



Early Years Arts Activity Mapping Project

Festival Bridge

Research by AYCORN East

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AYCORN Early Years Mapping Project Summary

This mapping study aims to understand and quantify current activities in arts and cultural spaces, as well as in Early Years (EY) educational settings in the Festival Bridge region, in order to build on existing strengths, highlight gaps, and prompt an inspirational road map for the future.

The research has been driven by the needs and opportunities present in the geographic areas covered by The Festival Bridge (FB), the regional Arts Council England bridge organisation for Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Peterborough and Suffolk. FB has been supporting cultural EY provision in this region through Culture Chain investment in the creation of the Arts and Young Children Regional Network (AYCORN) East.

FB commissioned Joy Haynes and Charlotte Arculus as representatives of AYCORN East to deliver an active research programme from April 2016 to August 2017 in order to:

- Develop a clear overview of current EY cultural provision and make recommendations as to where interventions are most needed or could be most impactful
- Support the development of the AYCORN East network
- Provide local cultural education partnership (LCEP) steering groups with a clear description of creative practice in EY and the ways in which LCEPs could support delivery

This research includes both qualitative and quantitative information. Working with Dr Jessica Pitt, AYCORN devised a research methodology which included data collection via an online questionnaire and in-depth case studies encompassing regional and UK-wide provision.

Abbreviations used in the report:

FB	Festival Bridge Organisation
AYCORN	Arts and Young Children Regional Network
EY	Early Years (used to describe young children in education contexts)
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
PVI	Private Voluntary and Independent Settings
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
ACE	Arts Council England
LCEP	Local Cultural Education Partnership
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
LA	Local Authority

Executive Summary

- There is an urgent need for EY arts sector development and investment.
 - ❖ Strategic investment in existing high-quality practice is required in order to build long-term sustainable partnerships between arts and education providers.
 - ❖ The skills required to work within EY sector should not be underestimated and are currently under-recognised and under-resourced; investment and advocacy are needed.
- Models of best practice and dissemination need to be developed.
 - ❖ EY arts provision does not currently appear to be of particular importance to arts organisations. Recognition of the skills required to deliver high-quality, collaborative arts activities for this distinct audience is low and communication of the offer to the EY sector is patchy. High levels of private funding for termly activities suggest that only those who can afford it can attend activities that many of us consider important to thriving and achieving.
 - ❖ Knowledge and understanding of quality EY arts practice needs to be clearly articulated by those with experience in the field.
 - ❖ Expertise across arts and education sectors should be drawn on to build mutual understanding and respect.
 - ❖ Advocacy is required on behalf of artist practitioners to communicate the value of high-quality arts practice to colleagues as well as parents, policy makers and those holding the purse strings.
- EY arts quality guidance is also required.
 - ❖ It is essential for the EY arts sector to clearly articulate the criteria for quality EY arts practice, as this can be used to offer guidance to those without specific knowledge of the field, which will then inform and help raise standards within the sector.

Please note that after this report was completed The Sutton Trust released this useful review of early years policy.¹

Report Recommendations

- Invest and develop the sector.

¹ <https://www.suttontrust.com/research-paper/closing-gaps-early/>

EY is the most formative period of development across a lifespan, when foundations are laid for learning, creative expression, emotional intelligence, motor skills and social intelligence. It is when audiences of the future are nurtured and when participation in the arts throughout life can be established. We recommend a strategic approach to EY arts funding based on this understanding, including:

- ❖ Creating a lead organisational body to take the EY sector in the FB region forward, while also developing strands of work that are holistic and interlinked, with reference and in response to existing national and international models
 - ❖ Supporting key individuals and visionaries working in the region in order to drive development and change
 - ❖ Developing a progressive programme that provides opportunities for national and international EY practitioners to gather in the same space, thereby facilitating connectivity and collaboration and developing cross-sector partnerships and perspectives; such a programme should include symposia, conferences, a residential model and a festival model
 - ❖ Developing local accredited EY arts and creative skills continuing professional development (CPD) and training programmes that engage with a broad range of professional practitioners working in EY settings, with particular focus on those who do not have degree-level qualifications
 - ❖ Building 'Communities of Practice', i.e. interdisciplinary and cross-sector partnerships which develop initiatives that respond to arts and education professionals, parents, community leaders and workers in order that all young children are able to thrive
- Champion high quality practice models and dissemination by:
 - ❖ Championing the benefits of the arts in young children's learning, development and wellbeing with reference to and in collaboration with existing models of excellence
 - ❖ Developing resources that help EY settings, parents and users to make informed choices about the arts provisions available
 - ❖ Developing relationships and direct communications with EY settings and nurseries
 - ❖ Mapping into existing top-tier authorities to disseminate into the wider EY sector, including marginalised and disadvantaged groups
 - Produce an EY arts quality guidance toolkit.

We recommend that an accessible and reflective toolkit is created that builds on the early years foundation stage (EYFS) framework and ACE quality principles in order to identify and support quality provision and practice, as well as enabling conversation and questioning.

We also recommend that the quality guidance aligns itself to the EYFS statutory framework's four guiding principles to shape arts practice in EY settings. Any proposed 'toolkit' should take account of the following:

- ❖ Every child is a **unique child**, so we must recognise children as collaborators, active and competent agents in their own learning.
 - ❖ Children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**, so we must recognise the distinctive qualities of EY and the importance of including families and parents in its development and delivery.
 - ❖ We must provide **enabling environments**, which means being open to and actively seeking cross-arts, education and social wellbeing partnerships to develop multifaceted collaborative initiatives and activities; it also requires creating inspirational multimodal spaces which stimulate the minds and imaginations and respond sensitively to the innate rhythms and physicality of young children.
 - ❖ Children **develop and learn in different ways and at different rates**, so we must recognise and value arts practice that can react to individual children's responses by being small-scale, intimate and exploratory, as exemplified by the artist residency model.
- Encourage artistic development.
 - ❖ Invest in arts practice that is open-ended, responsive and flexible, while also being underpinned by pedagogical theory and rigour.
 - ❖ Develop the artist residency model to enable collaborative projects between lead artists and associate artists, children and families, and settings.
 - ❖ Incorporate reflection and evaluation into all artistic programmes.
 - ❖ Broaden EY arts practice to include under-represented art forms.
 - ❖ Encourage international collaborations to raise standards and inspire new ways of working.

Introduction to Mapping the Project

Context

Early Years (EY) – from birth to five years – is a complex and multifaceted life stage, with dramatic developmental changes occurring rapidly and a working context that includes parents/carers and siblings in creative activities.

The EY arts field is fragmented and difficult to navigate. The Festival Bridge (FB) is seeking information about the scope and extent of quality EY arts provision in the region in order to create a meaningful, supportive and informed EY arts offer for 2018–2022. This offer should make the best use of the time, money, networks and partnerships available. The long-term vision is to make the region a leading area for EY arts practice within both the creative and EY sectors.

Broadly speaking, and perhaps with some bias, EY arts do not appear to be of particular importance to arts organisations, nor of great significance to Arts Council England (ACE) at the moment. The high levels of private funding for termly activities suggest that only those who can afford it can attend events that many of us consider important to thriving and achieving. Moreover, there is a quality issue when the main driver for this private provision is profit, as this comes at the expense of critical thinking, innovation and focusing on the child within activities.

EY arts activity has remained on the margins of core funding for many art forms: for example, the National Plan for Music Education does not include the 0–5 years age range in its core funding; those music hubs that offer music activities for children under five do so because they want to and arrange their budgets accordingly, but it is not a requirement. In order for all to receive what many consider a key component to human flourishing – namely, fruitful experiences in the arts – surely something needs to change in terms of funding for EY arts?

This project has great potential to harness and coordinate the wealth of expertise across art forms and early childhood practice in the region, building on existing good practice and identifying areas where activities may need to be encouraged, nurtured and/or developed.

Strategic Background

In autumn 2015, ACE launched the Cultural Education Challenge. This is a call for the arts, culture and education sectors to work together in offering a consistent, high-quality arts and cultural education for all children and young people. It therefore seeks to stimulate the formation or growth of local cultural education partnerships (LCEPs). These LCEPs are intended to encourage arts and cultural organisations, educational institutions and local

authorities to work together to drive a joined-up arts and cultural offer locally, as well as to share resources and bring about a more coherent and visible delivery of cultural education. Although the Cultural Education Challenge seeks to support children and young people from 0–19 at the time of writing, none of the FB area LCEPs currently focus on EY provisions.

AYCORN East was initiated to bring together arts, education and early childhood theory and practice. Its ambition is to increase the presence of and access to excellent arts and cultural opportunities for everyone, prioritising generating opportunities for families with the least access.

AYCORN therefore aims to:

- Highlight and showcase inspirational work in the arts and arts education for young children, including babies, and their families
- Spotlight work which listens to young children
- Advocate seeing young children as highly discerning audiences who deserve great art at local, national and international levels
- Advocate learning through the arts in early childhood
- Bring together artists and cultural organisations working in this sector to create ‘a community of practice’ through symposiums, professional development and training, and residential events and festivals
- Increase opportunities for artists to research, experiment, create and reflect, resulting in high-quality experiences for young audiences

Bridge–AYCORN Partnership

FB has been supporting EY arts work on an ad hoc basis in recent years. Across the FB region there are individuals and several arts, culture and heritage organisations that have developed EY arts practices over the last decade or so. Support has been given to a number of EY programmes in the form of time and money, such as the work produced by Cambridge Curiosity and Imagination in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council.

The network brings together artists and the EY sector to share research and develop new projects, including Norwich Puppet Theatre’s 2015 partnership with the national Polka Theatre organisation and the Royal Opera House to develop ‘Dot, Squiggle and Rest’, as well as Charlotte Arculus’ pioneering work through her company, Magic Adventure.

The network has started to explore ways that arts organisations and individual practitioners can work together, and in partnership with social and educational services, to research and create EY arts opportunities in a variety of new contexts, including museums, galleries and non-theatre cultural venues in addition to educational settings.

Music in early childhood has a long history in the eastern region. For example, Great Yarmouth Community Trust has a 17-year legacy of music and arts practice embedded within a Children’s Centre. Building on what already exists, AYCORN aims to increase effective collaborative cross-arts practice. Our region has been growing in strength and focus in recent years, and the growing AYCORN network of artists and educators working in the EY field is to be celebrated. To have a large number of artist respondents to the mapping exercise from across a range of art forms in this project shows that the organisation reaches those who are actively involved in EY arts work and thus those who bring the artist’s perspective to the EY field.



Early Childhood (Pre-Birth – Five Years Old)

The early childhood years are considered by many as the most formative period for a human being's development, with skills and abilities across many domains of learning acquired and developed between birth and five years of age. Before birth, the foetus can hear sounds and begins to attune to the primary caregivers' voices. The rhythm of the heartbeat in the womb gives us a sense of pulse, and movement provides a way to express and understand the world. Early experiences lay the foundations for all learning and positive engagement with arts and culture, which, for young children, is likely to be spontaneous, instinctive and natural. By providing experiences that allow and nurture a young child's desire to explore and be curious, artist-educators can enrich and deepen children's artistic capacities, as well as those of their families and carers.

It is also important to remember that babies engage very differently with arts activities compared to toddlers, just as toddlers engage in arts activities very differently compared to pre-school children. The early childhood years of development demand sensitivity, flexibility, and particular skills and expertise from both artists and EY practitioners.

The English EY Education and Care Landscape

The world of early childhood education and care (ECEC) includes a variety of provisions. It has ever been thus: informal childcare arrangements mixed with private and maintained provision across the birth-to-five-years age range. The following section describes the different types of provisions.

1. Childminders

Childminders are professionally qualified, Ofsted-registered carers who look after children at home. The provision they offer is flexible and individualised, caring for up to six children (0–8 years), they can also tailor their care to the needs of particular families. Since 2000 there has been a decline in the number of childminders working. Figures for the FB region (Rutter, 2016, Fig.17, p. 44) suggest that for every 1,000 children aged 0–5, there are between 6–10 childminders available in Norfolk, Suffolk and Peterborough, and 11–15 in Cambridgeshire. The Family and Childcare Trust (Rutter, 2016) suggests that this may be because parental preferences have changed over time (nurseries are now preferred) and because a high proportion of the childminding workforce are in their fifties and retiring. Childminders have to be registered with Ofsted, for which they must pay in addition to meeting all training costs.

2. Nannies

Nannies look after children in the children's family home. They work flexibly to meet the needs of the family and can be voluntarily registered with Ofsted if working parents wish to claim benefits.

3. Day Care

These settings usually offer care for children from 8am–6pm all year round. All day nurseries are registered with Ofsted and undergo regular inspections. They can be run by private individuals, community groups, educational organisations (e.g. Montessori), or as commercial businesses.

4. Private Nursery Schools

These settings are private organisations that choose to offer either sessional or full-time day care for children aged 2–5 years. Some settings adopt a particular educational approach, e.g. Montessori or Steiner. They may be open only during term time or throughout the year. They may be registered with Ofsted or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI).

5. Maintained Nursery Schools

These schools are maintained by local education authorities and are increasingly attached to a primary school. They provide full- or part-time education for children aged 3–4 years old (although increasing numbers cater for children from two years of age). Nurseries also offer after-school and before-school childcare.

6. Pre-Schools and Playgroups

These are community-based settings providing either morning or afternoon sessions, often run by volunteers or voluntary groups and private operations. They can be Ofsted-registered or unregistered and provide sessional childcare for children from 2–5 years old, usually during term time only.

7. Independent Schools

Some private schools offer pre-school provision for children from 2–16 years. They are privately owned and, although registered with either Ofsted or ISI, they can set their own staffing regulations in terms of qualifications and pay, and they decide their own curriculum.

8. Parent and Toddler Groups

These are informal groups run by volunteers for families with young children. They are based in community settings and do not need to register with Ofsted as they offer sessions of less than two hours per day.

9. Sure Start Children's Centres

Children's Centres were designed to be a one-stop shop for all services for families with young children: midwifery, health visiting, family support and other therapeutic services that include a programme of parent and child activities relevant to the families within each location. The centres were built on joint working to enable good communication across disciplines, with the hope of improving safeguarding for vulnerable children. By 2010 there were 3500 Children's Centres across England.

The numbers of Children's Centres in the FB region are as follows: 56 in Norfolk, 48 in Suffolk, 48 in Cambridgeshire, and 9 in Peterborough.²

Threats to the EY Education and Care System

1. Maintained Nursery Schools

Maintained nursery schools with their own headteacher and qualified teaching staff have the best reputation for achieving high levels of educational attainment for children, as identified in a significant project on Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (Sylva et al., 2004, Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2008). However, their existence is under threat as the financial costs of running a small-scale school operation is not viable compared to a primary school: the costs per child exceeds the government free school place contribution. Just over 400 nursery schools remain in England (Early Education, 2015).

Starcatchers, Scotland's national arts and EY organisation, has an international reputation for their EY work. Rhona Matheson, CEO, has reported the following impact on her EY arts work:

The impact of the political context – with 600 hours [of] free childcare for nursery-age children and eligible 2-year-olds in Scotland. There has been low uptake as there are massive challenges for 2-year-olds – [including] resistance from parents. The local authorities focused all that provision through pre-school nurseries, who are not set up for 2-year-olds. The [tension is the] economic benefits of getting women back to work versus more challenges and more 2-year-olds.

2. Children's Centres

More than 350 Children's Centres have closed since 2010, with only eight new centres opening. Alarming, spending in 2015–16 was down by 47% in real terms compared to 2010 according to Dan Jarvis MP (Walker, 2017). Many councils are choosing to merge centres to allow for more efficient delivery of services. What this must surely mean in real terms is a reduction in services. In recent years there has been a focus on targeted activity for families with specific needs, with a reduction in what has been known as 'universal' services for all families in the catchment area of the centre. Universal services are offered

² Source: Edubase <http://www.edubase.gov.uk/edubase/home.xhtml> (accessed 2nd March 2017).

to all parents with young children and have often included music and other arts-based activities. With the shift in emphasis away from universal to targeted services, it is likely that the funding for such activities is no longer available in many settings. Furthermore, the managers of settings may have professional backgrounds in social work, health or education and may be unaware of what constitutes high-quality arts activities for young children. When budgets are tight and time is limited, franchise packages that promote the educational value of their sessions against the early years foundation stage (EYFS) may be very attractive to managers seeking to add to their family programme without employing or managing a freelance professional. Among non-specialists, there is work to be done on raising awareness of what constitutes high-quality EY arts practice.



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This statement, posted (5th June 2017) on a Facebook group for early years music practitioners, encapsulates the current situation for EY arts activities:

I want to tell you, I've been keeping quiet but I've had enough. I have lost a number of music sessions recently due to the government cuts, and this afternoon I found out the last two Children's Centre groups have been axed. These were groups that were packed and very popular. Someone suggested parents should pay for the group. This was my reply...

There are some in our community who struggle financially. The reason why we offer free music is [to ensure] universal access for all. There are many groups where parents can choose to take their children and pay for the privilege. This [scheme], however, is free for a reason: [to make it] available for all; no one is left out [because they] may not be able to scrape the money together, because this is the reality of life now.

The value of music is more than money. I have had, and do have, other groups where parents pay.

But these Children's Centre music groups are sacred. We cannot cheapen them [by reducing them] to monetary value.

The Children's Centre provides a service so that each and every child and parent has access to high-quality music education, whatever their income or experience. Everyone is equal, with no one having to take me aside and request an application form for funding. This is not just a club to while away an hour a week. This is not only music education. It is a safe place for children to grow in confidence, find their voices, and develop skills in speech, language and communication. It is a place where their little voices are heard. It is a place where tired, exhausted parents who are literally on the edge of sanity can talk openly. It is a place where they feel safe enough to be honest about how terrible and how tough life is. This is not just a music group, this is a community, a support group. This is a place where we help each other, look out for each other and make friends, often for life. This is a place where people can laugh, a space for a moment in life that is squeezed by worries and troubles and there are many, many families who are struggling. I have spent 9 years not just teaching music but listening with my ears and my heart. This is not a group for families to hand over their coins; this is place where every single person is welcome whether they are the wealthiest or the poorest. This is a place of equality. You can pay for your clubs, but this is too precious to lose because this is not a club, this is a Sure Start Children's Centre music group which was set up for a specific purpose, and that is bigger than payment at the door.

Lorna Berry (Fledgling Music, based in FB region)

Early Childhood Education

Recent years have seen dramatic changes to the field of education, with many changes in EY policy during the coalition government's tenure (2010-2015). The Department for Education (DfE) brought in the Year 1 phonics check for all children, designed to assess every child's reading ability at six years old. Pay scales were revolutionised for teachers, removing the requirement for Qualified Teacher Status in academy schools and supporting in-service teacher training rather than university-based PGCEs. All of these measures have dramatically affected the education landscape today and were designed to reflect the rhetorical position of the DfE at the time. For instance, a government spokesman was quoted as saying:

We need a system that aims to prepare pupils to solve hard problems in calculus or be a poet or engineer – a system freed from the grip of those who bleat bogus pop-psychology about 'self image', which is an excuse for not teaching poor children how to add up. (Paton, 2013)

This view was countered by prominent figures in early-childhood education, including the Save Childhood Movement's 'Too much, Too soon' campaign. The following is taken from a letter to *The Telegraph* (12th September 2013) signed by 127 senior figures in education:

Though early childhood is recognised worldwide as a crucial stage in its own right, Ministers in England persist in viewing it simply as a preparation for school. The term 'school readiness' is now dominating policy pronouncements [...] Indeed current policy suggestions would mean that the tests and targets which dominate primary education will soon be foisted upon four-year-olds.³

These two positions clearly demonstrate opposing discourses that still abound in education. In the former, we see the traditional view of children as being in need of knowledge, which the teacher then transmits: i.e. education as 'putting in' or writing on the 'blank slate' (drawing upon John Locke) represented by the young child. By contrast, the progressive view of education sees child-initiated, child-led approaches as helping the child to realise what is already within them, thereby nurturing and scaffolding their learning. This sees education as co-construction, with teachers as expert guides. Here, children are conceptualised as needing to be free to play (drawing upon Jean-Jacques Rousseau) and as possessing an inherent natural goodness.

The ECEC landscape is stuck between these discourses, trying to align the requirements of testing and assessment of core skills and knowledge (the 17 early learning goals of the

³ Full letter available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/letters/10302844/The-Government-should-stop-intervening-in-early-education.html>

EYFS profile) with the need to include child-led and child-initiated learning opportunities as part of effective practice.

Parents

The most recent review of the EYFS recommended an increased emphasis on the role of parents and carers as partners in their children's learning (Tickell, 2011, p. 18). Moreover, Street (2006) reminds us of the importance of parents in babies' and young children's music and wider arts education. The notion that parents are a child's first educator was advanced by nineteenth- and twentieth-century educational theorists, such as Froebel, Pestalozzi and Susan Isaacs. Working in partnership with parents and including them in activities with their children has been found to be effective in increasing awareness of, for example, music at home (Pitt & Hargreaves, 2017a, 2017b). Similarly, the cultural activities and preferences of the home environment can be shared with settings in meaningful ways.

It is likely that many of us reading this report are also, or have been, parents of young children. This is true for the Chief Executive of Take Art (a National Portfolio Organisation and a pioneering arts charity serving the towns, villages and rural communities of Somerset), Ralph Lister. After Lister had a small child, he realised how bad much of the EY arts provision he saw was. EY has since become one of the company's five main threads, along with theatre, dance, music and rural touring. Throughout this report, we include cases of individuals in senior positions becoming parents and then realising the need for quality arts for young children. This is not an example of a joined-up coherent strategy, but rather a random one based on fertility and personal experience!

Knowledge that the arts are important for young children needs to be backed up with experiences of high-quality arts. This needs to be mainstream, appreciated as valuable, not considered 'domestic' or to do with 'mothering', and therefore low status. Rhona Matheson (CEO of Starcatchers) believes in the power of basing work on 'research and evaluation':

[I]t is about having the evidence about why it works, because there are still people who say, 'Why the hell are you doing performances for babies?', because they just don't get it. Those big symposia we did were really fundamental in being the catalyst for those who would never normally see the work. We had an Arts Council officer come who we knew was really sceptical, and after coming to the symposium he said he was totally converted. It's becoming part of people's cultural awareness that there is this work – but it's not embedded and there are challenges because there are those venues who don't want to pay for it because of the cost.

Some of us also make a transition, as parents, from being recipients of arts activities for young children to being leaders of such activities, as the following vignette describes.

Perspective from a children's librarian (also a parent) and Bounce and Rhyme Storyteller:

Attending sessions as a mother has really given me an idea of how other people do things. One Sure Start outreach group in a deprived area had a real mix of people and also snacks and drinks. They talked about nutrition as part of it. It was a real routine for the children. I ended up helping her run some sessions when she wasn't able, and I took a lot of ideas from her. The nature of storytelling is that you learn new rhymes from other people and carry them forward and pass them on. She has retired now, and that session has been cut. It's really sad because it was really, really good for people who needed it – an extra push to get out of the house in the morning with a small child, which can be really difficult. I miss that session – it was such a good one. The group wasn't just about the singing. It was about mental health and nutritional health: the kinds of things you may take for granted, but a lot of people could do with assistance with these.

On observation and learning:

It was so interesting going from attendee to deliverer. When I went with my daughter, as an observer, I would be so frazzled and tired, and sometimes I would look around, there would be this one-upmanship about what their baby is doing compared to what your baby is doing, and it's so hard. When I overhear conversations in the library like that I just think, 'Please just stop!' It's not a competition. Everyone is just really trying and the people who you think are the most together actually aren't. And you know everyone has made it out of the house that day – and that's important and that's what you need to remember when you see anyone with a small child. Getting out of the house is success and then coming together through song is delightful.

The Role of Arts Practice in Making the Transition to Parenthood

As we have seen, parents are very important in the arts activities that their young children access. However, the arts are also valuable for the wellbeing of new parents during the transition to parenthood. For example, new mothers frequently give up interesting, stimulating work to be with their young children in the early weeks and months, but many have entrepreneurial and arts experience they can channel into helping them transition to motherhood smoothly. Mummas & More is one such project: a local initiative designed to meet the needs of new mothers, devised by a new mother, with an emphasis on arts experiences. Although the project is for new mothers, its impact may well spill over into children's arts experiences through their parents' engagement.

Mummas & More:

Mummas & More is a creative events programme, network and blog based in Ely, Cambridgeshire, founded by new mother Emily Chase. It's a supportive network that brings together like-minded parents through creative and stimulating events, whilst valuing the time spent together as mum and child. Events consist of talks, creative workshops, and social meet-ups. (Although some events are just for mums and some for dads too!)

For many mums, it can be easy to feel a little lost in the amazing experience of being a parent. You might be looking for the support and friendship of other like-minded people or just want to do something different. Like us, you might absolutely love being a mum, but you might also be craving something for your mind to think about other than sleep deprivation and feeding, or you just might want to get your creative juices flowing! Mummas & More will endeavour to put on events that are fun, accessible and inspiring so that you can be the "Mumma" and the "More" that you always have been.⁴

Arts activities in early childhood can play an extremely important part in building and sustaining the growth of the parent–child relationship, which is of fundamental importance to our lifelong sense of security, confidence and self-belief (Bowlby, 1969; Stayton & Ainsworth, 1973; Ainsworth, 1979).

Although the education and care landscape has threats and challenges at this time, parents will always be the first educators of young children. Working in partnership with families will therefore enhance, strengthen and support much of the existing arts practice available for young children.

⁴ Excerpt taken from Mummas & More website (see: <https://mummasandmore.wordpress.com/about/> [accessed 4 September 2017]).

The EY Childcare Provision Landscape in the FB Region

Registered Provision by FB County

The following information is sourced from the FB counties' childcare sufficiency reports. Naturally, how data are collected and presented vary according to the remit for each county.

Registered Childcare Settings in Norfolk (shown as percentages of total provision)

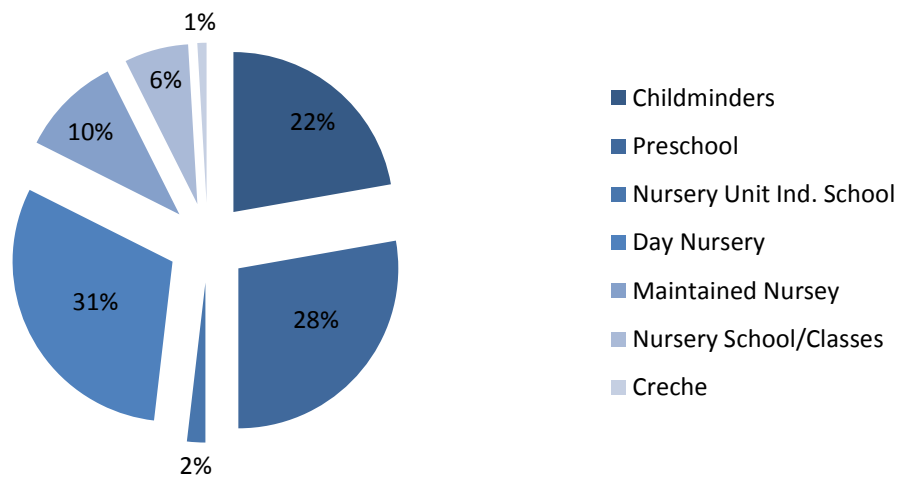


Figure 1: Norfolk (Source: Norfolk Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Report November 2016, p. 14)

Registered Childcare settings in Suffolk (shown as percentages of total provision)

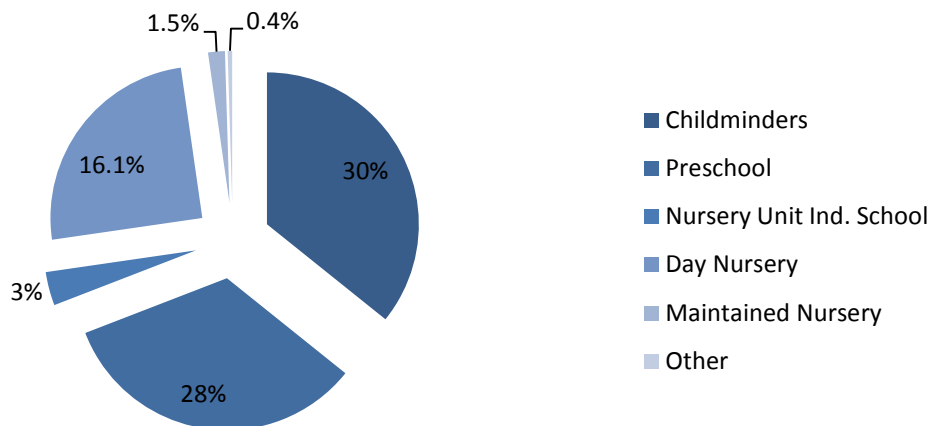


Figure 2: Suffolk (Source: Evinced database 28th April 2016, as cited in Suffolk County Council Annual Early Years and Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2016, p. 17)

Registered Childcare Settings in Peterborough (shown as percentages of total provision)

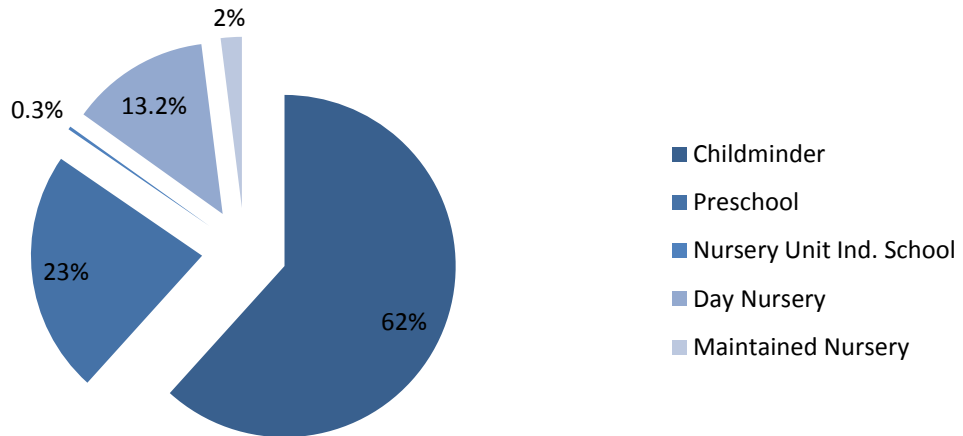


Figure 3: Peterborough (Source: Peterborough City Council Early Years Funding Entitlement Market Position Statement April 2015, p. 7)

Registered Childcare Settings in Cambridgeshire (shown as percentages of total provision)

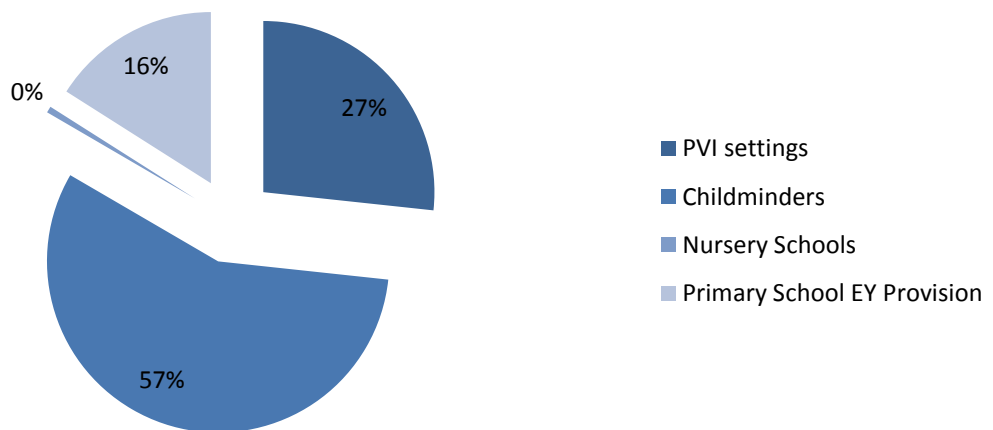


Figure 4: Cambridgeshire (Source: Cambridgeshire County Council Information Directory Autumn 2016)

The EY Arts Landscape

The working practices of EY artist-educators are characterised by freelance self-employment, low wages and little recognition or understanding from the wider arts sector. Work is predominantly project-funded, often quite short-term, with outcomes that may be relevant to the funder. Repeat funding may require amending something that works well, as funders do not like to fund repeat activities, perhaps emphasising the new and innovative over the tried and tested.

Other sources of income are privately funded activities, either through parent–child arts-based groups in the community or as a ‘bought-in’ service for schools or other settings, where practitioners work with the children and staff. Anecdotal evidence suggests that partnership working with EY teachers and practitioners is not always easy, as a visiting professional allows staff members to have time away from the children, so there is little meaningful transfer of skills and expertise. Time is money, and funding to pay for the arts practitioner to reflect on a session with other professionals, something that is a characteristic of quality practice, is only included in the budget by those who know its value. Quite understandably, schools and settings operate under tight financial constraints and want work with children to be the primary objective.

The work of the arts practitioner can therefore feel isolated and lonely, with little chance to share expertise that may have been accrued over many years, in some cases supported by postgraduate-level studies. This seems like a wasted, or at least underused, resource in the early childhood education sector. The selection of continuing professional development (CPD) courses for practitioners in settings is often prioritised according to what could be termed the ‘school readiness’ agenda: reading, writing, turn taking and the essential ‘required’ courses, such as first aid and food hygiene. Courses in the expressive arts are not prioritised by all settings. Individual practitioners may be very interested, but they do not hold the purse strings for training. Inspiring and knowledgeable leaders in settings can thus be influential. For instance, the head teacher at Homerton Nursery sees the arts as integral to children’s learning and sees visiting artists as beneficial in several ways:

The EYFS framework, which we use to plan children’s experiences, has a strand of expressive arts. In terms of priorities, all subject areas are of equal importance [in a] holistic approach. Arts are fundamental to children’s growth and development. They are key to children expressing individuality [...] and good starting points for verbal communication and a way for children who are not verbal to express themselves.

Franchise Business – EY Arts

The 2017 Conservative Government’s neoliberal dedication to free market principles has led to a division of arts provision into two categories, which Young (2017) calls the ‘funded

project' and the 'branded product'. The former is free at the point of delivery and the latter is paid for by those who consume the product. The franchise business model is situated in the latter category.

This model involves the franchisor giving a licence to the franchisee to own and run their own business using the brand name, as well as the systems and business model developed by the franchisor. These are businesses designed to make money.

In the area of EY music, well-known franchise brands include Jo Jingles, Monkey Music, Hartbeeps, and Boogie Mites. In the area of dance, brands include Tiny Toes Ballet, Happy Steps, Boogie Beat Music and Movement, and Gymboree. Visual arts franchises for early years include ArtVenturers and Tot Art. In the area of theatre, we have Stagecoach, Razzamataz, and Debutots.

These organisations focus on offering what sells: parents are seen as potential buyers of all kinds of services for their children. Franchise Direct, which offers franchise opportunities in the UK, describes children's franchises as a huge and growing area for investment:

For instance, educational and tutoring franchises are popular among parents who want to help their child learn and excel in school. Children also need to exercise and keep fit to combat the growing childhood obesity statistics, be exposed to the arts, have smashingly fun birthday parties and buy fashionable clothing. These are all viable options for children's franchises.⁵

A typical EY arts franchise has a presence in around 700 locations in the UK and Ireland, with most franchisees expected to have around 100 children registered by the end of their first year of trading, leading around 15 private group sessions per week. In addition, there are opportunities to run afterschool clubs, parties, and to work in ECEC settings. The start-up costs are dependent on the size of the area that is purchased, but they are typically under £10,000.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Franchise Model

Franchise EY arts businesses are a mixed picture, though some have a strong educational underpinning and recruit highly qualified franchisees. Many franchise models provide lesson plans for the year. Music (if it is a music franchise) may be played with a recorded backing track, and the person leading the session does not usually have any input into the choice of material she or he is delivering. The fact that these rigid lesson plans do not respond to the unique child, on that day, in that place, is a weakness of the model.

A franchise EY arts business is likely to have a strong brand image, access to good advertising and promotional facilities through their head office, and some knowledge of

⁵ (Source: <http://www.franchisedirect.co.uk/childrenfranchises/177>)

how to build a business. This is a threat to individual freelance artist-educators, who have expertise in their field but none of the brand support or promotional access to help them to clearly articulate the services they offer.

The last 20 years has seen a steady rise in franchise EY arts businesses, and they are active in our region. It is a challenging time for the independent freelance EY artist, as funding for EY arts activities has decreased and the number of franchise businesses has increased, yet both groups are targeting the same market: parents with children and ECEC settings. The well-articulated brands often win against individuals with expertise, knowledge and skill in their art form.

The issue of practice quality needs stating: it is essential for the EY arts sector to clearly articulate the criteria for quality EY arts practice and to offer guidance for those without specific knowledge of the field, as this will inform and help raise standards within the sector.

An EY arts practitioner's perspective on attending a franchise music session for young children:

It reminded me of going to Tumble Tots when I had little ones. I don't really know why I went – it was something to do. It was very much set with a pre-recorded pattern of what you do – a hello song, etc., all on a pre-recorded track of music.

The leader sort of sang along [to the pre-recorded track] sometimes, but you couldn't hear her very well; you could mainly hear the reasonably loud recorded music. It was aimed at toddlers, but there were babies there, but they couldn't have got much out of it. But they were there, I suppose jiggling along.

I think, for a mum, you would probably prefer to spend your morning or afternoon with some other mums as well and it wouldn't necessarily matter what the activity was. I remember that. You are quite desperate to fill your day.

I came away from it feeling [that] if that [were] my job, I would be very deflated, and I think people would enjoy it for a little time, [but] you would quite quickly find it very repetitive. I don't think the leader was enjoying herself.[...] I think, if you pick up your child from nursery and have a bit of lunch and want something to do, that is probably why you would go.

How did it encourage relationships between parents and children?

The parachute activity brought us all together. But parents mostly chatted.

I guess the format is similar in some ways to our 'universal' parent-child music group sessions – hello and goodbye song, but the difference is the recorded music [i.e. singing is not led by a human]. Perhaps people aren't bothered. I didn't recognise the families.

One director of a Children's Centre, although well aware of what constitutes quality arts practice, still makes use of a franchise business for the 'universal' group activities that are

offered as part of his parent–child activity programme. Universal groups are for anyone to attend, irrespective of their needs or situation. The director does not view this as a 'service', though: it is just something they offer. His view is that the quality activity, the 'service', is reserved for those families that really need additional help and support (the target families, see section 2, p.13 of this report). He makes these decisions based on Children's Centre finances.

This suggests that quality practice is perhaps costlier, but also that it is needed in particular cases, and that when funds are tight, the quality practice is saved for those who he perceives to have the greatest needs/most challenging circumstances.

Children's Centre director's perspective on use of franchise music businesses:

Families come in to CC's for different reasons; often it is about meeting up with your friends in a space outside the house. Quality is not an issue for them. It's something to do to fill your day.

Franchises offer CCs a free or cheap way of offering something which will get families through the doors as part of their 'Universal Offer'. The problem is that there is less and less money, but the same OFSTED pressure to reach numerical targets of families accessing centres. The franchise is an open access business [that's how they make their money] and it feels chaotic with little bits of interaction together but most of the time parents are just there with their friends. It has little to do with quality and everything to do with quantity.

This universal offer is fundamentally different from the high-quality in-house service that GYCT offers. Families come to these 'targeted' groups with an expectation that there is a reason for them to be there. Things need to change and perhaps talking therapy is not the right route. Therefore, I would make the case to Children's Centre and Early Help managers for the power of high quality creative work for families who could never access a universal group. This work offers high-quality, communicative, playful interactions that may not be happening at home.

The comments above pinpoint certain key issues. Parents with young children are keen to get out of the house and meet other parents in a similar position, as we highlighted earlier. They may have left a busy working environment, and suddenly they are stuck at home with a small child. They may have little notion of what constitutes a 'quality' activity. They are interested in finding a suitable time and place where other parents will be.

Parents will only advocate for quality when they can discern it. They are not experienced in EY practice; they may not be experienced as parents yet. We have to help them understand and care about the quality of the cultural and artistic experiences that they select for their children.

One of the key findings of this study is that we, as EY arts practitioners, have a duty to highlight the essential qualities of good practice to parents and others with a vested interest: i.e. what to look out for and how to tell if the activity is high quality.

Starcatchers CEO Rhona Matheson believes that communication with your audiences and stakeholders is essential:

One of the key points to our work is communication – creating bridges and relationships. Communication with settings can be difficult with low responses: our experience demonstrates that we really need to get out there, not [just] on the phone, with paper copies [of evaluations] to get feedback and gather evidence.



EY Arts Mapping Framework

Research Introduction

The aims of the mapping project were to examine the existing provision of EY arts activities in the FB region, to identify challenges and/or opportunities in the current climate, and to invite responses in relation to quality practice from various stakeholders.

Output

- Mapping current provision
- Current infrastructure, e.g. where EY creative practice is being delivered, how offers are made (subsidised, commercial, etc.), and who provides the opportunities
- Quality of provision (using the 'ACE Quality Principles' as a framework for discussing quality of practice)
- Progression routes, including what connections are used to take learning and experiences forward after early childhood
- Identifying short- to mid-term challenges and opportunities, including:
 - ❖ Challenges to current provision (i.e. the current education and cultural landscape is subject to rapid and substantive change, so it is important to identify which structures are key in the functioning of the ecology described above within this context)
 - ❖ Opportunities in the sector to help more children and families to engage in more and/or better cultural activities
- Recommendations

Audiences for the Research

- **Primary**
 - ❖ Festival Bridge
 - ❖ Festival Bridge area LCEPs (existing and future)
 - ❖ AYCORN East network members
- **Secondary**
 - ❖ Arts Council England
 - ❖ Local authorities
- **Tertiary**
 - ❖ Trusts and foundations
 - ❖ EY providers
 - ❖ Creative practitioners

- ❖ Schools
- ❖ Universities
- ❖ Local enterprise partnerships

AYCORN East's Research Methodology

- Stage 1

Mapping and gathering information via a bespoke questionnaire, designed by the AYCORN research team, to develop a broad picture of current provision in identified areas (i.e. Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Peterborough and Suffolk).

- Stage 2

Gathering data from a diverse sample of organisations and individuals representing different art forms and drawn from a wide geographical spread to highlight areas of good and abundant practice, as well as to discover gaps in provision.

- Stage 3

In-depth qualitative research to gather data through case studies via meeting and conversing with key individuals, using ACE's seven 'Quality Principles' as a framework.

- Stage 4

Gathering national and international references via consultation meetings with network and organisational representatives.

Mapping Project Aims

The aims of the mapping project were to:

- Identify and map the current range of organisations and individuals involved in offering EY (0–5 years) arts and cultural opportunities to parents, children and practitioners across the FB region. This included:
 - ❖ Arts and culture organisations, networks and projects
 - ❖ Local authority EY teams
 - ❖ Children's Centres
 - ❖ Cinemas
 - ❖ Galleries
 - ❖ Primary and nursery schools
 - ❖ Teaching schools
 - ❖ Franchise arts organisations
 - ❖ Freelance/independent artists and educators
 - ❖ Hospitals

- ❖ Playgroups, pre-schools and nurseries (maintained and PVI)
 - ❖ Independent schools
 - ❖ Libraries
 - ❖ Museums
 - ❖ Music hubs
 - ❖ Galleries
 - ❖ Social/charitable enterprises
 - ❖ Theatres
 - ❖ Virtual schools (children in care)
- Map the range of arts and cultural opportunities provided by these organisations and individuals, including:
 - ❖ Combined arts
 - ❖ Circus/clowning
 - ❖ Dance
 - ❖ Digital technology
 - ❖ Film
 - ❖ Installation art
 - ❖ Libraries
 - ❖ Museums and heritage
 - ❖ Music
 - ❖ Outdoor arts
 - ❖ Puppetry
 - ❖ Storytelling
 - ❖ Theatre
 - ❖ The visual arts
 - ❖ Writing/mark making
 - ❖ Other
- Identify individual case studies to augment and enhance the findings from the mapping exercise. These included studies of:
 - ❖ Cambridge Curiosity and Imagination
 - ❖ Take Art
 - ❖ Great Yarmouth Community Trust Children's Centres
 - ❖ Homerton Nursery
 - ❖ Starcatchers
 - ❖ A library practitioner
 - ❖ Castle Museum, Norwich
 - ❖ Music Education Hubs – Eastern Region
 - ❖ Franchise participants
 - ❖ A parent-initiated arts network

The project focused on the East Anglian County/City Councils of Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Peterborough and Suffolk.

Data Collection

Data for the mapping exercise were collected via an online questionnaire, which was made available from September to November 2016. The questionnaire was designed to capture a range of factual data and opinions relating to the ACE quality principles and CPD.

Completion of the questionnaire was entirely voluntary, although some respondents were encouraged to participate in order to ensure as accurate an account of the sector as possible. A directory of EY arts activity providers will be created from those participants who are willing to share their details in this way. The questionnaire required respondents to opt in to the directory; therefore, anyone who did not wish to have their details shared publicly will remain completely anonymous.

The data collection questionnaire was circulated in the following ways:

- Direct marketing via FB database of contacts
- Direct marketing via county council arts forums newsletters in Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire
- AYCORN social media channels (Twitter, Facebook, website)
- AYCORN direct marketing (email) to arts contacts
- FB social media channels (Twitter and website)
- Targeted approaches by region and arts type

Following the initial launch of the questionnaire via the methods listed above, the responses were reviewed weekly in terms of their geographic range and their coverage of arts activities. Where gaps were identified, the team undertook online research of potential practitioners/providers in that area or domain and targeted them directly via email and/or telephone. AYCORN also hosted two network events where the questionnaire was advertised. The data were shared with FB during collection to allow identification of any data gaps and known practitioners/providers who would have been expected to respond. Through this systematic and cyclical process, data gaps were identified to assess whether the data reflected a lack of response or an actual lack of provision.

In addition to the initial survey, a series of case studies were compiled through interviews with a range of stakeholders in the field to enhance the numeric data collected via the questionnaire. Stakeholders contacted included arts companies, museums, libraries, Children's Centres, schools, and parent-initiated arts activity groups.

Questionnaire Data Presentation

Using the data collected through this project, the following information will be presented:

- Participant information
 - ❖ Locations
 - ❖ Networks
- EY arts activities offered
- Type of organisations offering arts activities
- Geographical coverage of arts activities across the FB region
- Types of arts activities offered and where in the region they are offered
- Type of organisations that typically offer which type of activity
- The specific types of activity offered
- Target audiences for arts activities
- How arts activities are funded
- Venues for arts activities
- Perceptions of quality principles
- Past and future CPD needs
- Barriers to developing EY arts practice
- Anything else participants wanted to tell us

The total number of participants is indicated with a capital 'N'. On questions where not every participant chose to respond, the number of participants who did is indicated with 'n'. A lower case 'n' is also used to report the frequency of responses on a particular item in each question.

Case studies are placed throughout the reporting of the questionnaire data to complement particular findings.

1. Participant Information

The questionnaire was completed by 39 participants, 66% (n=27) of whom described their involvement in EY arts activity as freelance. The list below shows the organisations at which participants work in EY arts and/or their professional EY arts role. The sample size is small and any generalisations made to the wider population should be tentative. One respondent from a music hub (not included below) stated that he/she is not currently working in the EY field.

- 5 galleries and/or museums and heritage
- 6 arts organisations
- 2 social enterprise/charitable organisations
- 8 music organisations (including one franchisee)

- 7 freelance practitioners
- 3 dance and movement organisations
- 3 storytellers/writers
- 1 library
- 2 education settings
- 2 theatres

1.1 Rural and Urban Locations

We asked respondents about where they work in order to assess whether there are gaps in provision. The results shown in Figure 5 indicate that the majority of participants (64.1%, n=25) work in both rural and urban locations, with 2.5% (n=1) working in rural settings only. The remaining 33.3% (n=13) of participants work only in urban locations within the region.

This questionnaire data does not reveal how the work is divided among rural and urban settings for participants who work in both types of location. The data may suggest that rural locations are less well provided for in terms of EY arts activities. Freelance arts practitioners travel to places where families desire EY arts provisions and there are possible venues for their work. Those in rural communities may thus be dependent on sufficient interest from other families living in the same rural setting, having the funds to pay privately, and having an affordable venue close by in order to access suitable arts activities for their young children. Funded projects may be constrained in terms of reaching sufficient numbers of children and families within the funding guidelines, which may limit the locations chosen for the work: rural locations will not usually attract large numbers of participants.

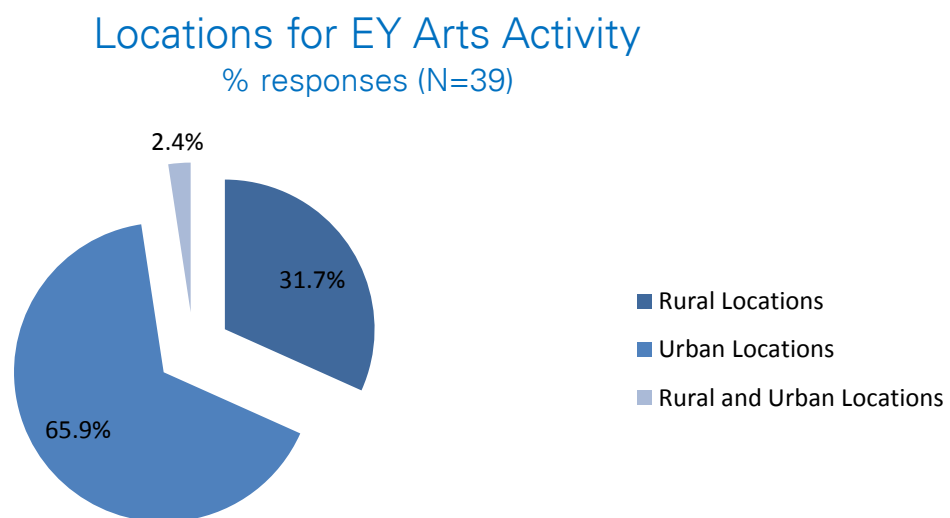


Figure 5: Percentages of respondents working in rural, urban or both types of location

1.2 Networks

We wanted to discover the range of regional, national and international networks that EY arts practitioners access and to see whether any networks are common across art forms. We also wanted to become aware of any potential art forms that may have no current useful networks so that the AYCORN and FB organisations might address such gaps and coordinate information sharing among practitioners. The following networks were cited by participants:

- International
 - ❖ International Society of Music Education (n=1)
 - ❖ European String Teachers Association (n=1)
 - ❖ European Network Music Educators and Researchers of Young Children (n=2)
 - ❖ Early Years Music Facebook Group (n=4)

- National
 - ❖ Society for Storytelling (n=2)
 - ❖ Youth Music (including Music F' EAST and Youth Music Network) (n=4)
 - ❖ Music Mark (n=2)
 - ❖ Sound Sense (n=4)
 - ❖ Musicians Union (n=2)
 - ❖ Equity (n=1)
 - ❖ Natural Voice Practitioners Network (n=1)
 - ❖ Music Educators and Researchers of Young Children England (n=1)
 - ❖ Earlyarts (n=1)
 - ❖ INSPIRE-MUSIC (n=1)
 - ❖ Making Music (n=1)
 - ❖ Early Education (n=1)
 - ❖ Small Size Big Citizens (n=1)
 - ❖ Puppetry Development Consortium (n=1)
 - ❖ Engage (n=1)
 - ❖ Puppeteers UK (n=1)
 - ❖ National Rural Touring Forum (n=1)
 - ❖ Foundation for Community Dance (n=1)
 - ❖ Group for Education in Museums (n=1)
 - ❖ Royal Society of Arts (n=1)

- Regional
 - ❖ AYCORN (n=5)
 - ❖ Suffolk Artlink (n=2)
 - ❖ London Early Years Museum Educators Network (n=1)

- ❖ The East Anglian Fabulation (n=1)
- ❖ Norfolk Early Years (n=1)
- ❖ Oxfordshire Early Years (n=1)
- ❖ Nottingham Early Years (n=1)
- ❖ SHARE Museums Network (n=1)
- ❖ Essex Sports Partnership and Early Years (n=1)
- ❖ Council of British International Schools (n=1)
- ❖ British Schools in the Middle East (n=1)
- ❖ OSIRIS Educational (n=1)
- ❖ OneDance (n=1)
- ❖ London Early Years Training (n=1)
- ❖ National Day Nurseries Association (n=1)
- ❖ Pre-School Learning Alliance (n=1)
- ❖ Cambridge Arts Network (n=1)
- ❖ Leadership for Learning Network (n=1)
- ❖ Learning without Limits Network (n=1)
- ❖ Norfolk Dance Artist Collective (n=1)
- ❖ The Garage (n=1)
- ❖ DanceEast (n=1)
- ❖ Norfolk Music Hub (n=1)
- ❖ Norfolk Arts Forum (n=1)
- ❖ Community Action Suffolk (n=1)
- ❖ Creative Minds East (n=1)
- ❖ Suffolk Creative Employment Programme (n=1)
- ❖ Suffolk LEP (n=1)
- ❖ Suffolk County Council Creative and Active Ageing Forum (n=1)
- ❖ SHARE Network (n=1)
- ❖ Reminiscence Network (n=1)
- ❖ Norfolk County Council Home Learning Environment⁶ (n=1)

In addition to the above, 10 respondents replied that they did not belong to any networks.

EY music practitioners appear to be well served by international networks, some of which may offer EY strands or special interest groups. At the national level, participants belong to a wide range of arts-specific groups: some have an EY focus and others relate to specific art forms. The gaps seem to be in the areas of film, digital technology, libraries and writing.

At the regional level, the local authority EY teams feature, as do AYCORN, Suffolk Artlink, and the Cambridge Arts Network. Arts-specific networks are less apparent, apart from a

⁶ The Museums/Heritage respondent added that this is 'not exactly a network, but we are building strategic links with them'.

dance artist collective and some music hubs. Suffolk Artlink is a member of a variety of Suffolk-based interdisciplinary organisations, as the following participant response shows:

Suffolk Artlink is associated or a member of the following: Community Action Suffolk, the SHARE Network, Reminiscence Network, Creative Minds East, Suffolk Creative Employment Programme, Suffolk LEP, Suffolk County Council Creative and Active Ageing Forum, Lowestoft Cultural Education network.

Perhaps this is an interesting model to think about for other regional arts networks. The value of joint working with other professionals cannot be underestimated. Building ‘Communities of Practice’ (Wenger, 1998) where understanding of the benefits of the arts in young children’s learning, development and wellbeing can be shared across disciplines is a vital aspect of raising awareness about young children and their families’ rights to an aesthetically enriched life.

2. EY Arts Activities Offered

Figure 6 shows the range of EY arts activities offered by sampled participants across the region:

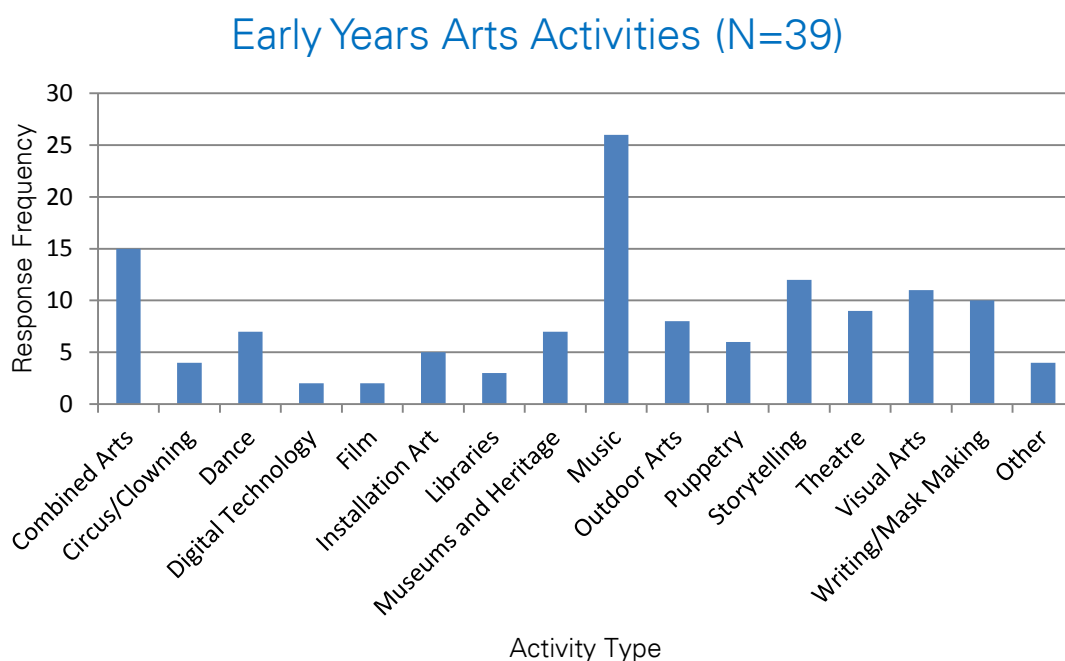


Figure 6: Coverage of EY arts activities across FB area

The results here show that music (n=26) is the most common arts activity, while combined arts (n=15), storytelling (n=12) and visual arts (n=11) are also popular. Interestingly, around half the respondents selected three or more art forms in their response to this question. This could be because EY work often requires a multi-modal approach, as young children

learn in a multi-modal fashion, so artists and practitioners may have developed skills across a range of art forms so as to work more effectively with young children. Interest in installation art has grown in recent years in the EY sector. This may be because the activity is open-ended and responsive to young children's wishes and intentions. Responses were received for every arts category, although with digital technology and film only receiving two responses each, they could be regarded as 'emerging art forms' for the EY age range. Responses in the 'Other' category included:

- *'In early years, it is not so clear cut! Basically, I provide a creative environment and the children decide what to do with it.'*
- *'Work with objects and the physicality of a historic building. Work with costumed characters (not exactly theatre: interaction with characters rather than performance).'*

Although networks and contacts may be stronger in certain art forms than others, we are reasonably confident that the results represent an accurate picture of EY arts activity in East Anglia. Nor are we surprised that music features strongly, as the networks are long established, with a possible residual legacy from Pre-School Music Association (in both networks and practice).

Since 2003 (beginning with a two-year funded Youth Music project), there has been a music team based in a Children's Centre in Great Yarmouth. This long-term embedded arts-based EY practice has had an impact on training and support for musicians and other artists who want to work in EY in the region over the last decade. It is a national and international example of integrated arts/music practice.⁷

Perspective of Charlotte Arculus, Director of Music and the Arts at Great Yarmouth Community Trust (GYCT) Children's Centres and Director of Magic Adventure:

Artists working in partnership with children and families make the work. A cohort of artists run various groups, some in partnership with speech and language services, some in partnership with the Parent Infant Mental Health Team, some with local settings and some universal - open access. The artists bring their ideas in and develop them alongside young children. This then feeds out into Magic Adventure and other strands of the artist's practice. I think we can genuinely say that young children are our research and development partners.

This is a 17- year partnership between a children's centre and a cohort of artists. Magic Adventure was originally commissioned by this CC in 2000.

We are about to consolidate the work of GYCT with the AYCORN network. This will go forward under the identity of Magic Aycorns.

⁷ Interest must be declared at this point: two of the authors of this report have been part of this work

The eight responses for museums and heritage in Figure 6 seems strong for this sector compared to mapping exercises conducted in other English regions. The Castle Museum in Norwich is an exemplar of well-established EY museum practice, as shown on page 39. This example shows that EY artist practitioners may have to educate some of their ECEC colleagues, as well as parents, policy makers and those holding the purse strings. They need advocates and friends to do this for them so that they can get on and practice in their field.

Castle Museum in Norwich has a long tradition of working with very young children, going back to the 1980s, when Katrina Siliprandi opened the museum for EY children, believing it to be important for children of all ages to access the collections.

The work with EY children has developed and expanded over the years with different staff members to achieve learning outcomes and incorporate music, drama, dance and art as well as the collections.

Steve Arber (the current EY learning and participation specialist) believes it is essential to introduce people to museums as young as possible so that they can overcome fears and worries that might build up in early childhood and to make exploring the natural world fun and natural:

The vision that we have is [that] whatever you do with anybody you can do with early years[...], you just have to do it in a different way.

He is [also] aware of parents as integral to children's experiences:

If you can engage the children, then you can engage the parent, or if you can engage the parents, you can engage the children, they work together. This develops the audience of parents that will bring their children with them, and when the children grow up they will bring their children. As a parent of young children, you need somewhere to go where people understand, where you're not going to be frowned upon and it should be a safe space.

On working in partnership with others:

We are doing a child minders' day. We have got 60 children coming in with their child minders. We will be doing storytelling and music, songs and rhymes. I'm going to be in the keep dressed as a jester doing half-hour medieval stories. I will not be holding a book showing pictures. We try not to use books when we are telling stories. We try to tell the story rather than show the story.

On the impact of a museum visit:

We get the children to be the characters in the story and get them involved. If you can find a way of connecting information with emotion and involvement, it is memorable for children. When you have [sounds, images], emotion and information all together in your

brain, it creates those neural pathways and it lasts forever. You probably remember school trips that you went on much more than you remember sitting in class learning things. This works from a very young age. Get them some really good memories when they are tiny, [and] they will remember as they get older: even if they don't remember the specifics, they will remember

how they felt. The important thing is how you feel: it lasts a lot longer than what you did or what you saw.

On listening to children:

We have freelancers that work here: all professional early years practitioners. We have an ex-head teacher from Attleborough Infant School devising our early years programme. She designs and re-plans the programme constantly in response to evaluation sessions and feedback [from] the children.

On challenges that have been overcome:

Art galleries and museums aren't intuitively early-years focused and that is one of the main problems that we've had. We invite people from nurseries and playgroups to come. I had a practitioner from a pre-school outside Norwich and she told me that she had come on the training [believing] that this was not going to be relevant for her children, but she was being sent, so she was coming. So, she was coming with her bags full of 'This is not relevant to me and there is no way you could possibly engage early years children in that work of art.' I got all the training participants to sit in front of 'Norwich River Afternoon', a quite-famous painting down in our art gallery. [I] got them to become four years old and we talked through the picture. The practitioner went away saying, 'I'm going to bring my children here.' She had assumed that because it was a painting on a wall, it's for adults and early years children can't relate to that.

This example shows that EY artist practitioners may have to educate some of their ECEC colleagues, as well as parents, policy makers and those holding the purse strings. They need advocates and friends to do this for them so that they can get on and practice in their field.

3. Type of Organisations Offering Arts Activities

Overwhelmingly, Figure 7 shows that the majority of respondents were freelance artists and educators.

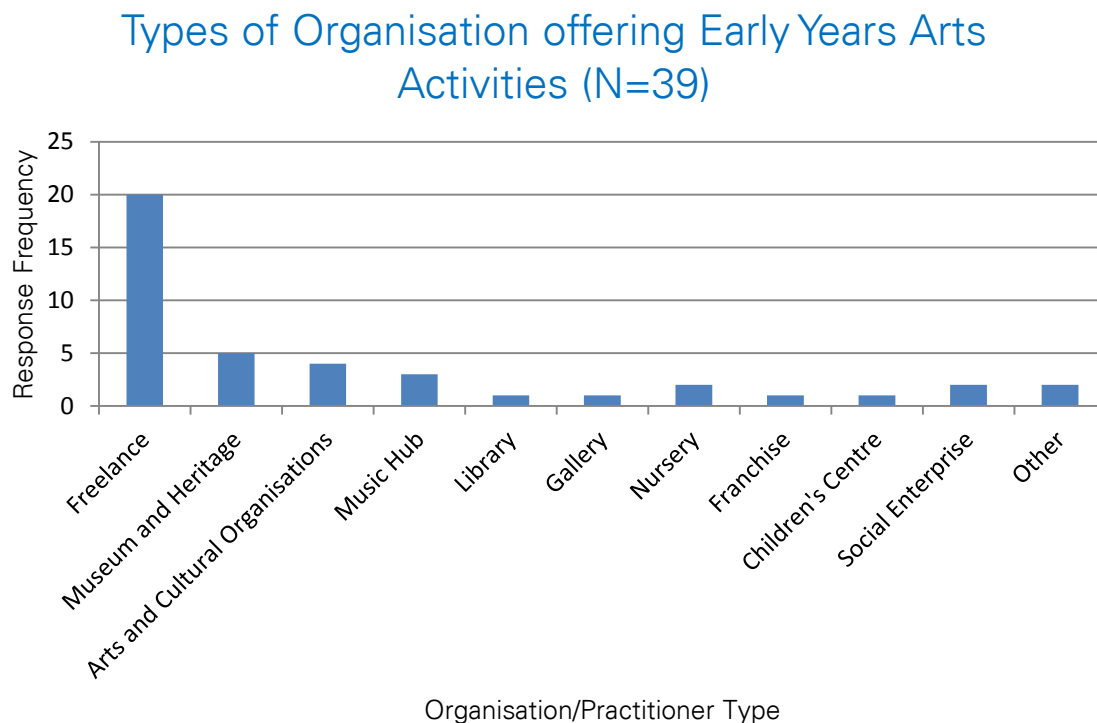


Figure 7: Types of organisation offering early years arts activities

The two responses in the 'Other' category included a digital arts company and one respondent who runs weekly sessions with parents and children, plus special events at Children's Centres, art centres and festivals.

It is perhaps notable that only two respondents identified nurseries and only one a Children's Centre as their base organisation (although one of these participants is head of a nursery school, so they may be representing arts activity across the setting). The two nursery participants are an EY practitioner and an EY music/baby yoga practitioner respectively. The low response rate may reflect cuts to budgets, which have significantly impacted Children's Centre services nationally.

With regard to the other responses, one gallery in the region is clearly involved with engaging under-fives. Interestingly, there were participants from settings that might be considered galleries, but who they chose to identify as working at museums.

When these results are considered alongside the arts activities offered (Figure 6), there is variance between the number of arts activities (of a particular type) offered and the number of providers who seem to be best placed to offer that activity. Activities such as theatre (n=9), featured quite strongly in Figure 6, yet no theatres appear to offer activities for under-fives. Similarly, libraries (n=3) scored more strongly as an activity (Figure 6) than as an organisation (Figure 7). We may therefore assume that the names and locations of such activities are fluid to some extent (i.e. that library and theatre EY activities do not have to take place in libraries or theatres). One respondent runs a touring theatre company, for example, and there may be mobile/peripatetic library services taken to schools and other EY settings.

Music Education Hubs

Figure 7 shows three music hub participants, which is an encouraging response for the region as music making with children under five is not an essential part of their core service offer. In spite of this, music education hubs (MEHs) are aware of organisations that provide EY music programmes in their given regional areas. Some feel that, regardless of their constraints, EY is an important area to focus on, particularly the Cambridgeshire MEH, while the Norfolk MEH plans to focus on EY in the future. Some key themes drawn from discussing quality and best practise with MEHs were:

- An EY focus involves family engagement, making it important for future legacy planning.
- Personal experience often drives change in organisations regarding EY engagement.
- Music education from an early age has an impact on learning across all other subjects.
- Programmes are influenced by feedback and thoughts from practitioners.
- MEHs have a responsibility to demonstrate best practice for families and communities, as well as to uphold music's role in social mobility.
- There is a general awareness of the market for EY arts and the recognition of good and bad practice.
- In terms of the role of the parent and families in EY activities, supporting parents sets the foundation for access to provision in the future.

4. Geographical Coverage of Arts Activities across the East Anglia Region

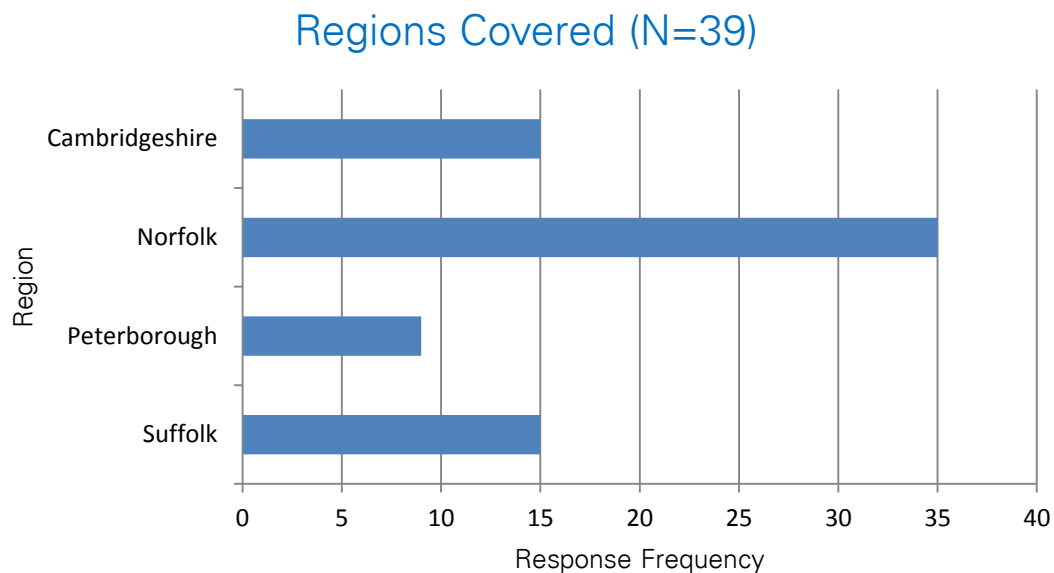


Figure 8: Geographical coverage of arts activities across the East Anglia region

These data suggest that many participants work across several regions. Closer inspection reveals that 15 respondents work in two or more regions, and eight of them work in every part of the region. This sample shows Norfolk as the most active region for EY arts activity.

5. Types of Arts Activities by Location in the East Anglia Region

The following table demonstrates which EY arts activities are offered in each location.

Table 1: Arts Activities by Geographical Location (N=39)

	Cambridge	Norfolk	Suffolk	Peterborough
Combined Arts	7	14	6	5
Museums	2	5	2	1
Visual Art	3	9	4	2
Writing	5	8	5	3
Music	10	20	9	6
Dance	3	6	2	2
Theatre	2	9	2	2
Outdoor Arts	4	7	6	3
Digital Technology	2	2	2	2
Film	1	2	1	1

Installation Art	1	5	2	1
Storytelling	3	12	4	2
Puppetry	2	6	4	2
Libraries	0	3	0	0
Circus/Clowning	0	3	1	0
Other	1	3	2	1

The results in Table 1 show a good distribution of EY arts activities across the region. There seems to be quite a lot going on. Most arts activities appear in every part of the region, except libraries and circus/clowning activities. The results are, however, shaped by nine participants who work in every part of the region and across multiple art forms. These individuals describe themselves or their organisations as follows:

- Freelance bid writer
- Music and movement organisation
- Cambridge Curiosity and Imagination
- Laboratory Media Education
- Storytelling arts facilitator
- Musician and drama practitioner
- Garlic Theatre
- Banyan Theatre Company

As an example, Laboratory Media Education offers combined arts, digital technology, film, installation art and music in every geographical location. The results above include each of those activities in every location from Laboratory Media Education alone. Similarly, Banyan Theatre Company operates in every location, offering combined arts, dance, digital technology, music, puppetry, storytelling, theatre and visual arts. They, too, are represented in every location across these arts activities in the results above.

Storytelling expertise is strong in Norfolk (n=12) compared to Cambridgeshire (n=3), Suffolk (n=4) and Peterborough (n=2). Library responses were not as high as might have been expected. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Bounce and Rhyme Time sessions for young children and their parents frequently take place across the region in libraries. Could it be that the librarians who run these sessions lack the confidence to call the activity 'arts' when they perhaps do not feel like qualified or skilled artists themselves? They may therefore be hesitant to participate in a questionnaire about EY arts practices.

One library respondent was willing to talk about her work in EY. She uses song, story and rhyme, both in libraries and in a freelance capacity for the Norfolk and Norwich Festival (NNF), among other settings. In this NNF setting, the group of participants is large and anonymous, and you can attend whenever you wish. Pitt and Hargreaves (2017a, 2017b) have found that parent-child music groups offer a multi-layered socialisation opportunity:

they encourage participants to interact with peers, as well as enabling intimate parent–child bonding moments. In these large, anonymous groups, perhaps there is freedom for parents to be uninhibited and to join in with the activity wholeheartedly, thereby showing their children how to join in and have fun in the group. This shows that group numbers can matter to engagement in EY arts activities.

Children’s Librarian – Millennium Library

Within the children’s library, which came into being in 2001, we have always had a provision for EY audiences. The sessions we offer have adapted and evolved to tailor [our service] better to the audiences. We now have three separate things which we do, making sure we meet the needs of all age ranges. We cover the 0–4-year age range and we do three different sessions for that age range.

Who does the work?

I deliver two of the sessions and we have various members of staff who deliver sessions. In house, we have Baby Time and I do Toddler Time (15 months to three years) and Book Time (three years to school age). They are adapted to meet the needs of whoever is in the group. We also have external organisations coming into the library, and they are organised by our community librarian. I have been doing these groups for about 12 years.

The community librarian oversees [the offer] and the library staff work together to deliver the session. It’s my thing. I love all library assistant work, but this particularly is my baby. My role is to try and engage with other staff members and anyone who is new: I ask if they would be interested in joining in. We always need a bank of staff who are willing and able and want to help. For me, my first story time was a baptism of fire. I was completely unprepared but it just rolled on from there.

The small team in the children’s library take it in turns to run the sessions, and we do try and engage with other staff members. I have taken it under my wing. I absolutely love it.

Why Early Years?

Personally, I feel that now, having a child of my own, even though I thought this before, I have always felt that education was underfunded and there was a gap for EY in terms of how it was being provided and how it was delivered. I felt my role as a librarian was to plug that gap and deliver something which was perhaps lacking in order to enrich the lives of children from every background. Having my own daughter and accessing Children’s Centres and ultimately seeing their funding being cut for me it became important to make sure there was a high quality, EY provision for free for everybody. As Children’s Centre funding was cut, I saw that people were not able to access quality [cultural] provisions any more, and they could not necessarily afford the paid-for groups. So that’s what I intend to keep doing.[...]It’s almost as if all graduate and move on together: this group gets them

ready for school. The group helps get them ready for sitting down and listening, responding, socialising and engaging, [and] behaving to a certain extent, though that's not my main focus.

6. Distribution of Arts Activities by Organisation Type

Table 2 shows that music is a ubiquitous activity - particularly those participants that call themselves a 'Freelance/Independent Artist' - offered by every organisation type apart from 'Gallery'.

Table 2: Distribution of Arts Activities by Organisation Type

		Organisation Type										
		Nursery	Music Hub	Museum and Heritage	Library	Gallery	Freelance/Independent Artist	Franchise	Digital Arts	Children's Centres	Charitable Organisation	Arts/Cultural Organisation
Arts Activity	Combined Arts	2	1	1	0	1	6	0	1	0	0	3
	Circus/Clowning	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
	Dance	2	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0
	Digital Technology	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
	Film	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
	Installation Art	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	0
	Libraries	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Museums and Heritage	1	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
	Music	2	3	1	1	0	13	1	1	1	1	1
	Outdoor Art	1	1	1	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0
	Puppetry	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0
	Storytelling	2	0	2	1	0	5	0	0	1	1	0
	Theatre	1	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	1	0
	Visual Art	2	0	4	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	1
Writing and Mark Making	2	1	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	

Other	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
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This group is active in every category of arts activity, apart from ‘Libraries’, which indicates the nature of EY arts: the sector is reliant on freelance practice. This poses some issues in relation to CPD and maintaining up-to-date, quality practice. Although many freelance practitioners are conscientious in attending training sessions and workshops at their own expense, it can be costly in time and money (and a question of priorities) to keep abreast of changes in early childhood policy and regulations, along with wider issues of education and care of the very young child, particularly if EY arts activities are only one strand of a portfolio career in the arts.

The arts and cultural organisations represented by this sample of participants do not cover every art form in their EY work. It might therefore be worth exploring what the barriers to working with the EY sector are for arts and cultural organisations, especially with dance, digital technology, film, installation art, storytelling and theatre, which have no current support.

The nursery schools that participated in the questionnaire have an interest in a range of art forms. The following case study from Homerton Nursery, Cambridge, provides further insight into the expressive arts as part of children’s holistic development and the importance of flexible approaches based on observing children’s interests when designing arts projects for young children.

An interview with the Head at Homerton Nursery

Priorities with the arts:

To me, creativity is not about crafts, although children need to learn skills. [Rather,] creativity is about children expressing themselves. So, for instance, if children are making a card for Christmas, good practice is about having as many materials for them to explore and use [as possible] rather than a teacher saying how they are going to do it. The multi-sensory aspect of creative arts is very important because young children need to experience things in more than one way. They need to touch, hear and see things to understand them fully.

Why are EY arts important?

Because children are developing a sense of who they are. A lot of this is through their relationships with other people. Creative activities are a very good way for people to connect and share experiences. This sharing and connection is fundamental to children’s growth and development and ability to develop healthy responses. What is very important is that there is no right or wrong. So, it develops self-esteem, brain development, physical skills and positive connections.

What does quality look like?

It's about giving children a breadth of experience and as many different kinds of experience and open-endedness; the open-endedness and non-judgemental aspect is really important, as is being sensitive to how you present experiences. Skills are important in the arts and being creative requires skill, but what is really important is that the skills side does not overpower the communicative and creative aspect.

Delivering high quality practice is a challenge for nursery schools as their job is to educate the children, but fundamentally we want them to develop as confident individuals and be excited about learning. So, it's about presenting them with things that interest and engage, taking their lead but being sensitive to things which can add to the experience and then adding things which can sensitively develop their skills. For example, it can be a mixture: dancing could be quite structured, or it could be about exposing children to different types of music, rhythm and materials to move around with so they can create their own expression without any kind of agenda at all.

What kind of benefits do you observe?

Children relax. Some children excel in those kinds of environments. We want children to see themselves as competent learners and they do not make the demarcation of subjects. They love singing and music. Play and creativity are very close. It seems to me that artists understand play, they haven't lost the ability to have unstructured play without agendas. Just the pure enjoyment of doing something and intrinsic motivation to explore, discover and be curious, that's what we want for our children.

The benefit of a very good EY education is that children become autonomous and confident learners, but this does not always show until the children are older. It is hard to measure the impact of this. You can observe how busy and engaged children are, and their behaviour will show that you are getting it right.

What are the factors that enable exemplary practice?

Drawing on experts is really important. Many people [practitioners] are not that confident in certain aspects of expressive arts, so if you can inspire the people working with the children, it not only has a benefit [at] that point in time, it has an ongoing benefit in terms of their confidence, the things they can do and their own creative enjoyment. This is why you get an 'A-B-C' approach in some settings: it's because there is a lack of confidence. If you lack that creative instinct, that creative playfulness, it's great to be inspired by someone else.

It's not all about money. I have seen great work with cardboard boxes. It requires creativity. Imaginative play comes out of messing about and also by sharing and negotiating with others through shared language.

Do you have a budget for the arts?

We have an integrated approach to everything pertaining to learning. As in all public-sector areas, we have to be more and more creative about how we spend money. We have to think out of the box.

Is it useful to have EY arts projects?

It's very important. The people approaching you have to be very open minded, so anyone who has a rigid view of what they want to do could run into problems. Young children have specific needs and requirements, and for the project to be beneficial to them, we will protect the wellbeing of the children and their right to choose, which is very important. We don't direct children in the way you may see older children being directed in classrooms, so the structure of the project will need to be very flexible. It's about the process, not the performance, and the children's experience is what is important.

The idea of asking parents and carers to share the process is a positive and helpful thing. That invitation can inspire and give ideas and resources to parents to use at home and [becomes] a celebration of beauty. It can only be a good thing to include parents.

How do you listen to children?

Listening to children is central and fundamental to everything we do. It's not about asking children questions. It's about tuning-in and careful observation. Tuning in to their emotional state and their interests, and incorporating this into how you plan experiences for them and how you provide for them or how you respond to them. I think, in that broad sense, their voice is completely central to what we are doing. It's about the whole child, their response to you and the environment, and adapting your language, your response, to the things you provide for them [so that it] is tailored to their needs. We observe what children are interested in and this informs what we do next. This is what we mean by listening to children.

7. Specific Types of Activity Offered

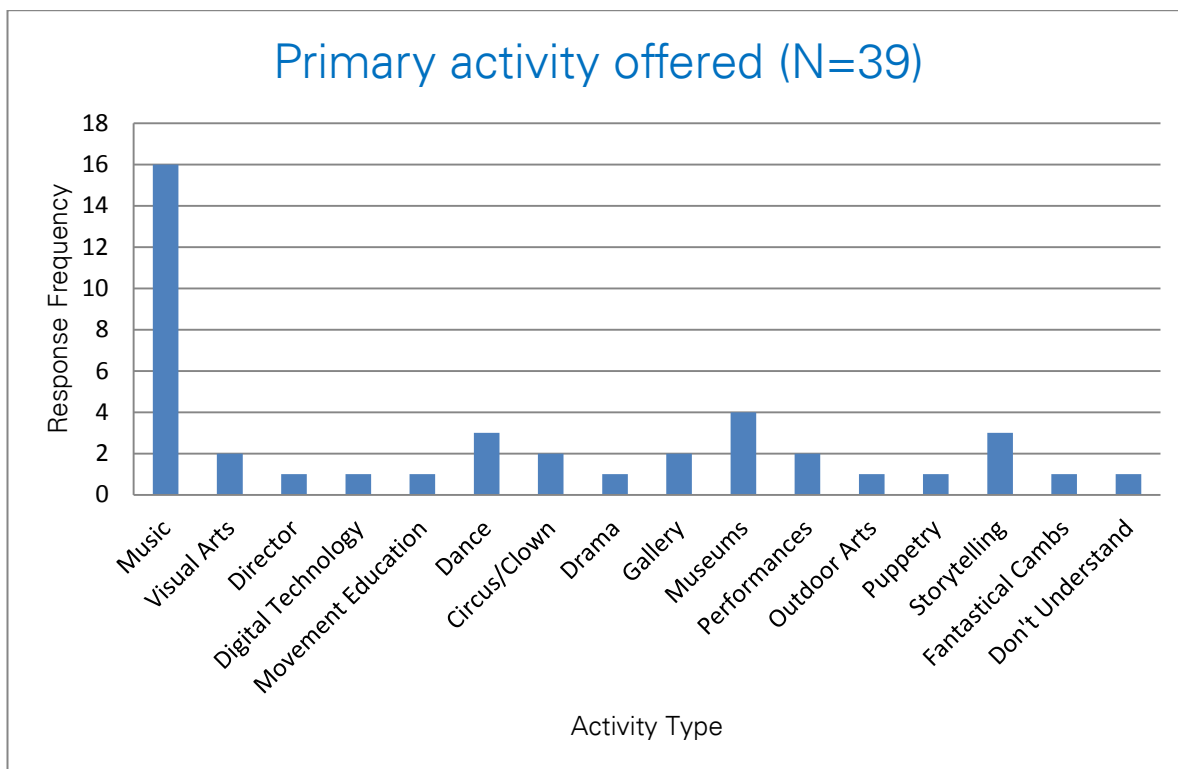


Figure 9: Primary EY arts activities offered by respondents

Figure 9 clearly shows that music is the most frequently chosen EY activity (n=16). This might be because music is the most common arts activity in EY education, or there may have been particularly strong networks or access points for the survey participation. The remaining activities are quite well distributed across a wide range of art forms: museums received four responses; dance and storytelling three, visual arts two, and most of the rest received one each. The notable exceptions are film and installation art, which do not appear as primary arts activities for any respondent (see Appendix A for more detail). The following case studies offer examples of EY arts practice, the challenges that the artists and organisations encounter and the underlying principles and aims of their work.

Cambridge Curiosity and Imagination (CCI)

Why EY?

A particular connection with the head at Colleges Nursery, Sue Bainbridge, who was keen to explore artists in EY settings. It's sometimes easier for schools to make space for younger children.

Who does the work?

[Our] core network worked together for ten years or more. Although specialists in [certain] art forms, [our] core artists are extremely flexible and facilitative. A creative approach

speaking in 100 languages . Sometimes the core team will work alongside a more specialised artist. This helps define the project to audiences.

How do you listen to children?

Document absolutely everything. Documentation is part of CCI's practice. By documenting, [we] mean 'listening to children': making observations, scribing for children, noticing what they are doing, thinking about what it is they are exploring, looking at their big questions and offering these [questions] back to them, photographing and filming them whenever possible. [It involves] trying to make visible their thinking through documentation and trying to find out what we can learn from that thinking in order to influence how we carry on thinking with them. It becomes a conversation and a respectful exchange. We go in with invitations, provocations, and sometimes constraints or outputs are set on us by our partners (for instance, one project has to be turned into exhibitions; in another we are setting out to shape new maps led by the children; so we know where we are going, but we don't know what the content will be).

CCI's work in galleries and museums has explored how it is often liberating to be led by children, how this is often freeing for parents and helps families access places which might otherwise seem confusing or incomprehensible.

Are there any challenges?

Money. Finding the time to go deep and revisiting. Honouring the input as co-creators and going back and showing them the extent to which they have done that is a challenge. Being respectful, time is a challenge. It's a challenge to find the time to show children how seriously we take them. When we are able to do this it is very powerful and feels like a proper long conversation. It's really hard to do this.

We consider ourselves to be advocates for children to be taken seriously. It's a challenge to find the time to show children how seriously we take them. When we are able to do this, it is very powerful and feels like a proper, long conversation. It's really hard to do this. We post lots of stuff, but it's hard to connect up all the conversations, parents, etc. We bring such integrity to the conversations.

Taking it seriously – oh, it's just art. The challenge is about being articulate enough about why we do it. We want to use some of this new thinking around logic models and theories of change and understanding the social impact of our work to explain why we do what we do. Why is it crucial? How do we articulate what we are? An arts organisation is not enough. An Arts and wellbeing organisation – with wellbeing all around us - does that explain it?

We work very closely with educators and we take it really, really, seriously. We work with Key people at the faculty of education, [such as] Mary Jane Drummond.

When I think about what CCI is trying to do, ultimately, it's about citizenship, knowing your place in the world, but we don't explain our work like that. So, we are on a bit of a journey about how we explain ourselves better. That's a real journey.

Staying relevant and[...]in touch with the academic research world while staying practical is a challenge. How to invest in our own CPD [is a challenge].

How do you reach disadvantaged families?

We explore with our partners where [and] how to best work with communities. Also, we work with whole classes, so [we] catch disadvantaged children this way. Disadvantage may be found in both the inner city or isolated rural communities

Two Funded EY Projects Delivered by Take Art (Somerset)

Soundwaves 2:

Soundwaves 2 is a Youth Music-funded project which places musicians in settings throughout [the] South West region in strategic, targeted areas, such as working [with] disabled children [in] rural areas and areas of deprivation. These 'case studies' last for 20-40 weeks, and part of the thinking behind this is that the high-quality practice delivered by and rooted in each residency can be held as an exemplar to inspire practice. Artists work with staff to make the work sustainable beyond the residency and into the wider setting.

A key factor is [that] settings who receive the residency sign up to a package of CPD which will extend to other settings in the area. Up-skilled practitioners from these settings are supported to share their learning and deliver CPD.

Evaluation includes perspective from parents, practitioners and musicians.

At a strategic level, the project wants to get the conversation about early-years, high-quality professional practice becoming more embedded in music education hubs, getting them to explore how they might be able to incorporate that. They are evaluating where music education hubs are around early years music, what their thinking is, and what might be preventing them from doing it. They are exploring how Take Art can support them beyond supporting them as a network. They have a steering group acting as a consultancy/advisory body. This is facilitated by Dr Susan Young.

The project is part of a wider research study conducted by examining sustainability in funded projects.

Hopper:

Hopper is a two-year project that creates opportunities for young children to experience great art and culture in early years settings, such as pre-schools, nurseries, libraries and Children's Centres. It also supports seven theatre companies – some who have experience of making work for young children and some who don't – in developing high-quality and relevant performances for under-fives and increasing access for hard to reach and marginalised children.

Part of the thinking behind Hopper is to create work which is small-scale, intimate, exploratory and [that] can react to children's responses.

The process will involve inviting theatre makers to work alongside nursery practitioners to create new work, as their voices are not often heard. Work will be developed in settings and then shared in theatres with the wider EY community.

8. Target Groups for EY Arts Activities

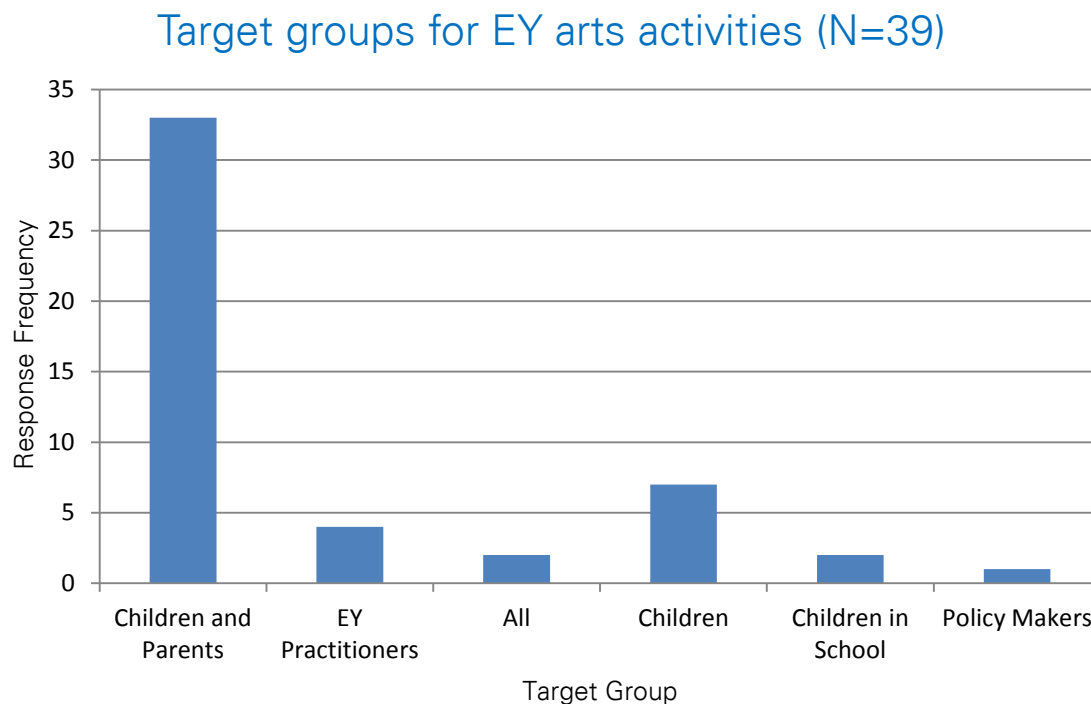


Figure 10: Target groups for EY arts activities

Figure 10 gives broad information about the target groups that participants work with in their primary EY arts activities. The 'Children and Parents' category (n=33) includes no detail about the age range of the children (for this information, please see Appendix B). Nevertheless, it is the dominant group with whom participants engage, while children (without their parents) are the next most popular group. Working directly with EY practitioners is an important aspect of EY arts work as it raises awareness of the benefits of the arts for young children and for practitioners. It could be that working with EY practitioners is perceived as secondary to the main work in EY for some participants (please see Appendix C for more detail).

9. Funding for Primary Arts Activities

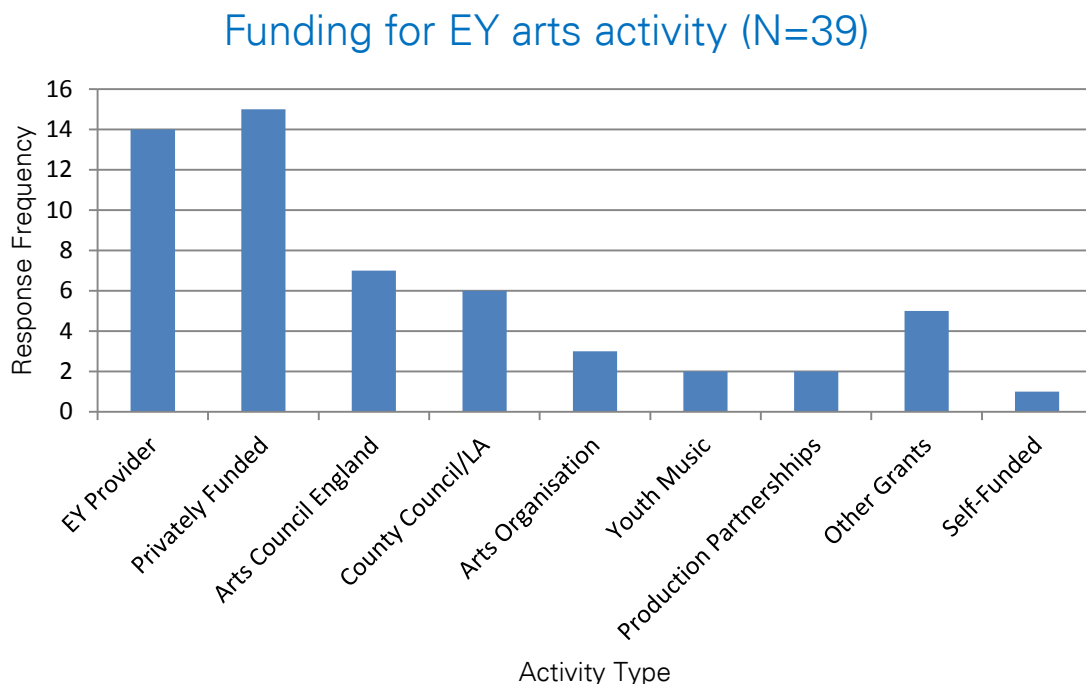


Figure 11: Sources of funding for EY arts activities

In the above, the 'Other Grants' category comprises:

- Heritage Lottery Fund (n=1)
- Children in Need (n=1)
- Museum Friends Group (n=1)
- Community Foundations (n=1)
- Grants (n=1)

Furthermore, the 'EY Provider' category includes:

- School (n=5)
- Nursery (n=2)
- Children's Centre (n=5)
- PVI (n=1)
- 'EY Provider' (n=1)

Sources of funding for EY arts activity are varied, though over a third (n=15) of all activities are paid for privately. This includes ticket sales, termly fees and parents and families paying to attend arts activities. A number of EY providers (n=14) pay to include arts activities for the children in their setting. ACE funds about 18% (n=7) of all activities. Only three arts organisations represented by this sample of participants fund EY arts. Funding from

national charities such as Youth Music, Children in Need and the Museum Lottery Fund support five EY arts activities in the region.

In order for all to receive what many consider a key component to human flourishing – namely, fruitful experiences in the arts – surely something needs to change in terms of funding for EY art and culture? As detailed already, MEHs are not obliged to provide their service for this age group, and the results here suggest that attendance at arts events and activities for young children is available mainly for those who can afford to pay for it themselves and much less available for those who cannot fund this for their families.

Elliott and Silverman (2015, p. 18), speaking about music, suggest the following:

At the heart of praxial music education is a focus on empowering people to develop the abilities and dispositions required to pursue many exceedingly important human goals and life values for themselves and others [...], a life well lived, personal and community wellbeing [...]: in short, a life of human flourishing.

Experiences in the arts are not just a nice add-on to a young child's life, they are of central importance and deserve to be funded properly from government as part of a joined-up funding strategy for the arts across the lifespan. Arts organisations also need to become business-proficient in order to articulate, promote and apply for funding. EY provisions can be seen as crucial to maintaining future arts audiences.

As an example, Rhona Matheson, the CEO of Starcatchers in Scotland, says that their funding comes from a variety of sources:

Most of our funding comes through the government, Creative Scotland and local authorities. We have just developed a business development manager role because we are not tapping into the funding we should be tapping into, because we just don't have the capacity: it is just so time consuming. So, in terms of really broadening our infrastructure, this is important. We don't have core funding: they turned us down last time round. That would take away some of the pressure of constantly finding project funding. Even to have an annual funding arrangement would be helpful. I could sit down every year and say, 'This is what we are going to do this year and this what we need.' The savings in time and resources would be massive, and I could spend the time raising money from other sources.

10. Venues for EY Arts Activities

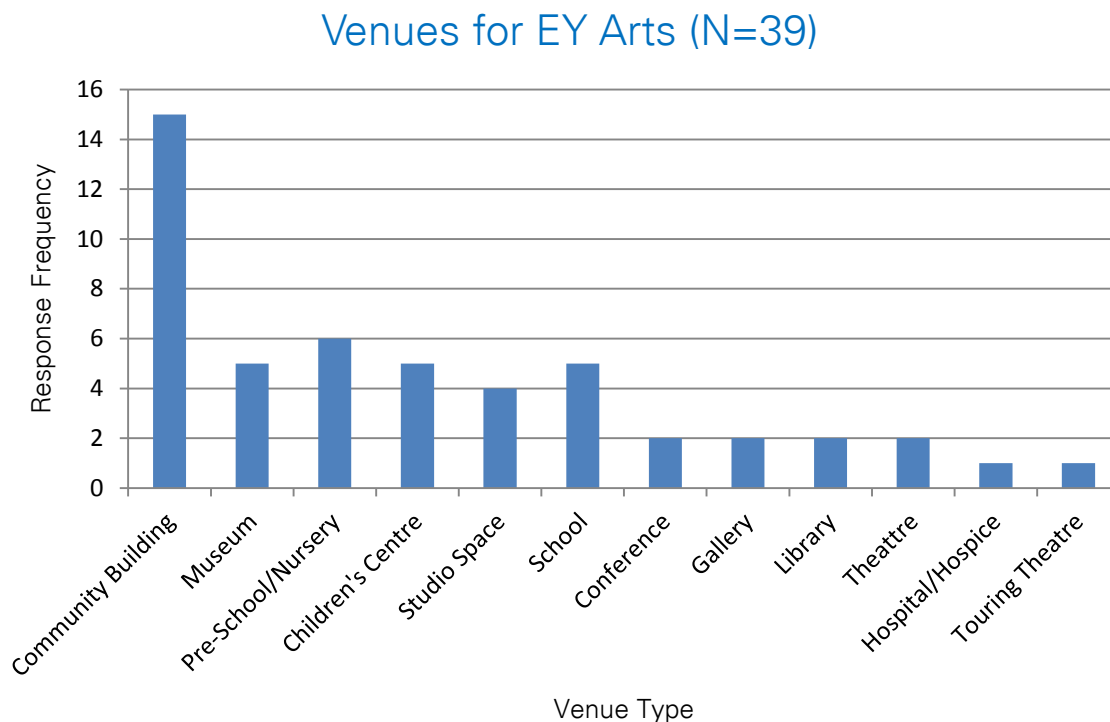


Figure 12: Venues for EY arts activities

By far the most common venues for EY arts are community-based settings: village, church and community buildings were all listed in this category. In many cases, the arts are being taken to the participants rather than the other way around. This ensures accessibility and inclusivity for families who may have neither the transport options nor the financial means to travel to arts venues. These include privately funded activities, however, which could still exclude participants for financial reasons. It is also encouraging that many arts activities are situated in education and care settings, with 16 responses including Children's Centres, nurseries, pre-schools and schools. It is also noteworthy that one participant works in health contexts. This work might make an interesting case study, or the individual might be willing to share her experiences at a dissemination event.

10.1 Childminders and Looked-After Children

It is notable that work with child minders is non-existent and no child minders participated in the survey, which does raise several issues. Firstly, we must ask whether EY arts organisations are adequately considering child minders as a group to engage with; secondly, we must look at whether there are ways that child minder provision can be included in existing networks to raise their profile, while also developing collaboration and engagement.

From the responses received, there appears to be a lack of focus on EY arts activity, specifically with looked-after children and young children with additional needs. It might be that therapeutic arts work is taking place through health or social care provision, and that this was not targeted as part of this project, but links and work in these areas would be worth developing.

11. Articulating Quality EY Practice

In this section, we examine how representatives of the different organisations in this report define 'quality practice' in an EY arts context.

11.1 GYCT

Charlotte Arculus, Director of Music and the Arts at Great Yarmouth Community Trust says that: *Quality is the ability [...] to respond creatively in the present moment with young children through gesture, facial expressions, voice-play, object play, etc. [It is] the ability to leave words and talking behind and communicate on deeper, authentic levels. Improvisation is a central part of our pedagogical practice, and this is coupled with critical reflection and review. Understanding children's development is vital, and understanding the difficulties many families face and being able to support parents is also fundamental. It's about the space which the practice creates, physically and mentally, and which enables self-expression, conviviality and curiosity.*

11.2 Castle Museum

Steve Arber from Norwich Castle Museum believes that: *Quality is about having appropriate resources and staffing. This might be a nice floor appropriate to the age group, making sure that it is constantly being assessed, or having appropriate resources and having well-trained staff. There shouldn't be a 'wow' moment; there should be a 'wow' session. The whole thing should be equally good.*

Children all learn in different ways. Some will learn by looking at things, some by talking about it, some by handling things, some by making things, some by sitting back and being quiet and taking it all in. We try and give opportunities for all of those different learning styles in all of our sessions.

11.3 Millennium Library

Hannah Woodhall says that: *Quality is interesting at the moment. Our Toddler Time sessions are very popular. We know that the quality of sessions is actually improved with more people and more voices. Involving everyone actually works better than segmenting people off, because they do tend to sit and chat. During the NNF*

festival, we have had up to 200 people. This has worked fine because everyone is on board and sings nice and loudly. If this is the case, the more the merrier!

I remember going to a Sure Start session where the guy who ran it would say to the families, 'Look, we all need to, for half an hour, sing together so our children see us joining in. If you stop and have a chat then they're not going to get involved and they need to see mum, dad, or the carer getting involved or the quality will be impaired.'

11.4 Cambridge Curiosity and Imagination

Ruth Sapsed of Cambridge Curiosity and Imagination says that: *Inclusivity is crucial but the way into [a project] has to be flexible. There is a way into it for everyone, but we are flexible as to what that way may be. For example, if we invite children to draw and some children don't want to draw, we will find other ways and invitations for them to participate. There is a lot of teacher anxiety around children being on task [and] following instructions, [about] there being a right, planned way of doing things, and of course we do plan, but we plan to include everybody. If someone wants to sit back and watch, that's a perfectly legitimate response, and if someone wants to run round and round in circles in a wood, then that's a good response. We are not going to determine how children respond. There is a way into it for everyone and we are responding to what their ways in are. [Quality is] inclusive, responsive, flexible. Quality is about the depth of engagement, not the outputs.*

11.5 Homerton Nursery

Sue Bainbridge from Homerton Nursery believes that: *It's about giving children a breadth of experience and as many different kinds of experience and open-endedness; the open-endedness and non-judgemental aspect is really important, as is being sensitive to how you present experiences. Skills are important in the arts and being creative requires skill, but what is really important is that the skills side does not overpower the communicative and creative aspect. [...] For example, dancing could be quite structured or about exposing children to different types of music, rhythm and materials to move around with so they can create their own expression without any kind of agenda at all.*

11.6 Take Art

Take Art spoke eloquently on the topic of quality and the comments have been abbreviated into a list of important factors:

- Placing children at the centre of the practice
- Up-skilling educators to work creatively
- In-depth, researched-based work
- Quality of product (for example, theatre: EY theatre should have the same checklist for production values as theatre for any other age)

- Being in tune, listening to the audience, responding to children’s reactions
- Listening to and observing young children and letting them be the pedagogues
- Recognising that young audiences are highly capable
- Ensuring that activities are of the highest aesthetic quality
- Being ambitious
- Understanding that EY needs a small and intimate scale
- Underpinning work by understanding young children’s development
- Knowing that high-quality arts for young children supports the adults around the children – parents or practitioners – to support the child

11.7 Starcatchers

Rhona Matheson, CEO of Starcatchers: *I think it’s the rigour of practice and it’s the people who are prepared to take risks in their own practice and the work they want to make [that ensures quality]. [It’s] that they are prepared to respond to the reaction of the children and that we are inspiring the children. The whole experience of taking a baby to theatre is new. When artists really want to make the work for that age group, you see the commitment and the passion for it and the dialogue.*



Key Quality Factors

Based on the conversations that took place during the case studies, the following list is a summary of the key quality factors identified for EY arts practice:

- Practice should be responsive and improvisational.
- Practice should support adults (parents/carers/practitioners) around the young child in order to support the young child.
- Practice depends on appropriate resources and staffing.
- Practice should include different learning styles and preferences.
- Practice should be flexible to make it inclusive.
- Practice should be child centred.
- Practice should be open ended.
- Practice should be non-judgmental.
- Practice and practitioners should be sensitive to the needs and intentions of young children and others they may work with.
- Practice should be centred on depth of engagement, not output/product.
- Practice should acknowledge that every participant contributes to the quality of the experience.
- Practice should focus on communicative and creative aspects rather than the development of technical skills.
- Practice should be research-informed and based on an understanding of young children's development.
- Practice should be in-tune with young children, based on listening and observation.
- EY arts performances should be small scale and intimate.
- EY arts performances should recognise that young audiences are highly capable.
- EY performances should have the same checklist for production values as performances for any other age group.
- Artists need to really want to make work for EY audiences, centred on dialogue.

We should note that there are issues about 'quality' practice in EY arts connected to the competing discourses of, on the one hand, arts activity perceived as requiring specialist expertise and, on the other hand, activities for young children perceived as being something anyone can do, as it bears a resemblance to 'mothering', a role in society that MacKinlay (2009) suggests often remains silent and hidden in her auto-ethnographic study. When researching lullabies, MacKinlay searched for mothers' voices about the many social-cultural and emotional ways that they use song with their infants, but she did not find mothers' voices represented in her search of the relevant literature. It may be that those who perceive themselves as non-artists find it difficult to participate in a questionnaire

about EY arts activities, as they might consider what they do with young children as being of no artistic value or not worth highlighting because they are simply activities for young children and something 'any mother could do'.

ACE Quality Principles

We asked participants to rate how important each ACE quality principle is to their work in the EY sector on a five-point Likert scale. The seven quality principles are:

- Striving for excellence and innovation
- Being authentic
- Being exciting, inspiring and engaging
- Ensuring a positive and inclusive experience
- Actively involving children and young people
- Enabling personal progression
- Developing belonging and ownership

(Arts Council England, 2015⁸)

All seven of the quality principles were rated as 'very important' by the vast majority of participants: in fact, 'Ensuring a positive and inclusive experience' was rated very important by all respondents.

There were some slight variations in responses, though, with the largest distribution of responses found in relation to 'Enabling personal progression': two participants chose not to respond, seven selected level four on the five-point scale, and one selected level three (a neutral position). This may be because 'progression' is an ambiguous term: does it imply progress in terms of learning and development in the arts? If so, according to what criteria? For instance, one participant added:

Not sure if personal progression means 'skill acquisition' or things like confidence, in which case the score for the last two should be higher. (participant q.)

It may also be that notions of becoming an 'artist' of the future do not sit comfortably with those for whom early childhood is considered a phase of 'being', not becoming (Qvortrup, 1994). Conceptions of progress and progression may therefore be less controversial when applied to older children and adults, whose education may follow particular curricula with recognised assessments and measurements of achievement. EY learning, by comparison, lacks clearly articulated progression routes in many arts disciplines, and many arts practitioners may not consider progression to be an important aspect of their EY work. One participant said:

⁸ Arts Council England (2015). Using quality principles in work for, by and with children and young people. <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/quality-metrics/quality-principles>

These principles have always been key; however, the concept of progression is increasingly crucial, [and] in the past the importance of this area seems to have been less understood generally. (participant a.)

These comments provide some depth to the reasons behind participants' scoring on the scale item questions. 'Progression' may be a problematic term for some, as it was mentioned twice in the comments. Participant *q.*'s comment, for instance, indicates that the term may be ambiguous, while participant *a.* suggests that the term is necessary but not well understood. There may thus be some work to be done in the area of defining terminology in relation to arts activity and progression. Likewise, the term 'authentic' may have been problematic for one participant, as they chose not to answer that question.

12. Continuing Professional Development

By comparing participants responses about their future professional development needs with their past CPD experiences (Figure 13), three items stand out as particularly desirable compared to current provisions: 'EY Arts Residential Weekend', 'EY Arts Festival' and 'Attending Conferences'. However, with the items 'Workshops', 'Early Child Development' and 'Reflective Practice', desire for future CPD is lower than past provision. As such, we recommend focusing funding and resources on the three areas where increased interest was identified.

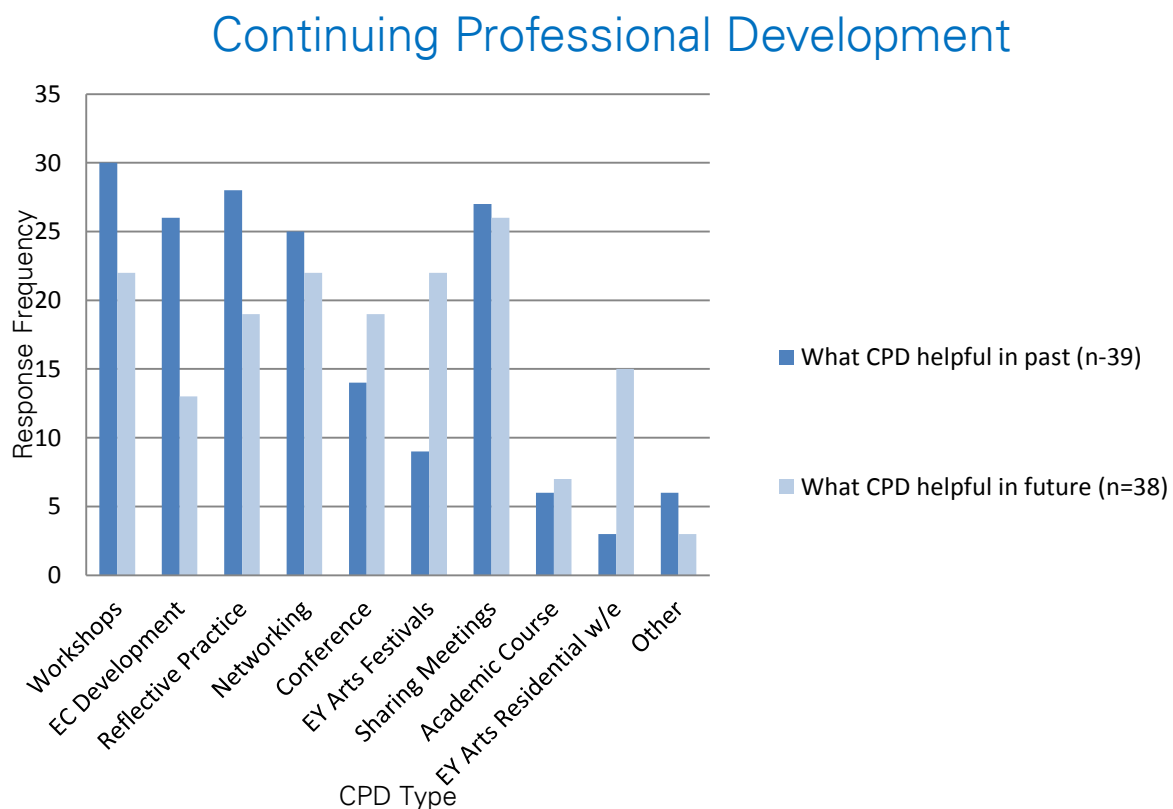


Figure 13: Continuing professional development provision and needs

As part of the 'Other' category regarding past CPD experiences, respondents commented:

- *Informal conversations with fellow practitioners*
- *Shadowing other EY practitioners/being mentored*
- *A master's [degree] is a difficult thing for a freelancer to take time out to do, although I'd like to [do so].*
- *This [field of EY] is relatively new to me ([I have] only been in this role for just over a year), so I haven't had a chance to attend many conferences, etc. However, I am looking to expand my networks and knowledge, as this is such a diverse field.*
- *We took part in a project with some other museums in the east of England to develop our early years offer; this project was invaluable and allowed us access to [...] expertise in the field.*

There were no additional comments for the 'Other' category in terms of future CPD requirements.

13. What Are the Barriers to You Developing Your EY Arts Practice?

Respondents were consistent in their replies to this question, with 'Time' and 'Money' identified as the main barriers in 21 out of the 38 responses. Comments on barriers included:

- *Workload/capacity. I currently manage the School and Outreach Programme, as well as regular Families and Children. I would like to do more EYFS, but I do not have the time.*
- *In the current climate, I would say funding is the biggest barrier. Lots of the organisations that I have been working in partnership with no longer have sustainable funding streams to continue open-access work. It is a time of transition and adaptation.*
- *Money. We could easily be running double the amount of some of our regular sessions, but [we] are unable to fund the practitioners we use for more than once a month.*
- *Self-employment in [a] low-pay field = many hours needed to make it viable, with no-one to cover for you. So, to attend training you must lose pay, plus often pay out for the training at the same time. So, time and money are both constraints.*

14. Final Comments from the Questionnaire

Some additional comments from the final question of the questionnaire that asked, 'Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?' included the following:

- *We will soon be recruiting a Learning Officer with specific responsibility for the Children and Families Programme, so I would hope to see our provision increase in the near future. I hope to continue to work with young children by encouraging group visits from the UEA nursery and other Early Years groups/providers.*
- *I feel very strongly that EY audiences deserve highly qualified, experienced and reflective practitioners, and I absolutely welcome more research and training to support this. This is an important part of offering high-quality arts experiences – materials, content and concepts should not patronise our young visitors, but challenge and excite them. My own research has shown that young children value authentic and unique experiences above all – just like older audiences!*
- *Really interested to hear the results of this mapping exercise!*
- *I think [people in] our sector work mostly freelance and in isolation. Therefore, any activity which gets people together, sharing and playing, will be incredibly valuable for EY artists.*
- *I am keen to see [the] EY arts practice identified by ACE and others as leading on inclusion – this is such an opportunity and should not be left to the McMusic/McArts operators.*
- *Due to the recent economic downturn, all the classes were suspended, after 15 years, as parents could no longer afford them. Now most of my work is in schools and training practitioners. (Freelance artist/educator)*
- *This is an excellent survey and in [my] new 'shared hat' of Community Music Co-Ordinator with Norfolk Music Hub, I am hoping to [identify] musicians who work in participatory practice and who identify as community musicians. Is there an opportunity for us to collaborate here?*
- *I have answered this in the capacity of the leader of Small Sounds. I often lead Early Years music and drama groups in other capacities and would be willing to talk to you about these as well, if that would be helpful.*
- *Currently the majority of my work is music and performance based, but there is a tranche of my practice that is rooted in visual and installation art. This work is more expensive and resource heavy and therefore harder to run regularly, even though there is a demand for it.*
- *We regard ourselves as being an example of best practice in Early Years and would be very happy to be involved in any initiative to develop provision in the region.*
- *We are a business. We often work in partnership with charities that have secured Arts Council funding, but [we] also deliver separately. The Garage and/or Youth Music hold the data on a previous regional Early Years Network created by myself during my role as Director of Music/Leader East of England.*

Key Themes

Leadership, Vision and Drivers

In this section, we look at the history of some of the case studies featured in this report: specifically, their visionary leaders, the drivers and those who blazed a trail for EY arts from the 1980s onwards.

GYCT

Who and when: Karen Harvey, Jess Pitt, Charlotte Arculus and Andrew Forrest, beginning in 2001 with a high level of investment from Youth Music.

Summary of key factors: The leaders (first Karen Harvey and then Andrew Forrest) of a trailblazing (first 50) Sure Start Centre realised that music was a unique way to engage with families. They are visionaries who understand that the arts should be an integral part of any offer. Initial partnerships with both Jess Pitt and Charlotte Arculus date from this time. Current Director Andrew Forrest continues to champion the work.

Norwich Castle Museum

Who and when: Katrina Siliprandi and Michelle Sorenson, beginning in the 1980s.

Summary of key factors: Katrina started the EY work in the 1980s. She believed children should be able to access collections. Michelle Sorenson took over later, followed by Steve Arber, who is committed to continuing the work. The organisation believes in hiring the right people for the jobs.

Millennium Library

Who and when: Hannah Woodhall, from 2001.

Summary of key factors: Notable work includes recognising that 'generic learning outcomes' could and should also apply to the 0–4 age group and following that through by continually adapting and evolving the offer.

CCI

Who and when: Idit Nathan, Ruth Sapsed and Creative Partnerships, from 2005.

Summary of key factors: Artist Idit Nathan influenced by Reggio Emilia approaches and the model of artists embedded in the school. Key drivers were educators, artists and the Faculty of Education at Cambridge University, who all recognised a lack of confidence in delivering creativity as practice. Inspirational practitioners for them are: Vivian Gussin Paley, Carol Dweck, Robin Duckett

Take Art

Who and when: Ralph Lister, since 1991.

Summary of key factors: Director Ralph Lister had young children and realised that there was a need for high-quality EY work. Gina Westbrook came on board in 2001. The organisation realised that EY is a very exciting sector to be involved in.

Starcatchers

Who and when: Rhona Matheson, Imagine, Andy Cannon, Andy Manley, Vanessa Riggs, Heather Fulton, and Susan Young (date unknown).

Summary of key factors: A 300k investment focusing on theatre for babies. Inspired by artistic director seeing work at Budapest's Glitterbird Festival. Draws on international perspectives. Some key points about this model:

- ❖ Has a key visionary in a position of authority
- ❖ International context (learning and sharing with others)
- ❖ Used a pilot run of three years to develop a working model that has endured
- ❖ Artistic differences need careful management to ensure that the work can continue
- ❖ Benefits from evaluation from an expert in the field

Emerging Key Factors

From these case studies, the key factors to emerge for EY arts for young children are:

- The importance of key people recognising the value of the work (i.e. leaders understanding what art can do for young children)
- Knowing that young children are competent and have a right to experience the arts
- Having key people to drive the work, thereby ensuring an enduring commitment to arts for young children through a succession of the 'right people in the right jobs'
- Key people becoming parents themselves and therefore realising the need for quality arts activities for their own children
- Drawing on international and research perspectives to support an understanding that there is a lack of confidence in offering creativity activities among early childhood educators and doing something about it based on research and practice; Young (2016) recommends and envisions a future of international, long-term projects with diverse populations to demonstrate the rich variety of young children's musical and artistic worlds
- Securing investment and funding for EY arts, without which even the best intentions are not viable

It is notable that only one respondent is involved in 'leadership' as their primary EY arts activity (i.e. a 'Director of Music and Arts'). It could be argued that the EY arts sector needs

more roles such as this in order to provide the vision and long-term planning necessary for significant projects and developments in the field. Similarly, only one respondent is involved in education (movement education) and/or training. CPD and education are much needed in the sector.

Making advances in terms of knowledge, understanding and progress in EY arts practice relies on the expansion of these two roles.

Recommendation: Advocate for funding to develop leadership roles for EY arts and long-term funding to promote EY arts practice as a specialist career.

Closing Comment

While acknowledging that parents are fundamentally important to their children's access to the arts, success of EY arts also depends on key decision makers 'getting it'. Becoming a parent is a powerful influence on leaders. However, we cannot rely on this as a method for ensuring the quality and frequency of EY arts programmes/projects. How, then, can we make EY matter to leaders and funders, irrespective of parenthood? Some suggestions:

- The sector needs to provide appropriate knowledge and information.
- EY arts performances need to be promoted and highlighted.
- An EY strand should be included in every arts festival.
- We must develop a funding strategy for EY arts, artists and performers.
- Young children's voices about the arts needs to be clearly articulated and made meaningful for leaders and policy makers.
- Evidence of the value of EY arts activities should be provided in a format that is easy to understand for those not working in the EY arts field.

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Appendix A

Specific Types of Activity Offered (Figure 9, p.50)

In collating the data in Figure 9, we selected broad categories for most of the items, e.g. 'Baby Music', 'Family Music', 'Music for FS and KS1'. These have all been grouped together under 'Music'. The differences between the activities will be teased out through further questions.

One respondent stated: *'I have over 150 different activities that I can provide; I don't understand what you mean by first!'* This has been classified as 'Don't Understand' in Figure 9.

Some responses included more than one art activity, e.g. *'Adventure Tots – interactive imaginative journey sessions using movement and storytelling'*. In these cases, each art activity was counted.

One 'Gallery' response stated: *'Gallery based experiences (using rhymes, heuristic play & sensory exploration to connect with museum objects) & art making activities'*. This was simply counted as 'Gallery' since the activity focuses on the gallery-based experience through the multi-art activities.

The library respondent identified *'Bounce and Rhyme'* as the primary activity; this was counted as both 'Music' and 'Storytelling' in the results.

Storytelling received fewer responses than might have been expected. Figure 6 (p. 42) shows that there were 12 responses for 'Storytelling', and yet it attracted only three responses as the primary activity. This may be because it is an additional activity for some arts practitioners. Similarly, 'Visual Arts' scored only two responses as a primary arts activity, which is significantly less than the 11 responses it received as an activity offered in general (see Figure 6).

Appendix B

Age Groups of Children for Primary Arts Activities

- 19 respondents, or half the sample, work with children aged 0–5 years.
- In addition, 10 specified the particular age range of children (within the 0-5 age category) with whom they work (e.g. 1–2 years, 3+ years, 4–5 years).
- 2 respondents work with children across the transition from EYFS to KS1 (i.e. 4–7 years and 5–8 years).
- 2 respondents work with primary school-aged children.
- 2 respondents work with children aged 0–18 years.

- 1 respondent works with 'youths', not EY children.

These results highlight that 'early years' can mean different things to different people. Many consider EY in England to cover the EYFS only (i.e. education and care for children between birth and five years old). As can be seen from these results, though, it is not uncommon for arts activities to cover a different age span, the lines perhaps being more blurred when arts activities are inclusive and accessible across the lifespan.

Appendix C

Additional EY Arts Activities

Respondents were given an opportunity to provide information about any other EY arts activities that they offer in addition to their primary EY arts activity. Responses included:

- Various visual arts/gallery/studio experiences (n=11)
- Music (n=9)
- Concerts or performances (n=4)
- Storytelling and writing (n=3)
- Holiday activities (n=1)
- Theatre and installation art (n=1)
- Training (n=4)
- Roles such as 'trustee' or 'organiser' for arts organisations (these roles include a target audience of policy makers) (n=3)

Some practitioners offer more than one art form in their portfolio: in one case, music is their primary activity, while theatre and installation art are secondary art forms. Some participants also offer activities for different age groups or from different funding sources.