

Probe & Case Study Report

Sing Up 2007-2011
Programme Evaluation

Sing Up 2007-2011 Programme Evaluation

Sing Up 2007-2011 was the Music Manifesto National Singing Programme, led by Youth Music, with AMV-BBDO, Faber Music and The Sage Gateshead, supported by Government. It aimed to raise the status of singing and increase opportunities for school children throughout the country to enjoy singing as part of their everyday lives, and to support all primary schools to become 'singing schools'.

Sing Up commissioned the Centre for Use of Research & Evidence in Education (CUREE) to undertake an external evaluation of the whole programme. The evaluations are presented as follows:

- Synthesis Report including Executive Summary
- Probe & Case Study Report
 - Themed Reports:
 1. Communications
 2. Health & Wellbeing
 3. Impact on Schools
 4. Learning Across the Curriculum
 5. Management of Change
 6. Musical Development
 7. Partnership
 8. Speech, Language and Communication
 9. Transition
 10. Workforce Development
 11. Youth Leadership

The full set of reports can be found on the Sing Up website: www.singup.org

Further information about CUREE can be found at: www.curee-paccts.com

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Introduction

Sing Up 2007-11 was the Music Manifesto National Singing Programme, led by Youth Music, with AMV-BBDO, Faber Music and The Sage Gateshead, supported by Government. It aimed to raise the status of singing and increase opportunities for school children throughout the country to enjoy singing as part of their everyday lives, and to support all primary schools to become 'singing schools'.

Sing Up operated through four main strands of activity: a national PR and advertising **campaign** highlighting the benefits of singing; singing **resources**, through the twin vehicles of a website www.singup.org (including a 'Song Bank') and a free termly magazine with CD; a **workforce development** programme to build the confidence and expertise of primary school teachers, musicians and others in leading and supporting children's singing activities, with a supporting network of 30 Sing Up Area Leaders; **funded programmes**, supporting the development of singing activity around the country.

By March 2011 Sing Up had engaged with over 95% of state primary schools and over 90% of all schools with primary school-aged children in them.

This report is designed to illustrate and explore practice in schools and other organisations, which was triggered by and supported through the Sing Up programme. It complements the evaluation reports created for each of the relevant themes¹ identified by Sing Up. The themed reports were produced by CUREE as a result of the analysis and synthesis of self-evaluation reports and other related documentary evidence for a sample (just under a hundred) of Sing Up projects.

This current report aims to offer a 'real world portrait' which is both analytic and relates back to the themes, and to add texture to the programme-wide findings (see the Synthesis report).

When working to create a picture of the Sing Up practice at a user (typically, school) level, we paid attention to exploring in depth the following areas, which were agreed with Sing Up as being priorities for illustration:

- Singing in early years and foundations stage (EYFS);
- Singing and learning across the curriculum
- Singing opportunities for disadvantaged young people, created through the Beyond the Mainstream projects;
- Communications (namely work completed by the Campaign and Resources strands of the Sing Up consortium) and how they were perceived and used by the practitioners and school/setting leaders; and
- Strategies for implementing and managing change related to the Sing Up programme and the impact of such work on the participating organisations/schools.

Five sites were involved in this project. They were identified through documentary

1. Themes included Musical Learning and Development; Speech, Language and Communication; Learning Across the Curriculum; Transition; Partnerships; Management of Change; Workforce Development; Youth leadership; Impact on schools and Communications.

analysis and consultation with Sing Up as likely to have evidence of practice related to the enquiry areas. For the purposes of this research we limited our 'sites' to schools and other organisations working directly with children and young people. When visiting them, we tried to explore their involvement with Sing Up and specifically the five enquiry areas listed above.

The report is in six sections. In section one, a short description of each school/setting is followed by an overview of their involvement in the Sing Up programme. Section two offers a description of singing practices in a range of settings (EYFS, mainstream primary school and organisations working with children not in mainstream education or at risk of exclusion). Section three provides an analysis and synthesis across the case study organisations of the approaches to introducing and embedding new singing opportunities in their settings. In section four, we outline the impact of change across the case study sites. We then offer some conclusions, highlight challenges and suggest tentative implications. Finally, section six describes our methodology and includes references.

1. Brief Description of Case Study Sites

In this section we provide an overview of the five case study sites. We outline their contexts and indicate how they 'fit' into the bigger Sing Up picture.

All sites were involved in the Sing Up programme, however they are not in any way representative, aside from the fact that they are in different parts of the country, serve different kinds of communities and were involved in different aspects of the Sing Up programme.

Wylam First School

Wylam First is a small school serving a rural area in Northumberland. Pupils are from mixed social and economic backgrounds and are mainly of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is low. The school was rated as 'outstanding' in its 2008 Ofsted report.

Wylam First is a Platinum Award school. Sing Up Platinum Award is designed to recognise schools who 'have exceptional singing achievements and are willing to act as ambassadors for Sing Up'².

Joseph Hood Primary

Joseph Hood Primary is smaller than many primaries and serves a mixed residential community in London. Almost half the pupils are from minority ethnic groups, and a quarter are learning English as an additional language. The school was rated as 'good' in the latest (2008) Ofsted report.

³.Ibid Joseph Hood Primary is a Sing Up Gold Award school³.

².For more information on the awards schools see the Sing Up website: <http://www.singup.org/sing-up-awards/the-awards/>

Starting Point and the Greater Manchester Music Action Zone (GMMAZ)

Starting Point is a unique Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) in Bolton. It offers an introduction to the English education system and British way of life for the children of asylum seekers, refugees and people coming to Britain from anywhere in the world. It teaches basic and life skills, to enable children to move on to mainstream schools.

Starting Point was involved in Phase 1 of the Beyond the Mainstream⁴ programme within Sing Up. Led by the GMMAZ, the project focused on supporting teachers from Starting Point to develop skills and tools that would allow them use singing in everyday teaching, and encourage them to see singing as a valuable, enjoyable addition to their teaching practice.

Pie Factory Music

Pie Factory Music (hereafter referred to as Pie Factory) is a charity providing free music and related arts workshops for young people aged between 0-18 years across East Kent. In partnership with organisations such as Integrated Services Programme (ISP)⁵ Kent and Kent County Council, Pie Factory has developed several projects that aimed to offer singing opportunities to children from disadvantaged backgrounds, including pupils excluded from schools due to emotional and behavioural difficulties and looked after children. This work was part of the Beyond the Mainstream strand of Sing Up.

Sing Up Bedfordshire

Bedfordshire Music was one of the Sing Up Area Leaders, and Bedfordshire became a funded Sing Up Community, through which it developed two strands of work: school based projects ('Singquest') and community based projects ('Community Voice'). We focused on the former and visited two schools involved in the Sing Up Bedfordshire project:

- Church End Lower School, a little larger than average primary school, serving a rural area. Pupils are predominantly White British.
- Livingstone Lower School, smaller than average inner city primary school. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds and two thirds of the pupils speak English as an additional language. Many pupils join the school with little or no English. A few pupils join having received no previous schooling.

2. The Sing Up Programme in Different Contexts

2.1. Early Years Foundation Stage

Primary aged children and staff supporting them were the principle beneficiaries of the Sing Up programme. Yet, a few Sing Up projects had an EYFS aspect to their work, as transition from Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1 was an objective for the overall programme.

Early years practitioners from settings ranging from children's centres (e.g. Sing

4. Sing Up made a commitment to ensure that its work impacts upon all primary aged children, including children in SEN schools, Pupil Referral Units, looked after children, children with mental health issues and many others early in 2009, and the stream of work that underpins this commitment throughout the programme is called Beyond the Mainstream. BTM broadly focuses on children who can't access primary mainstream school (in SEN or PRU settings) as well as those who have difficulties accessing primary mainstream (including looked after children, children with EBD, children with mental health difficulties etc).

5. Integrated Services Programme (ISP) – is an independent provider offering support to looked after children and foster carers. More info available at: <http://www.ispchildcare.org.uk/index.html>

Up Bolton) to schools (reported by Sing Up Awards schools), frequently used activities such as 'call and response', and singing songs that help children learn shapes or numbers. Some EYFS settings offered informal singing opportunities alongside timetabled music lessons where children could develop their singing skills and start learning to play musical instruments.

Involving parents was an important feature of many projects. In East Kent, for example, a singing leader who worked with Sure Start settings, delivering a series of short singing interventions, encouraged parents to take singing material away and use it at home with their children. Similarly, some Sing Up Awards Schools encouraged parents to join in the singing activities when they visited the school.

Another project offered a workshop for children and their mothers, specifically targeting those who have experienced domestic abuse. Initially shy and reluctant, mums and their children subsequently worked in three groups to practise singing and make actions to the verses of 'We will rock you' (Pie Factory). Elsewhere, colleagues aimed to offer similar support to mothers (very young girls), helping them to develop a bond with their babies through singing, and ultimately strengthen families and the community (Moat House project).

Most practitioners who reported use of singing in EYFS, noticed that it helped develop children's confidence, social and communication skills. Where parents were involved, they welcomed the opportunities to share singing experiences with their children.

During our case study visits, we explored singing in EYFS in four of the case schools: Wylam First, Joseph Hood Primary, Livingstone Lower schools and Starting Point PRU.

Teaching staff and leaders in all the case study schools highlighted the potential of singing in EYFS in helping children:

- develop their language and communication skills;
- acquire skills and knowledge in other areas of learning, such as basic numeracy skills;
- settle down and enjoy being in school; and
- develop positive relationships with staff and peers.

The contribution of singing to the development of speech and communications skills was valued in aspects such as voice control and pronunciation of sounds, particularly difficult for EAL children; taking turns when communicating with others (the frequently used methods of teaching singing were 'call and response' and 'rounds'); understanding the idea of rhyme; and understanding the meaning of songs through a whole class discussion. Opportunities for repetition of sounds and words, present in many songs commonly used with this age group, were particularly valued by teachers. Referring to her practice of working with children whose communications skills were below their age related expectations, an

experienced Reception class teacher commented:

'Singing is, without exception, the first instance they start to access verbal communication.'

EYFS practitioners found it easy to select songs that related to other areas of EYFS curriculum (e.g. numeracy). They also highlighted that singing was used to help children focus, concentrate and improve their memory. Learning new songs – every day in some schools – was seen as a way of achieving this.

Colleagues from three of the participating schools selected songs for different times of day (energetic - in the morning, calming down – after an active break or lunch). In Wylam First School in particular, singing was a regular part of daily routines; it made them enjoyable for children. A reception class teacher described how they sing the register in the morning and 'It's nearly time for lunch' at the end of the morning. In Livingstone Lower School, songs accompanying routines and familiar actions, such as 'Hang up your coat' were similarly popular.

A common way to try and realise the potential of singing in an EYFS setting was through the use of nursery rhymes. Those that could help with learning other things, such as numbers, days of the week, etc, were particularly popular.

We observed a session in Starting Point PRU where nursery rhymes were used extensively. The centre offers support to children who have just arrived to Britain and often do not speak much English, and lack basic skills and understanding or experience of the education system in this country. Starting Point uses many strategies and approaches that are typical to EYFS with older aged children too.

During the session we observed in Starting Point, children enjoyed singing greetings; Five little ducks; 1,2,3,4,5; The bear went over the mountain and other songs. Some children were more advanced in their language skills and could sing the songs through, whilst others just joined in with the words they knew, often using the repetition in the nursery rhymes to help them sing more of each line towards the end of the song. During the session, over half the children had opportunities to lead the group: three members of staff present immediately identified when they did something well and encouraged them to lead their peers, typically by using 'call and response' or 'copying' strategies.

Before singing, each of the nursery rhymes was used as an opportunity to practice vocabulary (names of animals, days of the week, etc). E.g.:

T: The bear went over the...? What's the word? Let's say together, 'mountain'.

T: (showing a rubber duck) What's her name? What does she say?

Movements and prompts were used extensively during the session to support vocabulary acquisition and help children take advantage of contextualised learning.

Similar approaches were described by colleagues from other schools that had high numbers of EAL learners amongst their pupils (e.g. Joseph Hood Primary and Livingstone Lower School).

The transition from EYFS to Key Stage 1 (KS1) was seen as a positive experience in our case study schools: many of them used teaching and learning strategies in year 1 that were similar to those used in EYFS. Similarly, singing opportunities were available to children in both phases. Colleagues thought that opportunities for holistic learning in year 1, and a thematic approach in particular, helped children's transition. Singing was often part of these approaches. For example, staff from Joseph Hood Primary developed a topic-based curriculum in year 1 that linked music, history, art, geography, etc. They would use the 'Make that sound' song, for example, when exploring QCEA unit 'The Information Around Us'.

The impact of singing at EYFS stage and the extent to which it can improve children's progress later on, proved difficult to estimate. Colleagues from Sing Up Bedfordshire, for example, were certain that the achievements and musical ability (pitch, listening skills and confidence) of the KS1 children who had experience of singing and music when in EYFS were higher, than those of children who did not have such opportunities. On the other hand, colleagues from schools like Wylam (Sing Up Platinum Award), where singing has been embedded for a number of years, did not have any benchmarks or control groups to compare their children's performance with, and were therefore unable to comment on the likely impact.

2.2. Primary Mainstream: Singing Opportunities in School and Across the Curriculum

We explored the singing opportunities across the curriculum with four of our case study sites – Wylam First and Joseph Hood Primary Schools, Starting Point PRU (GMMAZ Sing Up project) and Sing Up Bedfordshire community, where we visited Livingstone and Church End Lower schools.

All the opportunities observed by the research team and described by school staff and pupils could be classified as singing in lessons, whole school singing and singing as pupils' activity of choice.

Singing in lessons occurred as part of both music and other areas of curriculum. With regards to music lessons, colleagues from one of the primary schools reported that through their involvement with Sing Up there had been an increase in the amount of singing in music lessons. More importantly, from the school's point of view, following the professional development input they received through Sing Up, all the teachers felt able to teach singing and music as opposed to just the music coordinator, as had previously been the case.

It was singing in other curriculum areas though that was most frequently highlighted by school leaders and practitioners in relation to singing in lessons, partly because this was something that has been developed in some of the schools directly through their involvement with Sing Up. Singing was recognised as a tool for supporting learning in curriculum areas such as English, mathematics, history, modern foreign languages (MFL) and others.

Primary practitioners from the case study schools used signing in teaching English to both native speakers and EAL pupils: 'children who don't talk will happily sing'.

Songs not only provided opportunities to develop grammar and literacy skills through, e.g. segmenting words from the song lyrics, to extend vocabulary and improve pronunciation, but were also used for developing children's understanding of meaning and context of songs. Staff from Livingstone Lower School highlighted how well many of their teaching and learning strategies, such as acting things out and using movement, linked with the Sing Up resources and recommendations for developing singing.

The song 'Make that sound' was used by two different primary schools in science and ICT lessons. Songs about Vikings and Egyptians were mentioned by children and staff alike as helping with learning history. Similarly, both pupils and practitioners from all the primary schools we visited, mentioned singing in French and Spanish as a frequently used teaching and learning strategy in MFL lessons. Pupils from Joseph Hood Primary were particularly positive about how singing helped them learn curriculum content:

'Singing helped me learn about the Iron Age.'

'We sang a song that helped you learn about division – 'My grandma'. You don't realise but you are learning about division.'

'We sang 'Hey Mr Miller'. It helped me learn about World War II history'

There were instances when singing was used as part of cross-curricular 'themed' work, helping make connections between different subjects. Examples of this approach included singing songs from different countries (for the World Cup theme) and the song 'Diwali' (when studying India) in Joseph Hood Primary.

Where songs were used regularly throughout the school year to support learning of different subjects, staff saw an opportunity to showcase singing that supports learning across the curriculum. Year 3 class from Church End Lower School, for example, prepared with their teacher a performance for parents, singing songs ranging from 'Recycle it!' to 'Amazing Egyptians', from 'Helping Plants Grow Well' to 'Pirates'.

Another area of curriculum that practitioners from our case study schools highlighted as lending itself well to singing was children's social and emotional development (SEAL). Songs such as 'Make someone happy', 'I can do anything' and 'Believe' were frequently used here.

In other instances, teachers felt able to use singing as an activity that was always at hand when there was a 'five minutes slot' to spare. Using the Sing Up Song Bank resources meant that these five-minute singing activities did not require additional planning and preparation from already busy teachers. It was perceived as 'a type of a brain gym,' that worked well, for example, to help children switch between different subjects or relax at the end of the day.

Singing as a whole school activity typically happened during assemblies:

'In our assembly every day we sing 1-2 songs' (Pupil, Joseph Hood Primary school)

In Wylam First School, whole school singing assemblies usually occurred weekly and lasted around twenty minutes. During one such assembly we observed some children leading warm ups through 'call and response', all pupils singing and Makaton signing 'Red and yellow', and also singing songs in other languages. An excellent balance of fast and slow songs and singing with backing tracks and a capella, in parts and unison, loudly and quietly, with and without actions, not only allowed pupils to practise their vocal skills and voice control but also offered variety which helped every child truly engage with the activity. Children led several singing activities during the assembly.

In the case study schools, singing assemblies were typically led by music coordinators, with support from other members of staff and school leadership team. Livingstone Lower School even had an assembly where all members of staff sang to their pupils who then offered some 'constructive feedback'. Singing as a whole school activity also occurred during preparation and participation in performances such as Harvest or Easter festivals, carol singing and others.

A common way for children to engage in **singing as an activity of choice** was a school choir. In schools where singing takes different forms, being part of the school choir has a high kudos for children. Year 2 pupils that we spoke with in Wylam shared with us:

'We so much wanted to go to choir, we heard so much about it'.

Both children and staff in Wylam were proud about the inclusive nature of their choir: everybody who wants to sing can come and join in, irrespective of their abilities:

'You don't have to be a good singer to sing.' (Year 2 pupil, Wylam First School)

The quality of Wylam choir's singing was nonetheless outstanding, particularly when singing harmonies or 3-4 part arrangements. When practicing a song during the choir session we observed in Wylam, children first sang in unison to remember the lyrics, they then sang it in two parts and finally attempted a three part arrangement with one group singing harmonies. Two members of staff and a parent volunteer led the session. When singing harmonies or parts, children joined one of the adults who led the singing for the part they were assigned to. Children, some of whom were KS1, displayed great concentration, especially when singing songs with complicated lyrics, fast tempo and in foreign languages.

In Wylam First and Joseph Hood Primary, two of the Sing Up Awards schools that were involved in this project, pupils that attend the school choir support members of staff and help their peers learn new songs during assemblies:

'Choir children love teaching the rest of the school a song.' (Music coordinator, Joseph Hood Primary School)

Only in two schools was regular singing happening at all these levels (in lessons, as a whole school and a voluntary activity). In others, singing mainly happened in lessons so that whole school singing was rare. In others still – singing in lessons was less frequent and regular than whole school singing or choir activities. Often the amount of singing was also affected by the school year, increasing at some points (e.g. preparation for Christmas) and decreasing – at others (beginning of a school year).

2.3. Beyond the Mainstream (BTM)

As early as 2007, Sing Up recognised that to fulfil its commitment to offer regular access to singing opportunities to all primary age children, it needed to extend its work in and beyond schools. Following the recommendations of the initial report exploring singing provision for children who were not in mainstream education, the consortium developed 14 projects nationwide working with children educated outside of mainstream primary schools.⁶ In 2009, over 800 children were involved in the programme including those with Special Educational Needs (SEN) such as multiple and profound learning difficulties and physical disabilities; looked after children and young carers; and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Since 2009 BTM as a thread that underpins the entire Sing Up programme has disseminated learning and further developed training and resources. It also made a commitment in 2010 to work in partnership with the National Children's Bureau (NCB) to focus some of its work on looked after children.

In early 2011, as part of the project reported here, we visited two sites involved in Sing Up BTM work – Starting Point PRU in Bolton and Pie Factory in Kent. Starting Point, catering for children of migrants, many of them refugees or asylum seekers, participated, in partnership with GMMAZ, in Phase 1 of the BTM programme. Pie Factory has been involved in both Phases 1 (2009) and 2 (2010-2011) due to its focus on looked after children, a group which became one of the key foci of Phase 2. Both settings work with a wide range of age groups of children, starting from EYFS through to Key Stage 3 (KS3) and older.

Despite each of these two projects being unique in its own right, there were a number of common features, or principles, characterising their approaches.

Attention to Personal and Social Development of Children and Young People

Starting Point (GMMAZ) and Pie Factory leaders described their goals – for the Sing Up projects and their settings in general – in a very similar way: helping vulnerable young people develop skills they lack through providing them with access to singing and music. Both settings aimed to develop their pupils' confidence and ability to communicate with others.

6. This information refers to Phase 1 of the Beyond the Mainstream Sing Up programme. At the time of writing (February 2011) Phase 2 of the programme was not yet completed and the programme evaluation data was therefore not available.

'It's not about [child participant] becoming a singing leader. It's about her developing social awareness, learning not to talk about herself all the time, developing confidence to ask questions if she doesn't understand something'. (Project leader, Pie Factory)

Alongside these social skills, Starting Point had a strong emphasis on basic and life skills. This could be, for example, learning to say and understand the time and then moving on to using a bus timetable. Where possible and particularly for older children and young people, Pie Factory tried to equip them with skills such as perseverance, time management and problem-solving, and develop the right attitude for working environment. It supported young people to gain accreditation, such as the Arts Awards.

Importance of Relationships and Opportunities to Express Feelings

Working with children who had been displaced (as migrants or children being in the looked after system) and often lacking clarity of their own identity, both Pie Factory and Starting Point leaders and practitioners felt it was important for them to create an atmosphere of trust, providing young people with opportunities to share their feelings and learn to 'be confident about who they are' (headteacher, Starting Point).

The headteacher at Starting Point spoke about her staff (including e.g. dinner ladies) being constantly aware that pupils may start talking about their past. In such cases, staff are expected to reinforce the positives of the children's current situation (e.g. being safe) and what they have learnt. The PRU staff make an effort to learn about each new pupil and celebrate the diversity in their classroom. Part of this is through creating a display with each child's photo and country of origin as soon as they join; another part is through singing 'Hello', 'It's good to be me', and 'I'm a special person' in lessons.

Many pupils come to the PRU with their brothers and sisters and this family feel is very much encouraged by the staff. For example, we observed several children holding hands during the session. Two of them were siblings, the third one was just used to looking after the younger children because they were from the same country.

School staff working with Pie Factory noticed how quickly the music specialists developed bonding with children and young people. They observed the group dynamics in every session and changed it if, for example, a child was struggling. During the sessions we observed, we also noted that Pie Factory staff paid a lot of attention to children listening to each other. Establishing ground rules in the beginning was common.

In Pie Factory, composition and song writing was seen as a good way for children to safely explore their feelings or 'unpack' particular issues, e.g. why they don't want to go to school. Frequently, the focus on expressing emotions was suggested by foster carers or leaders of schools Pie Factory worked with. In one instance, for example, a foster carer wanted to find out how her three foster children felt and got on with each other. Pie Factory staff supported these young people to write verses about how they felt as individuals; they then wrote chorus together.

Describing an approach to song writing that they commonly use, a Pie Factory leader reflected:

'We identify a theme they are comfortable with, discuss what makes a good song and the importance of lyrics. Initial ideas are usually superficial, e.g. football. We try to get a bit deeper and get to emotions.'

Pie Factory often split children into smaller groups to work on instrumental and lyrics aspects separately with two members of staff. Groups then swapped; making sure everyone had a chance to work on both.

Older and Younger Children Working Together

Peer relationships (younger children learning from older ones, and older children being role models for younger pupils) were important aspects of singing provision in Starting Point and Pie Factory. A Pie Factory leader articulated the initial challenge they face:

'A lot of children are defensive and they find it difficult to laugh at themselves. Usually they laugh at each other's weaknesses.'

In this context, young singing leaders in Pie Factory extended their personal development through supporting others. This project offered some looked after children, who had attended Pie Factory workshops, to work with 'juniors' with emotional and behavioural problems. Staff commented that 'learning to trust each other', and supporting younger children without dominating them was a steep learning curve for this group of young singing leaders. Pie Factory staff highlighted some other aspects of young singing leaders' learning:

'Young singing leaders learn to set their own expectations of their work and take it in turns to write about the things they have learnt each week. It is their responsibility to, for example, bring something to do as an exercise each week or think about how to illustrate concepts such as 'communication' to younger participants. They learn how to help others and how to offer feedback positively.'

Providing their former participants with opportunities to extend their development through working with others and helping them learn what they have learnt already, seemed common at Pie Factory.

During our visit to Starting Point we saw a session attended by KS1 and KS2 children together. Younger pupils, some of whom come from countries where 'children are seen, not heard', observed older peers leading the group activities (e.g. Everybody do this song with movements) and gradually felt brave enough to have a go too.

Flexible and Tailored Approach

Perhaps the most noticeable similarity about the two settings involved in Sing Up BTM work was their willingness to go an extra mile in taking account of and accommodating the needs of their pupils. An example of this would be Pie Factory delivering sessions in foster homes and both settings working with whole families.

The sessions themselves, particularly in Pie Factory's case, were often bespoke, tailored to the specific needs of the participants. Their needs, often complex, were considered when grouping the children, selecting repertoire or adopting a particular training approach.

For Starting Point, appropriateness of repertoire for their children was one of the foci of their Sing Up project in partnership with GMMAZ. Not only did they make sure that lines like 'shoot them all' were replaced in songs with less violent alternatives, but also a number of songs were specifically written by the singing animateurs for the PRU as part of the project. Frequently, these songs helped children with limited if any command of English, to learn new vocabulary, such as days of the week, shapes, etc.

Frequently, the 'principles' described above (attention to personal and social development, opportunities for expressing feelings, different age children working together and tailoring sessions to children's needs) were intertwined in the two projects' approaches. For example, working together on writing a song, young singing leaders were learning to communicate with each other and adults; they could express their feelings via the lyrics and they received appropriate support from Pie Factory staff in choosing the style of their song, instrumental backing track and recording it.

3. Making singing part of children's life: management of change

Making singing part of children's lives in a variety of settings involved a range of processes and structures, some of which were internal to the organisations involved in the programme and others were more characteristic of the programme as a whole. These processes and structures were frequently interdependent and often (e.g. in the case of staff professional development) related to both internal processes enabling and sustaining change within schools and external – programme-wide – opportunities made available to organisations and individuals. We explored management of change and factors supporting it, including Sing Up communications and workforce development, with all five of the case study sites.

3.1. Internal processes

When exploring management of change with the case study sites, we were trying to find out the reasons for their engagement with the programme, the ways in which staff and student ownership was developed, how colleagues were supported and how the work was evaluated.

The schools involved in this project chose to make new singing opportunities available to children because they saw it as an activity that was 'accessible to all children' (Joseph Hood Primary), helped develop social cohesion (Livingstone Lower), children's communication and social skills and was enjoyable at the same time (recognised by all sites). Most of them had some singing history in their settings but were either dissatisfied with what was there or saw new possibilities through working with Sing Up.

Beyond The Mainstream (BTM)

Initial engagement with the Sing Up programme differed slightly for the settings and organisations involved in the BTM work. GMMAZ, a music specialist organisation, was looking for a partner to develop a BTM project with. Fascinated by the unique PRU, colleagues from GMMAZ approached Starting Point, inviting it to get involved. The project was then developed specifically for Starting Point's needs and context. It tried to build on the PRU's Starting Point's existing work of developing children's life skills and supporting their transfer into mainstream education.

7.Sing Up (2009) Beyond the Mainstream – Report on Funded programmes 2009.

Partnership working was key to both BTM sites we visited as it was for the BTM programme⁷ as a whole. Pie Factory worked with the ISP and Kent County Council to develop a programme for looked after children. Approximately 40% of the provision was delivered in Pie Factory's own venue, where they have, for example, recording facilities, at other times provision took place either in carers homes or school settings. GMMAZ, on the other hand, always came to Starting Point to work with children and staff. The model was chosen because the project aimed at enabling practitioners to continue delivering singing opportunities to children after the project was finished. Both GMMAZ and Pie Factory did most of the project coordination work and liaison with Sing Up, and led on the evaluation activities.

Mainstream

All of the case study sites enjoyed support from their senior leadership, and in some cases – governors (e.g. Wylam First), saw this as a crucial factor in their work. Where singing was happening across whole schools, it was typically led by a music coordinator or teacher. Settings where singing was mainly happening in the classroom tended to have class teachers who were enthusiastic about singing and music.

Involving more or all members of staff in singing was seen as important by the case study school leaders and practitioners. Several schools had training for teaching assistants from example, to enable them to effectively support singing. Introducing more and broader singing opportunities into school frequently started with a whole staff INSET session for the case study schools. In most cases these were led by external music specialists (such as The Sage Gateshead, GMMAZ or Bedfordshire Music). As one of the school leaders highlighted, it was not just expertise that external specialists brought with them:

'It [embedding singing] is hard to do as a school unless you have got somebody from the outside to inspire all members of staff and children with extra spark.' (headteacher, Wylam First School)

The importance of introducing members of staff less confident about singing to resources such as the Sing Up website, which did not require them to sing themselves when trying it out in their classrooms, was recognised by all the case study schools. Some school practitioners had opportunities to observe music professionals modelling singing sessions with children as part of their training, others were convinced by trying singing themselves as part of the staff choir.

Teachers working together on collaborative development of their practice was a feature in some of the case study settings. In Wylam, colleagues highlighted the importance of having two members of staff who were co-leading whole school singing activities, supported by a committed and passionate about singing parent volunteer. Not only could they discuss, for example repertoire and approaches to teaching singing, they could also co-deliver an assembly or a choir session, supporting different groups of children when singing parts or harmonies and modelling different singing styles.

In other schools, colleagues were commonly supported by the music coordinator or an experienced member of staff, who often acted as a specialist coach or mentor for them. For example, practitioners from Starting Point supported a less confident colleague in trying singing in her classroom and occasionally ran singing sessions together for children from two year groups. Elsewhere, a class teacher commented:

'The music coordinator showed me how to use the teaching notes and scripts. They are helpful in choir.' (Joseph Hood primary school)

Even in schools where singing is embedded in the sense that all children had access to it in a number of ways (e.g. a choir, school assembly and in lessons), there was a lot of diversity in the amount and types of singing activities offered in lessons across the school. In many instances this was explained by the level of teacher confidence and skills, when colleagues were not able to move beyond short 'five minute' activities. In others, the age of children or a particular curriculum area were seen as challenging. For example, involving KS3-4 staff from Starting Point proved difficult due to their lack of belief that singing could be relevant and engaging in the secondary classroom. In other case, colleagues struggled to find songs relevant to mathematics beyond basic numeracy. Interestingly, pupils we interviewed also noticed that as they got older, there were fewer songs that could truly help their learning in different curriculum areas, compared to EYFS and KS1.

There was a marked difference between the participating schools and BTM sites in their approach to monitoring and evaluating change. Whereas schools tended not to formally monitor the impact of singing on their school and stakeholders, unless prompted by the need to submit evidence to Sing Up as part of their application for Sing Up Awards, the two BTM projects considered evaluation aspects of their work from the outset. Pie Factory worked with the external evaluators from the Institute of Education and saw this aspect of the project as one of the main development opportunities provided by the programme:

'The evaluation process ... has encouraged us to be learners and demonstrate being a learner to others.'

Pie Factory regularly collected participating children's thoughts and reflections on the sessions, complemented by the notes of observations of progress and performance made by adults leading and supporting the young people. For GMAZ, collecting children's feedback and records of progress was a challenge due to their limited English language skills. PRU staff and music specialist' perceptions and observations were collected to evaluate the impact of the project.

3.2. External Support

3.2.1 Sing Up Communications

Communications as defined in Sing Up's structure fall into three main categories:

- Campaign strand – awareness raising and communicating the value of singing and driving engagement. Mainly delivered through advertising and PR, specific project ideas to get people involved (e.g. Sing Up's School Trip Singalong) and overarching messaging;
- Marketing & Communications – strategy, print and PR support for existing Sing Up elements and workforce to connect with their markets (e.g. marketing the Sing Up Training Programme and Sing Up Awards); and
- Resources – materials and repertoire to develop singing once school leaders and practitioners got engaged with Sing Up, but also the platforms for it, i.e. Sing Up website and magazine.

Depending on the nature of the project or initiative through which the case study sites got involved with Sing Up, the breadth and depth of their understanding of the programme differed. For some participants, Sing Up was primarily associated with the specialist music organisation (such as GMMAZ, Pie Factory or Bedfordshire Music) they worked with. For others, for children in particular, the programme was often equated with the Sing Up website or the local, regional and national events in which they had participated. On the other hand, school music coordinators and various stakeholders in schools that had been involved in a range of activities, perceived Sing Up as a complex entity whose activity included the above mentioned and many other elements.

What was common in all the case study sites, was the awareness that Sing Up was something much bigger than their school or setting and the pride they (particularly the Sing Up Award schools) took in being part of it. Children, for example, were fond of the Sing Up T-shirts which, in their teachers' view, gave them a sense of belonging and shared identity. School leaders thought that singing made their schools special in the eyes of parents and community:

'It [involvement in Sing Up and the Gold Award] is really useful in terms of marketing of the school. It is something that I say to parents to show that our school is special. We really have to 'sell' the school to parents.'

More importantly perhaps, we consistently heard back from staff and children in the settings we visited, the values and messages conveyed through the Sing Up campaign and the programme as a whole. This included them giving multiple reasons for why singing was important and valuable, and their belief in the inclusive nature of singing as activity that should be available to every child. Examples of this included:

- pupils and staff explaining to the research team that 'everybody is expected to sing' (Wylam First);

- pupils recognising that to be a 'really good singing school' it is important to include 'everyone, even the little ones' (Joseph Hood Primary); and
- children with behaviour difficulties, who had previously been excluded from singing perceived as a reward, not appropriate for misbehaving pupils ('we weren't allowed ... [just had to] get on with our work'), getting a chance to access to singing and music (Pie Factory).

Wylam First School went a step further and carried the values of inclusion and singing as an inclusive activity into the community. School leaders and staff spoke of their Music nights, where every child could come and showcase their achievements. Not only do children show respect for each other (however small an achievement might seem, everybody would clap and recognise the progress an individual child had made and their efforts), the same is expected of parents attending the event.

The case study schools highlighted the role that their area leader (Bedfordshire Music) or other music organisation (e.g. The Sage Gateshead for Wylam) had played in promoting the Sing Up brand through, e.g. explaining the nature of the programme and its objectives in whole school twilights in the 'early days' of the programme. Subsequently these organisations introduced their local schools to the Sing Up resources and training opportunities. In a sense, they were the face of Sing Up and an ambassador of the Sing Up brand for these schools.

Resources played an important part in enabling school practitioners to make singing part of children's experience of learning and sustaining schools' commitment to Sing Up values. They also appeared to represent Sing Up, particularly for participating children, some of whom knew the Sing Up website well and used it independently to access songs.

The Sing Up website and magazine were the two most frequently mentioned types of resources. The value of the website was consistently praised by school practitioners and music professionals alike. An ability to use the Song Bank resources without being a music specialist or a confident singer was frequently highlighted as a key factor resulting in music being more embedded in the case study schools:

'... all the staff really used the Song Bank. That was the thing that made the difference.' (music coordinator, Joseph Hood Primary School)

Some specific features that music specialists and school staff found particularly helpful included:

- Availability of backing tracks;
- Resources to be used with the interactive white boards;
- Range of styles and topics of songs; and
- Searching facilities, offering school practitioners an opportunity to easily select songs for their context, curriculum and pupil needs.

In terms of challenges, several practitioners highlighted that the need to register and log in to access resources put some of them off using the Song Bank and also restricted their pupils from accessing its resources from home.

The Sing Up magazine was frequently mentioned as helpful by practitioners, often showing them new possibilities for increasing the amount of singing across the school. For example, staff from Livingstone Lower School used an idea from the magazine and designed a 'singing stop' (looking like a bus stop) in the playground to encourage children to sing independently out of the classroom.

Some other resources made available by Sing Up and used by the case study sites were more context specific. One of the BTM settings (Pie Factory), for example, made use of Pyramid packs, developed by Sing Up in association with ContinYour's Pyramid club scheme⁸, and aimed at helping children with social and emotional difficulties.

3.2.2 Workforce Development

Practitioners from all five case study sites were able to access different forms of continuing professional development (CPD) made available by Sing Up. These varied considerably in their foci, place and method of delivery, length of support, etc.

A significant amount of CPD happened in schools or other settings working directly with children. Initial, whole school, INSET training took place in all the case study schools. Commonly, the session covered the benefits of singing and opportunities for using it across the primary curriculum and introduced resources and support, including training opportunities, provided by Sing Up.

In many cases the introductory INSET session was followed by training models that offered schools specialist input and support over long periods of time. GMMAZ, for example, provided bespoke weekly sessions to Starting Point staff over two terms. Similarly, in Bedfordshire, schools had a term's worth of weekly tuition, supplemented by three additional sessions later on.

In training delivered by GMMAZ (for Starting Point) and The Sage Gateshead's Vocal Union⁹ (for Wylam First School), music specialists first ran sessions with the children, which the school staff could observe, and then held training workshops for staff to explore the practice modelled by specialists.

School practitioners' participation in a staff choir either in their school (Wylam) or local authority (Merton, Joseph Hood Primary School) was seen as an important factor in encouraging them to try using singing in their classroom or enhance what they were doing already.

These training models existed alongside external (non-school based) CPD opportunities provided by Sing Up. Two types of such events were highlighted by the case study sites:

- Workshops, lasting between two hours to a number of days; and
- The Sing Up Gatherings.

8. http://www.continyou.org.uk/children_and_families/pyramid/home

9. http://www.thesagegateshead.org/l_and_p/vocalforce/index.aspx

The latter were mentioned by a number of leaders and practitioners as valuable networking and practice sharing opportunities.

In all instances, staff welcomed the relevance of the training they received for their practice and the fact it was well supported by resources that could be used in the classroom.

4. School/Setting-Wide Impact

The interviews with school leaders and staff, music professionals, young people and their parents highlighted their belief that their work on making singing part of children's life and experience of primary education and their involvement in the Sing Up programme has resulted in benefits at a whole school level as well as positive impact on groups of stakeholders, mainly pupils and staff. Some examples of impact at a whole school level, as highlighted by the case study sites, included the development of:

- a sense of belonging: singing together was an activity that made pupils and staff perceive their school as a unique community that they all were part of;
- the environment, which included positive relationships between pupils and staff, that was supporting learning across the school and beyond;
- additional opportunities for children (and staff) to 'shine' and develop leadership skills;
- the school curriculum through enrichment of learning in various subject areas, cross-curricular projects and new extra-curricular opportunities; and
- a positive image of a school amongst parents and community.

Involvement of staff in leading the work and their participation in workforce development opportunities made available by Sing Up were commonly linked with their improved skills and confidence in teaching singing. Leaders and practitioners also noticed improvements in teacher confidence in general, which was frequently perceived to be a result of being challenged and stepping out of their comfort zone. In several settings school leaders commented that their involvement in the whole staff professional development provided by Sing Up in their schools had led to improved collaboration between staff and better relationships between colleagues.

The five case study sites identified the impact of singing on children and their development as their main achievement. Specifically, school leaders and staff and music professionals across the five sites thought that, alongside their musical development, singing supported the development of pupils' social and communication skills, improved their confidence and self-esteem and enhanced enjoyment of learning and school. Each setting, those from BTM project in particular, had individual case studies of the 'transformational' impact of singing on particular young people.

Pupils from the two schools recognised as 'singing schools' through the Sing Up Gold and Platinum Awards (Joseph Hood Primary and Wylam First), were very articulate in reflecting on the progress they make year on year, by participating in their school choir and other singing activities offered by their schools. In particular they commented on their improved ability to:

- learn songs, highlighting speed and ease of learning melodies and tunes;
- remember the lyrics even when long and complicated, or in other languages;
- understand the meaning of even previously known songs;
- sing in parts and harmonies;
- sing 'accurately', referring to pitch and tone, holding high/low and long notes;
- clearly pronounce individual sounds and words, including when singing a fast song;
- use movements and acting when singing.

Both pupils and staff emphasised that, more importantly perhaps, children 'would sing anywhere': in lessons and in the playground, when walking home and on a coach, and at home – with their friends and family.

5. Next Steps

Our case study sites' plans for next steps varied as much as their projects; and often reflected not only the extent to which singing had already embedded across the schools (and hence how much there was still left to do) but also their wider needs and priorities. Common to all of the sites was their desire to sustain what has been achieved through Sing Up and, 'having seen it work', further develop the approach adopted by the school to suit the settings, their pupils and communities.

One school for example, is planning to start a Key stage 1 choir, another is considering making singing more integral to its curriculum. A third one is thinking about using singing as a way of involving 'hard-to-reach' and disadvantaged parents and families in the school life. And a fourth has been given a grant by Kent County Council to do more work with looked after children and young people towards educational attainment levels and accreditation.

6. Methods

This report offers an analysis and synthesis of the evidence collected by the CUREE research team during visits to five case study sites involved in the Sing Up programme. The researchers employed a variety of data collection methods, including:

- documentary analysis;
- interviews with school and music organisation leaders, teachers and support staff, children and their parents (where possible);
- observation.

An evidence-based concept map, enquiry framework and tools were used to ensure the consistency of data collection and interpretation across the five case study sites.

CUREE would like to thank all staff and pupils from the five case study sites for their support of the Sing Up evaluation activities.