



Early Hurly Burly Performances

Evaluation Report





The project commissioned Open Sky Productions to produce Hairy Fairy Tails, seen here in rehearsal - photo credit Jack Offord



This evaluation was carried out by Impact Consultancy & Research

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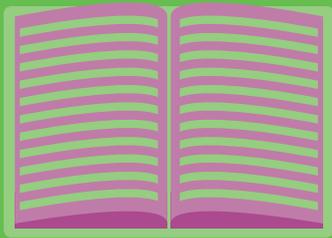
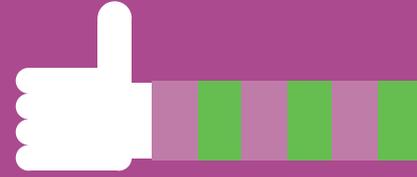
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2454 children attended the Early Hurly Burly performances.

Views were collected from **224** children and of these, 84% said that they 'really liked' the performance they had attended.



92% of parents or carers said that they would be more likely to use their local library again as a result of attending a performance.

31 artists were engaged by the project.



94% of parents or carers said that they had enjoyed the performance 'a lot'.

Library staff said that they were more confident to work with parents and young children as a result of Early Hurly Burly



Artists said that their skills as performers had improved as a result of the project.

1. Introduction and Background

Early Hurly Burly Performances was a live performance project for Early Years families, funded by the Arts Council and carried out by a partnership of the library services, music education services and other music organisations in 12 West Midland local authorities. As a result of the project 48 theatre/music performances were hosted across the West Midlands (at least 3 in each of the participating library service areas) between May 2016 and August 2017. Performances were free of charge for those attending and families that are socially and economically disadvantaged were specifically encouraged to attend. Monitoring information shows that 2454 children with their parents or carers attended the performances.

This project was developed following a previous Early Hurly Burly project that took place in the West Midlands in 2014-2016 and demonstrated a demand from Early Years children and their families for music and arts based activities. The Consortium, which consisted of partners from 9 local authority areas in the first project but has now grown to 12 local authority areas, is committed to contributing to the development of Early Years children and to have a particular focus on those who are socially and economically disadvantaged, have disabilities and/or are from diverse communities.

Early Hurly Burly Performances built on the success of the activity delivered in the first project and incorporated new and more varied performances. The project also commissioned a new performance specifically aimed at Early Years children. The new commission, 'Hairy Fairy Tales' by Open Sky Productions, was performed at least once in each library service area.



Project Aims

The following were the intended aims of Early Hurly Burly Performances:



To reach families (with Early Years children) that are socially and economically disadvantaged, have children with disabilities and/or are from diverse communities.



To engage families with high quality, different and engaging performances, and encourage through several engagements a commitment to attending similar future events.



To further test the value of engagement with music and performing arts activity for child development and parent/child relationships.



To enable library staff to share and develop enhanced skills at presenting and marketing performance activity that will increase their confidence and generate a proactive approach to programming and delivering future events.



To facilitate new opportunities for performing arts companies either with experience of or interest in developing quality work for Early Years children.

2. Methodology

To assess the extent to which the project achieved its intended aims, the following evaluation activities were undertaken:



Feedback was collected from parents and carers immediately following the performances via a short survey



An online survey with library staff



An online survey with partner organisations



An online survey with practitioners



Two roundtable discussions with the partner organisations



A workshop with library staff



Visits to 12 performances (one in each library area) to collect feedback directly from children



Views were collected from practitioners, music organisations and libraries at a symposium named the 'Early Hurly Burly Pow Wow'.

Interim findings were presented to the Steering Group in October 2016.

In addition to the above, monitoring information was also collected from each of the participating libraries eg the number of people attending.

3. Evaluation Findings

3.1 Meeting the project aims

The following outlines the findings which emerged from the evaluation activity and specifically describes the extent to which the project met its aims.

To reach families (with Early Years children) that are socially and economically disadvantaged, have children with disabilities and/or are from diverse communities.

The postcodes of people attending the performance were collected via the parent/carer survey. There were 409 parent/carer surveys returned and of these 374 had valid postcodes. Analysis of these postcodes shows that 13.64% of people who filled out an evaluation form with a valid postcode were from areas that are within the 20% most deprived wards in England. Overall, monitoring data indicates that approximately 2454 children attended Early Hurly Burly Performances. If the same percentage is applied to the total number of children attending, then it can be estimated that approximately 335 children were from households that are within the 20% most deprived wards in England.

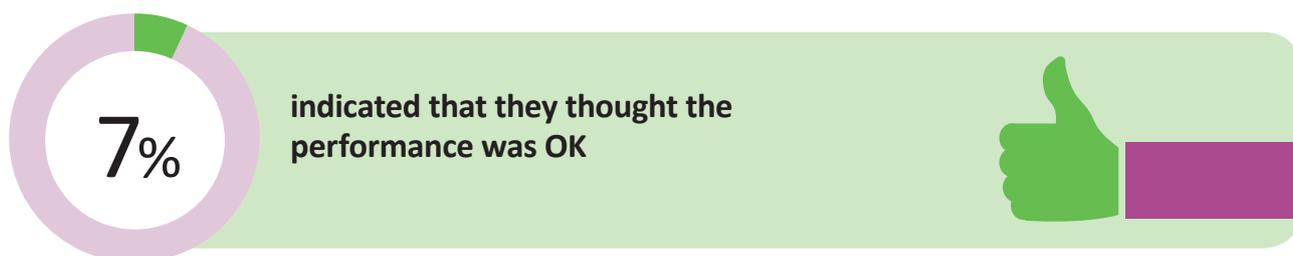
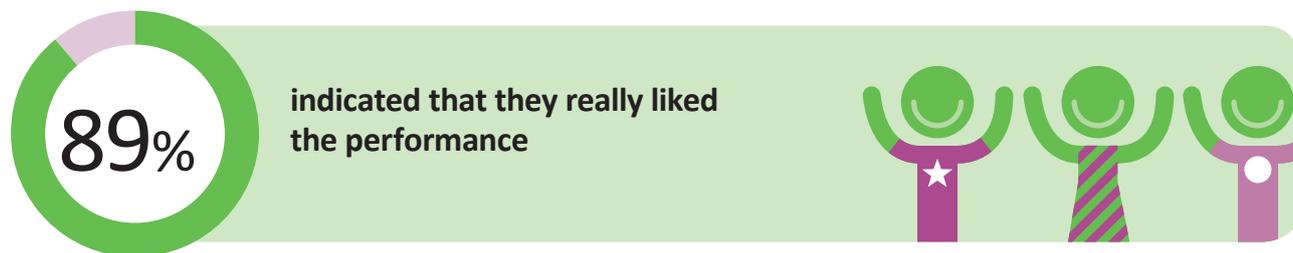
Of the 29 library staff who completed the online survey, 8 said that they thought performances in their library had been attended by an ethnically diverse audience and 15 believed that the audience included families who were socially or economically disadvantaged.

Overall the evidence suggests that the project had some success in engaging families that are socially and economically disadvantaged and/or are from diverse communities. The value of mums having an opportunity to socialise was also noted by practitioners.

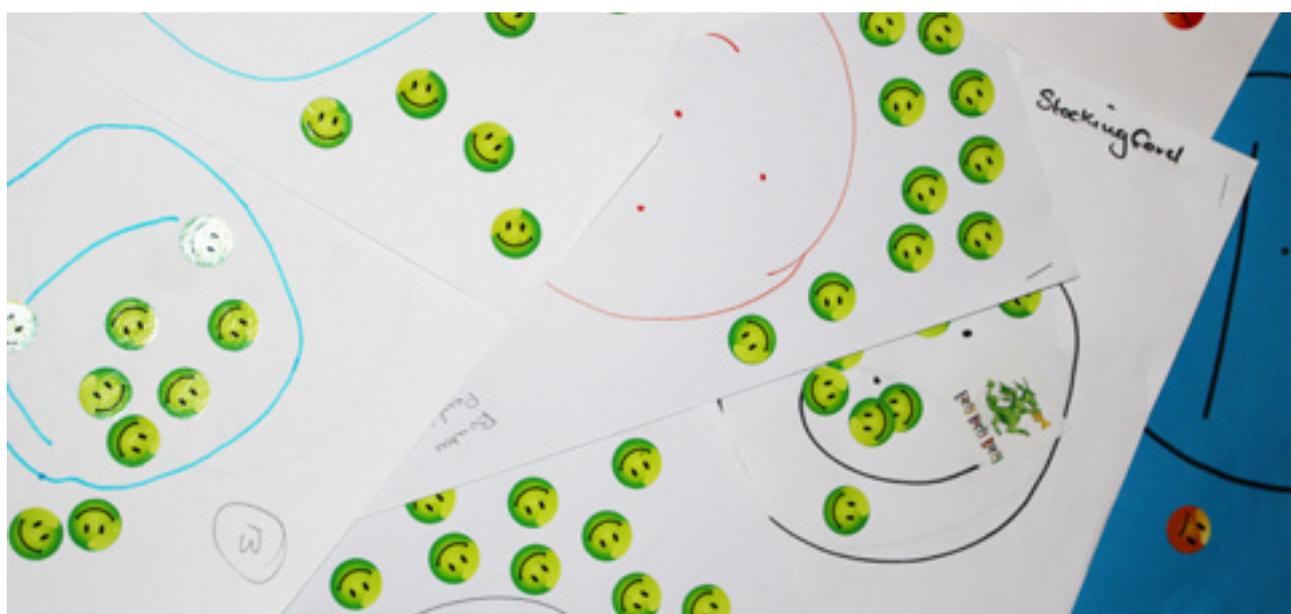
To engage families with high quality, different and engaging performances, and encourage through several engagements a commitment to attending similar future events.

The performances offered through the project were of high quality and were very engaging for children and parents. Of the 409 surveys completed by parents or carers following the performances, 93% said that their children had enjoyed the performance 'a lot'. Further, 94% of parents or carers said that they had also enjoyed the performance a lot. This is extremely high, particularly as there were a variety of performances offered. At the 12 performances that were observed by the evaluator it was clear that children were enjoying the performances and were keen to engage with the performers. Following these performances

children were asked to indicate whether they had 'really liked' the performance, whether they thought it was 'OK' or whether they 'didn't like' the performance by putting stickers on corresponding sheets of paper. Feedback was collected from 224 children in this way and of those children participating:



The high percentage of both children and parents and carers indicating that they had enjoyed the performance 'a lot' suggests that the project had been successful at selecting performances of high quality.



Children's feedback on performances – using 'smiley faces'

Responses also indicate that performances were very successful at engaging children as 51% said that their child was 'very confident' to join in and 43% that they were 'quite confident' to join in.

"He's normally very shy. It was lovely to see his eyes when they were singing and dancing. Great to see the participation of him and the other children. They were all spellbound."

Parent / Carer

"Absolutely fabulous! Kept all the children's attention from age 2-4 years."

Parent / Carer

"He concentrated really well. He is only 14 months and listened and clapped. It was our first theatre visit and we both loved it."

Parent / Carer



Attendees at the Pow-Wow join in during lunchtime musical performance from Theatre Tots

All 29 library staff members who completed the online survey also said that parents and carers and children enjoyed the performance. Library staff also observed high levels of interaction and participation, with children laughing, clapping and responding to performers. The performances also had a positive impact on staff and other library users which also reflect their quality.

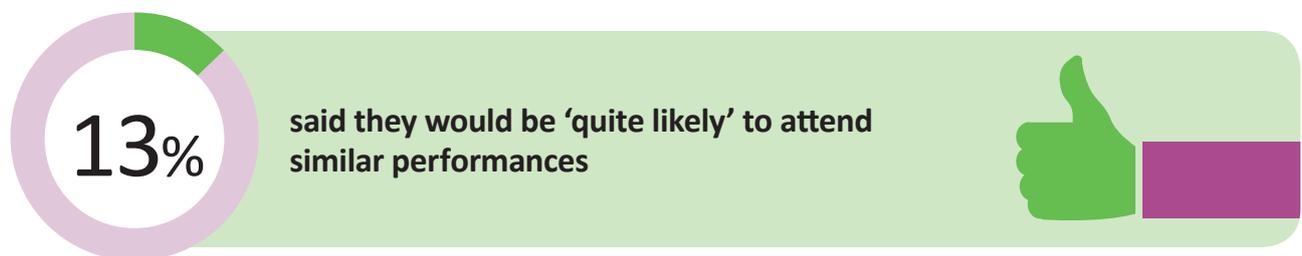
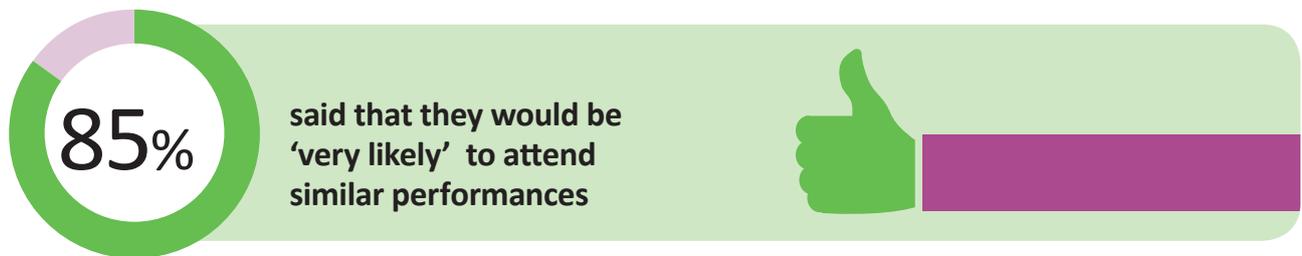
“Staff thoroughly enjoyed the performance, and joined in with the dancing. Other library users also thought it was a great idea, there were no complaints about the noise. A carer has told us since the event that she was surprised how much her child joined in and enjoyed it. All parents want similar events again.”

Library staff



The Crows arrive! - Handmade Theatre's Flying the Nest at Ross-on-Wye Library

Parents and carers were also asked if attending the Early Hurly Burly Performance meant that they would be more likely to attend similar performances in the future. The responses to this question were:



In addition 92% of parents or carers said that they would be more likely to use their local library again in the future as a result of attending the performance. Of the 4% of parents or carers who said that they would not be more likely to use the local library in the future, many said that this was because they were already a regular user of the library.

Overall the Early Hurly Burly performances appear to have been successful at increasing the likelihood of parents or carers of attending both other performances and of using the library in the future.



“This is one reason why libraries are so important for pre-school children.”

Parent /Carer

“Thank you. Thoroughly enjoyed the performance. Will be looking for future shows to bring my elder daughter also.”

Parent /Carer

“Really pleased I have finally been here and will look for more performances in future”

Parent /Carer



Hairy Fairy Tails by Open Sky Productions attracted a huge audience to Leominster Library

To further test the value of engagement with music and performing arts activity for child development and parent/child relationships.

The delivery of the project meant that long-term assessment of impact on child development was not really feasible. However, qualitatively and anecdotally, parents and carers clearly demonstrated that they value music and the performing arts as, when asked to indicate the elements of the performance they particularly enjoyed, 77% said that they particularly enjoyed the music and 70% said that they particularly enjoyed the interaction with children. Many of the comments given by parents and carers also support the view that the performance had an impact on their child's development and many of them commented positively about their child's reaction. It is clear that parents and carers enjoyed observing their child's reaction to the performance and for some their child's reaction was not what they expected.



Audience captivated during a performance by SeaLegs Puppets at Frankley Library in Birmingham

“He has been rather shy previously but he joined in right from the beginning and loved it.”

Parent /Carer

“Normally my child’s quite shy but she loved joining in. She laughed lots and lots. And in the Tam Lin story, she hugged me lots! By the end she was yawning, as we’d been on such a magical journey. Thank you for sharing your magic!”

Parent /Carer

“She doesn’t usually sit down. She really loved it. Music helped to return her concentration.”

Parent /Carer

“Never seen my granddaughter sit still for so long.”

Parent /Carer

“Her confidence built during the performance lovely to watch. Please do more often.”

Parent /Carer

“I was surprised by the way she kept still and paid attention.”

Parent /Carer

“An unexpected surprise, my daughter loved it and sat for the whole hour. Thank you”

Parent /Carer

To enable library staff to share and develop enhanced skills at presenting and marketing performance activity that will increase their confidence and generate a proactive approach to programming and delivering future events.

Partnership meetings were held quarterly during the project and provided an excellent opportunity for library staff to share information about the performances. Topics discussed during these discussions quite often focused on marketing the event and attracting audiences that are considered ‘hard to reach’. These events were considered useful by library staff. In addition the PowWow event which brought together the different partners and stakeholders of Early Hurly Burly – libraries, practitioners and music development organisations – was a further opportunity for staff members to share ideas and communicate directly with practitioners. 9 library staff members completed evaluation forms following this event and all of those completing forms said that:

- They felt more confident to work in partnership
- They felt more confident to plan an Early Years performance
- As a result of the PowWow they had added new skills to their ‘skill set’.

Comments received from library staff indicate that specific marketing and communication skills were enhanced and developed.

“Supported development of staff-ideas for audience targeting, better use of social media as a promotional tool, conversations with families and parents of the benefits of music for child development.”

Library staff

In addition 29 library staff members completed an online survey, and 22 of these said that as a result of hosting an Early Hurly Burly performance they felt more confident to work with parents and young children in the future. The reason given by those members who indicated that they did not feel more confident was that their confidence in this area was already high due to other activities that they were involved with in the library, eg storytelling. Similarly 24 library staff members indicated that they would feel confident to host a live performance in the library in the future.

“Everyone involved enjoyed the session and parents and children were keen to find out about other performances. We received some very positive feedback on the evaluation forms and now, as a library service, feel more confident about hosting similar events in the future.”

Library staff

“It was a wonderful session and the families enjoyed the performance. Staff were very positive about the event and would like to see more performances in the library.”

Library staff

Unsurprisingly library staff members most commonly indicated that having sufficient resources would be key to ensuring that they were able to host performances in the future. However knowledge about knowing which performers to approach and how to successfully market performance were also seen as important factors in deciding whether or not to host a performance in the future. In this respect, partnerships between libraries and their local music development agency will be key to the success of any future project involving libraries.



Two practitioners share experiences during the PowWow

Overall, library staff members reported that the project had had a very positive impact on the library, parents and carers, and children. Importantly, by hosting performances at libraries, performances were made accessible to a diverse range of parents and carers which was as beneficial to libraries as it was to parents and children.

“Parents loved having a different activity to introduce to their children within the library. Which many would not have seen before or could afford to see elsewhere.”

Library staff

“A fantastic performance. Children and carers were all enthralled. We had so many people ask about future events – it has created such a buzz in the library. Thank you!”

Library staff



Children enthralled by SeaLegs Puppets at Handsworth Library in Birmingham

The visits that were made by the Evaluator also showed that libraries had learnt from the experience of the first EHB project and were able to host performances with confidence and in a way that was inviting and welcoming to parents and carers and their children. Libraries also demonstrated their commitment to the evaluation and efficiently ensured forms were completed, this is reflected in the high numbers of responses received.

To facilitate new opportunities for performing arts companies either with experience of or interest in developing quality work for early years children.

Responses to the online survey of performing arts companies and individuals demonstrate that they benefited significantly from the project. There were 31 artists utilised through the project and 4 of the 7 performance organisations responded to the online survey. These responses show that all of those that responded felt that their confidence to use library spaces in the future had increased. Further, 3 of those responding said that they felt that:

- their skills as performers had increased as a result of the project
- their involvement in the project had led on to other opportunities.
- the project had meant that they were able to share skills and expertise with other performers.

“I absolutely love this amazing project and it has enabled me as an artist to both grow and become a lot more creative. Also to use the library space and open the doors to future opportunities. Everyone is always very helpful. Also to reach out to far wider hard-to-reach audiences to engage with them, children and people from a variety of cultural backgrounds and needs. This is a groundbreaking project and I would love to continue to work closely with EHB. To be able to bring theatre, music, dance, costume, children’s and family entertainment close and personal to the audience is always very special. The feedback has been amazing and one keeps learning and progressing, Thank you.”

Artist/Performer

In addition to the online survey, views were also collected from theatre/music/dance practitioners at the 'PowWow'. Evaluation forms were completed by 12 practitioners at this event and these demonstrate the following:

- 6 said that the PowWow had resulted in them adding new skills to their skills set
- 10 that they felt more confident to plan/carry out performances aimed at the Early Years
- 10 that they felt more confident about working in partnership with others
- 8 said that they felt more confident to work in library spaces in the future.



Conversation, reflection and a cup of coffee during the PowWow



Everyone's dancing in the Children's Library Corner at Brierley Hill Library, with Aashiyana Arts

3.2 Other outcomes achieved by the project

In addition to meeting the stated aims (above), the project achieved other outcomes which benefited libraries, music organisations and ultimately families with Early Years children. Some libraries reported an increase in usage and membership. Although the extent to which this can be attributed to the project is difficult to quantify, comments and feedback received through the evaluation suggests that the project was a significant contributory factor.

“It has been a wonderful project to be involved in. The performances have all been of a very high quality and families are eager to see more in libraries. They all felt that a library was an ideal location for these performances and, as a result, they use the library a lot more having had such a positive experience in the environment. As an organisation, we will no longer shy away from offering these kinds of events in libraries.”

Library staff

Both music organisations and libraries also report securing other funding to do similar work in the future.

“We have been able to demonstrate to ACE that we can organise and host successful events for young children to introduce them to musical theatre and as a result have secured funding for a new project.”

Library staff

“EHB has enabled us to develop good links with 3 new library partners. As a result of this, Quench Arts has managed to achieve further funding for an early years music and literacy programme targeting children with developmental delays.”

Library staff

Another theatre company reported using the project as evidence to secure funding to develop performances in libraries in the East Midlands.

The commissioning of a theatre piece for the project also had significant benefits for artists. For example Open Sky Productions who were successfully commissioned by the project, used the impetus of Early Hurly Burly to tour the commissioned production, *Hairy Fairy Tails*, to many other venues. This benefitted more audiences, more venues and the artists involved with Open Sky.



*The project commissioned Open Sky Productions to produce *Hairy Fairy Tails*, seen here in rehearsal. Photo credit Jack Offord*

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

There is strong evidence to support the view that Early Hurly Burly achieved the stated aims of the project and additionally achieved other outcomes which benefited the partners involved but also ultimately the families of Early Years children. The partnership element of the project is key to its success and creating an environment of mutual learning and development is also significant to ensuring successful delivery. The project has continued to raise the profile of the library as a gateway to Early Years children and their families and has also further developed understanding of the significance of music and the arts to child development. The main hindrance to future activity is, of course, availability of relevant funds. However if funds are secured the project has demonstrated that the partnership infrastructure can be mobilised to offer high quality music and theatre experiences for families that may not otherwise access these.

It is recommended that the following are taken into account for the development of any future project:

- The partnership approach is continued and developed with a focus on mutual learning and development
- Opportunities to be involved with the hosting of music/theatre performances is extended to as many library staff as possible
- A directory of practitioners is developed to ensure that libraries are able to select artists
- A 'How to market performances' guide is developed to assist in the successful marketing of performances
- Further direct targeting of families who are socially or economically disadvantaged takes place. In particular there should be targeting of families with children with a disability, for example by working with relevant charities and agencies
- Developing new musical performance forms for young audiences (eg a 'theatrical music' approach, as opposed to 'musical theatre' of which MishMash Productions is seen as a progressive example)
- Developing new training for existing music practitioners (both teachers and artists) in engaging with Early Years



The project commissioned Open Sky Productions to produce Hairy Fairy Tails, seen here in rehearsal. Photo credit Jack Offord

Early Hurly Burly Vision and Values

We believe that the lives of young children and their families are improved with regular access to the arts and positive cultural activities. EHB will work with a broad range of partners to provide opportunities, introduce new programmes and develop strategies to access funding.

Our Vision

ALL young people, before they start school should:

- Enjoy face to face artistic activities
- Have visited a library
- Have been introduced to books and stories
- Have experienced a live, age appropriate performance
- Have sung rhymes and songs, experimented with instruments and reacted to music with others of a similar age and their families
- Live in an environment where they can sing rhymes and songs, play creatively, draw, paint, act and dance with support from the adults around them.

To achieve this we will:

- Commission high quality performances for libraries and other cultural settings for pre school children
- Continue our relationship with libraries to build on the good work from previous EHB projects
- Work with Music Hubs to develop pre school programmes
- Develop a strategic relationship with the Arts Council Bridge organisation
- Work with ALL service providers with a remit for improving the lives of ALL young people to achieve our vision.
- Develop confidence boosting activities for adults who work with and care for children in order that they can fulfil our visions.

Early Hurly Burly was initiated by the members of a consortium who were invited by **Arts Council England's** West Midlands bridge organisation, **Arts Connect**, to discuss the possibility of making partnership applications, specifically to support programmes of Early Years music-based provision throughout the West Midlands.

This unprecedented gathering included representatives from Library and Cultural Services, Music Education and Performing Arts Services and Music Education Hubs in Coventry, Dudley, Herefordshire, Sandwell, Stafford, Telford, Walsall, Warwickshire and Worcestershire, together with independent community music charities **Make Some Noise** in Stafford, **Quench Arts** in Birmingham, and **The Music Pool** in Herefordshire, and was supported by **Arts Connect**. In the second phase of the project, they were joined by representatives from library and music services in Birmingham, Shropshire and Solihull.

Lead Applicant: Herefordshire Libraries

Project Management: The Music Pool

Project Manager: Jo Henshaw, for The Music Pool

Evaluation: Impact Consultancy & Research

Report design: Matt Willis for sclef.co.uk

Birmingham City Council	Solihull Libraries
Quench Arts	Solihull Music Service
Coventry Libraries	Staffordshire Libraries
Coventry Performing Arts Service	Make Some Noise
Dudley Libraries	Telford & Wrekin Libraries
Dudley Performing Arts	Walsall Libraries
Herefordshire Libraries	Forest Arts Walsall
The Music Pool	Warwickshire Libraries
Sandwell Libraries	Worcestershire Libraries
Shropshire Libraries	Severn Arts

Funded and supported by

Arts Council England

Arts Connect

For a list of the arts practitioners who took part, please contact **The Music Pool** on **01432 278118**, info@musicpool.org.uk

For information about libraries, please contact Herefordshire Libraries on **01432 260731**, schedgzoy@herefordshire.gov.uk

Photo credits: Quench Arts, Theatre Tots, Jo Henshaw, Jack Offord and David Warren



The Early Hurly Burly project has benefited from the funding and support of

