

Youth Music - Communicate Through Sound Project **Term 3 Summer 2023 Report**

Key

ML - Music Leader

ASD - Autism spectrum disorder

ADHD - Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

Aim: To improve communication skills and to help improve communication between the child and their wider family unit or social setting. All of the children taking part will have some form of communication delay/need.

Group sessions for Term 3 were held at Carrington Pre-School for 12 weeks. The children we worked with had speech and language delay, emotional difficulties, Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and or undiagnosed ASD/ADHD. We worked with up to 10 children for each session which rotated through the setting meaning we had core children each week alongside some children without speech and language delay.

The theme for term 2 was 'Water' which included weekly sessions identifying a different place where water is present e.g a river and animals that live in these habitats.

Each session followed the same musical structure that included:

- *Hello*: Using our voices to greet each other and make sounds
- *Warm Up*: Making sounds and using Makaton signs
- *Group Playing*: Playing untuned percussion or ukuleles with familiar sounds and words
- *Group Singing*: Various instruments including shakers, bells and chime bars to sing/ make sounds or communicate with
- *Moving to Music*: Moving with pom poms, dance ribbons, scarves and communicating with peers and family members
- *Drumming*: Playing with Djembes or claves to feel the beat and encourage vocal/ physical responses
- *Listening*: Playing chimes and triangles to tune in to quieter sounds and vocal responses
- *Goodbye*: Using our voices and sensory props to communicate with the group and each other that it's time for music to end

The children at Carrington Pre-School were preselected each week by the nursery team. This was to ensure that the children with communication delay were always present

alongside some of their peers who could communicate more freely. This was an effective approach by the nursery team as the children with communication delay were also following or learning from their peers who they knew and felt comfortable with as well as the music leader (ML).

Child A, would often greet the ML by the door and lead her by the hand to the music area. He would often pull the ML hand towards the floor to tell her to sit down and begin.

Some of the children with communication delay were animated at the beginning of the session either making sounds, vocalising or using Makaton signs to show their excitement.

The hello song was led with actions which the majority of the children joined in with immediately others choose to watch and listen.

When introducing the theme and new watery setting e.g. a river for each session, the ML would encourage all the children to also sign and say or verbalise. They enjoyed making new signs and would often repeat them throughout the term when asked "do we remember the sign for river?"

The children were excited by the warm up activity called lolly pop which was a simple rhyme rolling arms and clapping gradually getting faster.

Song:

Lolly lolly lolly (rolling arms) POP (clap)

Repeat 3 times gradually getting faster with a funny sounds to finish.

All the children would vocalise and either use the words or make silly sounds at the end of the rhyme. Child B particularly liked this song and became excited, animated and would giggle throughout.

The group instrumental song this term was the Rattlin' Bog.

Song:

(Lively playing)

Oh, ro, the rattlin' bog,

The bog down in the valley-o.

Oh, ro, the rattlin' bog,

The bog down in the valley-o. (Stop)

(Quiet playing)

Well in the bog there was a FISH (Makaton sign)

A rare FISH a SWIMMING FISH - Splash (sound making)

And in that bog that was a FISH (Makaton sign)

The bog down in the valley-oooooooooooooooooooo (Gradually getting louder on the oooo)

Rattlin' Bog was a very effective song in terms of communication responses. The ML would present the animal in the song by using a puppet and sound. The children were then asked "what is it?" Some children would reply verbally others would jump up and down or wriggle waiting for the ML to give the verbal and Makaton sign response. The children were then given shakers or bells and played along to the song using musical differences such as loud, soft and gradually getting louder. The ML also included the Makaton sign for the animal and sounds. This enabled the children to sign the animals and

or say the animals name along with the sign and or make the sound of the animal. This ensured that all the children could participate within their needs and communicate effectively. Each week there was a new animal, new sign and new sound to explore. The children anticipated the song each week and were excited to see what the new animal, sign and sound were.

The drumming section of the lesson plan also enabled the children to communicate with the ML and make sounds or verbalise within their needs.

The children all had their own drums and we would make sounds whilst playing a beat. Each session we had a drum clap which gradually got louder with a big “hey” at the end. The ML would begin by making the signs for quiet and loud which the children copied. All the children were excited to play the drum clap and would vocalise “hey” or a sound of their choosing. Child A and B would also run or wiggle as the sound was getting louder and would almost burst with energy as the sound got louder and finally released.

The team at Carrington’s Pre-School were positive, engaging and supported the children throughout the sessions. They were all willing to engage, use the Makaton signs and actively join in with sessions. They also encouraged and actively supported those children who had varying needs to join in how they could. This enabled the children to feel comfortable and supported by those they know and trust.

There were 3 key children who were identified at the beginning of the term and observed by the ML.

These included:

Child A - Undiagnosed ASD

Child B - Undiagnosed ASD

Child C - Speech and language delay

Child A - Undiagnosed ASD

Child A had limited vocabulary and would speak with singular words or sounds. Child A often would go up to the ML bag and try to see what was inside. He was eager to touch, hear and play the instrumental sounds. Throughout the sessions Child A would vary where he would sit in the space. The ML was open to him participating wherever he was comfortable. Sometimes he would sit on the carpet with the rest of the group, sometimes at the back of the room, sometimes in a play area and occasionally would leave before the session ended and make his way to the playground. However wherever he was sitting he was listening and engaging in some way by either using his instrument, making sounds, eye contact with the ML or moving to the music. Child A responded mostly with single words or vocal sounds or babble to make himself understood by the ML. Child A also had very expressive facial responses to different sounds or frequency of music which enabled the ML to understand if he liked/disliked a particular instrument or sound. Throughout the session Child A became more engaged and would stay for longer periods of time often participating and interacting with his peers and communicating with them with verbal sounds and facial expressions.

Child B - Undiagnosed ASD

Child B appeared confident and excited about music sessions at the beginning of the project. Child B was familiar with some simple Makton signs such as hello, friends, yes, no etc. He understood from the moment the ML made signs that this was the way he could communicate with the ML effectively eager to learn and practice new signs. Child B would use singular words initially to accompany some of the signs but later progressed to small sentences. Child B also imitated the ML familiar phrases or repetitive sections of music sessions such as ...

“Hello everyone (makaton sign) its time (makaton sign) for music (makaton sign), singing (makaton sign), and dancing (makaton sign).”

Child B would deliver the signs and words just before the ML with confidence and with a huge smile on his face. Child B really enjoyed learning new signs and would often repeat them throughout the session and also at times using the singular word e.g. Fish. He also enjoyed the drumming sections and freely made his own drumming patterns and would verbalise “hey” and “ho” at the end of each drumming section. Throughout his confidence in being able to communicate with the ML and also his peers in music sessions was evident as he engaged with the group for longer periods and was able to participate independently or with little support from the teaching team.

Child C - Speech and Language delay

Child C appeared anxious about music sessions to begin with. She would often sit at the back of the group and try to look around her peers to see what was happening. The ML would sing to each child in turn asking them to sing their name back to the ML or make a sound. Child C found this challenging to begin with and would shrink back and at times cover her eyes. Throughout the weeks she grew in confidence and by week 7 she was able to sing her name to the ML without feeling anxious. Child C also found turn taking challenging, for example if she was asked to play her instrument or make sounds in solo. She was much more comfortable with group activities initially. Over the weeks her confidence grew and she was able to share her instrumental and verbal sounds/words with the group. She enjoyed moving to music and following instructions with sensory resources without the need to communicate using words but held eye contact with the ML and ensuring the ML could see what she was doing and that she understood what she needed to do. Her facial expressions also showed confidence and joy.

All of the children communicated with the ML in some way whether this was with sounds, eye contact, words, signs, gestures, body movements and facial expressions. It was interesting to observe differing ways of communicating the same idea, phrase, animal or theme and how each way of communicating was unique to each child's personality and need.

What we have learnt so far

We would like to learn from Communicate Through Sound two year project:

- 1. What changes and impact our curriculum has on children displaying communication difficulties and document any differences or similarities that may be shown between different groups of children.*

Visual cues for example puppets or pecs enable children to clearly identify an animal or object without the feeling pressure to initially understand a sign or word. These visual cues when working with a mixed ability group help all children to communicate in any way that they can. Often for children with communication delay this may be with sounds but as the sessions progress this can develop into signs and words. Throughout the project the use of visual cues has been a very clear similarity that impacts on communication responses.

2. What range of skills a music leader needs in order to work with children with varying needs who display communication delay.

Listening to the children's thoughts and ideas

Allowing extra time for vocal responses

Allowing time for 1-1 interactions

Supporting children to participate anywhere in the room that they feel comfortable and are able to engage

Looking for and understanding each child's different ways of communicating or responding to musical activities.

Term 1 & 2 skills needed

Patience - allowing plenty of time for children to respond.

Adaptability - push the curriculum in a new direction if the child or children move it in a different way.

A solid range of resources to support different needs - Lots of sound makers for the children to try and make common sounds/words with.

A curriculum that supports varying needs - different ways of repeating the same activity within each child's capability. Ensure each child can succeed and not fail.

To go with and listen to each child's response and accept that it may be different from the one the ML was looking for.

Praise - Rewarding children with praise has a positive impact on their health and wellbeing.

A good understanding of Makaton and other visual aids

A structure and curriculum that works for a large group - to include enough resources for each child

To allow children to dip in and out of sessions

Work with the centres team to encourage participation and also find out more about children's needs

What format will CreateED's curriculum move in, in order to work with early years children with communication difficulties and how is this influenced and adapted by the children and their families input?

Throughout the project so far there have been opportunities with instruments and sensory resources to work on focussed interaction and attention. We aim to explore this method further in terms 4, 5 & 6. For ASD and ADHD children the method of "bucket time" or equivalent with instrumental resources helps the children to connect, listen and respond.

Carrington Pre-School teaching team commented that ...

"Through the music sessions in small groups which have included children having additional support, the ML gave clear calm instructions and was able to hold the children's attention. The ML is enthusiastic and professional and through the different weekly

themes, delivers an exciting programme which supports their stage of the Early Years Development.

The ML has extended their listening skills and used Makaton signing to support the children's communication. The children have enjoyed playing with all the exciting different objects and musical instruments.

We feel that the our children have not only had fun in these sessions but have extended their attention, developed their listening and Makaton skills.”

Below are pictures of the children exploring instruments and sensory resources during music sessions.

