

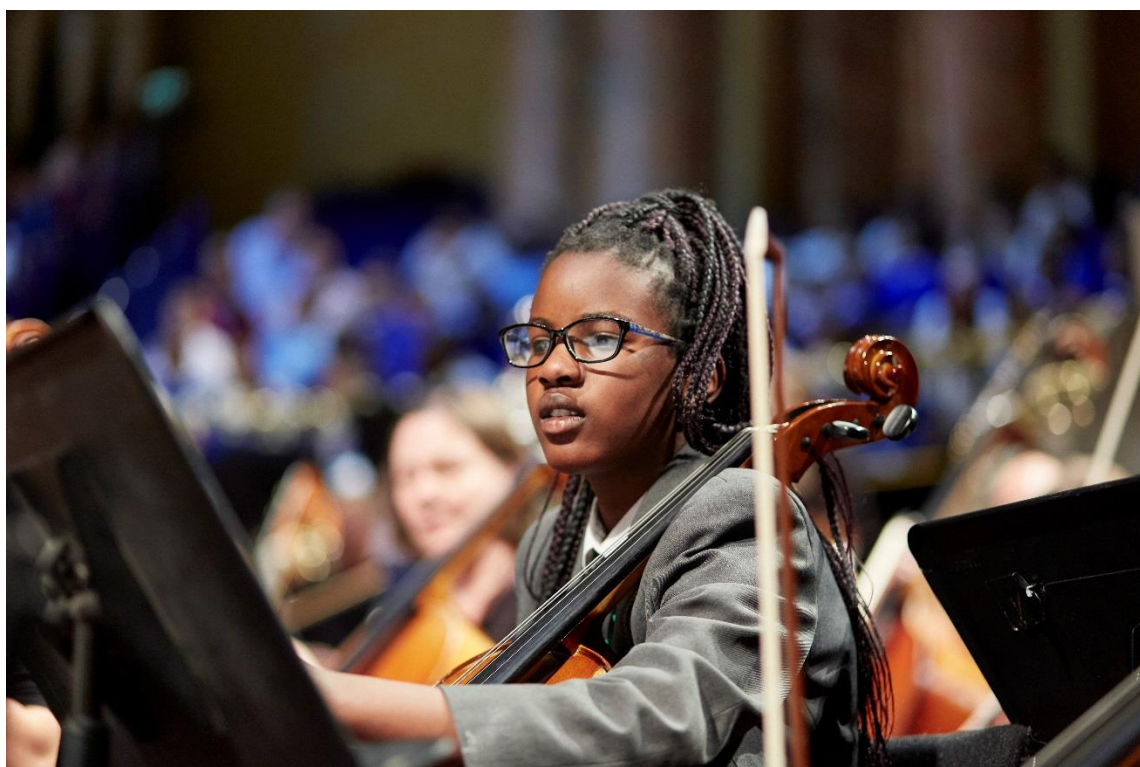
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ENGLAND**

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Research into support for musical progression for young people from *In Harmony* programmes and other disadvantaged communities



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September 2017

Key Findings

Young people continuing with their musical activities in secondary school and during GCSE studies loved music, had strong musical identities, had a social life related to music and were committed young musicians.

This had been achieved by the *In Harmony* programmes which provided a wide range of inclusive, musical activities in a supportive environment and opportunities for performance and engagement with other young musicians.

In Harmony staff are key in developing strong, supportive relationships with young people, to inspire and motivate them and guide them in the decisions they make about their musical progression.

It was important to engage parents early on and maintain their support. Regular contact, meetings and other communications were crucial.

Musical progression opportunities at secondary school were generally limited and where available were often inappropriate. The lack of a positive musical culture led to negative peer pressure and sometimes bullying. Most progression was through extra-curricular activities.

There were financial challenges in providing instrumental lessons at secondary level despite the availability of the pupil premium.

Extra-curricular activities needed to take account of location and access. Finding suitable, affordable accommodation for activities and concerts was challenging.

To ensure appropriate musical activities for all young people required partnerships with other music education organisations, particularly music hubs which have responsibility for providing appropriate and affordable progression opportunities in their area.

The *In Harmony* programmes are at various stages of development. They face different challenges. They can learn from sharing their experiences as part of ongoing professional development opportunities.

There is no quick fix to ensuring musical progression. Each *In Harmony* programme needs to identify the challenges for the young people and families in its communities and through consultation with them attempt to resolve the issues.

It is not sufficient to provide progression opportunities for young people from very deprived communities, it is necessary to recognize the barriers and attempt to remove them.

Executive summary



Background

In Harmony was launched in 2008 with three pilot projects for an initial period of two years. In 2012/13, the funding responsibility for *In Harmony* shifted to Arts Council England and a decision was made to continue to fund two of the initial pilots, Liverpool and Lambeth. In 2012, four new programmes were initiated: Telford and Stoke, Nottingham, Newcastle and Leeds. Over time the core principles of *In Harmony* have evolved to reflect how the six programmes operate in their different settings. National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)/Arts Council England (ACE) have defined them as:

- a focus on areas of deprivation and low engagement;
- a demand-led, committed whole school approach;
- immersive and intensive activity;
- alignment with music education hubs / integration within music education hubs;
- professional musicians, ensembles and orchestras working with schools;
- high profile performance opportunities;
- continuity and progression for children;
- access to instruments;
- the sharing of expertise and resources.

Change within the wider community may result in the long term, but is not a primary focus for ACE/Department for Education (DfE) as funders.

A range of independent evaluations of *In Harmony* have been carried out and one national evaluation (2013-2016). These have found evidence of the positive impact on the personal, social and musical development of participating young people.

The research aims and methods

The research was funded by Arts Council England (ACE) and commissioned by Opera North, acting on behalf of the six national *In Harmony* programmes, in June 2017.

The research questions were:

- What can the literature reveal about the factors that affect musical progression in young people, particularly those from deprived areas?
- What are the similarities and differences between the six *In Harmony* programmes?
- What factors contribute to successful progression?
- What are the barriers to successful progression?

Research methods

A literature review was undertaken and is presented in a separate document.

The research was mainly qualitative, although progression data were collected from each *In Harmony* programme. Focus group interviews were conducted with groups of young people and their parents. Individual interviews were conducted with at least two members of staff from each *In Harmony* programme, head teachers and individual young people. Interviews were also undertaken with staff from London Music Makers, the Nucleo project and Sistema Scotland.

The *In Harmony* programmes

The *In Harmony* programmes differ in terms of the length of time they have been established, their aims, the number of participating primary schools, their organisational and management structures, their access to professional orchestral musicians, their geographical location, the number and type of extra-curricular activities, the instruments on offer, the content of the programmes, the extent of partnership networks and the ease of collecting progression data.

Benchmarking against other programmes

The *In Harmony* programmes differ from other musical programmes. Comparisons with The Nucleo, London Music Masters and Sistema Scotland indicated that the *In Harmony* programmes could develop more strategies for engaging parents particularly in the early stages of the programme and could strengthen their links with secondary schools to monitor progression.

The Literature Review

The full literature review is available in a separate report. It showed that there are many potential progression routes for young musicians. Motivation to continue to engage with music is complex but includes having a love of music, a strong musical identity, friends who are involved in music making, positive beliefs about musical potential and sufficient confidence to resist peer pressure. Families play a crucial role in supporting young musicians, particularly in the early stages of learning. Teachers provide young learners with inspiration, act as role models, need strong musical and pedagogical skills and must be able to develop strong positive relationships with young learners. Educational systems can be more or less supportive of music education. In the UK, the unintended consequences of major educational changes are having a negative effect on music provision.

Music Education Hubs have a remit to ensure that clear progression routes are available and affordable to all young people. This can be achieved through having strong partnerships with

other organisations. Positive transitions can be supported by partnerships between teachers, parents and initial and next-steps organisations.

Factors contributing to successful progression: young people

Those who had successfully progressed loved music, had friends who shared their passion, viewed the programme as egalitarian and as supportive. They appreciated the opportunities for socialising.

Excellent relationships with staff contributed to the sense of community where the children and young people felt valued and appreciated. This contrasted with some other musical environments.



The children and young people participating in *In Harmony* programmes had access to a wide variety of musical activities which supported the development of their musical skills. The pedagogical links between the ensembles and the small group tuition varied between programmes. Some programmes had explored how they could achieve more in less time.

Having a sense of achievement was seen as important in relation to children continuing to play when they transferred to secondary school. Ensembles in secondary schools were sometimes seen as not offering sufficient challenge. The older children recognized that they needed to be challenged and appreciated that this might come from different kinds of music.

The young people reported that they practised on their instruments and accepted that this was necessary for them to make progress. Not all had a home environment conducive to practice.

It was important that the children had the opportunity to change instrument. In some cases, this was key to continuation.

Parents, teachers and young people recognised the way that the programme developed transferable skills including concentration, learning skills, confidence, team work, leadership and social skills. Mentoring younger children supported this.

There needed to be a variety of progression opportunities to satisfy the different needs of the young people. The extent to which these were available depended on the partnerships that the programme had. These were particularly important for those who wanted to go on to become professional musicians.

Family factors supporting progression

Parental support played an important role in children continuing to play, although some children progressed without this, but with intensive support from programme staff. Some parents demonstrated agency, making conscious choices which enabled their children to engage in the programme. Older siblings sometimes acted as role models.

Some programmes made a significant budgetary investment in team members with a pastoral role who were responsible for developing community and parental relationships. These supported children in getting to the after-school activities and provided strong links with families. The *In Harmony* teams' support had been crucial for a few children with extremely challenging circumstances. The programmes also offered stability at transfer from primary to secondary school.

Programmes recognized the importance of good communication with families. Parents were contacted immediately when children did not attend extra-curricular sessions. Some programmes held meetings for parents, particularly in relation to transition or issues relating to GCSE examinations.

Programme factors contributing to successful progression

There was strong agreement that offering extra-curricular activities early on was crucial to support successful progression. Participation in these activities generated the self-motivation that was critical to developing resilience and ongoing engagement.

Following transition to secondary school, it was important to follow up and contact young people who did not return to the programme. Parents needed to understand the importance of engaging with the extra-curricular activities. Following transition, the next challenge came as young people approached GCSE.

Progression within the extra-curricular activities was addressed in different ways, whole groups progressing together or individuals moving between groups.

The extra-curricular activities set up by some programmes could be accessed by other children in the area. The extent to which this occurred depended on resources.

The *In Harmony* teams were hugely committed and supportive. They provided transport when parents could not, maintained personal contact particularly through the transfer to secondary school and had strong positive relationships with young people.

All of the programmes recognised the importance of performance opportunities in engaging the young people and their parents. They needed to be frequent and on occasion in prestigious venues.

Holiday courses were important in enhancing motivation, as were opportunities to engage with other young musicians from around the UK and internationally. The involvement of professional musicians supported progression.

Having supportive primary head teachers was crucial. Some primary schools helped with administration, booking coaches, supporting trips, writing to parents.

Excellent relationships with partner and progression organisations were critical to young people's progression. The extent of the formal and informal partnerships which programmes had varied enormously.

Parents and students needed information about career and progression opportunities. Successful strategies included signposting progression routes, supporting placements and connecting with other providers where the programmes could not offer relevant opportunities themselves.

The pedagogical approach was inclusive with many examples of differentiation. Praise was an important element of this inclusive approach.

The repertoire adopted needed to be challenging but not too difficult. The older children recognized the need for this.

Some parents wanted their children to take graded instrumental examinations. One programme ensured some form of external assessment when the children left primary school, although there were challenges in relation to funding this. Other staff were more ambivalent about instrumental examinations. Taking examinations had a positive impact on motivation and the amount of practice undertaken.

All the programmes reflected on their activities and made changes where they were perceived to be necessary. Overall, the programmes were addressing issues relating to progression.



Challenges to successful progression for young people

Programmes, families and young people reported many challenges to successful progression. There are challenges for all children transferring from primary to secondary school. The culture of secondary schools and their size and scale can be intimidating after the relative intimacy of the primary school.

For *In Harmony* children the musical change was dramatic. In primary school, the programme was integrated within the school curriculum and valued within the school. At secondary school music was not always valued. *In Harmony* was seen as supporting children through the process of transition as it offered stability.

The academic pressure at secondary school and the amount of homework was seen as a challenge to young people. This increased as GCSE examinations became closer leading some to feel the need to reduce their involvement in extra-curricular activities.

There were more opportunities for other activities on offer at secondary school. Some young people were unsure whether they would continue with music.

Year 6 pupils feared being seen as 'uncool' if they played an instrument. Some young people's involvement with *In Harmony* had been hidden from peers. There was evidence of bullying related to musical activity. Not all of the students experienced negative peer pressure.

Some *In Harmony* staff reported issues related to racial prejudice from audience members when the children were attending or performing in concerts.

The culture in secondary schools was seen as having a negative impact on motivation. Where music provision was available it was variable and did not always provide opportunities which met the needs of young people from *In Harmony*. Frequently, there was no orchestra.

There was a lack of opportunities for the young people to take music at GCSE and at A level. The introduction of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) had reduced the number of options for GCSE.

Where there was a specialist music school it was often some distance away and parents could not always provide the necessary transport. Even specialist music schools did not always have an orchestra.

In some places, there were well-established extra-curricular progression routes for the young people which had been demonstrated to be successful. These were sometimes in partnership with other organisations. In other cases, the activities were run by *In Harmony* but other children attended. The opportunity to meet other committed young musicians was important for motivation. Some progression routes, outside of the *In Harmony* programmes, had a very different culture which demotivated young people.

At secondary school, there was no guarantee that instrumental tuition would be available. If available, usually it was not free. Programmes tried to maintain tuition but did not have the funding to sustain it.

Challenges for families

The home environment of some families was not always conducive to practice and there were other practical issues, e.g. space for storage of an instrument or access to it.

Finance for lessons, trips, instruments and examinations was a challenge. Some programmes had adopted strategies to support progression offering discounts on paid for provision and free transport or asking for parental contributions.

Transport was an issue depending on the location of extra-curricular activities and concerts.

When children leave *In Harmony* they no longer have an instrument. Buying an instrument is a financial challenge.

Concert attendance required making arrangements for the care of younger children and making changes to shifts at work. Parents were concerned for their children's safety in large venues in city centres and also in some schools. Parents wanted improved communication about concerts and other activities. Some felt that this had reduced over time.



Challenges for programmes

Children transferring to many different secondary schools exacerbated issues relating to progression. It was difficult to establish good relationships with so many schools particularly when there were changes in leadership.

Differences in the timing of the end of day in secondary schools and their location presented challenges for planning extra-curricular activities. Generally, provision for the older children tended to start later. In one case, early arriving children could participate in a homework club.

Programmes differed in the number of weeks that they offered activities each term. Long breaks made it difficult for parents to motivate their children.

It was important to have a critical mass for extra-curricular activities. Ensuring that the age, commitment and expertise levels gelled was a challenge as was offering engaging and challenging activities.

Location and size of accommodation was important for access and being able to offer a range of activities. Secondary school students did not always want to return to their primary school. Parents needed to have easy access. The availability of venues for concerts and their cost was problematic for some programmes.

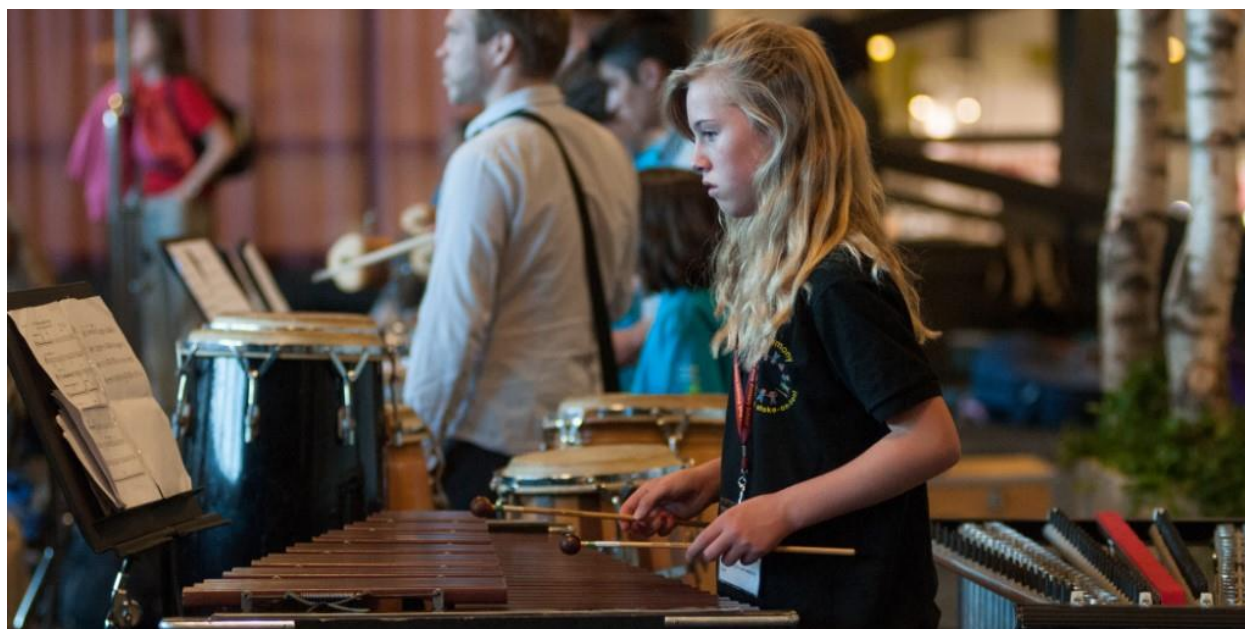
Financial pressures varied between the *In Harmony* teams depending to a great extent on whether they could raise funds to supplement ACE/DfE funding. Some asked parents for donations to support activities, while some relied on the level of commitment of staff to compensate.

Engaging parents was an ongoing challenge. Many families did not value music. Programmes did all they could to engage children and their parents. GCSE was a concern for some parents. Some parents did not see music as an appropriate career choice.

There were a range of cultural issues including those relating to gangs and religious beliefs which could act as a barrier to progression for the older children, particularly girls.

Maintaining momentum was a recurring theme. After the initial introduction of the programme it became difficult to sustain the excitement.

Partnerships were essential to support musical progression. Setting these up and maintaining them could be problematic. There was general agreement that there needed to be more coherence in the opportunities and pathways on offer.



Conclusions



In Harmony serves communities experiencing economic deprivation. Deprivation is defined not only in terms of material deprivation but also in the social exclusion from the ordinary patterns, customs and activities of society, i.e. cultural deprivation.

Engaging parents in areas of high deprivation can be challenging but is very important. *In Harmony* programmes need to try to engage parents at the earliest opportunity.

While the programmes provide the basis for progression in terms of engendering a love of music and strong musical identities, these are not sufficient to ensure progression.

Young people are vulnerable to activities being discontinued both when they transfer to secondary school and begin GCSE courses.

Secondary schools do not always have musically nurturing environments. The range of provision on offer may be limited and may not include orchestral experiences. This can apply to specialist music schools.

Affordable musical activity may not be available when children transfer to secondary school and want to continue learning a musical instrument. The pupil premium could be used for this purpose.

In Harmony teams cannot prepare young people for every kind of musical career. They need to provide information and support and have strong partnerships with other organisations that can offer what is needed.

Currently available extra-curricular activities may not be easily accessible to young people in deprived areas. There may be challenges in relation to transport, the level and intensity of

the activities and pedagogical approaches. Music Education Hubs have a responsibility to provide appropriate and affordable progression pathways. Working in partnership with them is likely to be beneficial.

It is important to provide opportunities for holiday courses, performances and playing with and communicating with professional musicians.

In Harmony programmes can and should learn from each other. Time devoted to continuing professional development where experiences could be shared could be very valuable.

To ensure that young people engaged with *In Harmony* can progress in the ways that they wish, it is not sufficient to have structured opportunities in place for them. Action has to be taken to remove the barriers which prevent them from taking up those opportunities.

Recommendations

The existing *In Harmony* programmes are diverse. They have been operating for different periods of time and have developed different ways of operating to meet the needs of the communities that they serve. Each programme has different issues to address depending on their location, the schools that they are working with and the specific nature of their local community. There are no simple fixes to promoting progression and no one solution that works for all.

To make recommendations in this context would be meaningless. However, it is possible to draw on the experiences of the six programmes, both positive and negative, to identify strategies, activities and approaches that may contribute to success in addressing the challenges faced in supporting young people to progress. It is hoped that this will have relevance beyond *In Harmony* to other music provision and indeed to other artforms addressing similar concerns.



Successful programmes at primary school will:

- Engender a love of and passion for music in children and young people
- Be inclusive
- Engage children in activities with a range of different genres of music
- Have high expectations of what can be achieved
- Support the development of a positive musical identity
- Provide opportunities for friendships with other young musicians
- Offer some choice of instrument
- Ensure that children and young people have opportunities to practice their instrument
- Provide opportunities for engagement with extra-curricular musical activities from an early age, long before transfer to secondary school
- Establish firm relationships with families and follow up with parents when children have not attended extra-curricular activities
- Communicate clearly to families using a range of mechanisms
- Offer opportunities for some form of accreditation/validation of achievement
- Provide pastoral support when necessary
- Ensure that there are frequent opportunities for performance, on occasion in prestigious venues
- Provide opportunities for holiday courses and other trips outside the local area to encourage greater independence

Successful programmes post primary school will:

- Provide a range of extra-curricular activities for *In Harmony* and other young people that is joined up and offers clear progression pathways
- Offer pastoral support to young people
- Provide subsidies, transport and logistical support where necessary
- Create opportunities for young people to feed into future plans for *In Harmony* to empower them and increase the likelihood that they are successful
- Be connected and have extensive partnerships with other local providers of music education opportunities
- Have extensive knowledge of what musical opportunities are available for young people in the area
- Be able to advise and support young people and their parents in making decisions about which musical progression opportunities to pursue
- Be tenacious in following up non-attendance in students recently transferred to secondary school
- Be connected and have strong relationships with secondary schools where this is possible and have knowledge of the musical opportunities that they offer
- Provide information to parents about the musical opportunities in local secondary schools
- Provide a homework club and food and drinks prior to extra-curricular activities
- Have extensive local knowledge about funds which may be available to support young people and their families in pursuing these activities
- Offer practical guidance as to how to access funding to take up these opportunities
- Have an active role in recruiting funders/donors to support young people's ongoing progression

Successful programmes in the community will:

- Ensure the community is aware of performance opportunities
- Engage with community partners
- Provide opportunities for parents/carers to engage directly in provision as volunteers
- Engage parents/carers in activities as early as possible (lesson observation, support for practice, help with concerts, help with extra-curricular activities)
- Provide parents/carers with information about the music provision in local schools
- Provide parents/carers with information about the wide range of possible careers in music
- Consult and meet with parents/carers so they can share any concerns that they may have

Successful programmes will:

- Be reflective and committed to learning
- Share challenges, and how they have been addressed with other *In Harmony* programmes
- Find ways of ensuring consistent data gathering
- Keep case studies of individual children to map progression journeys
- Set up alumni groups with support from past students

Research is needed which will:

- Ensure that all programmes are gathering consistent data on progression beyond primary school enabling comparisons to be made and engendering a more accurate picture of retention patterns
- Map out the journeys of young people as they transition as it is clear that some young people continue their musical journeys informally or through other providers.
- Test potential strategies that might support transition but that have not yet been trialed.

