



Good Vibrations Toolkit

Inclusive approaches for making music with deaf and hearing impaired children and young people

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THE QUESTION

One of Hearing Support Service's most frequently asked questions is 'Why do music with the deaf?'

Let's turn the question around...

Why wouldn't you do music with deaf and hearing-impaired children and young people?

"It used to be felt that if a child is deaf, therefore they cannot hear, and that music doesn't belong to them.

But deafness is a complicated subject...

They have as much right to participate in music as any other youngster."

Dame Evelyn Glennie

Watch the full interview with Dame Evelyn Glennie at www.youtube.com/SoundLincs



INTRODUCTION

Drawn from two decades experience of facilitating inclusive music, SoundLincs has developed the Good Vibrations music toolkit for adults working with deaf and hearing-impaired children and young people. It is developed in partnership with Leicester-shire Schools Music Service with support from Leicestershire Hearing Support Service.

The toolkit promotes active participation in music-making as a way to enable musical engagement and progression. It includes links to many relevant resources to build knowledge, understanding and support such as research, literature reviews and case studies from experts in the field of deaf and hearing-impaired practice.

So, whether you are a Teacher of the Deaf, schoolteacher, SENCo, music service whole class instrumental teacher, community musician, parent or carer, or simply have an interest – this toolkit is for you!

Good Vibrations is part of SoundLincs FundC initiative funded by National Foundation for Youth Music.



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



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INSPIRATION

Paul Whittaker OBE,
Freelance deaf musician. Founder and Artistic Director
'Music and the Deaf' from 1998-2015.

“With any deaf child, whatever their degree of loss or form of communication, it’s so easy for them to get ‘lost’ in a music session, and by that, I mean they switch off, become disengaged and bored.”

Never underestimate the impact a deaf musician can have – *“You’re the same as me. If you can do it, I can do it too.”*

“Delivering music to deaf children – especially profoundly deaf British Sign Language users and in a mainstream setting – is not as easy as anyone might expect. There is a massive difference between working with a child who has a mild loss and uses hearing aids well, and one who is more deaf and has less residual hearing.”

TIPS

In any circumstance

All experiences of hearing loss are different and unique to the individual.

It is important to acknowledge that deafness doesn't necessarily mean that the participant can't hear anything.

Ask the child or young person how you should communicate with them, this could include:

Technology support – What technology, e.g. transmitters, receivers, loop systems, is used by the participant to assist communication? And what do you need to understand about this?

Hearing Aids and implants – Gain an understanding of what the participant is experiencing. Different apparatus and implants vary in how they process frequencies.

Adult support – Understand how they usually support the participant e.g. using British Sign Language or Signed Supported English

Unless told otherwise it is fair to assume lip reading will be used.

Further information available at: www.SoundLincs.org/musicanddeafness

TIPS

Establish face-to-face contact with the participant and maintain eye contact

Use facial expressions and visual arms/body movements to support communication.

Avoid jargon and unfamiliar abbreviations in verbal communication. As with all children, language must be clear, concise and age appropriate.

Ensure you are 'lipread friendly' by:

- Speaking clearly but not too slowly – don't exaggerate your lip movements
- Not covering your mouth with hands or clothing

Avoiding standing or sitting in front of a large window or in sunlight.

Don't shout. It is uncomfortable for hearing aid users and looks aggressive.

Only one thing at a time can be listened to. Either music or talking but not both

The ideal place for talking has good lighting and away from noise and distractions.

TIPS

Don't assume that a participant has understood what you have said. Ask them directly and assess through their response

If an instruction is not understood, don't just keep repeating it. Explain it in a different way e.g. write it down or use pictures.

Don't single out deaf and hearing-impaired participants. Be discrete or address the whole group.

Most deaf and hearing-impaired participants will learn in an integrated environment e.g. mainstream school. It is important to be sensitive to the learning experience that the participant is used to.



TIPS

In a musical context

Aim high – anything is achievable. All instruments and singing can be accessible to deaf and hearing-impaired participants.

Communication

Ensure good eye contact by arranging the group in a semi-circle with you facing them.

Establish clear methods that work for the whole group such as visual signals for silence and to start/stop playing

Establish a clear pulse by using both audible and visual signals.

Don't walk around when talking or demonstrating to the group.

Don't give verbal instructions whilst music is being played. Remember, only one thing can be heard – music or instructions. Avoid humming parts/rhythms whilst participants play as it makes it harder for them to distinguish what they are doing.

TIPS

Volume

Avoid empty echoey rooms for music sessions. Find a space where the acoustic is 'dry'.

Always check the level is comfortable for all. Thumbs up works well.

Explore the concept of volume as thick or thin, strong or gentle, present or distant.

Frequency

Consider the frequency range. Explore concepts such as high, low, thick, thin, earthy, airy, liquid, solid. Sound is like a food diet – too much of the same thing can make us ill!

Select musical instruments by 'families' or groups. Endeavour to arrange for deaf and hearing-impaired participants to explore instruments separately from the larger group. Particular frequencies and timbres can be more pleasing and discernible to them.

TIPS

Group Work

Avoid a 'free for all' cacophony of sound as many layers can be distressing or confusing. Turn taking for instrumental playing can help.

Before playing/composing layered music, practice it simply without layers and gradually build it up.

Where possible, ensure that deaf and hearing-impaired participants are seated next to hearing peers with similar instruments and directly opposite you.

Work in small groups. Large groups - 20 or more - could be split and use different space if possible. If not possible, structure activities so that noise levels are controlled by having only one group playing at any one time, e.g. a lyric writing group and a playing group.

Performances

Performances are important to develop confidence in deaf and hearing-impaired participants as much as their hearing peers.

Performances help to challenge perceptions of what deaf and hearing-impaired participants can achieve.

TIPS

Knowledge

Linking music to other art forms e.g. dance, visual art, storytelling, can be helpful for some, especially if they are orientated to those disciplines

External sounds that penetrate the music room can negatively affect the musical experiences of deaf and hearing-impaired participants.

It is likely that participants will have less experience of music-making. Plan to introduce basic concepts such as pulse, tempo and rhythm

Be mindful that British Sign Language has a different grammatical structure to English. Allow more time to introduce song writing concepts such as rhyming.

Some deaf and hearing-impaired musicians and music leaders won't use electronic keyboards with young people. This is because they are thought to suffer from a lack of tactile sensation, separation from the sound source and the volume is often not controlled by the participants.

When it comes to songs – don't assume that deaf and hearing-impaired young people will know the same ones as hearing young people. They rarely do. For those who rely on BSL, using a whiteboard or paper with words on may confuse things rather than help them.

ACTIVITY 1

Musical Journey

Suitable for:



Families



1-2-1 Work



Groups
of Children

Let's go on a musical journey! This could be to a fair, a magic mountain, into town, but as an example let's go to the seaside. How are we going to get there? Train? Car? Bus? Let's get on the bus. Who is the driver? Continue to create a description of the journey, adding any relevant songs you might know – e.g. 'Wheels on the Bus'.

When the child or group is ready to move on...

Use a whiteboard or paper to write a list of activities you might do at the destination (e.g. the seaside). Discuss sounds that you might hear there – seagulls, waves, laughter, the crunch of walking on a pebble beach. Can your group recreate any of these sounds using their voices? Draw a symbol or image on the paper to represent each of the sounds.

Everybody vocalises the sounds together whilst a member of the group – the conductor! – points at the images. Proceeding slowly will help all participants as they can mimic the sounds by watching/listening to the group whilst also responding to the images.

ACTIVITY 1

When the child or group is ready to move on...

The images and sounds are used to construct an original piece of music. Order the images on a piece of paper or stick them on separate pieces of card. This representation of music is called a graphic score. The music is played by conducting (as previously) or facilitating the group to read and play the score from start to finish.

Encourage the group to rearrange the images to create new compositions. Stacking images will create a layered effect and a more complicated texture. Be aware that some deaf and hearing-impaired participants may initially experience the layered sounds as confusing, so the graphic score should be developed gradually.

When the group have successfully completed compositions with vocal sounds, they can be encouraged to select instruments that mimic their vocalisations or relate to the images. Create new scores that explore the combined sound of instruments and vocalisations.

ACTIVITY 1

What Do I Need?

Props associated with the journey or theme, e.g. the seaside, could include shells, buckets and spades. A selection of songs which link to the journey or theme. A selection of instruments, large pieces of paper or cardboard, drawn/printed/cut out symbols and Blu Tack.

Why is it so good?

Graphic scores and visualisations are a great system for communicating sound ideas and sequences for all participants. There are unlimited possibilities for themes, destinations, transport and activities upon arrival! Graphic scores offer great potential for an extended activity that spans several weeks.



ACTIVITY 2

Playing Instruments as a Group

Suitable for:



Families



1-2-1 Work



Groups
of Children

Collect instruments into family groups. For example, percussion instruments can be grouped as wood, metal, struck, scraped, shaken. Try different ways to play or use a range of beaters to use with the instruments as wooden, felted or rubber beaters make very different sounds. Pitched instruments have their own families too. For example, the string family consists of a violin, viola, cello and bass. Try out the instruments within each family group one at a time.

Experiment with volume and visually demonstrate volume using your arms far apart for loud and close together for quiet. Agree a visual prompt for stopping and starting such as an arm/hand movement or red and green traffic light images.

When the families, instruments and methods of playing have been selected, the group should explore (visually) the acceptable levels of volume for them.

ACTIVITY 2

When the group or child is ready to move on...

Two lines of family instruments face each other. Either two lines from the same family (e.g. bass and cello facing viola and violin) or two different families (e.g. strings facing percussion). Ensure deaf and hearing-impaired participants are at the centre of their line and able to copy their colleagues. Line one plays/beats together a medium tempo count of 8 (the pulse). Line 2 listens, then copies it and passes it back to line 1. The pulse should be passed smoothly and steadily from one line to the other without rushing, slowing or missing a beat!

When the group or child is ready to move on...

Line 1 starts to play the pulse as above, line 2 introduces a rhythm. After an agreed number of repeats, the lines swap the rhythm and pulse around. Slowly build up a musical composition by experimenting with volume (dynamics), silence (rests) and speed (tempo) when playing the two parts together. Divide into three lines (forming a triangle) and slowly build a composition which starts by passing the pulse, then introduces two new rhythms.

This activity has limitless possibilities by increasing the lines, introducing more families, and experimenting with pulse, tempo, rhythm, dynamics and pitch.

ACTIVITY 2

What do I need?

Instruments which can be divided into families

Why is it so good?

This activity promotes choice such that participants take the lead on what they would like to play, and potentially learn.

Ensuring a good experience when introducing instruments in a group situation can be tricky and uncomfortable for deaf and hearing-impaired participants, and particularly if there is a lot of sound being produced by excited players!

Where possible, try to arrange for deaf and hearing-impaired participants the opportunity to experience and explore instrument families on their own. This will help to ensure a more fulfilling integration with the whole group later.



ACTIVITY 3

Singing as a Group

Suitable for:



Families



Groups
of Children

Encourage all group members to copy you. Yawn and stretch your arms, purse your mouth and begin to make noises. As you make noises place your hand by your throat – this will help all participants understand about the vibrations in the voice box.

Using the 'brrr' sound of a ringing telephone, begin by all making the same note (pitch) then change it to go higher and lower by moving your arms up and down, similar to a lift or a rollercoaster.

This activity can be developed to enable different group members to lead. Change the sound to 'oohh' and then 'ahh' and ask the group for suggestions!

ACTIVITY 3

When the group is ready to move on...

Standing in a semi-circle (ensuring any deaf or hearing-impaired participants are in front of you) sing a well-known song or nursery rhyme. Explore having the lyrics displayed on a white board (although not always helpful for those that rely on BSL).

Practice singing the song or rhyme with a pulse – clapping or marching can help as it is visual. Change the pulse, speeding it up and then singing it again much slower. Practice changing the dynamics by using your arms to conduct the volume. Be mindful that shouting, rather than singing loudly, can damage the voice and is distressing for all to experience.

When the group is ready to move on...

Use the tune of a song your group knows well and create brand new words! Pick a topic that the group are currently working on or choose a different one. Ask the group to tell you words or phrases that remind them of the topic. Then try to spot words that rhyme and create rhyming sentences that match your topic.

Practice the words together and then add the tune. You sing the first line or two then the group sings it back to you. This is often known as the call and response.

ACTIVITY 3

As a development for this activity, when the group are confident singing their song, they could add body percussion or drums/percussion to accompany their composition.

What do I need?

You will need a whiteboard/paper. If you are working on the later development of song writing, give some thought beforehand to ensure your group are stimulated with ideas to respond to the activity. Suggestions could be Halloween, Easter, the seasons or maybe a new group/school song!

Why is it so good?

Vocal warmups and exercises naturally lend themselves to the inclusion of all participants. As with any activity, keep an open mind to different approaches. Some deaf and hearing-impaired participants may access sound through hearing aids, or through noticing vibrations as they sing, or visual movements indicating pitch and dynamics. These last two preferences are common practice in singing warmups and conducting large groups.



INSPIRATION

Dame Evelyn Glennie

The world's premiere solo percussionist, composer and speaker. Profoundly deaf since the age of 12.

“It’s very important for deaf children and their families, and the education environment, to expose them to as many music opportunities as possible. Going to performances and going to different types of performance for different types of music, and also letting them explore instruments. Deaf children respond to all instruments but, like any other individual, they will lean towards a particular one.”

“Validate every description a deaf person gives of a sound as there is no right or wrong.”

“Be aware of posture when youngsters are playing percussion. The body is best being in the standing position or else in a good upright sitting position in order for the body to perceive the sound physically. Slouching or leaning will affect how they hear sound.”

RESOURCES

National Deaf Children's Society: How to make music activities accessible for deaf children and young people.

Yorkshire Youth and Music: Instrumental Learning for Deaf and Hearing-Impaired Children and Young People

National Association for Music Education: Teaching music to students with a hearing loss

Dame Evelyn Glennie: TED Talk – Evelyn Glennie shows how to listen.

Dame Evelyn Glennie: Hearing Essay – Evelyn's insightful reflections on music, listening and deafness.

Paul Whittaker: SiBSL – Songs in British Sign Language

University of Leeds – Hearing Aids for Music

Christine Sun Kim: The works and papers of Deaf Sound Artist

Aharona Ament: Beyond Vibrations – the deaf experience in music

University of St Thomas: Teaching Instrumental Music to Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

Get involved! If you know of more resources that could be added to the list, please contact info@SoundLincs.org

RESEARCH

Music4U: Music to Young Ears report

National Deaf Children's Society: Links to Research

Emma C Hutchingson: Musical responses in 3–6-year-olds with profound cognitive impairment – in song, with instruments and in movement

Emma C Hutchingson: How do young deaf children respond to different sounds? Exploring children's responses within the context of a music session

Joshua Kuang-Chao Chen, Catherine McMahon and Lieder Po-Hung Li (2012): Music Training Improves Pitch Perception in Prelingually Deafened Children with Cochlear Implants

Bjorn Petersen: Information and Research about music, deafness and Cochlear Implants

Julie Fix: The use of music education in oral schools for children who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Alice-Ann Darrow: The Role of Music in Deaf Culture: Implications for Music Educators

Get involved! If you know of more research that could be added to the list, please contact info@SoundLincs.org

ORGANISATIONS

Music Organisations

Music and the Deaf: www.matd.org.uk

Drake Music: www.drakemusic.org

The National Foundation for Youth Music:
network.youthmusic.org.uk

SoundLincs: www.SoundLincs.org

Deaf and Hearing Impaired Organisations

National Deaf Children's Society: www.ndcs.org.uk

The Ear Foundation: www.earfoundation.org

British Association of Teachers of the Deaf:
www.batod.org.uk

Action on Hearing Loss:
www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk

Signature: www.signature.org.uk

Hearing Link: www.hearinglink.org

Get involved! If you know of more organisations that could be added to the list, please contact info@SoundLincs.org



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Published by SoundLincs 2018

ISBN:978-0-9548069-9-6.