ie. short term, medium and long term goals).

4. Now identify 1-3 top priorities that are big enough (practically and morally) to require a network and specific enough for progress to be tracked.

5. Consider how you will know when you have achieved your goals. Ask each group member three possibilities of max six words (each) summarising their answer to the statements below (1 post-it per statement).

   We will have achieved our goals in 18 months/2 years
   (choose a time scale):
   - If network leaders/partners can ...
   - If network members can ...
   - If teachers/specialist support staff can ...
   - If pupils in a range of settings can ...

6. Then, as a group identify common themes in the success criteria and group them for network leaders and members, for teachers and other professionals, and for pupils.

7. Now ask sub groups to draft 2-3 composite success criteria that summarise the ideas on the post-its for one of the groups. Agree these with the rest of the group.
Tool 2  
Communication within the network

How will we work together?

Good communication is essential for a network. Face to face meetings can be necessary for keeping the relationships positive and enabling the network members to make progress and resolve strategic and operational issues. Yet organising these can be a serious challenge because of people’s workloads and the logistical demands of between-organisation working. Many Sing Up networks resolved this creatively, using other forms of communication (such as video-conferencing or Google+) when appropriate, usually after an initial face to face get together. What about your network? When do you need a meeting and when might email, Doodle poll or Skype sometimes do?

Aim of the tool

To identify methods of communication that will be efficient, yet enable the network to achieve its goals and ensure learning takes place.

Resources

• Post it notes and pens
• Copies of grid A for each pair
• Flip chart and marker pen (you might wish to transfer grid B to one of the flipchart pages in advance)
• A4 paper
• At least one copy of the next page to guide the network members through the activity

How to:

Please see the next page

Agreeing on appropriate methods of communication

1

Using grid A below, brainstorm in pairs the advantages and disadvantages of different types of communication (eg. email, telephone, Skype, face to face meetings, residentials, forum). Bring your ideas together on a flip chart.

Example: Email

Advantage: Can send and reply any time of the day that’s convenient

Disadvantage: responses may be slow – can take a long time to reach decisions. Easily misunderstood when brief.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of communication</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skype</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face to face meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2

In pairs or groups, take some of the goals/areas of learning you have already identified. For each goal, break it down into individual actions and consider which method of communication will best help you towards completing them.

Bring your ideas together on a flip chart using grid B below.

Example

Goal: to develop a resource

Action: to brainstorm ideas – take a slot in our termly meetings to feedback research

Action: decide on the format of the resource – take a slot in our termly meetings to feedback research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purposes of communication</th>
<th>Possible forms of communication</th>
<th>Degree of Importance</th>
<th>Risk if it goes wrong</th>
<th>Level of comfort of network members in using it</th>
<th>Choice for each new purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tool 3
Effective professional development

Professional development

What do we want to learn together
Professional development of their members and other staff is often one of the key goals for networks.

Some forms of CPD are more effective than others. The checklist that is at the core of this tool (see next page) is a summary of the international evidence about professional learning that leads to better outcomes for staff and pupils.

Aim of the tool
To establish how effective the current CPD activities are and how they can be developed further.

Resources
• Copies of the next page
• Pens
• Highlighter pens

How to:
Please see the next page

Identifying the different kinds of CPD we use and will use

In pairs, think about the CPD activities that have already taken place in your network. If your network has not yet run any CPD activities, its members could reflect on their own past experiences of CPD. Looking at the forms of CPD below, indicate how often they were present in the CPD activities, using the scale below.

4 – we always did this
3 – we often did this
2 – we sometimes did this
1 – we hardly ever did this

1
Share your top and bottom scorers as a group. Were there any surprises? Eg. something you expected to see wasn’t on the list?

2
Thinking about the forms you use frequently, discuss which of them were the most useful and which can perhaps be dropped to create time for trying out new forms. Capture on a flipchart.

3
Next, consider 2-3 forms of CPD you haven’t yet used or used very little. Discuss why you haven’t used them and consider whether/how you might use them in the future.

4

Checklist of effective CPD

• Building on existing knowledge
• Taking account of individual learning needs
• Encouraging ownership of learning
• Peer support/coaching
• Opportunities for structured collaborative activity
• Opportunities for structured professional dialogue rooted in trying things out
• Observing specialists model new or innovative practices
• Specialists supporting individuals to try out new practices
• Specialists facilitating collaboration between individuals
• Individuals experimenting with new approaches
• Observation and feedback
• Opportunities for shared learning and reflection on evidence about how and why new approaches work as they do

*Taken from the findings of four systematic reviews of CPD: http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/Default.aspx?tabid=274
Summaries are available at: www.tla.ac.uk/site/Pages/RfT.aspx (see the first three summaries in the Teachers’ professional learning section)
### Tool 4
### Embedding learning

**Taking learning and other outcomes of network activities back into members’ contexts**

Taking learning back to your own school/setting might seem daunting for some network members, particularly if it is likely to lead to significant changes. Sharing plans for and experiences of embedding outcomes of network activities in their own context can help network members to articulate concerns, secure peer support and increase their commitment to making it happen.

The facilitator might want to engage network members in a debriefing session at the end of the activity to pool ideas about opportunities for peer support and to consider how they will monitor/review individuals’ progress, etc.

**Aim of the tool**
To identify steps network members can take to embed learning, resources, etc., gained through network activities in their workplace.

**Resources**
- A4 paper for each network member (perhaps divided into four sections for each of the steps)
- Pens
- At least one copy of the next page to guide the network members through the activity

**How to:**
Please see the next page.

### Taking steps towards embedding learning

1. Consider and record what you are trying to do/your goals (both your work directly with children in your setting and your role as a specialist trainer).

2. Identify the levers for action and the obstacles which lie in the way – these could be your own actions, feelings, thoughts and attitudes as well as those of others or structures/mechanisms encountered in your own context.

3. Share steps 1 & 2 with others (in pairs or small groups). Together, reflect on how your network activities/learning will help make best use of levers and overcome obstacles.

4. Work together to identify the kinds of support the network and its members can offer each other in capitalising on levers and overcoming obstacles.

5. Action planning – what do you need to do to incorporate the outcomes of your network activities:
- into your work with children and young people in your setting,
- when training school staff and other professionals
- beyond your immediate context?
Monitoring impact & progress

Is our changing practice making a difference?

Effective networks collect the evidence of how their activities affect their own and others’ practice and how it impacts on pupil learning experiences and outcomes as a natural part of making and fine tuning their work. This tool will help network members to collect such evidence. It might be helpful to introduce the tool at a network meeting and explore together any questions and practicalities e.g. Who would take notes? When?
The network also needs to agree the timescale for evidence collection and schedule a meeting during which they would discuss it.

Members then collect evidence in their settings and bring it to the network meeting in a form that is easily shared.

Aim of the tool
To identify the impact network activities have on vocal leadership and singing activity of network members, education and other professionals they support/train and pupils in a range of settings.

How to:
Please see the next page

Resources
• Copies of the next page for all members so that they could get familiar with the tool and discuss it together
• At least one copy of each of the appendices

Gathering evidence of the impact of network activity on vocal leadership and singing activity of pupils, teachers and the wider school community

A. Vocal leadership
Sing Up has developed a set of Principles of Good Quality Vocal Leadership, with the firm belief that good quality leadership will inspire good quality singing. These principles are applicable for all types of vocal leaders: music specialists or non-specialists, adults, young people or children.

You may like to capture the impact of network activity on network members, education and other professionals network members support/train and pupils during a single session, or over time. You could video a session or ask a colleague to take notes, using the check list in Appendix 1 as a guide to structure observation and its analysis.

Your observation evidence could look like this: ‘The teacher was confident about using her own voice in order to show the children the musical responses that she required’ ‘She encouraged three groups of pupils to come up with their own verse at the end of the song’.

Additional tools to assist with this can be found on the Quality pages of the Sing Up website www.singup.org/quality

B. Singing in various dimensions of school life
Singing can improve learning, confidence, health and social development. It has the power to change lives and help build stronger communities.

You may like to capture the impact of the network activity on singing in a school or setting within various dimensions, for example:
• supporting musical learning
• supporting learning in other areas of the curriculum
• social cohesion
• speech and language development
• health & well-being.

To help you collect the evidence you could ask a colleague to observe a session or a lesson, focusing on a small number of specific children (3-5) or groups of children rather than a whole class. Alternatively you could video a session or small part and then review it. You (or a colleague) could then just capture notes on the progress and achievement of these children, eg

Speech and language development – ‘Pupil A’s diction throughout was good which was impressive, given that he spoke English as an additional language’.

Musical learning – ‘Pupil B took part in all singing activities, joining in with actions too. She was particularly enthusiastic when she was asked to lead a song (call and response), when she demonstrated good pitch and rhythm.’

If you decide to do this – then you might also consider taking part in the Sing Up Awards scheme (please refer to Appendix 2 to find out more) at the same time.

C. Sharing and reflecting
The next step will be to share your evidence with other network members to discuss and reflect on collectively. By putting your evidence on cards/post-its and grouping them across the network, you could try and explore which types of impact appear to be strongest across the network and which are less visible e.g. we are doing well in terms of pupils enjoying our singing sessions but we don’t have many examples of them contributing their own ideas. Or perhaps, you could focus on one area at a time (eg. pupil interaction or participation) and look at the diversity of practice across the network.

You might like to take any video recordings you made to these meetings too.

And don’t stop there! Remember that the Sing Up website hosts various forums that will allow you to share your discussions and reflections with vocal leaders from all over the country and help you extend your network learning!
### Good Vocal Leaders are: How to recognise the principles in a leader:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>ENGAGING</strong></th>
<th><strong>SUPPORTIVE OF PROGRESSION</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They are flexible, responsive and share their enthusiasm to create enjoyable, relevant and well-paced sessions.</td>
<td>They are willing to try a range of approaches that help people improve, highlighting opportunities for development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They have the right repertoire for the group</td>
<td>They plan for progression in the short and long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They know the repertoire they are using</td>
<td>They consider skill development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They use a variety of approaches</td>
<td>They can link warm-up and vocal material to maximise progression during a session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They can use a range of repertoire</td>
<td>They set achievable goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is appropriate pace to the session</td>
<td>They provide performance opportunities for the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are responsive to individual styles of learning</td>
<td>They give positive, constructive feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They plan sessions well but can respond to the session dynamic</td>
<td>They utilise other adults in the room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are flexible, responsive and well-paced sessions.</td>
<td>They establish a culture of ‘how do we improve?’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They choose the right repertoire for the group, including vocal activities that will contribute appropriately to their spiritual, moral and cultural development.</td>
<td>They signpost learners to additional expertise and opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They understand the impact of the environment on the successful outcomes of sessions eg. room layout, temperature, space requirements, light</td>
<td>They encourage pupils to take responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They utilise appropriate support from other colleagues</td>
<td>They utilise other adults in the room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They lead singing &amp; vocal activities using a range of approaches, including the use of technology</td>
<td>They provide performance opportunities for the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They have appropriately high expectations of individuals and the group</td>
<td>They give positive, constructive feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They use reflective questioning</td>
<td>They utilise other adults in the room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They employ appropriate verbal and non-verbal methods of communication enabling all group members to understand and learn to the best of their abilities.</td>
<td>They establish a culture of ‘how do we improve?’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>CREATIVE</strong></th>
<th><strong>EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATORS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They encourage experimentation and invention, using a range of different approaches and ideas.</td>
<td>They understand where to stand to effectively communicate with the group in different situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They utilise song and voice work within curriculum topics</td>
<td>They use positive body language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They can teach a song from different starting points (rhythm, melody, action)</td>
<td>They can lead without the need to speak instructions eg. through singing, gesture, conducting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They employ effective rehearsal techniques for example they can link warm-up and vocal material to maximise progression during a session</td>
<td>They engage the attention of the group through a variety of means.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They choose appropriate repertoire for the group and set realistic goals</td>
<td>They utilise other adults in the room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They develop their own performance skills</td>
<td>They utilise other adults in the room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They choose appropriate repertoire for the group and set realistic goals</td>
<td>They utilise other adults in the room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They can create simple arrangements of songs such as changing the mood or style through to adapting the structure, adding harmonies etc.</td>
<td>They utilise other adults in the room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They can break up the teaching of a song into chunks for example by phrase, by motif</td>
<td>They utilise other adults in the room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They employ effective rehearsal techniques for example they can link warm-up and vocal material to maximise progression</td>
<td>They utilise other adults in the room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They can teach a song from different starting points (rhythm, melody, action)</td>
<td>They utilise other adults in the room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They explore how to achieve sense of style in voice work.</td>
<td>They utilise other adults in the room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They provide performance opportunities for the group</td>
<td>They utilise other adults in the room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They signpost learners to additional expertise and opportunities</td>
<td>They utilise other adults in the room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They encourage pupils to take responsibility</td>
<td>They utilise other adults in the room</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>COMMITTED TO LEARNING</strong></th>
<th><strong>MUSICAL</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They are open-minded and eager to learn and take responsibility for their own continuing professional development.</td>
<td>They develop their own performance skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They experiment with tonal qualities</td>
<td>They choose appropriate repertoire for the group and set realistic goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They explore how to achieve sense of style in voice work.</td>
<td>They can create simple arrangements of songs such as changing the mood or style through to adapting the structure, adding harmonies etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They can lead without the need to speak instructions eg. through singing, gesture, conducting</td>
<td>They can break up the teaching of a song into chunks for example by phrase, by motif</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They utilise song and voice work within curriculum topics</td>
<td>They can link warm-up and vocal material to maximise progression during a session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They provide performance opportunities for the group</td>
<td>They can teach a song from different starting points (rhythm, melody, action)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They set achievable goals</td>
<td>They can convey how the musical material should sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They maximise progression during a session</td>
<td>They explore how to achieve sense of style in voice work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They can link warm-up and vocal material to maximise progression during a session</td>
<td>They experiment with tonal qualities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They establish a culture of ‘how do we improve?’</td>
<td>They utilise song and voice work within curriculum topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They signpost learners to additional expertise and opportunities</td>
<td>They utilise song and voice work within curriculum topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They encourage pupils to take responsibility</td>
<td>They utilise song and voice work within curriculum topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They utilise other adults in the room</td>
<td>They utilise song and voice work within curriculum topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They provide performance opportunities for the group</td>
<td>They utilise song and voice work within curriculum topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They set achievable goals</td>
<td>They utilise song and voice work within curriculum topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They maximise progression during a session</td>
<td>They utilise song and voice work within curriculum topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They explore how to achieve sense of style in voice work.</td>
<td>They utilise song and voice work within curriculum topics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Good Vocal Leaders are:  

**COMMUNITY FOCUSED**  
- They are committed to an ethos of collaboration, partnership and developing connections.

**CARING ABOUT THE VOICE**  
- They understand vocal physiology
- They understand the impact of the environment on voice use
- They have an ability to recognise vocal problems
- They create the right conditions for voices to stay healthy for example: lay the room out appropriately, warm voices up, choose appropriate registers/keys for the repertoire in relation to age and experience of the group, consider the length of vocal use, encourage the drinking of water, carefully structure the repertoire used within a session to achieve best practice for voices.

How to recognise the principles in a leader:

- They make links with other practitioners (peripatetic teachers, parents etc)
- They lead the group in performances that make connections within a community
- They maximise opportunities to connect with visiting professionals
- They provide opportunities to engage the community
- They share singing opportunities with other schools, groups
- They support other staff

Appendix 2  

The Sing Up Awards process supports the Headteacher and school community to discover wide ranging benefits for themselves whilst developing high quality singing activity and vocal leadership.

“The Award is something concrete and tells them (the pupils) that they are brilliant at something and it has made a difference to the way they carry… and present themselves.” (Award school)

The Sing Up Awards help schools meet the needs of the National Curriculum for music by encouraging staff and pupils to reflect upon their singing activity and find ways to improve it. Supporting group singing and singing in different styles are key requirements in both the Sing Up Awards and the National Curriculum for Music. Additionally, Sing Up schools are proven to be more advanced in their singing as achieving an Award requires the school to embed singing throughout school life.

There are three Sing Up Awards: Silver, Gold and Platinum.

The key features of the Sing Up Awards are:

- **Accessible** – All schools for primary-aged children can work towards and achieve an Award. This includes SEN schools which incorporate a wider age range.
- **Flexible** – you can tailor the Awards to suit your needs and circumstances.
- **Support** – taking part can connect your school to a supportive singing community
- **Journey** – you build an online portfolio of evidence to demonstrate your school singing activity
- **Timeframe** – An Award can be achieved within an academic year.
- **Quality** – Sing Up’s Principles of Good Quality Vocal Leadership are at the heart of the Awards.
- **Professional development** – the Awards support you to develop your singing practice and impact on the quality of singing and singing leadership across the school.
- **Progression** – there is clear progression for pupils, staff, SMT and Governors within four strands: Participation, Breadth & Diversity, Leadership and Vision.
- **Achievement** – a Sing Up Award can help bring about long term positive changes in your school life.
- **Recognition** – the Awards recognise your school’s achievements and success

The Sing Up Awards…

- Provide a clear framework to develop the provision of singing activity in your school
- Support teachers to deliver the national curriculum as well as encouraging singing outside the classroom
- Create motivation for the whole school through giving the pupils, staff and the school community something to work towards collectively
- Help schools to gain recognition for the work that they do and links them into a community of peer support
- Can be integrated into the wider development of your school and can run alongside other school initiatives
- Guide schools on their journey through the Sing Up programme, ensuring they get the most from the resources and training available.

*For more information about Silver, Gold and Platinum Awards go to http://www.singup.org/awards.*

“Taking part in the Sing Up Awards has helped us to maintain a high singing status as well as push us even further”  
(Louise Adams, Moorlands Primary School)
Thank you

Sing Up
Richard Allen
Lindsay Bell
Madelaine Follow
Kelly Huscroft
Hannah Murray-Leslie
Frances Watt
Dawn Williams
Bridget Whyle
Jenny Young

CUREE
Philippa Cordingley
Natalia Buckler
Miranda Bell
Colin Isham
Kate Holdich
Don Evans

The Autism Network
Clare Hunt
Richard Allen
Dave Cutibbert
Steph Dickinson
Rebecca Gross
Pete Ord
Pamela McGahon
Ann Stott
Yvonne White

The Drake Music Network
Doug Bott
Alex Ivanovich
Michael Dollan
Anna Madeleine
Anna Thorpe Tracey
Sam Yates
Gary Day
Meryn Sturt

The Makaton Network
The Makaton Charity
Bev Cullen
Liz George
Kate Mines-Beasley
Cat Kelly
Georgina Roberts
Victoria Jane Fagg
Sarah Walkook

The Music and the Deaf Network
Paul Whittaker
Kelly Huscroft
Laurie Stewart
Andrew Haslemood
Al Start
Andy Higgin
Jill Henderson-Wild
Rebekah Mills
Nicola Duncombe
Sam Wheeler
Shelley Coulter Smith
Yvonne Barwick

The PRU Network
Beth Allen
Phil Mullen
Ann Jones
Graham Dowdall
Roshi Nasehi
Shirley McDermott
Steve Lewis
Debby Tindall
Liz Comer
Bernie Artuso
Ann Stott

Photography
Dan Medhurst
David Tieman
Michaela Greene
Dan Brady

Design & Artwork
Dan Forster
www.danforster.co.uk

This evaluation was conducted by CUREE (Centre for Use of Research in Evidence and Education)
www.curee.co.uk