



## **Final Report**

# **An Evaluation of the Boogie Mites Early Years Music Education Programmes**

**in respect of parents and practitioners.**

**Commission by Boogie Mites UK Ltd.**

Prepared by: Nikki Fairchild and Dr Regina Karousou  
Early Years Teacher Status Programme Coordinator and Research Assistant  
Contact: [n.fairchild@chi.ac.uk](mailto:n.fairchild@chi.ac.uk) and [r.karousou@chi.ac.uk](mailto:r.karousou@chi.ac.uk)  
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## Executive Summary

A research project was commissioned to evaluate the benefits of Boogie Mites Early Years Music Education Programmes. The aims of this project were to understand how participation in music making programmes can support children's development in the prime areas of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (DfE, 2010); these being communication and language, personal social, emotional development and physical development. It also sought to investigate parental and practitioner perceptions of the programmes. This report presents the findings from three Boogie Mites programmes: Babies, Minis, and School Ready. It was designed in three phases. During phase one, data was gathered from focus groups with parents, telephone interviews with parents and practitioners about their experiences as they happened during participation in such programmes and retrospectively after the programmes had finished. During phase two, parental feedback forms and practitioners' evaluation forms were explored which allowed a critical synthesis of practices and behaviours before and after the programmes. These forms enabled comparisons between and within the groups. Finally, the third phase of the project explored key stakeholders' views on the programmes through analysis of existing feedback forms. This allowed the project to gain a holistic overview of the Boogie Mites programmes. Using qualitative and quantitative methods, the authors show evidence of how Boogie Mites Music Programmes can encourage development and increase parental and children's confidence in the use of music at home and in the settings.

## Introduction/Background and Context

The University of Chichester was commissioned to evaluate the benefits of the Boogie Mites Early Years Music Education Programmes on children's development. In particular, the research project investigated three such programmes: Babies, Minis and School Ready, to assess (1) parents' perceptions of the impact seen on language, communication, physical, social and emotional development of their children and their own confidence and home practise and (2) practitioners perceptions of training to cover these 3 programmes both for use 'in house 'with children only and as a parent workshop/course.

Boogie Mites UK Ltd have compiled a range of music programmes for Early Years. Three of these have been included in the research study. They covered the following three programmes:

1. Boogie Mites Babies (0 - crawling)
2. Boogie Mites Minis (crawling to 3 years)
3. Boogie Mites School Ready (3 to 5 years)

### Parent courses

Six week parent education courses have been compiled around these programmes. Each of the programmes includes a mix of original songs written by Boogie Mites and traditional songs and rhymes. Many of the Boogie Mites songs are sung with the CD playing in the background to give confidence to adults and children to join in, they use catchy melodies with a strong beat to engage adults and children to take part in the active music making. A mixture of popular music styles such as jazz, rap, reggae, boogie woogie and calypso are used to offer songs that adults enjoy as much as the children and so that children experience a wide range of music genres. Homemade props and instruments are used for action songs and percussion activities. Parents sit on the floor with their children and are encouraged to join in with every activity throughout the session. The music and movement session includes action songs, singing, role play, word play, rhymes, percussion, sequencing games, rhythm stick tapping and drumming, counting, tidying up, sensory activities and lullabies.

Sessions are fully inclusive for all children, regardless of ability, to join in with making either some of, or all of, the sounds, actions, words, sequences of sounds and actions, depending on the stage they are at. There are some 'follow the leader' activities (call and response style) and some free play



activities. Self-expression is encouraged throughout the session. Children are free to wander but are encouraged to re-join the group as each new prop comes out. Children are encouraged to be very active in supporting the group with taking props out and putting them away. The format of the session is the same each week, so they become familiar with the routine.

Each week of the 6 week course is 1.5 hours; this covers a lesson plan of 45 minutes music and movement followed by a refreshment break and craft activity for the Minis and School Ready groups, or discussion time in the baby groups. The craft activity involves making a prop or instrument used in the session from recycled materials. The lesson plans can be adapted by the course leader as required to suit the group. Changes to plan are recorded on lesson plans. An annual best practice review of lesson plans by the Tutor team contributes to on-going development of the course.

Boogie Mites Parent Education course tutors are not classically trained musicians, they have a mix of different backgrounds – performing arts, teaching, early years. They all train with Boogie Mites to understand the EYFS (DfE 2012) and how Boogie Mites songs and linked activities support development in the EYFS (DfE 2012). They also have a minimum of PTLLS (Preparing to Teach in the Life Long Learning Sector) adult education qualification and many years experience working with children and parents in early years.

The parents receive education information about the benefits of the activities practiced in the sessions, to support early years development at each stage, this is covered at the start and end of each week. There is also a drip feed of tips which are covered during the session with each song/activity.

Parents keep a diary each week recording their and their child's learning and home practice. They take a CD pack home on week 3 and are encouraged to practice songs and linked activities throughout the week between sessions and after the course has finished.

### **The course objectives are as follows**

#### Learning outcomes for parents:

- To participate in a shared activity with their child supporting their social and group skills

- To gain an overview understanding of the EYFS (DfE 2012) Prime Areas of Learning understanding how the songs and activities covered support development in these areas at this stage (refer to Development Matters for each age group (Early Education 2012)).
- To gain an understanding of the 7 aspects of Letters and Sounds Phase 1 (Primary National Strategy 2007) and how the songs and activities covered on the course support this foundation phase of literacy development (School Ready course only).
- To learn new songs and activities for practice at home during and after the course.
- To advise parents about other services or follow on courses available at the Centre or via other Family Learning providers locally (depending on the contract).

Learning outcomes for children:

- To participate in a shared activity with parent and group, developing personal, social and emotional skills such as bonding, taking turns, sharing, co-operating, social interaction.
- To develop physical skills through moving with music and handling instruments.
- To develop communication, language and listening skills through tuning into sounds, sequencing actions and sounds, playing with voice sounds and the rhythm of words, patterns of sounds, rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, phoneme sounds and gaining confidence for self-expression through music.

For the purpose of this research project the selected settings worked in partnership following Hampshire Family Learning Contract criteria (shown in italics below) and they were responsible for choosing the participants in the sessions. This included the selection of participants in respect of the data from the quantitative analysis on existing Boogie Mites feedback forms and those attending the focus groups. The criteria for selecting target families was: *Families in deprived communities, or those experiencing disadvantage, who may not have any formal qualifications or have not yet reached Level 2 qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework. Fathers, in order to increase male participation.* Using these criteria the families selected for the sessions were a minimum of 50% from the target group and up to 50% from the non-target groups. Hampshire County Council confirmed that the split for participation in the Boogie Mites Music programmes for courses run in 2012-2013 was 73.9% target families and 26.1% from non-target families. Those classified as non-target for the Family Learning criteria may have met Children's Centre target criteria for example children with developmental delay or behavioural issues.

## **Practitioner Training**

Training days and half days are offered by Boogie Mites for early years practitioners to cover the songs and linked activities in the programmes for use in the setting with children as part of everyday activities and/or for practitioners working with parent groups to lead the Boogie Mites Music Parent Education Courses (described above) themselves. Practitioners are given CD packs with detailed notes of how to lead the songs, linked activities, progression options and links to the EYFS Development Matters. The objective is to give the confidence and the resources needed by early years practitioners to lead musical activities/courses, to engage target parents, to understand how these activities link to development in the EYFS and to pass this on to parents.

This document reports on the findings from focus groups carried out with 45 parents who participated in the Boogie Mites music programmes during May – July 2013. It also reports on the findings of telephone interviews with 12 parents and questionnaires with 296 parents attending Boogie Mites Parent Music Education Programmes (held between September 2012 and July 2013). Finally it reports on 136 Early Years practitioners following training sessions run and organised by Boogie Mites over the past three years.

## **The context of early childhood education and music**

Music forms part of the EYFS (DfE 2012) curricula. It sits within one of the Specific Areas of Learning under the subheading Expressive Arts and Design where children ‘explore and play with a wide range of media and materials through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology’ (DfE, 2012, p.5). The EYFS early learning goals for Expressive Arts and Design are situated within the contexts of *exploring and using media and materials* and *being imaginative*. The inclusion of music within the early years contemporary curriculum has been demonstrated across a number of countries (such as Hungary, Japan, the Czech Republic) and curricula frameworks (such as High Scope and Reggio Emilia) to name a few (Georgeson and Payler, 2013).

Child development theorists acknowledge the benefits of music; Vygotsky reflected on the use of music as a social and cultural tool to develop and understand a child’s thinking, influence their perception and their experience of the world (Gray and Macblain, 2012). Pioneers of early childhood education such as Steiner and Froebel recommended that children regularly engaged in music activities and singing to support development and learning (Bruce, 2012). This view is replicated in modern texts where Anning and Edwards (2006) reflect on how music and singing can be seen as an important mode of pre-verbal communication and that songs and rhymes encourage ‘listening,

making eye contact, turn taking and responding' (Anning and Edwards 2006, p.85) all of which are important for communication.

In Early Years settings music is used to promote and support communication, cement routines and to encourage creativity and positive learning dispositions. This could take many forms such as singing, nursery rhymes, playing and listening to music and integrating holistically with other areas of the EYFS (DfE 2012) curriculum. In fact the Primary National Strategy (2007) pack Letters and Sounds Phase 1 (3 – 5 years), used to support the development of phonic awareness, has music as a central part of the recommended activities and recommends that music should be part of daily activities.

However, there is evidence that music practice has declined in quantity and quality. Ouvry (2012) has suggested this can be attributed to practitioners not having the confidence to set up an appealing music environment and becoming over reliant on listening to music on electronic devices such as iPod's and CD players as opposed to more active aspects of music making. The focus on more academic aspects of the EYFS (DfE 2012) such as literacy and maths could impact on the training of practitioners to deliver and support music. This could result in children missing out on the potential benefits that active music making can have on literacy and maths skills (as well as all other areas of learning and development).

Ouvry (2012) feels giving practitioners the confidence to support children via the exploration of their knowledge of singing and nursery rhymes can be the starting point to overcome this lack of confidence. Connections can be made with parents to allow practitioners to ascertain home practice and help broaden their own repertoires and the cultural aspect of singing and music making can be generated from this link with parents. In addition using instruments can be developed and the environment staged in such a way as to welcome children and practitioners to explore and make music together. Clift *et al* (2007) agree that training is key when supporting practitioners to feel more comfortable and engage with music practice themselves. By doing this practitioners can then have the tools to deliver engaging practice with children. Young (2008a) feels practitioners need to move away from the view that to engage in music a practitioner needs to have an innate sense of musicality. She suggests this needs to be countered to support more practitioners to engage with music in their settings.

### **The importance of music in the early years**

There is a growing body of evidence which supports the positive benefits of young children's involvement with music to support their development (Creech, 2010, Lonie, 2010b, Salmon, 2010, Youth Music, 2006, Lonie, 2010a, Poch de Grätzer, 1999, Harrison and Pound, 1996). Studies undertaken by Goswami and Bryant (1990) and Anvari *et al.* (2002) have indicated that listening to music and singing use the same auditory and cognitive skills that are necessary for supporting language development and phonemic awareness which can then have an impact on preschool children's reading ability. Salmon (2010, see also Barrett, 2010) states that when children listen to music, they make associations that allow them to unlock patterns and past memories. Such associations are then embedded in children's everyday activities and daily lives. In this way, Salmon argues: "Music and soundscapes are natural ways to tap into children's prior knowledge" (p. 941). Barrett (2009) agrees and argues that music-making activities provide a rich context for language to flourish.

The use of music to promote positive pro-social behaviour has also been shown in Kirschner and Tomasello (2010). Here children who had engaged in music demonstrated heightened positive and cooperative behaviour during activities held after a music session. The social nature of playing and listening to music has been shown (Young, 2008a) and Harris (2011) noted how children showed an awareness of rhythm in exploratory play and that they engaged in musical conversations with practitioner when playing instruments. It has also been suggested that music can support turn taking when small groups of children share musical instruments and that anecdotal feedback following a research project saw parents indicating an increase in communication and language (Harris, 2011).

Yim & Ebbeck (2009) looked at the link between musical preferences and musical engagement of children aged 4-5 years in two cultural contexts. They concluded that when choosing between a variety of musical activities such as singing, listening, playing musical instruments and dancing/moving, it was the latter activity that was viewed as the most preferred activity for young children in both cultures. As a result, they advise early years practitioners to be mindful when integrating music into the curriculum to allow children opportunities to engage fully with music. Leighton & Lamont (2006) explored the actual singing achievement of children aged 4 to 8 years when singing individually and as part of a group. They found that factors such as familiarity of the songs, age, pitch accuracy, gender, language skills and context influence children's singing. Looking at the social context, the authors maintain that when singing in a group context children would

perform much better than when singing individually because there is less pressure on remembering the words, correct melody and pitch especially when singing difficult songs.

How music is constructed by practitioners responsible for early years music-making activities has received considerable attention within the literature. Young and colleagues (2007) observed that choosing the right songs and activities for young children during group-singing is crucial for allowing a musical interaction between parents and their children to take place. They call for 'infant-directed' singing (p. 263) with catchy tunes, sung slowly to encourage listening and language development and moments of interaction between mother and child. They argue that in order to encourage engagement and development, both parents and children need to be comfortable in the sessions and to be exposed to materials that are accessible and relevant to them. Similarly, Fawcett (2011) warns that "...group singing does not offer the communicative possibilities of one-to-one musical engagement" (p. 4). Through such engagement children are able to freely experiment with sounds, make sense of the world around them and process events on their own accord and at their own pace. Indeed, Ilari & Gluschkof (2009, see also Leu, 2008) argue that such musical engagements are important because they are situated within wider social, cultural and psychological contexts. It is argued within the literature that when children engage in unstructured musical narratives, they offer us a window to their daily world which can reveal aspects of their upbringing, ritual and emotional states that form part of their identity and that of their families (Barrett, 2009, 2010, Salmon, 2010).

Despite the myriad of benefits music has for children's development, Lonie (2010a) reminds us how important it is to value and use music for music's sake in addition to making connections to the attached educational benefits. This allows for recreational use and the listening of music as an uplifting experience. It can also account for the use of music to support routines and exploring and experiencing a wide range of styles of music.

### **Parents, Practitioners and Music**

We now know that young babies are able to respond to music (Trehub, 2003a, b cited in Young *et al.* 2007, p. 255). Malloch & Trevarthen (2009) when analysing the interactions between mothers and babies when talking and singing together found that the mother's speaking voice to her baby (infant-directed speech) blends music and language. They formulated the term 'communicative musicality' to capture the ways in which parents engage with their babies in dialogues that carry music-like features such as pitch and melody. Through their inherent musical sensitivity, babies will respond to these musical games. By reacting in this manner, a powerful bond is created between the mother

and her baby; a bond which is sensitive to distress either in the mother (post-natal depression) or the child (normal development) (Leu, 2008, Young *et al.* 2007). It has also been demonstrated that positive relationship between parents and children can develop where music has been used as a clinical intervention (Nicholson *et al.*, 2008). In this case the non-judgemental and non-threatening nature of the programme was highlighted as a benefit when promoting parent and child interactions.

An existing body of work (Melhuish, 2010, Barrett, 2009, 2010, Lamont, 2008) has identified the importance of the home learning environment and the everyday music making activities that occur with young children in the home. Barrett (2009) investigates the role that music has on young children and their families. She used music, video diaries and interviews with key stakeholders to capture daily life occurrences. She found that joint and individual music-making and music programmes shape family relationships, identities, and provide a way of living. Young (2008b, cited in Barrett, 2009) carried out a study exploring the everyday music experiences of 'under-two-year-olds'. She found that affluent parents were able to provide their children with a greater number of musical activities and had access to different musical resources such as musical toys, electronic media sources etc. Young (2008b) maintains that what parents, practitioners, children understand of music and how they use music is inevitably restrained by the resources available to them.

Gudmundsdottir and Gudmundsdottir (2010) investigated the benefit of music programmes for younger and older mothers in Iceland and found that all benefitted from activities, although the younger mothers felt more likely to participate if the programme was free. An evaluation of a music intervention programme on the Isle of Wight saw parents reporting positive interactions with their children and found the intervention supported their singing with their children (Clift *et al.*, 2007).

More recently a study commissioned by Youth Music (Osgood *et al.* 2013b) investigated a number of Early Years Music projects with the aim of establishing effective strategies to enhance engagement of 'hard to reach' parents in early years music making sessions. A number of tensions were noted. These included early years practitioners viewing music specialists as having little experience of working with very young children and music specialists viewing early years practitioners as having little musical confidence. Respective expertise and pedagogical approaches were rarely negotiated, instead professional hierarchies emerged that placed music providers as superior to early years practitioners. The music leaders tended to be white middle class, classically trained musicians for which the cultural connotations can be off putting. The report identifies a need for improved synergy

between family services and music specialists. They also discuss the differing priorities of those commissioning the service (e.g. Children's Centres looking to signpost families and using music as the hook) and music professionals who were keen for families to engage with the music offered for the appreciation of musicality for its own sake. In talking to the 'hard to reach' families themselves the study finds that parents were deterred from attending these music sessions because it was often too structured and incompatible with the competing demands on their time. They had concerns that there was an over reliance on traditional nursery rhymes, insufficient instruments and leaders often did not have experience working with very young children. It also found that working class mothers advocated the use of popular music. There was a general view that the music provision was not stimulating enough. The music activities of 'hard to reach' families was often practiced at home, with friends, outside the formal early years music making setting.

The use of music needs to be situated within the wider context of early childhood education. Previous research has suggested that the home learning environment is a predictor of later progress at schools (Siraj-Blatchford *et al.* 2003, Sylva *et al.* 2012). Pre-schools are also cited as a positive benefit to young children's cognitive development (Sammons, 2010a and 2010b) and that quality preschools could counter a less interactive home learning environment (Sammons, 2010b). The key to quality settings is a focus on pedagogy which supports staff and parents to build strong relationships and where children can participate in adult supported activities (Siraj-Blatchford, 2010). Coupled with this the EYFS (DfE 2012) describes how strong relationships between parents and practitioners should be developed. These partnerships can support the child's development and allow for early intervention, if needed.

There have also been successive policies specifically targeting 'hard to reach' parents tracing back to the Every Child Matters (HM Government, 2003) agenda. More recently there has been an intensification of this targeted approach (Field, 2010, Marmot, 2010) and the recognition of early intervention (Allen, 2011) with the formation of an Early Intervention Foundation (<http://www.earlyinterventionfoundation.org.uk>). Although there have been concerns over the marginalisation of parents labelled in this way (Osgood *et al.* 2013a, Boag Monroe and Evangelou 2010) the policy landscape suggests targeted support is here to stay.



## Research Approach

The University of Chichester was invited by Boogie Mites UK Ltd to undertake a research project on the benefits of the Boogie Mites Music Education Programme.

The research objectives of the study were the following;

- i) To investigate parent's perceptions of the influence of the Boogie Mites music programmes on children's language, communication, physical, emotional and social development.
- ii) To explore the influence of the Boogie Mites programmes on parental knowledge, confidence and involvement in children's learning.
- iii) To evaluate practitioner's perceptions following training sessions by Boogie Mites.

In order to meet the above research objectives, it was important to design a robust and rigorous methodology. As a result, a mixed methods research project employing quantitative and qualitative methods was chosen to allow for breadth and depth in the findings (Bryman 2008, Cohen *et al.* 2011). The aim of the quantitative methodology was to allow the collection of a large amount of data in order to give confidence in the findings. The aim of the qualitative methodology was to allow for more in depth data to enable the relational similarities and differences of the participants to emerge as they interact with fellow parents, practitioners, children and music leaders. It seemed, therefore, reasonable to suggest that during their interactions participants would be confronted with various ideas and practices. These might influence their degree of involvement, their perceptions and the use of music at the relevant settings (home, nursery schools, schools and Children's Centres).

Ethical considerations in research are of paramount importance and as such universities have adopted specific codes, rules, and policies relating to research ethics. In recent years, it has become mandatory for educational researchers to submit research proposals for formal ethical scrutiny (BERA, 2011). These guidelines detail a responsibility to participant, sponsors of research, community of educational researchers, educational professionals, policy makers and the general public. Following these guidelines, the researchers gained ethical approval from the University of Chichester Research Ethics Committee.

## Quantitative data

Quantitative data was gathered from a number of sources including primary data (evaluation and feedback forms for parents and practitioners) and secondary data (analysis of existing feedback forms and evaluations done by Portsmouth City Council). It was important to include two different sources of data in order to allow for triangulation and to develop a rich understanding of the benefits of the Boogie Mites Music Education programmes from different perspectives.

In order to evaluate the progress that parents and children made since attending their music parent education programmes, Boogie Mites asked parents to fill out a programme feedback form (see Appendix A). This form consisted of a number of questions and comments that parents were asked to complete at the start of the course in week one and at the end of the course in week six, these were courses that ran between Sept 2012 and July 2013. Parent feedback forms were collected from 296 parents who had taken part in one of the three Boogie Mites Music Parent Education Programmes: Babies, Minis and School Ready. These parents had attended courses which had had participants selected under the Hampshire Family Learning Contract criteria<sup>1</sup>.

To gain insights into the perception of practitioners, data was included from a number of training courses which were held by Boogie Mites. These Early Years practitioners were invited to attend one-day training on how to use one of the Boogie Mites Parent Music Education Programmes for their settings (Appendix C). In total, 136 such questionnaires completed by Early Years practitioners at the end of their training day were collected by Boogie Mites in the 3 years prior to the research being carried out.

## Qualitative data

Three focus groups (nine in total) were carried out for each one of the Boogie Mites music programmes: Babies, Minis and School Ready during the final week (week 6) of the programmes. The focus groups were selected following Hampshire Family Learning criteria<sup>2</sup> and organised and facilitated by Boogie Mites (Table 1). To allow for some degree of trust and familiarity between the researcher and the participants, the researcher joined in the sessions. Before the start of the focus groups, all participants were asked if they still wanted to take part. All participants, who had signed

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<sup>1</sup> see introduction for details on the selection of the parents

<sup>2</sup> See footnote 1.

in advance a participation form (Appendix D), reiterated they were happy to take part. Each focus group lasted for approximately 30 minutes, was recorded with the participants' permission and later transcribed. 45 participants took part in all nine focus groups that were carried out at the Boogie Mites course location during June -July 2013.

Before the start of the focus groups, participants were asked to complete a small questionnaire in order to gather some demographic data regarding age, gender, language and educational qualifications across all nine focus groups (Appendix B). In total 45 such questionnaires were completed and returned. This was considered important as literature in this area (Osgood *et al.* 2013a, Melhuish, 2010) has suggested that the demographic variables described above can influence attendance in musical programmes as well as provision and exposure to musical activities.

<b>Settings</b>	<b>Type of setting</b>	<b>Boogie Mites Course</b>
Setting 1	Preschool	School Ready
Setting 2	Infant and nursery school	School Ready
Setting 3	Children's Centre	Babies
Setting 4	Children's Centre	Babies
Setting 5	Infant and Junior School	School Ready
Setting 6	Children's Centre	Babies
Setting 7	Children's Centre	Minis
Setting 8	Children's Centre	Minis
Setting 9	Children's Centre	Minis

**Table 1. Types of settings that participated in the research project**

Along with the data collected during the focus groups, supplementary data in the form of diaries were provided by the Music Leaders leading each of the nine music programmes. The diaries were kept by the Music Leaders and updated on a weekly basis with notes made regarding the children's and parents progress during each of the sessions along with any other information such as special needs of the child, attendance of the family etc.

One-to-one semi-structured telephone interviews were carried out with parents who had completed the either three or six weeks Boogie Mites courses up to six months prior to the research being carried out. The purpose of this was to ascertain from parents the longer term impact of the programmes. An initial email was sent to all parents who had given their permission to be contacted on the Boogie Mites programme's feedback form. Those parents who had provided a telephone number instead of an email address were contacted. In the end, 12 parents were interviewed over the telephone. The low response could be perhaps attributed to the fact that parents who initially may have been happy to participate in a research study, felt overwhelmed by the prospect of a follow up call. It could also have been due to some of the interviews taking place at the start of the summer holidays where a call for parents with an older sibling could have been problematic. To mitigate this the researchers did offer to schedule the call at a time to suit the parent either during the day or early evening and in some cases rescheduled the call at the request of the parent. Each interview lasted for 15 minutes, was recorded and later transcribed. The same interview schedule was used for both focus groups and telephone interviews (Appendix E).

In addition to the telephone interviews carried out with parents, one-to-one semi-structured telephone interviews were carried out with practitioners. These were practitioners who had completed a training course run by Boogie Mites up to three years prior to the research being undertaken. The reason for contacting the practitioners was to evaluate their reflections and perceptions of the benefits of Boogie Mites Music programmes for the practitioners and their settings. An initial email was sent to all practitioners (44 in total) who had given their permission to be contacted after completing a Boogie Mites Programme training evaluation form. In order to encourage participation, a follow up telephone call acted as a reminder. In the end, 8 practitioners agreed to be interviewed. The low response rate could be perhaps attributed to the fact they were contacted during the summer holidays when some School and Preschool staff are on holiday and for Children's centre staff perhaps participating in a research project at this time might have added to the existing pressures faced by the managers of such centres which were undergoing a restructure. Each interview lasted for approximately 15 minutes, was recorded and later transcribed. The interview schedule is appended (Appendix F).

When the data was collated, the overall result was a significant amount of data in terms of interview transcripts, observation notes, music leaders' diaries and questionnaires. The data included:

- Observation notes from 9 focus groups.
- Music leaders' diaries from 9 focus groups.
- 136 questionnaires from the training day for Early Years practitioners.
- 296 questionnaires from the programme feedback forms for parents.
- 45 parental research questionnaires.
- The transcripts of 12 one-to-one interviews with parents.
- The transcripts of 8 one-to-one interviews with Early Years practitioners.
- The transcripts of 9 focus group interviews with parents.
- Secondary data including feedback forms and evaluations completed by Portsmouth City Council.

Data collection and data analysis happened at the same time as it enabled the researchers to develop an increasing understanding of the data. An initial reading of the data allowed the researchers to individually construct emergent themes and ideas appearing from the data. As the analysis was proceeding, the initial categories apparent from the first reading of the data, were narrowed down to more specific themes that eventually led to specific sub-themes that could be applied to the individual participants as well as when looking at the groups collectively. In the end, the final list of themes (see Appendix G for parent themes and Appendix H for practitioner themes) was compared between members of the research team to ensure consistency in the coding of the themes and against the EYFS (DFE, 2012) to posit the research against the prime areas of learning.

## Caveats

Evidence based research has been considered a key driver for policy change. It is acknowledged that in these austere financial times expenditure for Government and Local Authorities are dependent on proven outcomes supported by evidence based research.

An attempt was made to secure funding which would have resulted in a twelve month project to evaluate the Boogie Mites programmes and to embed a research culture at a strategic and operational level within the company. Unfortunately due to the current challenging funding climate it was not possible to follow the initial aims. Boogie Mites and the University of Chichester were still committed to the project and felt it was important to redesign and reconstruct the evaluation on a smaller scale.

The reframing did have an impact on the resultant research design and methodology as it was agreed to use data previously collected by Boogie Mites and add some newly sourced data collected by the researchers. Although the limitations are acknowledged the resultant data collected and analysed has enabled the researchers to produce this evaluation report.

The main constraints of the project were as follows. The focus groups were pre-selected based on the Hampshire Family Learning Criteria, this allowed for a mix of 50% target and 50% non-target families (although during 2012-2013 the ratio was 73.9:26.1 target and non-target families). In addition, the researcher was only able to observe the last Boogie Mites session. This could have influenced how the researcher was perceived by the group and the group dynamics during the focus group sessions. The researcher was not able to understand how the group had developed over the six week course and this group development may have affected the type of data gathered. For example if the group had not gelled a focus group may not have been an effective way to collect data. It would have been more beneficial if the researcher was able to observe the group during weeks one, three and six so that there was the opportunity for trust and familiarity to be developed between the researcher and the participants, often referred to as participant observation (Bryman 2008).

The mix of the parents on the courses were as per the Hampshire Family Learning Contract criteria. In respect of the quantitative data the forms were collected from courses based on the criteria but the researchers could not ascribe which forms were from target families and which were from non-target families. The focus groups were drawn from courses where the criteria were met and the researchers identified that the majority of the data came from parents who have GCSE's. It is likely that some of these participants were from the target group; however the researchers were unable to identify them individually for the purpose of this report.

Boogie Mites UK Ltd are a small private company who work with parents, practitioners and children and have offered early years music sessions since 2003. The on-going changes to the programme were reflected in its components such as the programme feedback form for parents, the duration of the programme, and the training evaluation form for practitioners. Such changes meant that there were limitations to the number of statistical comparisons that could be made between and within each of the Boogie Mites programmes. It would be useful to design and distribute one feedback form for future Boogie Mites Music Programmes. It is hoped that this will be one of the outcomes from this research project.

The data collected through primary data through focus groups and questionnaires, this research project had the opportunity to analyse existing secondary data on evaluations completed by Portsmouth City Council and existing feedback forms. However, because of the different designs and formats in such data, there were some restrictions to the amount of data that was deemed as useful and relevant to the objectives of this research study.

## **Findings and Analysis**

This research project set out to evaluate the benefits of three of Boogie Mites Early Years Music Education Programmes: Babies, Minis and School Ready for parents, children and Early Years practitioners. This chapter will be split into two subsequent sections: section one will report on the research findings from the parent data, while section two will report such findings from the practitioner data.

### **Findings and Analysis from the Parent Data**

This section of the report presents the research findings from the parent data (telephone interviews, focus groups, feedback forms and observations). In structuring the chapter, the research questions that this project sought to answer, will be used. The data was transcribed and then analysed using a thematic analysis (see Appendix G). Data gathered from the quantitative methodology will be presented first followed by data gathered from the qualitative part of the study.

### **Quantitative data**

#### **Results before and after attending the Boogie Mites programmes**

All parents at the start (week one) and then again at the end (week 6) of the Boogie Mites programmes were asked to comment on a number of questions that mainly focused on their awareness of how music can help their child's development (questions 3, 4, 5, and 6); these are detailed in Appendix A. They were also asked to state how often they sang with their child each day (question 1) and whether they had music resources at home to support their child's learning (question 9). In the graphs below B = before and A = after with 1 – 9 representing the question asked on the form.



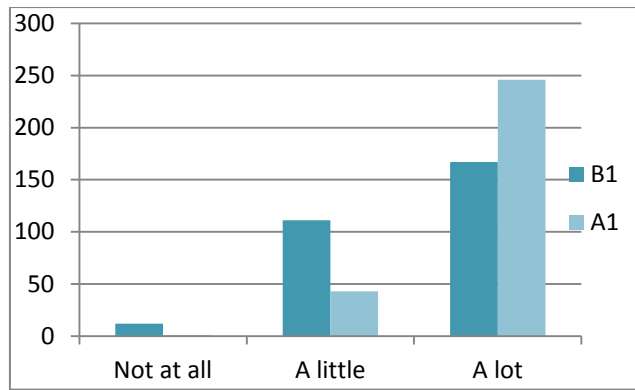


Figure 1. Parental responses of daily singing with their child

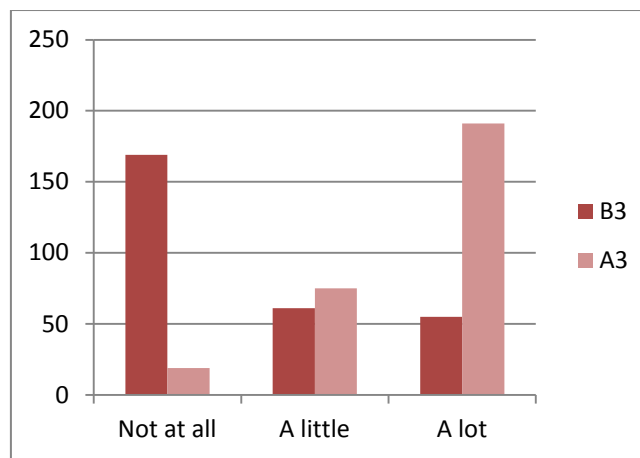


Figure 2. Parental responses regarding their knowledge of the EYFS three prime areas of learning

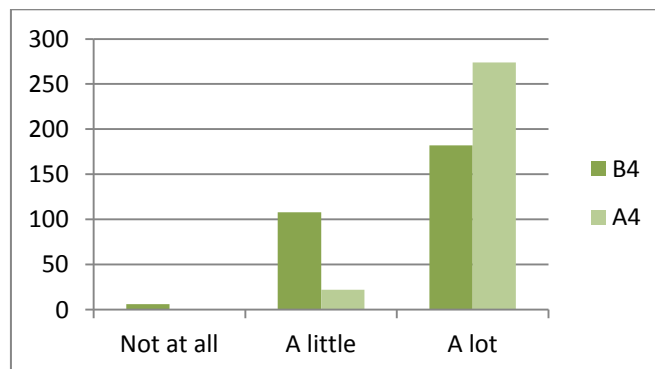
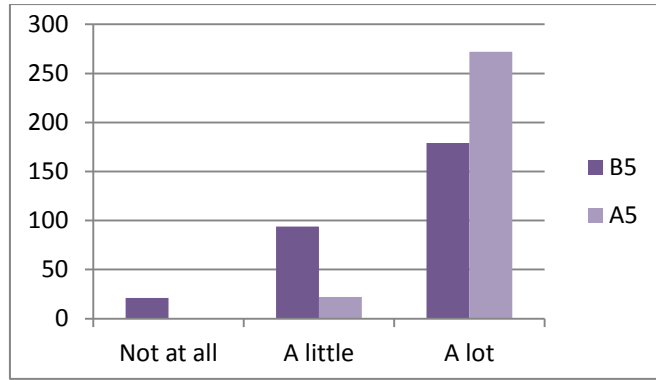
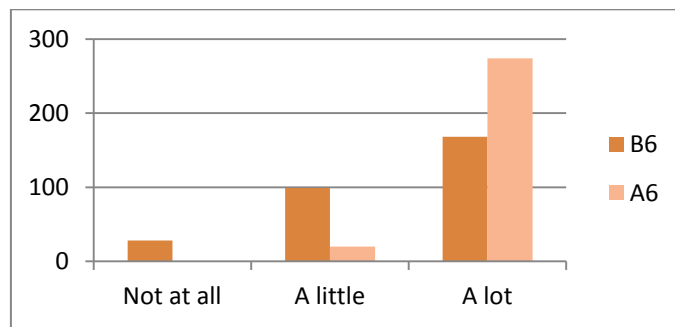


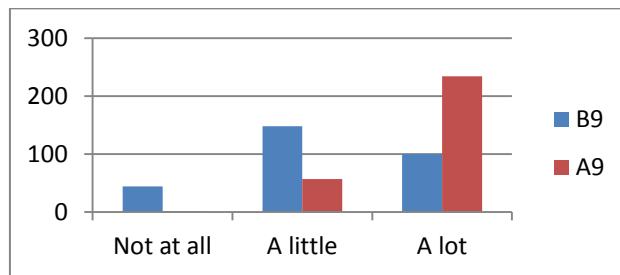
Figure 3. Parental awareness of how music can support child's communication skills



**Figure 4. Parental awareness of how music can support child's social skills**



**Figure 5. Parental awareness of how music can support child's physical skills**



**Figure 6. Parental responses of having music resources at home to support child's learning**

All parents reported that they and their child benefitted from doing the Boogie Mites programmes. During week one, parents' awareness was spread across the three categories (not a lot, a little and a lot) with a minority of the parents reporting they were not at all aware of the links between music and the development of communication, social and physical skills or how singing with their children regularly and using music to support their child's learning at home was as important. A third of the parents felt they had some knowledge of these areas and an overwhelming majority reported being

very aware of the power of music and using music at home. What is interesting is when they were asked again at the end of the sessions the same questions, the numbers of parents who reported their knowledge to have increased on all of these questions rose dramatically. This has had an impact on the increase in those parents who sing daily with their children before and after the course.

From these results we can infer that the Boogie Mites programmes reinforced to all parents regardless of their existing knowledge, practice and awareness, the extent to which music can greatly impact their child’s development. The reinforcement indicated by the positive change found in the ‘a lot’ column could suggest a growing awareness of the benefits on embedded music practice at home. By encouraging greater levels of adult: child interactions, a link with increasing parental engagement and home learning could be inferred as was found in the Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education 3-14 Project (Sylva *et al.* 2012).

## Qualitative data

### Sampling during focus groups and telephone interviews

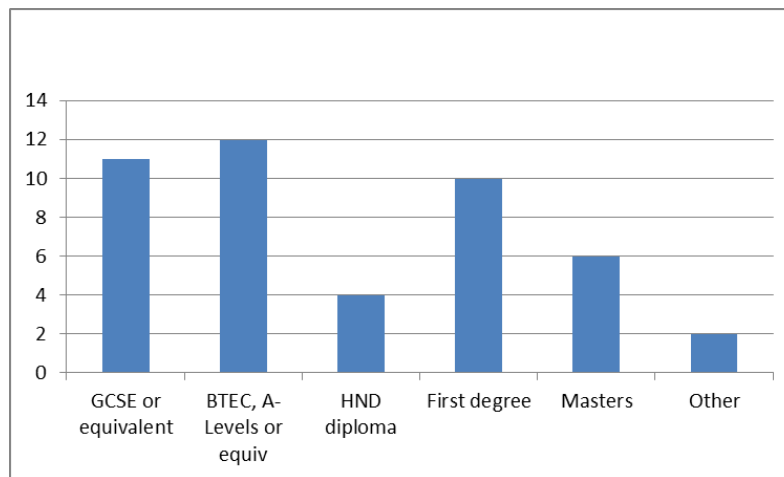
Ninety parents who were already participating in one of these programmes were approached by the Boogie Mites Music Leaders and were invited to take part in a focus group. In total, 45 parents took part representing 50% of the overall participant population. Summary tables of attendance disaggregated by gender, age, language and educational qualifications are presented below.

		Age				Total
		20-25	26-30	31-35	over 35	
Gender	male	1	0	0	1	2
	female	4	8	19	12	43
Total		5	8	19	13	45

**Table 2. Demographics of parents in relation to gender and age group**

Gender	English	Romanian	Zulu	Vietnamese	Russian	Polish	Hindi
Male	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Female	36	1	1	1	2	1	1

**Table 3. Demographics of parents according to gender and language**



**Figure 7. Demographics of parents' educational qualifications**

For the parents who participated in the focus groups there seem to be some interesting differences. An overwhelming majority of the parents (43 of 45) were female with just two males, and the main language spoken at home for most of the parents (38 of 45) was English. Interestingly there were a small number of parents (7 of 45) whose native language was not English. Only two of those parents said they used their native language when singing to their children. With regard to parents' educational qualifications, although the majority of the parents (23 of 45) were educated to A-levels, some of the parents (10 of 45) were educated to a degree level and a few (8 of 45) had a Master's degree or a higher qualification. As mentioned previously, additional Hampshire Family Learning Criteria may have been met but these were not highlighted to the researchers. It is, however, not surprising that the majority of the parents who agreed to take part in the focus groups were apparently the 'not target', well educated, parents. Education level of parents is important because studies in this area (Melhuish, 2010) suggest that parents' educational qualification, in this case the mother's, has strong effects throughout children's schooling but more strongly when children start secondary school.

Twenty five parents who had completed the Boogie Mites programmes were contacted by the researcher by telephone and email during August 2013. In total, 12 parents were interviewed. A table of the parents' background characteristics is shown below (Table 4).

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Number of Children</b>	<b>Boogie Mites course</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Educational Qualification</b>
Parent 1	30-40	2	Mini	English	Partially finished BA
Parent 2	30-40	2	Baby	English	University Degree
Parent 3	30-40	1	All three	English	L3 Adv GNVQ
Parent 4	20-30	2	Baby	English	NVQ3 in Childcare
Parent 5	30-40	1	Baby	English	University Degree
Parent 6	30-40	1	Mini	English	University Degree
Parent 7	30-40	1	Mini	English	GCSE
Parent 8	30-40	1	Mini	English	University Degree
Parent 9	20-30	1	Baby	English	NVQ
Parent 10	30-40	2	Mini	English	English Grade
Parent 11	20-30	1	Mini	English	GCSE
Parent 12	30-40	2	Mini	English	University degree

**Table 4. Demographics of parents who took part in one-to-one telephone interviews**

In contrast to the parents who participated in the focus group, there seem to be some similarities across this group in terms of age, number of children, language and educational qualifications. Again it is not surprising that the majority of parents who agreed to take part in the telephone interviews were 'not target' well educated parents. It can be clearly seen that half of the parents who agreed to be telephone interviewed were educated to a degree level and a third had a childcare relevant qualification. Those parents were particularly aware of the benefits of music in children's social, emotional, communication and physical behaviour. In addition, the language that was spoken at home was English and the majority of the parents (10 of 12) belonged to the same age group which may impact group dynamics and social networking (Vernelle, 1994, Forsyth, 2006). Finally, more than half of the parents (7 of 12) had only one child, with literature suggesting that the size of the family matters in terms of attention, interaction and educational attainment (Melhuish, 2010).

## Impact of the Boogie Mites programmes on children's development

### a) Communication and language development

These qualitative results support those found in the quantitative data. The majority of the parents commented positively on the changes in their children's communication and use of language particularly in their child's ability to express themselves in front of others through speaking and singing. However the parents were uncertain as to whether these changes were a result of the course or natural development. This was particularly the case with parents with younger children (0-2 years):

*[It's] difficult to say as she is changing all the time. She has recently started saying the odd word where you know what she is saying (Interview Parent 9)*

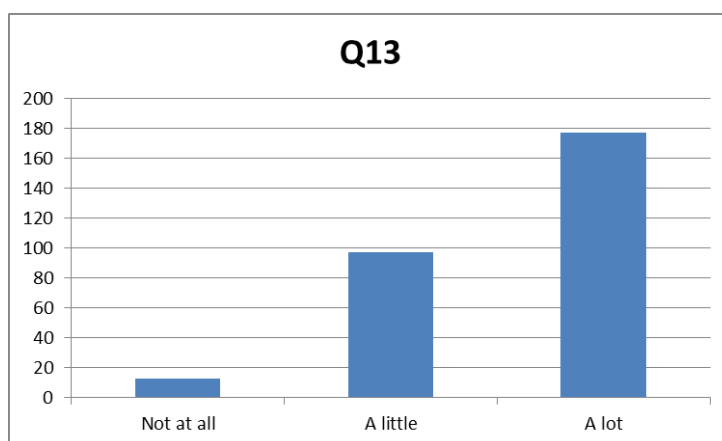
*I have not noticed any changes as we had already been going to music groups before even though Boogie Mites was new, music was not a new experience for her (Interview Parent 7)*

Parents with younger children recounted how quickly their children were growing that it was almost impossible to attribute any of these changes to the course alone. This was particularly the case for parents for whom engaging in music and music-making groups such as Boogie Mites with their children was part of everyday life. Having said that, parents went on to stress the educational and cognitive benefits that were gained from being exposed to such formally structured early year musical activities.

This was reflected in the quantitative questionnaire feedback forms that parents were asked to complete during week one and week six of the programmes<sup>3</sup>. When answering the question relating to whether they have noticed any changes in their child's language and communication development, the majority of the parents reported noticing a great number of changes in this area (Figure 8).

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<sup>3</sup> Appendix A.



**Figure 8. Parental responses on children's communication skills**

When they were previously asked about their understanding between music and communication skills, an overwhelming majority of the parents (274 of 296) said their understanding was much greater than when they started the programmes. However, when the focus of this question shifted onto reporting on the changes they noted on their child's language and communication skills. Out of the 287 parents who completed this question (6 parents did not do so), 13 said they had not noticed any changes, 97 said they had noticed some changes, and 177 reported they had noticed a lot of changes when it came to their children's language and communication skills. So more than half of the parents said they had seen a lot of changes in their child's communication skills. When they were asked to give examples of such changes their comments included the following:

*Singing and rhyme helps to develop speech patterns (Parent 5 Feedback Form)*

*Understanding soft, loud, fast, and slow speech (Parent 6 Feedback Form)*

*My son can sing along and it has helped his vocabulary and gets excited about music and talking (Parent 10 Feedback Form)*

The participants during the focus groups and interviews were prompted to point out exactly what were those changes that the majority perceived as significantly contributing to children's development in this area. An overwhelming number of the participants referred to areas such as speaking, listening and attention and supporting routines (EYFS, DfE, 2012).

*A lot more confident, expressing himself more, how he feels, talking to other people and just randomly going up to someone and say 'look what I've made', a big step for him (FG2, Parent 1)*

*A lot more focused and following instructions whereas at home if I would say 'let's tidy up' she would say 'No', as soon as she hears the music she is up, helping collect things, so yeah more focused and compliant(FG1, Parent 3)*

*I have not found any more babbling, she has always responded to music, it's just reinforcing it.(FG6, Parent 3)*

Across the nine focus groups participants firmly agreed that since attending the Boogie Mites programmes they had noticed how their children had become more confident, were eager to show others what they had achieved, were able to follow instructions and were responding to music. Such findings concur with the literature which suggests that music can support children's phonic awareness (Lonie, 2010b, Anvari *et al.* 2002). What is also notable is a change in the children's everyday behaviour as evaluated in terms of following instructions. While some children initially seemed reluctant to 'do as they were told' the use of particular songs, like the 'Tidy up' song in the excerpt above, appeared to have a positive effect on their behaviour.

Changes in communication and language which could be attributed to the Boogie Mites course were more noticeably reported by parents in the telephone interviews with children with language delay or special needs and by parents with English as an additional language. The parents of such children commented on how much more confident their child appeared to be when singing and using other means of self-expression. On some occasions parents noted that, while before the course their child would neither enjoy nor take part in any singing activities, after the course they got more excited when particular songs came up. The inference here is that the Boogie Mites programmes have been able to engage these children

*My eldest boy has got special needs and he is completely non-verbal but he absolutely loves music. It's the one thing that really keeps his interest... (Interview Parent 2)*

*...we have different music for different activities but we also use them for me to teach them my language so we will have English nursery songs but I will sing them in my language so they learn something different through music(FG1, Parent 5)*

Using language to express oneself and verbally communicate with others is regarded as an empowering route of communication particularly with older children (Hardy 2012, Brock and Rankin



2008). This develops from non-verbal communication in babies and pre-verbal children where the child seeks to make sense of the world (Fisher, 2008). However, when the child finds it difficult to use language because of language delay or when English is not their first language, finding other ways to communicate and interact with others is vital. Music seems to provide an alternative path whereby it allows *all* children regardless of their level and ability to express their curiosity and enjoyment (Fawcett, 2011, Young *et al.* 2007, Barrett, 2010). Goddard Blyth (2009) (cited in Dowling, 2013) suggests music and social engagement are the early foundations for communication.

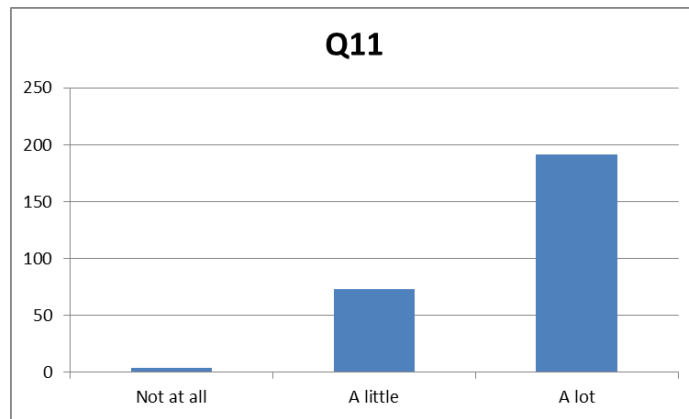
#### b) Personal, social, and emotional development

All of the parents confirmed how the Boogie Mites programmes contributed significantly to their children's personal, social and emotional development (EYFS) (DfE, 2012). There were numerous examples within the data when parents recounted occasions when their child was able to interact with other children in the group, their confidence had grown, or they used music to voice their needs. When what was described by some parents as 'milestones' were reached either during the music-making sessions or at home, it felt that a 'light bulb' moment for both the parents and the children was achieved:

*My brother plays the drums and she always wanted to play on that and it is not because it's playing; she actually wants to recreate what she feels. So not just having a bash... (Interview Parent 3)*

*She started to love music now. At first it was she likes music and now she loves music. She even asks and brings me the CD and asks me to put it on. She is very willing as well. (Interview Parent 11)*

What is interesting is the enthusiasm the parents expressed about the significance of music to their family and the perceived impact they felt it has had on their children's musicality. In so doing, there is an apparent shift from just enjoying listening to music towards an active and proactive engagement with music. This is reported by the parents in different ways: in the first quote there is an explicit progression from playing instruments to linking music with emotions. In the latter quote, the parent uses language to show that not only her child is 'loving' music but she takes a proactive stance in choosing music that she wants to listen to. This finding concurs with the parent feedback data (Figure 9).



**Figure 9. Parental responses on children's social skills**

In this figure, 269 of the 296 parents answered the question on the Boogie Mites programme feedback form<sup>4</sup>. A small minority of the parents (4 of 269) said they did not notice any changes. When looking at the additional comments made, being sociable already and attending music groups and festivals were some of the reasons given. Some parents (73 of 269) reported they had noticed some changes while the majority of the parents (192 of 269) said they have seen 'a lot' of changes. This finding is not as surprising as literature in this area has suggested the positive effect music and singing as part of a social group can have in bringing young children together (Kirschner and Tomasello, 2010, Young, 2008a, Vygotsky, 1978). However, what is interesting is the degree to which such behaviour can be monitored and adjusted successfully while in a group situation (Leighton & Lamont, 2006).

During one Boogie Mites music programme, before the session had started the music leader commented on the behaviour of two twin boys. She observed that during the first couple of sessions the boys would be unengaged, would just mouth rather than sing the songs and would generally not demonstrate pro-social behaviour throughout the sessions. During the last session for the most part of the session a researcher observed such behaviour. However, there were times when the boys when asked by the music leader to sing along with her or wait for their turn, they would engage and follow instructions. Later on in the focus group, the parent commented this was the first group they joined and since joining on some occasions she noticed a change in the boys' vocabulary and general behaviour. Melhuish (2010) suggests that when children start group-care in the first year of life there is a reduced risk of anti-social behaviour than if they start in the first two years.

<sup>4</sup> Appendix A.

As it was pointed out earlier, developing one's confidence and social skills was a developmental area that the parents unanimously agreed the course had an impact on their children. There were many instances during the focus group sessions where children would leave their mother's side to explore the music teacher's bag, fetch props or simply go and play with the other children in the group. These observations were also confirmed by the participants in both the interviews and the focus groups.

*.....she is able to interact with children in her own level, have fun but also back away if she wants to. She is a bit more sociable and she feels more confident with other babies (Interview Parent 5)*

*For us as a family just a miracle he is out there without me, he would not do that before, ... it has been this group that has drawn him in and it's amazing he is out there without me (FG5, Parent 2)*

*I can see I let her move away from me whereas earlier on it would not happen, now she is confident, she knows she is safe and she is quite happy with that and it shows progress even at this level because they got used at this place and new environment and new people and interaction and all together it's a big package apart from the music. (FG8, Parent 1)*

Being able to 'let go' and move away from what is familiar and comfortable to something that is new and unknown, was a step that the participants and their children found difficult at times. This separation was practised and trialled a number of times during the Boogie Mites programmes by children who felt able and confident enough to take a few small steps away from the parent for exploring or simply interacting and playing with other children. This 'separation' was enabled by the knowledge that the environment, the people, the activities were 'safe'. This can be clearly seen in the second excerpt. One carer (grandmother) reported her initial reluctance in joining the group because of her grandchild's special needs which she felt would not allow him to participate fully in the group. She then went on to say that while in the first couple of sessions he would neither take part nor move away from her side, she was amazed that during the focus group he was quite happy to leave her side and play with the other children in a different room. As a result, the Boogie Mites programmes did not just offer a music programme for the participants and their children, but also the space and opportunity to practice 'letting go' in small intervals.

*Today for the first time he co-operated throughout usually he would be somewhere else, the first time we came in he wandered off and did his own thing but today he has sat down and done everything (FG1, Parent 1)*

*Part of it [doing the course] is perseverance because I really saw her developing through doing it, her approach to music and the social aspect in terms of following other kids. (Interview Parent 6)*

Implicit within these quotes are the specific models on offer regarding how one should behave and what one should do within a group environment (Osgood *et al.* 2013a, Allen and Osgood 2009). Within the group the child and the parent are pleased when the child could cooperate and follow patterns of behaviour that are considered as normal and age appropriate by the other parents, the music leaders and the social environment. Such subtle and continuous questionings over the course's objectives are more easily smoothed out within the confines of the group environment, where parents can often be supported by the desire to do what is right for their children. Participation in the group and the feedback of the facilitators allowed parents to contextualise their children's learning and recognise the individual nature of their children. This allowed them to consider what was right for their children as opposed to 'right outcomes' for their children (Osgood *et al.* 2013a). This is evident in the second excerpt, where one parent felt anxious when her child did not appear to be progressing at the same pace as the other children.

### c) Physical development

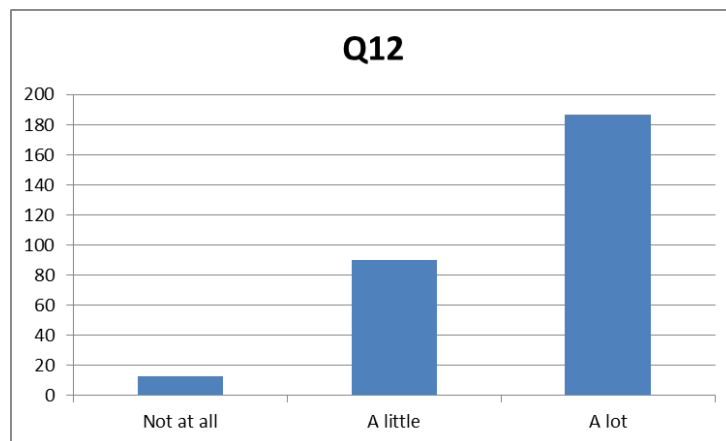
Early years music-making groups recognise the benefits such activities can have on children's physical development (EYFS, DfE, 2012). Indeed, this was an area that gathered a lot of comments from the parents more predominantly in the telephone interviews than the focus groups. Although all parents said their child was moving more and was more active physically, again it was difficult to assign any such changes to the Boogie Mites programmes alone. Undoubtedly the programmes had an impact as parents and children were prompted on numerous occasions by the music leaders to act out the songs by shaking their shakers or touching their ears and hands. In so doing, it reaffirmed how music can aid co-ordination and movement.

*.....I think 'L' can do what she could already but 'R' has started marching to the music, the stick things are new to him and he has got a lot better. I don't know why because we did other groups, but the actions and the co-ordination, he is really following the actions of the song, he*

*got more out of it in terms of development, he has benefitted from it loads and he is more likely to stimulate 'L' (FG2, Parent 3)*

*I really saw her as she was crawling not quite walking and at the early sessions I was following her round the room and getting her back into the group. (Interview Parent 6)*

The data from the parent feedback forms<sup>5</sup> confirmed that the majority of the parents saw an improvement in their child's physical development (Figure 10).



**Figure 10. Parental responses on children's physical skills**

Figure 10 clearly shows how parents on the whole perceived that what they were doing with their children during the Boogie Mites programmes had an impact on their physical development. Out of the 290 parents who completed this question<sup>5</sup>, 13 parents said they had not noticed any changes, 90 reported some changes and 187 said they had noticed 'a lot' of changes in their children's physical skills. When looking at the earlier quantitative data where parents were asked to report their awareness of the connection between music and physical development in week 1 and week 6 of the programmes, an overwhelming majority (274 of 295) said they were much more aware. The slight decrease in this number could be because some parents were not able to positively reaffirm whether it was the course alone or part of normal development. Nonetheless, the majority perceived that the programmes had affected their child's co-ordination, movement, control and physical activity.

Such changes in the children's physical skills were vociferously stressed by the parents who attended the programmes a couple of times.

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<sup>5</sup> Appendix A.

*She did a Boogie Mites (course) twice after each one she engaged more, she was able to clap more and she is a bit more co-ordinated and she is a bit more vocal in that environment. The group setting really helped her towards her developmental milestones (Interview Parent 5)*

*The eldest one absolutely loves music and he is a bit of a mover. He loves to dance. He has a natural rhythm. He has no interest in playing with anything. He has a shaker and he will shake it but does not have the concentration or the perseverance. Again the baby loves to be around music and he will reach out his hand to try and hold a shaker (Interview Parent 1)*

During the sessions, parents were encouraged to not just sing the words but move around, clap their hands and be more active with their children involving the whole body. Undoubtedly such activities were not only carried out during the programmes, but continued at home.

Overall, all parents reported that participating in the course at least once had a positive impact on their child's development, although some felt that a child's natural development needed to be considered when thinking about how this was expressed across all the EYFS (DfE 2012) prime areas of learning. The inference is that the Boogie Mites programmes support children development across the EYFS (DfE 2012). In particular, the parents who were able to identify changes in their child's development were the parents of children with special needs and language delay. Those parents stressed how Boogie Mites music was a valuable means of communication and a means through which they could interact with their child and do something enjoyable as a family (Darrow, 2011, Allgood, 2005).

### **Impact on parents' confidence**

All parents commented that since doing the Boogie Mites programmes, their confidence improved. This improvement was expressed in a number of ways in the interviews and focus groups including a willingness to try new musical activities, a desire to join other musical groups and making music more of a family activity:

*[It has been] 110% improvement. When you first start Boogie Mites you feel like a prime idiot jumping around and singing and doing all the silly actions but at the end of the course you are*

*like 'Hey, let's do it! Can't wait for the next one'. It's improved my confidence and hers; it's brilliant in that respect (Interview Parent 3)*

*I don't mind doing it in front of other people but now it's a lot easier I don't feel such a weirdo (FG6, Parent 1)*

*A bit of singing, we do another group at the library, and we go and sing songs and we have this [Boogie Mites] CD and we have other action records and we play this (FG2, Parent 3)*

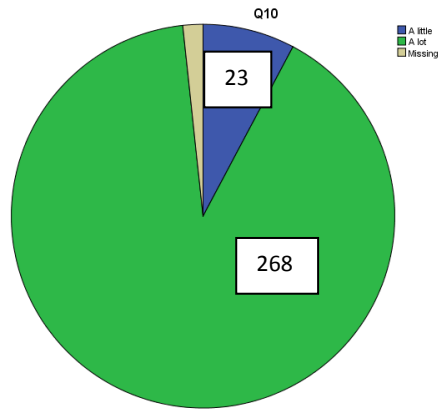
*[I feel] very confident. We go to the library and they do a 'Bounce and Sing' cause my daughter enjoyed it loads I thought I should take her and do another music group as Boogie Mites was not available (Interview Parent 4)*

The majority of the participants considered their growing feelings of confidence in terms of how others perceived them. Interview Parent's 3 comments seem to capture this feeling very well. At the start of the programme, like her child, she felt uncomfortable when asked to move out of her comfort zone, but towards the end she came to appreciate the benefits of joining in. In a way, the Boogie Mites programmes asked parents to do more than just singing the songs. It invited them to put aside their established identities and explore what it is like being a child again. As a result, for Interview Parents 3 and 4, the course and listening to the Boogie Mites CD at home acted as a stepping stone for discovering other music groups they could take part with their child. These comments suggest that taking part in a Boogie Mites music group can allow parents, regardless of their professional background, expertise and knowledge, to forget any inhibitions they might have about their singing and enjoy music for music's sake. And in so doing it had a knock on effect on their children's confidence.

This finding concurred with the findings from the quantitative data sourced from parent feedback forms<sup>6</sup> that parents were asked to complete during week one and week six of the Boogie Mites programmes. An overwhelming majority of the parents said their confidence improved since attending the programmes (Figure 11).

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<sup>6</sup> Appendix A.



**Figure 11. Parental responses on their confidence**

Question 10 on the Boogie Mites programme feedback form was answered by 291 parents. The responses indicated 23 parents felt a little confident while 268 parents reported they felt a lot more confident than when they first started the programmes. Interestingly none of the parents said they did not feel confident.

In exploring the theme of ‘confidence’ a bit further during the telephone interviews and focus groups, some interesting findings emerged. It was discussed earlier that ‘feeling confident’ was associated with the ability to sing in front of strangers. Other associations were linked to realising the impact music can have on children’s development, spending more time with their children, having fun, being resourceful and developing a sense of belonging.

*We are already singing with our children but you are not aware that the things you are doing are important because music is everywhere but it’s more related rather than for the sake of singing ... before they would come home with their new song and you will be 'Ok' but now you are getting involved in it and you want to be part of it (FG1, Parent 5)*

*Yes we do different activities, in the morning she plays with her toys and I sing to her, I sing to her twice mornings and evenings when she goes to bed we just listen to music to calm her and relax(FG3, Parent 5)*

*...all the children in the nursery...they are going to school in September and it's created a bond with them(FG2, Parent 3)*



*We use quite a lot of instruments at home like bottles and ribbons because he really likes that (FG4, Parent 4)*

The motivation for joining and carrying on with the Boogie Mites programmes for six weeks varied across the parents in the focus groups and telephone interviews. For the majority, the more they engaged with the programmes and used music at home and during the sessions, the more confident they became. For those parents who took part in the School Ready programmes with a focus on transition, the programmes had perhaps an additional value. They enabled them to meet and get to know the other parents who they would continue to see at school after the end of the programmes. More importantly, they felt that it has created a little group for their children who will all be going onto the same school. This is seen in the third excerpt where this parent felt this was an additional benefit for the parents and the children in the Transition School Ready group.

Having considered earlier the importance of parents' educational qualifications, age, and language, what parents do with their children at home is equally important. Many studies have shown the importance of parenting in general and in particular the link between parenting and early years attainment (Whalley, 2007, Field 2010, Allen, 2011, Sylva *et al.* 2012). A great deal of data was gathered on this issue with parents commenting on their parenting practices such as listening to music, reading to children, singing songs and nursery rhymes, playing together, going to the library etc. Although a lot of the parents took that to be part of their normal routine, the realisation that such activities can not only help children to formulate the first sounds or increase their curiosity, but more importantly they can also stimulate and motivate values about the importance of learning. Studies in this area (Melhuish, 2010, Sylva *et al.* 2010, Anvari *et al.* 2002) have shown that the influence of home learning environment on children's educational attainment to be far greater than it was previously believed.

A commonly expressed feeling amongst the participants was the length of the course. Many of the parents felt the course should have been longer. This could have been a reflection on their growing confidence. For some, they and their children, felt more relaxed and able to participate. However, there was a split amongst the participants with a small number feeling that the course was not long enough for the programmes to have a strong impact on the parents and children's development and others who felt the course was quite long.

*I am more confident to introduce her to items that make noise rather than just musical instruments but if we had a chance to have more weeks probably we could have seen much more development, what I see now is that she has engaged with the activities more than when we started. (FG8, Parent 1)*

*Quite long course (Comments from feedback form)*

The comment on the quite long course may have been generated from a parent who had not engaged or who had been in a group which had not gelled. Group dynamics could play a large part in the participation of group members (Young *et al.* 2007). Boogie Mites may wish to explore group work theory to support their music leaders to reflect on, and support group formation, and also how to support a group to disband following the end of each course (Vernelle, 1994, Forsyth 2006).

### **Impact on parents' perception of music**

#### **a) Before the course**

One third of the parents during the telephone interviews admitted that they were mainly using music for recreational purposes. They felt that music was a pleasurable and fun activity that young children can enjoy. However, a great number of the parents in the focus groups and the interviews professed their awareness with regard to the links between music and development. This could be because they were quite musical themselves or going to music groups with their children was not a new activity to them.

*Significant; musician as a father and I am aware of power of music in helping with children's learning and with people in general (Interview Parent 1)*

*We listen to music a lot, we've been to festivals and he has been to some with us as well (FG8, Parent 2)*

*Play music all the time at home in the car on TV as a background and then we sing together (FG4, Parent 2)*

It must be noted that parents were asked how they thought about music retrospectively. As such the course might have influenced their answers. Nevertheless, the majority of the parents agreed that doing something musical with their children even if it is for a short period of time is beneficial.

Interestingly so, when they were prompted to explain in more detail the areas that they thought music has got the most impact, they all focused on language, cognitive and social skills.

#### b) After the course

What seemed to have significantly changed in their comments was the level of importance they attributed to music. While parents previously admitted they were less inclined to join in with their child's music-making activities and singing, they then recounted that persevering with the course and coming in each week allowed them in a way to become more involved with the group. For example, there were a number of occasions where the children would be asked to sing songs and create sounds using different objects such as tapping sticks, household materials and musical instruments. According to the following excerpts, this pattern was repeated at home.

*Yes. I don't know if I think about it differently but it has focused me.... It has given me more information as to why it is important. I knew it was important before but it has reminded me and she enjoys it (Interview Parent 6)*

*I think it's reinforced how beneficial it can be for children for their language development and how fun it could be doing the actions (FG6, Parent 3)*

It could be suggested that the course changed the way in which some parents thought about music and used music. For those parents who were already doing something musical with their children, the programmes cemented in their minds that using music on an everyday basis can have a big impact on their child's development. In so doing, they all commented how motivated they felt to do even more musical activities with their children at home. As it was seen earlier on, analysis of the quantitative data reaffirmed that the number of parents who reported in week 6 to be using music at home increased significantly (234 of 292). It is in that home learning aspect and carrying on at home where we can clearly see the impact of the course as seen below.

*We sing more at home than we probably did, I knew a lot of nursery rhymes but had not remembered them and doing this has probably reminded me of the ones that I probably knew and it calms him down(FG4, Parent 3)*

*All the stuff we did at home like we would listen out for sounds but I was not aware until now that's why we were doing it, it's coming here I noticed that we were doing these things before but now I know why (FG1, Parent 6)*

*Mostly family time in the evenings, sang nursery rhymes, did some crafty things like the recycling they use at Boogie mites to bang the drums and things like that. A few of the elements from it (Interview Parent 1)*

What is particularly noticeable in the excerpts here is how music seems to have transformed from a 1:1 activity to an activity for the whole family. Previously parents commented that it was something they did on the way to the park or at the car because they were aware of how it helps with their child's development but almost reluctantly. After taking part in the course, they have realised how it could affect their child's behaviour and encouraged them to do more. In so doing it has become a core part of the family's identity. It's something that the whole family can get involved in and learn from. Melhuish (2010) argues that: '...children may internalise aspects of parental values and expectations...as they form a self-concept of themselves as a learner' (p. 62). As a result, it can change the family dynamics and enable children to feel proud and develop a positive sense of themselves as individuals and as part of a family unit (Barrett, 2009, 2010).

A key aspect that might have contributed to this transition is the kind of resources the practitioners use during the sessions. Such resources include the Boogie Mites CD that parents get and are encouraged to use at home. Another resource used extensively at the sessions was household materials such as tissue boxes, scarves, kitchen rolls and tins. All parents commented on how the inclusions of such materials have spurred theirs and their child's imagination and have given them ideas about what to do at home. The use of open ended resources can act as a catalyst to support a child's imagination and is the cornerstone of pedagogies such as Reggio Emilia (Rinaldi, 2006).

*I quite enjoy making the different sounds with different objects and that was something new, I think it's thinking that music can be everything if it has a beat and a rhythm that is what it has taught me (FG5, Parent 5)*

## Findings and Analysis from the Practitioner Data

This section of the report will present the findings from data gathered from practitioners. Data was gathered on two different occasions. Practitioners were asked by the Boogie Mites team to complete a questionnaire to evaluate the Boogie Mites training they had just received. A different set of practitioners were interviewed by an independent researcher sometime after they had completed their training when they were asked about their perceived impact of the Boogie Mites course in their setting.

### Quantitative and qualitative data from feedback forms following the training

Boogie Mites organise training days for practitioners in each of the three groups; that is Babies, Minis and School Ready. These training sessions have a mixture of practitioners including those who would be taking the programme back to their settings to use with children and those who would be running parent programmes. Overall, 113 practitioners feedback forms from training sessions held over the last year took part (Figure 12). Young *et al.* 2007 suggest that it is common for practitioners to attend training days or short courses on early years music-making programmes to update their music portfolio.

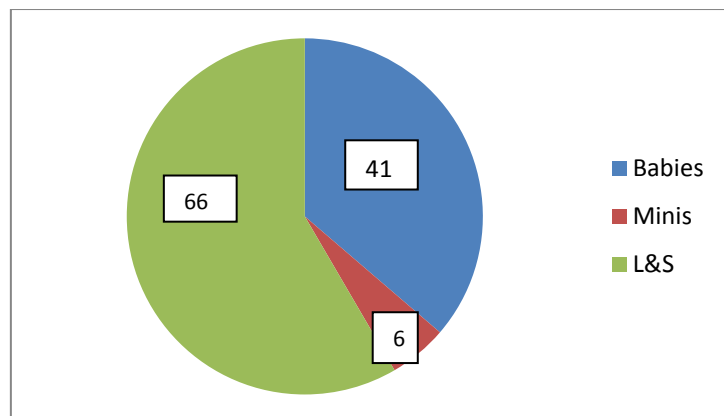


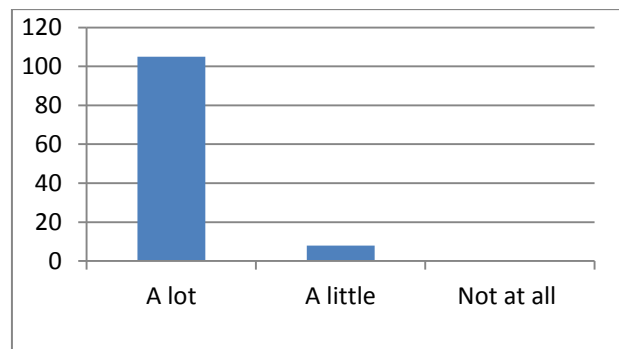
Figure 12. Number of practitioners taking part in training day

More specifically, 41 practitioners opted to do the Babies training, six practitioners opted for the Minis training, and 66 opted for the School Ready training. When practitioners were asked to evaluate the training day, they did so by completing a questionnaire consisting of four questions.

Each question was rated using a 3-scale rate as ‘very much, a little, not at all’. The findings for each of these questions are presented below.

**Q1. Have you understood how each of the songs are led, how they support School Ready and development in EYFS and tips which can be given to parents for use at home?**

In this question practitioners were asked to comment on their level of understanding of the educational impact of the course in relation to children’s development of phonics and the prime areas of EYFS (DfE, 2012) as well as whether they felt they could support parents in using the course at home.

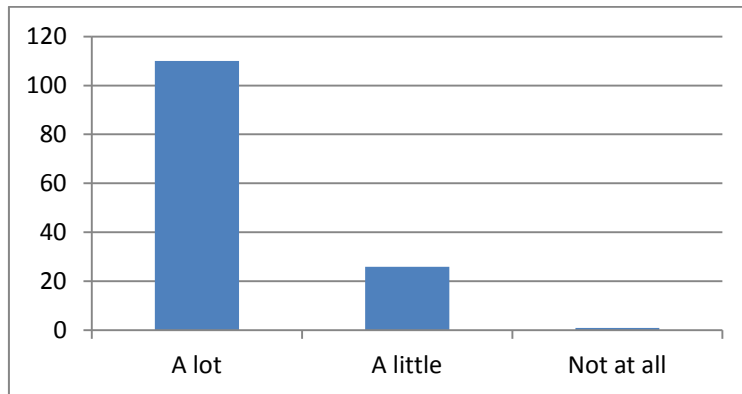


**Figure 13. Number of practitioners’ understanding of Boogie Mites objectives**

In answering this question the majority of the practitioners (105 of 113) said they had a clear understanding of the aim of the Boogie Mites programmes. Only a handful of practitioners (8 in the School Ready group) classed their understanding as a little. All the practitioners said they had understood the objectives of the Boogie Mites programmes across the three cohorts.

**Q2. Do you feel confident to lead the Programme for children and/or parents with children at your setting?**

Having being asked whether they understood what can be said to be the cornerstone of the Boogie Mites programmes, practitioners were then asked to comment on their confidence., They were asked to rate how confident they felt in leading the Boogie Mites Programme within the setting for children and for those who were training to also be able to offer a parent workshop or course they were asked to rate how confident they felt to lead workshops or a course for parents in their settings on their own (Figure 14).



**Figure 14. Number of practitioners feeling confident to lead a course in their setting**

Overall the majority of the practitioners (110 of 137) said they felt very confident in leading a Boogie Mites programme for children or parents in their settings. A small minority of practitioners (26 of 137) reported that they did not feel as confident just after one training session and only one practitioner from the School Ready group said they did not feel confident at all. Below are some examples of the comments the practitioners reported regarding their confidence on the training evaluation form at the end of the training:

*Confident to lead a future group; need to get to know the songs better to be fully confident(Practitioner 1, Training form)*

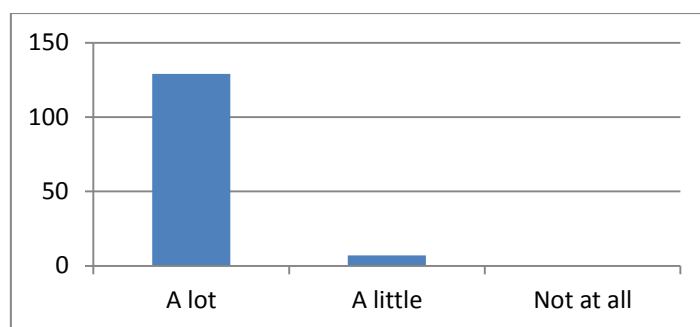
*Valuable, fun, confidence boosting(Practitioner 10, Training form)*

*Looking forward to running the program in the near future(Practitioner 26, Training form)*

*More confident about training parents(Practitioner 113, Training form)*

**Q3. Has the training being valuable? Please comment as to why or why not?**

The aim of this question was twofold. In the first instance, practitioners were asked to comment on the kind of training they received and how valuable they felt it was. Then they were asked to provide any comments as to how the training could be improved. Analysis of the first part of the question yielded similar responses to the previous questions (Figure 15).



**Figure 15. Number of practitioners who thought the training was valuable**

The majority of the practitioners (129 of 137) rated the training as very valuable and only a handful of practitioners (8 of 137) felt the training was a little valuable. None of the practitioners who completed the training evaluation forms reported that the training was not valuable.

With regard to the second part of this question practitioners' comments can be grouped around three main areas: training, resources and challenges. In so far as the training is concerned currently Boogie Mites facilitators deliver the practical training session in one day; for those taking the programme back to their settings the course is half a day and for those on parent programmes the course is a full day. Using themes to further analyse the participants' comments, a number of sub-areas emerged such as the experienced facilitators, course structure, links between music and development, and potential benefits for the setting.

*Friendly and knowledgeable facilitators (Practitioner A)*

*Always valuable to have training by those who use it (Practitioner B)*

*Training reinforced own knowledge of baby development but with a focus on music. Lots of ideas for our SEF for OFSTED (Practitioner C)*

*Easy to see how it links with EYFS; relaxed way of helping parents and children development (Practitioner D)*

Equally some of the participants felt the training could be improved further. Most common issues expressed included comments such as: sessions being either too long or too brief; the pace was either too fast or too slow; and there was not enough time to learn the songs and the actions. Suggestions for improving the training alluded to varying teaching methods by using video displays, splitting the sessions in halves and offering more practical advice on how to engage 'hard to reach' parents and children with special educational needs.



Having ready-made resources such as the Boogie Mites CD for participants to take away, practice and use at the setting was another aspect of the training the participants felt it was useful. Although having the CD in the end was clearly important, some of the participants identified the need for this prior to the course to support learning the songs as pre-course work. This was particularly the case for those participants who were not familiar with the songs used by the Boogie Mites facilitators. For that reason they felt that having a list of the song lyrics and a copy of the overhead in their pack would have better equipped them later on when learning how to sing and act out the songs.

Lastly, the practitioners commented upon the challenges that might prevent them from joining any Boogie Mites training in future. The challenges mentioned were about the budget allocated for staff to go on training courses, and the age range of children the programmes are for. These comments may benefit for further exploration by Boogie Mites directly after the training sessions and any concerns or questions can be addressed whilst information is still fresh.

### **Qualitative Data from follow up telephone interviews (training within last three years)**

All practitioners were asked to put their contact details after filling out the program evaluation form if they were happy to be contacted sometime in the future. The purpose of this would be to interview them about their experiences of using the programmes in their settings. A spread sheet was created by Boogie Mites with all the names of the practitioners who had agreed to take part. A researcher from the University of Chichester emailed 30 practitioners asking them if they wanted to be interviewed. Those practitioners who had not provided an email address were telephoned. In the end, 8 practitioners were interviewed (see Table 5 below). The interview lasted for approximately 15 minutes and was recorded with the permission of the interviewee. The data was transcribed and then analysed using a thematic analysis (see Appendix H). The core findings are presented below.

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CURRENT ROLE</b>	<b>Educational qualification</b>	<b>Year of Training</b>
Practitioner 1	Manager and Leader	Masters	Early 2012
Practitioner 2	Outreach worker	GCSEs at school	2010 & 2012
Practitioner 3	Lead Family Support Outreach Worker	Montessori Diploma	2011
Practitioner 4	Manager of Children's Centre	Not disclosed	2011
Practitioner 5	Manager of Children's Centre	Graduate Degree	Her staff attended training
Practitioner 6	Manager of Children's Centre	Foundation Degree	Her staff did a few months ago
Practitioner 7	Lead Practitioner	Foundation Degree	July 2011
Practitioner 8	Deputy Manager	NVQ in Childcare	2012

**Table 5. Demographics of practitioners taking part in telephone-interviews**

### **Educational scope**

When practitioners were asked their reasons for choosing the Boogie Mites programmes, their reasons varied from the programmes being recommended to staff, as part of staff's professional development, as a reaction to budgetary cuts. In the case of cuts Centres were unable to buy in programmes but still wanted to offer them so they sent practitioners on training who would be able to cascade and use within the Centre under licence.

*We had lost music time in the children's centre, we used to buy in music time and then obviously our budget reduced and so we've decided to do something in house. A music program that children and their parents can have access to. (Children's Centre Lead Practitioner)*

*So we set it [the Boogie Mites program] up in the children centre. We did the training, set it all up so that we could do it in our groups. (Lead Family Support Outreach Worker)*

It is perhaps not surprising that nurseries and children's centres have been affected by the current economic climate. Whilst previously they might have been able to offer a variety of courses and allow their staff to be individually trained, it seems that at present they apply a greater level of scrutiny when training their staff. Such scrutiny is influenced by factors such as financial constraints, rising number of admissions, safeguarding children, managing inter-professional partnerships etc. When interviewees were prompted further to reflect on whether the Boogie Mites programmes had benefited them in meeting the educational needs of the children and the wider community, there was a wide spread agreement as to the value of the programmes.

*What we feel is we are doing the Boogie Mites program with the children as a whole group and it incorporates every child, even children who have English as an additional language can take part with the Boogie Mites, can learn the movements. So it's a course that all children can participate... It covers all aspects of learning. (Children's Centre Manager A)*

*...[a]s a program that would support the speech and language, support us to identify difficulties in children and also support parents to understand how music and singing can support the development of their children's speech and language. (Children's Centre Manager B)*

The majority of the practitioners said they were looking for an educational program that was accessible, affordable, suitable and inclusive. Amongst the requirements the practitioners cited for when choosing such educational programs were the ability to respond to each child's physical, social and emotional needs, to include activities that encourage children's language and communication skills to develop, to provide opportunities for young children to be active and interactive, and to equip them with practical tips to identify and support children who might be having difficulties in developing such skills. All practitioners agreed that the Boogie Mites programmes allowed them to meet those needs to a great extent.

### **External pressures**

Early Years settings along with parents are seen as key providers in offering children a rich environment that equips them with the necessary skills for schooling later and life in general (Siraj-Blatchford *et al.* 2003, Allen, 2011, Sylva *et al.* 2012). As such Early Years settings are expected to have the resources in place to educate, support and care for all children including those who have

special educational needs and disabilities. Under governmental policies they are required to have strategies and procedures in place for ensuring that learning and development takes place and for assessing and measuring that learning (DfE, 2012).

*We use parts of the program ... we did start doing the session like a course, so parents just came in but the take up was not very good. So now we do it at the end of a toddler session, so the last 20 minutes – 30 an hour I shall do some of the Boogie mites stuff in the end of a session. We don't follow the normal 6 week course pattern. We might do the same thing each week; we might mix it up a bit. (Children's Centre Manager C)*

Here Manager C highlights the difficulties encountered in her Children's Centre of running a targeted Boogie Mites course. In the beginning they tried to run a 6 week course but because of the lower than expected attendance they had to resolve to a 'pick-n-mix' approach where certain elements of the course were incorporated into her planning. Such elements for the programmes were chosen because they tied in to the Centre's overall objectives and plans. It does need to be acknowledged that the low attendance could indicate that the Centre needed wider support to gain referrals for the course and that potentially the programmes were not advertised effectively.

Another difficulty that the majority of the participants encountered was with assessment. They are aware that part of their job is to assess and measure each child's progress. Although Boogie Mites offer an evaluation form, the majority of the interviewees said they were not using it. The reasons they encountered included insufficient training, lack of time, using own assessments, and clashes with the centre's overall evaluation.

*Yes we do [use our own evaluation] because it goes better with our planning. So we evaluate through our observation, assessment and planning. So we look at that and what we want to do next week with the children and what aspects we can go through and which link with the phases especially with the school leavers who've just gone. (Pre-school Team Leader)*

## **Confidence**

### Practitioners leading Boogie Mites within the early years setting for children only:

As it was discussed earlier, a significant number of practitioners said the Boogie Mites training gave them confidence to implement Boogie Mites in their settings. After completing their training, there

was almost an explosion of renewed enthusiasm, eagerness and willingness to implement what they had learnt back into their setting. Not only that but they were inspired enough to share what they learnt with their rest of the colleagues in their setting.

*Refreshed ideas for music; learnt new songs which I can share with children and practitioners(Practitioner 26, Training form)*

*Gained new ideas to help promote music in different ways(Practitioner 35, Training form)*

*Looking forward to running the program in the near future(Practitioner 101, Training form)*

#### Practitioners leading Boogie Mites parent workshops or courses:

However, when practitioners who were also trained to lead parent workshops returned to their setting the reality of leading a parent workshop dawned on them. Where confidence remained high the practitioners were delivering the parent programmes in their entirety very soon after the training and keeping it going. For some, confidence felt during the course itself quickly evaporated once they got back to their settings. Those who did not start to offer the course soon after the training were more likely never to get started. In some ways lacking in confidence allowed them to view the course from the parents' perspective and how difficult it might be to join in as well as carry out the practice at home. Other reasons might include practitioners being new to the profession or to the setting, not having much experience themselves in engaging with parents, and not having enough time or training to familiarise themselves with the material so that they were able to deliver it. One Centre Manager interviewed inherited the pack but had not attended the training herself. This highlights the need for follow up training for new staff. Budget will be a factor effecting this problem.

*It's hard to say because I have not been properly trained in it. I have to take up all the equipment and listen to all the songs from the CD myself. There are a few songs that I am not that comfortable with because I have to learn them. The regular songs I would know I am fine but it's kind of hard. I could do with some training really to improve my confidence too.  
(Children's Centre Manager C).*

#### **Good parenting**

Along with their individual responsibilities in the learning of children, early years settings are also encouraged to form partnerships with a range of stakeholders such as parents and/or carers. The

benefits of such partnerships are widely acknowledged within the literature (Whalley, 2007, DfE, 2012) including benefits for the individual child and for the whole family, sharing information about the child's strengths and areas for development and their behaviour so that the teacher or practitioner can better understand that child; practising at home skills learnt at school or setting etc. The importance of the home-learning practice to children's development was emphasised by a few practitioners.

*The songs are really catchy and because they've used tunes from well-known songs, parents catch on to them quite quickly and because the parents catch on them quickly, the children get to know them quickly as well. It's been really good. (Lead Family Support Outreach Worker)*

*...as long as you are doing something at home and singing then we obviously try to show them and tell them the benefits of how it helps with their development as well. (Outreach Worker)*

*I have had really positive feedback when we come to do the rainbow song we make the rainbow sheet that I use in the sessions and the cover and ask the parents to go back and make their own rainbow sheet and baby shakers. (Children's Centre Manager)*

*A lot of them [parents] I've sold them the CD so a lot of them listen to the CD at home and doing it at home as well. (Family Support Worker)*

What is interesting in these quotes is that practitioners are aware that if they are able to motivate and get the parents on board, then there is a greater chance that they will carry on with the learning and the activities at home. Underpinning this awareness is an effort to build on the communication between parents and teachers. This is important because by carrying on with the learning in the classroom/setting as well as at home, it provides an opportunity for the child to reach its maximum potential and to optimize the child's learning experience. In addition, it allows for relationships to form and develop between teachers/practitioners, parents and children. The parent/practitioner partnerships support open communication and can promote both the social and emotional development of the child and their learning outcomes (Whalley, 2007). Where partnerships exist children have also been found to exhibit greater pro-social behaviour in the classroom setting. It has also been established that children who have a parent that communicates with their teacher/practitioner regularly have a better understanding of the social and emotional development and their learning outcomes of their child.

However, getting the parents on board and enabling that communication to develop demands great effort and understanding from both parties. Parents might feel that it is the practitioner who has the knowledge and expertise to support and educate their child. They might view their knowledge as insufficient especially if they come from different educational, classed, and ethnic backgrounds (Osgood, 2012). Against this backdrop, they might be made to feel ill-equipped when offering a different view. Therefore targeting parents who are perceived by the practitioners as ‘vulnerable’ are seen as a top priority.

*Well I have certainly noticed that it has given some of our parents, some of the more vulnerable parents, more confidence to sing in the group whereas before they would not necessarily try something. (Lead Family Support Outreach Worker))*

*We want to invite parents who don't understand; who don't sing with their children etc. so we can teach them, if you like, that singing does support their child's development. (Children's Centre Manager B)*

*The problem is that with the course it did not run as effectively because parents, if their children were ill, they would not come, they might miss a week, we had parents who would say 'oh my children don't like singing music', we used to run it along play in another room and they would not go in so their children would miss out. So we've decided to do it alongside a play session. (Children's Centre Lead Practitioner)*

Practitioners need to be mindful about adopting a positive and inclusive partnership with parents. In some cases the practitioner can be viewed as the knowledgeable expert and the parent as the novice who needs to be shown what to do and how to behave with their child (Osgood *et al.* 2013a). Sometimes these relationships can include a subconscious allocation of roles and can hinder the development of an open relationship based on encouragement of supportive dialogue. A reflective practitioner will consider these relationships based on who attends their setting and considers how they support them and include all parents including the ‘hard to reach’ parent. They may consider that it might be the parent who is choosing not to participate because they feel what they are doing with their child is equally valuable and useful even if it goes against what may be perceived as the ‘norm’. Such implicit readings are helpful because they allow us to think and reflect on the positive ways in which Early Years settings and music providers can reinforce ideas of what it means to be a

'good parent' and what such a parent looks like. This in turn can lead to a respectful and supportive relationship which can in turn support the home learning environment (Taggart, 2010). Boogie Mites attempt to address these problems by training practitioners who know the families in their communities to lead the music making sessions and by making the sessions fun with a main objective being to empower parents to take the ideas and music (CD) home to become embedded in everyday shared family activities.



## Conclusions and Recommendations

This research examined a number of key areas these being:-

- An investigation of parents perceptions of the Boogies Mites Parent Music Educational programmes for Babies, Minis and School Ready in respect of
  - Their perception of any changes to their children based on the prime areas of the EYFS (DfE 2012) – personal, social and emotional development, communication and language and physical development.
  - A reflection on any personal changes following the programme.
- An investigation of practitioner’s perceptions and experiences following Boogie Mites practitioner training.

The research was a mixed methods study using quantitative historical data already collected and collated by Boogie Mites from past programmes (parents, practitioners and key stakeholder data) and qualitative newly sourced focus group and semi-structured interview data collected and collated by the researchers.

### Conclusions from the parent data

#### Impact on the parents

Parents were able to reflect very positively on their feelings about the beneficial impact of the Boogie Mites programmes on their confidence and views on music practice. The influences on parents can be seen in the model below:-



Figure 16. Parents reflections on their feelings and confidence following the Boogie Mite programmes

All the parents from the focus groups or interviews felt more confident when singing and with their general music practice. The model above captures some of the key outcomes of this growing confidence where many of them talked about exploring and finding their inner child, forgetting their inhibitions and enjoying music for its own sake. Many parents have provided their children with new musical activities at home or joined other groups which may be of benefit to their children. All these attributes are important as they help to ensure music practice becomes embedded into family activities. This can be an entrance point for practitioners to make that link to parents in respect of home learning and can be a tool for parental engagement in other aspects of early childhood education.

The research also explored perceptions of music pre and post programmes to identify if any inferences could be made. Before the course parents were mainly recreational users of music and saw it as a fun activity, although they did recognise the significance of music when linked to communication and language. After the course parents were aware of the level of importance in engaging with music and they could see how this related to other holistic aspects of their child's development. There was a renewed motivation to continue and expand the range of singing and musical activities at home. Some parents suggested that music had moved from a 1:1 activity to a family experience which again could support embedding music practice at home.

#### Impact on children in the EYFS (DfE2012) prime area of learning.

Data was collected quantitatively via end of programme parent feedback forms and showed that parents felt very strongly that the Boogie Mites courses had an impact on their knowledge of the EYFS (DfE 2012) prime areas of learning. This data is useful in understanding how parents felt after the respective courses. The qualitative data was a chance for the researchers to explore in more detail how parents expressed the impact and set it against their child's development.

When considering parents' perceptions of any changes to their children following the Boogie Mites programmes feelings were mixed. In respect of communication and language parents did describe positive changes in their children with increases in communication and that their children felt more confident. However, there was the acknowledgement that the course was a short period of time to notice anything different and that the changes could be attributed to normal development, particularly with the younger age ranges. Parents did feel the courses were suitable for all ages and were engaging for all children including those with English as an Additional Language and those with SEN. In particular, the parents who were able to identify changes in their child's development were

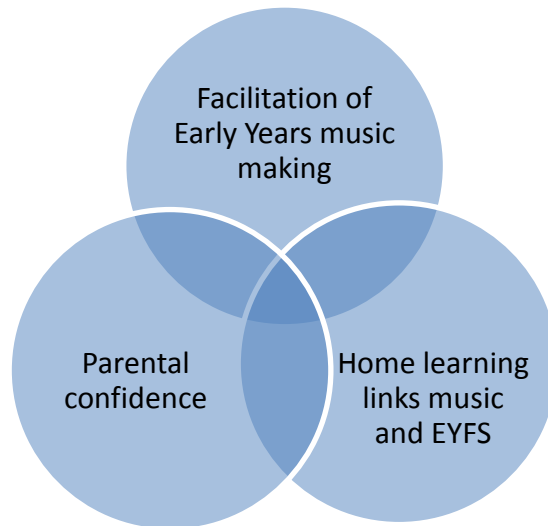
the parents of children with special needs and language delay. Those parents stressed how Boogie Mites music was a valuable means of communication and a means through which they could interact with their child and do something enjoyable as a family. The quantitative data showed very positive acknowledgement that the Boogie Mites courses had impacted on their child's communication and language skills with 274 of 296 noting some or a lot of changes in their children.

When considering personal, social and emotional development parents felt the course had a positive impact on their children's social skills particularly their confidence and interaction in a group situation. They felt these skills would support their children's social development more widely. An added extra to this was that their children were more inclined to want to sing and use the Boogie Mites CD at home and seemed more proactive in their listening to music and exploration of music making at home. This was coupled with the growing parental confidence and understanding of the value of expanding music practice at home. The quantitative data supports this finding with 265 of 296 noticing some or a lot of changes in their child's personal, social and emotional development.

All parents could see the link to physical development within the programmes as they described how their children engaged in this aspect very clearly. Once again they did feel it was hard to attribute changes specifically to the programmes due to the course length and their perception of normal development. However, many of them remarked that the course supported their children's physical development as it linked music and movement together. Results from the quantitative data support the inference that the Boogie Mites courses promote a child's physical development with 274 of 296 notice some or a lot of changes in their child.

### **Summary of core findings (parent data)**

From the findings it can be suggested that the combination of appropriate and relevant facilitation of early years music making programmes, parent confidence and engagement, and the link between music, home learning and the prime areas of learning (EYFS – DfE 2012) played a key role in children's and parents' development (see Figure 17). These three aspects need to be viewed holistically and have equal importance in supporting the growth in music practice shown both in parents and children. It is the fusion of these three elements which seems to support the impact the Boogie Mites programmes had as highlighted by the data described in the findings section.



**Figure 17. The interrelationship between people and elements of an early years music making programme**

The first area illustrated in the model above is the facilitation of early years music making programmes. The facilitation of the Boogie Mites programmes (Babies, Minis and School Ready) by the music leaders were viewed very positively by all parents as they encouraged participation and allowed experimentation in a safe environment. They were the mediators between the settings/schools and home and supported the development of home practice. The positive attitudes of the facilitators encouraged and supported the parents. This provided an opportunity which promoted the group to work together supporting the transition of parents from working alone to working as a group. This transition allowed parents the chance to gain a wider support network over and above the music activities on offer. This provides a counter discourse to Osgood *et al.* (2013b) as the Boogie Mites facilitators are early years trained and not classically trained musicians. Because of this they are able to relate to and make connections with all parents, children and practitioners without taking the privileged position of the 'more knowledgeable other'.

Secondly, the Boogie Mites sessions were an important factor when encouraging parents to make the links between the EYFS (DfE2012) prime areas of learning and the use of music both at the session and in the home. The fact that parents were practicing and using their skills at home could lead to music becoming embedded into home practice. The home practice took many forms such as 1:1 or family activities, making and using instruments and singing with the CD. In many cases parents have indicated the small size of the Boogie Mites music groups and the personalisation by the music leaders contributed to its success. Again this provides a counter discourse to Osgood *et al.* (2013b), Boogie Mites have the same goal as the commissioning settings which is to engage parents in fun

activities, transfer knowledge about the EYFS (DfE 2012) benefits, encourage home learning and signpost them to other services. The programmes researched have a high percentage of target families who stay for the full six week programme.

And thirdly, all parents reported that they felt more confident to use music with their children at home and as part of everyday life. Whereas previously they said they used music for recreational purposes or in the background, they commented how much of a primary role it now played in their lives. The parents' increased confidence had a knock on effect on their child's confidence. Boogie Mites songs have popular music styles which have been chosen to engage the adults and children making them culturally relevant to life today. During the sessions the use of home-made props and instruments mean that every child and parent has one which are used during the sessions which makes for an inclusive environment. Boogie Mites provides a completely different format of funky songs (such as jazz, rap, reggae, calypso, boogie woogie styles), actions, props and instruments, and aims to get parents to take it home into everyday life. This coupled with the increased parent confidence suggests music practice will become embedded at home which could lead to greater parental engagement in other aspects of their child's development and learning.

### **Summary of core findings (practitioner data)**

#### Course evaluation forms

These reflected the evaluations of practitioners who had attended a range of Boogie Mites practitioner training courses over the past 3 years. The responses indicated that following the training practitioners were quite clear on Boogie Mites objectives in respect of the outcomes for children and parents and the links with the EYFS (DfE, 2012). All of the participants found the training valuable and saw how this could be embedded within their own and their setting's practice. This suggests Boogie Mites facilitators have been able to form effective relationships with the early years practitioners, perhaps because the facilitators were early years trained themselves and not classically trained musicians (Osgood et al. 2013b).

#### Practitioners leading Boogie Mites within the early years setting for children only:

A significant number of practitioners said the Boogie Mites training gave them confidence to implement Boogie Mites in their settings. After completing their training, there was almost an explosion of renewed enthusiasm, eagerness and willingness to implement what they had learnt back into their setting. Not only that but they were inspired enough to share what they learnt with their rest of the colleagues in their setting.

### Practitioners leading Boogie Mites parent workshops or courses:

However, when practitioners who were also trained to lead parent workshops returned to their setting the reality of leading a parent workshop dawned on them. Where confidence remained high the practitioners were delivering the parent programmes in their entirety very soon after the training and keeping it going. For some, confidence felt during the course itself quickly evaporated once they got back to their settings. Those who did not start to offer the course soon after the training were more likely never to get started. There were some suggestions to improve the training which included time and pace of delivery, use of a variety of delivery methods (e.g. videos) and more advice on how to support children with SEN and reaching the 'vulnerable' or 'hard to reach' parents. There were also comments on whether there would be any funding available for them to attend future training to refresh and update their practice.

### Practitioner interviews

There were four main emergent themes the first being the educational value of the training. Many had chosen Boogie Mites programmes on recommendation and used the opportunity for practitioners continuing professional development.

The majority of the practitioners said they were looking for an educational program that was accessible, affordable, suitable and inclusive. Amongst the requirements the practitioners cited for when choosing such educational programs were the ability to respond to each child's physical, social and emotional needs, to include activities that encourage children's language and communication skills to develop, to provide opportunities for young children to be active and interactive, and to equip them with practical tips to identify and support children who might be having difficulties in developing such skills. All practitioners agreed that the Boogie Mites programmes allowed them to meet those needs to a great extent.

Many interviewees mentioned some of the external pressure they currently face; this was particularly pertinent for those who worked in Children's Centres. Some of the interviewees used the course in its entirety and had not changed or adapted it since their initial Boogie Mites training. Others took a more individual approach depending on how they used the course, generally due to the type of session and the attendance by parents/children. For some it was a way of signposting target parents onto other services offered and might be used in a 'stay and play' session. For others it was an activity done at the end of a session to engage parents and children where songs were

selected at random. Respondents discussed how they had used their own evaluations to benefit the children and had tailored these to suit their own needs and contexts.

The perception of their own confidence varied and the usage of the course was dependant on how they felt about the delivery. Those who delivered the course in its entirety had kept their confidence levels high from the initial training, possibly because they took this enthusiasm and used their skills immediately. Where the course was used in a more individual way practitioners reported that they did not feel as confident to implement and picked songs which they felt most comfortable with. In these cases further training may have benefited in renewing and refreshing practitioners' repertoires.

All practitioners were aware of the good parenting discourse, they were very able to make the link between the parent/practitioner partnership and the impact this can have on home learning. By recognising this, it is important to consider how parents on targeted programme might feel. Practitioners may need to reflect on their parent partnerships when dealing with 'vulnerable' or 'hard to reach' parents as this may impact building a collaborative relationship. It must also be acknowledged that the early intervention policy priorities place practitioners under more pressure to provide targeted intervention and those settings which used the programmes to sign post parents may have been considering these other services when initially recruiting parents.

### **Project Recommendations**

This study can provide the following recommendations:

- Further longitudinal research can be done in this area to help us understand how families who participated in the Boogie Mites programmes have continued with music at home and the impact this has had.
- When considering how to support parents in the Music Education Programme gaining an understanding of current home practice and how this is influenced by the courses might allow for tailoring interventions for each parent.
- Wider feedback can be gained from key commissioning stakeholders to consider their views of the Boogie Mites programmes.
- A generic feedback form (start and end of course) for parents and practitioners can be designed for use in the future to best provide meaningful data that be compared in future evaluation both by Boogie Mites and by the settings/organisations leading Boogie Mites under licence following practitioner training.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A (Parent Feedback Forms)

### BOOGIE MITES INITIAL AND END OF COURSE ASSESSMENT

Boogie Mites music and movement parent education programme to support early years learning with focus on literacy – ages 3-5 years.

Please select the nearest answer to how you feel.

There is no right or wrong answer.

Name:						
Child's name:						
	Week 1			Week 6		
	Not Really	A Little	A Lot	Not Really	A Little	A Lot
1) I sing with my child daily?						
2) I play instruments with my child (e.g. shakers, drums, guitar etc.) at home						
3) I have heard of the EYFS 3 Prime Areas of Learning?						
4) I understand how singing and music making can help my child's communication and language skills?						
5) I understand how singing and music making can help my child's social and emotional development						
6) I understand how singing and music making can help my child's physical development						
7) I have knowledge about the National Strategy for Letters and Sounds and the 7 aspects of Phase 1 which lays foundations for literacy skills						
8) I understand how singing and musical activities can support my child's literacy skills at this stage						

9) I have resources and ideas for supporting my child's learning through music at home						
10) I feel confident in using music at home to support my child's learning.						

Questions to ask in end of course and post course evaluation sent to the home:

11) I have seen my child progress with social skills through music making over the course and at home

yes/no

If yes please give an example:

12) I have seen my child progress with communication and language skills through music making over the course and at home

Yes/no

If yes please give an example:

13) I have seen my child progress their physical skills through music making over the course and at home

Yes/no

If yes please give an example:

I use the Cd and activities covered on the course at home

Often/occasionally/never

Please give any other feedback in own words:

## Appendix B (Parent Research Questionnaire)

### Boogie Mites Research Project

It will be useful to know a little bit about you and your background before the start of the focus group. Any information you provide on this form will be used anonymously by the research team at the University of Chichester. This will help us to analyse the data we collect from the focus groups both at this setting and others around the South of England.

Name:	
-------	--

Q1. What is your gender?(Please tick **ONE** box)

Male	
Female	

Q2. What is your age group?(Please tick **ONE** box)

<i>Under 20</i>	
20-25	
26-30	
31-35	
Over 35	

Q3. What is your first language?

--

Q4. What is the highest educational qualification you have achieved? (Please tick **ONE** box)

GCSE or equivalent	
BTEC, A-levels or equivalent	
HND diploma	
First degree	
Masters degree	

THANK YOU! ☺

## Appendix C (Practitioner Training Questionnaire)

### Programme Evaluation Form

This form is to be completed by practitioners having attended practitioner training covering Boogie Mites six week parent education course around our programme to support Letters & Sounds Phase

1. Your feedback is very important to us and we use it to constantly improve our music programmes. Many thanks.

NAME OF PRACTITIONER: .....

CHILDREN'S CENTRE : .....

BOOGIE MITES TRAINER: .....

1 Have you understood how each of the songs are led, how they support Letters & Sounds and development in EYFS and tips which can be given to parents for use at home?

Very much

A little

Not at all

2 Do you feel confident to lead the six week course for parents at your setting?

Very much

A little

Not at all

3 Has the training been valuable? Please comment below as to why or why not.

Very much

A little

Not at all

Comments:

4 Do you have any suggestions for improving the training?

Comments:

## Programme Evaluation Form

This form is to be completed by practitioners having attended Practitioner training covering Boogie Mites Music Programme to Support Letters & Sounds Phase 1. Your feedback is very important to us and we use it to constantly improve our music programmes. Many thanks.

NAME OF PRACTITIONER: .....

EARLY YEARS SETTING : .....

BOOGIE MITES TRAINER: .....

1 Have you understood how each of the songs are led and how they support the Aspects of Letters & Sounds Phase 1.

Very much

A little

Not at all

2 Do you feel confident to lead the songs at your setting?

Very much

A little

Not at all

3 Has the training been valuable? Please comment below as to why or why not.

Very much

A little

Not at all

Comments:

4 Do you have any suggestions for improving the training?

Comments:



## Appendix D (Participation Form)

Consent Form for Boogie Mites

Department of Childhood, Social Work and Social Care

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING CAREFULLY AND ANSWER ALL STATEMENTS

An evaluation of Boogie Mites UK Parent Education Music Programmes.

- |  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| 1) I have read and understand the information sheet for this research project. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. | Yes | No |
| 2) I understand that my participation in the activity is voluntary and that I am therefore free to withdraw my involvement at any stage, without giving a reason.                                | Yes | No |
| 3) I understand that all information will be anonymised and that my personal information will not be released to any third parties.  | Yes | No |
| 4) I am happy to participate in this research  | Yes | No |

Your name (please print).....

Your signature.....

Date.....

Researcher's name (please print).....

Researcher's signature.....

Date.....

## Appendix E (Parent Interview Schedule)

### 1:1 Interview Schedule for Parents

#### Background

1. What role does music play in your family life?
2. What sort of activities for you do with your child?
3. How was music used when you were a child?

#### Impact on parent

1. Since doing this programme do you think about music differently? If yes, how?
2. What sort of changes have you noticed in how you use music?
3. How confident do you feel now in trying out new musical activities with your child?
4. Has this programme affected your relationship with your child?

#### Impact on child

1. Have you noticed any changes in your child's cognitive/motor/language/social/emotional skills?
2. What type of musical activities does your child ask for since the start of this programme?
3. What changes have you noticed in your child's behaviour/attitude towards music?
4. Have you observed any changes in how your child interacts with family members/others/school friends?

#### Evaluation

1. Would you recommend this programme to others?
2. What are the three things that you will change about this programme?
3. What are the three things that you will keep in this programme?

## Appendix F (Practitioner Interview Schedule)

### 1:1 Interview Schedule for Practitioners

#### Background

1. Can you tell me a little bit about your educational background?
2. Can you tell me a little bit about your educational qualifications?
3. What is your current role?

#### Evaluation questions

1. When did you do your Boogie Mites training? Which group (babies, minis, school ready)?
2. Why did you choose Boogie Mites?
3. What do you think of the Boogie Mites programme?
4. Are you still using the whole / parts of the programme? How are you using it?
5. Have you made any changes? If yes, what?
6. Have any other staff members trained on the Boogie Mites programmes?

#### Impact questions (if they run parent programmes)

1. Have you noticed any changes in parents' perceptions / attitude towards music?
2. Have you observed any changes in parents' confidence during the programme?
3. Has the way in which parents interact with their children changed?
4. In terms of the children, have you noticed any changes in the children's cognitive / motor / language / social / emotional skills?

Any additional comments you wish to make?

## Appendix G (Thematic Analysis for Parents)

### Thematic Analysis (parents)

#### **Development in prime areas**

##### Communication and Language

Listening and attention

Speaking

##### Other

No change

Normal development

Starting with what child can do

Support routines

Distraction

##### Personal, Social, Emotional Development

Self-confidence and self-awareness

Managing feelings and behaviours

Making relationships

##### Other

No Change

Normal development

Transitions

SEN

##### Physical Development

Moving and handling

##### Other

SEN

#### **Perception of music after course**

More confident

More relaxed

Use more resources

Realise importance – child development

Understand cause and effect

Increase 1:1 interactions

'Good Parent' discourse

Having fun

Part of a group (Transitions)

No Change

Course not long enough

Normal development

#### **Use of music before course**

Recreational

Distraction for child

Child choice/entertainment

Support routines

Child development

## **Use of music after course**

### Children related

Child initiates activities  
Emotional development  
Language development  
Child has SEN

### Parent related

Singing/dancing/nursery rhymes  
Professional challenges  
Role modelling  
Greater parental awareness  
No Change – professional in early years/teaching  
1:1 interaction  
Support routines

### Resources

Use of new resources  
New songs  
CD supplied

### Other

No Change (natural development or other influences)  
Other music groups  
Do new things  
Fun  
No Change

## **Musical Influences**

Recreational  
Support routines  
At School  
At Church  
Played instrument  
Cultural  
Limited

## Appendix H(Thematic Analysis for Practitioners)

### Themes from Practitioner Data

#### **Reasons for choosing programme**

External pressures  
Funding issues  
Internal re-organisation  
CPD/Training  
In-house program  
Supporting setting's aims

#### **Evaluation of programme**

##### Positive

Providing effective support for children and parents  
Encouraging partnership  
Targeting 'hard to reach' parents  
Appropriate learning style  
Links with EYFS

##### Negative

Complex format  
Confusing sessions  
Difficult terminology

#### **Using Programme**

Whole program  
Parts of the programme

##### Other

Confidence  
Familiarity with songs  
Meet setting's needs

#### **Changes made to programme**

Own evaluation  
Update training  
No changes

#### **Changes seen in parents**

Improvement in learning  
Carrying on at home  
Increased confidence  
Joining in  
Barriers to participation

##### Other

Impact of resources

#### **Changes seen in children's skills**

Communication and Language  
Personal and social development  
Physical development  
Links to learning