



Final Executive Summary Report

An Evaluation of the Boogie Mites Early Years Music Education Programmes

in respect of parents and practitioners.

Commission by Boogie Mites UK Ltd.

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Executive Summary

In 2013 the University of Chichester was invited by Boogie Mites UK Ltd to undertake a research project on the impact of the Boogie Mites Music Education Programmes.

Research Objectives

The research had the following objectives:

- 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.

Methods

In order to meet these objectives, a mixed research methodology was employed:

- Quantitative methods: the aim of this was to allow for the collection of a large amount of data in order to give confidence in the findings;
- Qualitative methods: this aimed at collecting 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.

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 September 2012 - August 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.

Quantitative Methods

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).

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. Parents were asked to complete it at the start (week 1) and end (week 6) of the course. Between September 2012 and July 2013, feedback forms from 296 parents were collected from 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.

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 Music Education Programmes for their settings. In total, 136 such questionnaires completed by Early Year practitioners at the end of their training day were collected by Boogie Mites in the three years prior to the research being carried out.

Qualitative Methods

Three focus groups (nine in total) were carried out for each one of the Boogie Mites music programmes: Babies (pre-crawlers), Minis (crawlers – 3years) and School Ready (3 - 5years) during the final week (week 6) of the programmes. The focus groups were selected following Hampshire Family Learning criteria and organised and facilitated by Boogie Mites. Each focus group lasted for approximately 30 minutes, was recorded and later transcribed. 45 participants took part in all nine focus groups that were carried out in situ during June - July 2013.

Along with the data collected during the focus groups, supplementary data in the form of diaries was provided by the Music Leaders leading each of the nine music programmes. The diaries were kept by the Boogie Mites Music Leaders and were 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, attendance etc.

In order to ascertain from parents the long term impact of the programmes, 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. In the end, 12 parents were interviewed over the telephone. Each interview lasted for 15 minutes, was recorded and later transcribed.

In order to evaluate practitioners’ reflection and perceptions of the Boogie Mites programmes for the practitioners and their settings, 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. Each interview lasted for approximately 15 minutes, was recorded and later transcribed. The interview schedule is appended.

Core Findings

a) Parent data

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. They were also asked to state how often they sang with their child each day and whether they had music resources at home to support their child’s learning. In the graphs below B = before and A = after with 1 – 9 representing the question asked on the form.

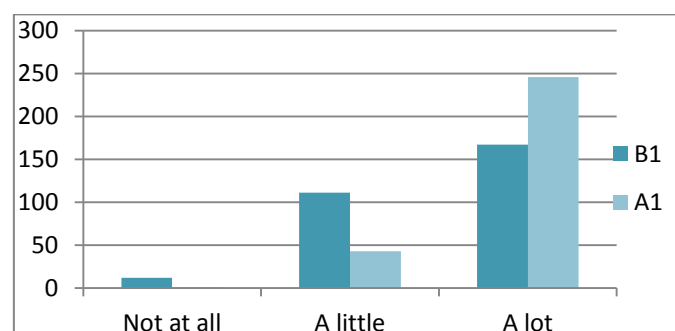


Figure 1. Parental responses of daily singing with their child

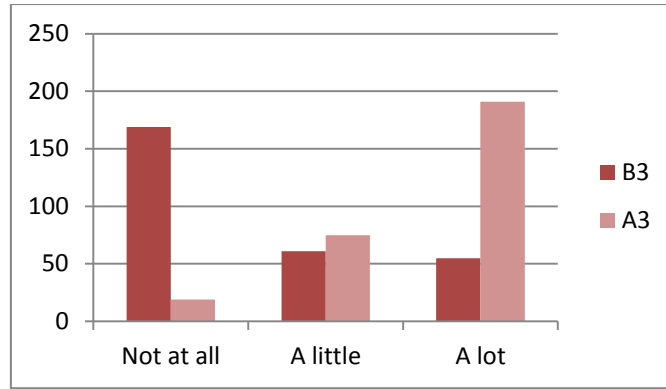


Figure 2. Parental responses regarding their knowledge about EYFS three prime areas of learning

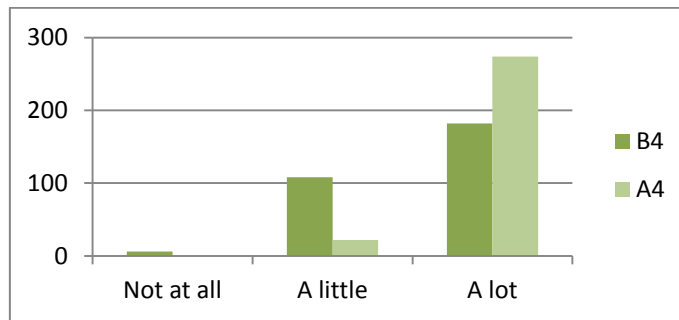


Figure 3. Parental awareness of how music can support child's communication skills

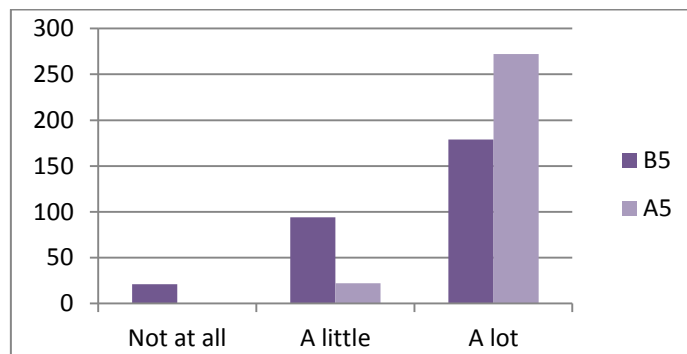


Figure 4. Parental awareness of how music can support child's social skills

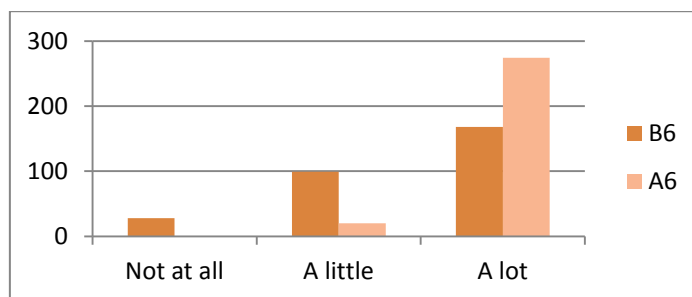


Figure 5. Parental awareness of how music can support child's physical skills

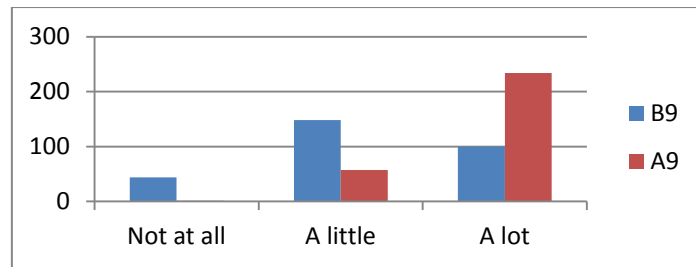


Figure 6. Parental responses of having music resources at home to support child's learning

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 of 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.

Qualitative 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:-

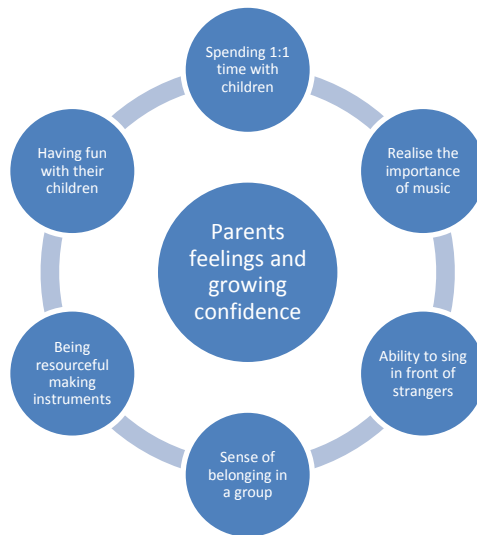


Figure 7. Parents reflections on their feelings and confidence following the Boogie Mite programmes

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. It is in that home learning aspect and carrying on at home where we can clearly see the impact of the course both from the quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Impact on children in the EYFS 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 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. 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. However, there was the acknowledgement that the course was too short a 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. 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. The quantitative data showed a 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 269 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 noticing some or a lot of changes in their child.

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

b) 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 three 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. 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.

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.

Conclusions

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 EYFS prime areas of learning played a key role in children's and parents' development (see Figure 8). 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.

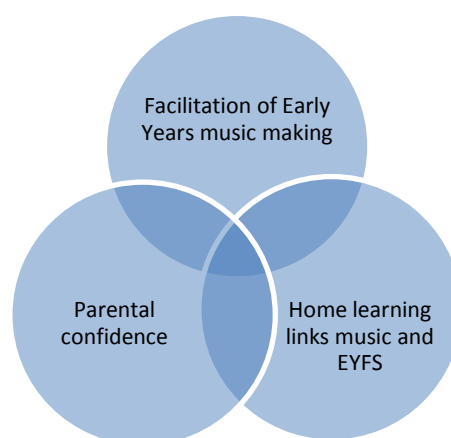


Figure 8. The interrelationship between people and elements of an early years music making programme

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. It is, perhaps, because Boogie Mites facilitators are early years trained and not classically trained musicians that 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 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. Boogie Mites have the same goal as the commissioning settings which is to engage parents in fun activities, transfer knowledge about the EYFS 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.

Practitioners agreed that to a great extent, the Boogie Mites programmes were accessible, affordable, suitable and inclusive. The programmes allowed them 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. Qualitative and quantitative data showed that, following training for use of the programme 'in house' with children, there was an explosion of enthusiasm to implement what they had learnt and to share it with colleagues. However following training to offer the parent workshop/course there was less confidence and qualitative data showed that for some settings, which did not implement what they had learnt immediately, confidence quickly evaporated. Indications were that settings would benefit from continued support and training in these cases.