

Creative projects *and the new* EYFS



Creative Futures delivers high quality, child-led music and arts programmes, designed to support and enhance the new EYFS.

We are a recognised sector leader in Early Years arts provision, drawing on research and practice to inform our approach. We work with family and community settings, nurseries and pre-schools, mainstream primary schools, and the early years workforce on a range of bespoke projects which all have the same underlying themes: to enable all children aged 0-8 years to have access to inclusive, inspiring and memorable arts experiences; and to support multiple aspects of children's early development and well-being.

“Creative Futures delivers a brilliant service. It gives the impression that it is not just ticking boxes. It cares about the children the families and their needs” (Children's Centre Manager)

Our approach

We have refined our approach over a number of years through working in a variety of settings, with dozens of highly experienced artists with different methods and styles, and through collaboration with researchers and other professionals. We are particularly focussed on the use of music to support children's **mental wellbeing** and **early language development**, and have collaborated extensively with NHS Speech and Language Therapists. We have engaged researchers to help us measure the impact of our work, thus learning from their observations and insights. As a result, and drawing on our knowledge of relevant early years research, our approach is:

- **Child-led:** As much activity as possible is led and directed by the children involved.
- **Developmentally appropriate:** All activities are specifically geared to the children involved.
- **Reflective:** We regularly hold reflective practice and practice-sharing sessions to embed learning across our team of early years music/arts leaders.
- **Multi-disciplinary:** combining different modes of expression and art-forms within each workshop for example music, story-telling and movement
- **High quality:** Our projects are carefully planned, and delivered and managed by highly experienced professionals.
- **Collaborative:** We work closely with EYPs to deliver our programmes in a collaborative way, and can adopt a modelling and scaffolding approach to support professional development.

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- **Outcome-focused:** Specific outcomes for the children (individually or as a group) and staff can be agreed with the setting, and we can collaboratively track how the projects meets these objectives.
- **Inclusive:** Our approach is always fully inclusive and empowering, enabling children at whatever level in their learning and development to engage in a meaningful way.

“In terms of impact, a comparison of the data between the first and final sessions each term revealed evidence of children demonstrating significant musical learning, as well as language development and increased communication skills.” (Professor Welch & A. Bowmer, 2016)

Meeting the needs of the new EYFS

We recommend programmes which combine music, story-telling and movement activities which – from our experience – are most likely to positively impact children’s confidence and learning across multiple aspects of the EYFS and which are effective even with mixed groups of children including those with SEN and EAL.

Overarching principles

As our work is child-led, we respect the **uniqueness** of every child, and our artists respond to each child’s needs in the moment, supporting their confidence, learning and development.

Our approach encourages **positive relationships** to develop between children and their peers, and children and adults. Often children communicate with each other through play and music: our artists create **nurturing environments** which enable creative play, communication and interaction to flourish, and through which children are **supported to develop** at their own rate and in their own way.

Prime and Specific areas

The provision of high-quality music-based programmes has been shown, through multiple research studies, to have positive impacts on young children’s development. This includes in all areas of the EYFS ‘prime’ and ‘specific’ areas, and in particular:

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Personal, Social and Emotional Development

This fundamental building-block of a child's development underpins everything, and provides the core from which the child will learn and develop. Our programmes support each child's emotional development, building self-confidence and a positive sense of self, along with interpersonal skills, prosocial skills and a sense of achievement.

EYPs and centre managers involved in our 'Music for Change' programme reported:

"Children who were shy have come out of their shell [and become] involved in a bigger group. Social Emotional development has improved. Children are now visibly volunteering to take part – they are socialising and interacting." (Nursery Manager)

Communication, Language and Literacy

Hearing is the first sense to develop in the womb, and sounds are the earliest forms of communication between a baby, their surroundings and their mother. Sounds – shaped into music – form the building blocks of language, which is why much of our work in settings is devoted to supporting and encouraging musical dialogue between individual children, and between adults and children, and building on this to foster larger-group musical dialogues and interactions. There is much evidence that rhythm is key to language development, so we also encourage and nurture each child's perception of rhythm through interaction and games, alongside rhymes and song. These interactions can later take the form of call-and-response dialogues and song-singing which support language development and vocabulary. Some of our programmes combine story-telling with music, so that children deepen their understanding of a given narrative and learn new vocabulary through creating musical responses to a story in the form of songs, improvisations, or soundscapes. Mark-making activities run alongside our music-making so that decoding skills are developed through the understanding of visual representations of sound.

"We had a high proportion of children with SLCN, this has really helped their confidence, vocabulary and listening and attention." (Nursery Manager)

"I came with almost no speech and struggled with behaviour. Aged 2½ he was able to join in with the rhythms of particular songs and reproduce them, albeit with unclear language. He was one of the strongest at identifying different sounds, and was so confident about his answers that he tried to speak in front of the whole group, for one of the first times ever." (Creative Futures Music Practitioner)

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Our programmes are also designed to

- Support children’s development in fine and gross motor skills, co-ordination and precision. (Physical Development)
- Develop familiarity with numbers from 1 to 10, and support the recognising of patterns in sound. (Mathematics)
- Experience a range of art-forms from different cultures, listen to a variety of sounds from the natural and built environment, and delve into different stories, songs, and music. (Understanding the World, and Cultural Capital)
- Develop the artist within each child, building on their innate musicality and expressivity through engagement in high-quality participatory arts activity. “The quality and variety of what children see, hear and participate in is crucial for developing their understanding, self-expression, vocabulary and ability to communicate through the arts.” (Expressive Arts and Design)



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What we offer

Creative Futures offers a range of programmes for Early Years settings of all types. All our programmes are adapted and shaped to meet the needs of each individual setting. In our experience, the longer and more intensive the programme, the deeper and more sustained the impact is likely to be both on children and staff.

A number of example options are outlined below, and we can also tailor a programme to you:

Option 1 Year-round on-site delivery

Number of sessions: 30-36 (term-time only); or 48 (year-round)

Either a full day or half day per week, working with multiple groups each session/day including small-group targeted work if desired. Activities include music and movement sessions with different age-groups, music-based free-play, music and story-telling. This option can also include a mentoring strand for specific EYPs, and CPD sessions for all staff, with the aim of embedding more creative activity in the setting for the future without the need for external input.

Option 2 CPD only

Number of sessions: Ideally 7 sessions, spread over 6-9 months

This CPD course can be delivered either on-site, or online. The cost would be significantly reduced if a number of settings took together. This would enhance the discussion and practice-sharing elements of the course and help EYPs from multiple local settings to form a 'community of practice' or local network. The topics of the CPD course can be agreed with the setting(s) involved, to meet their needs. Here are some examples:

- Improvisation, stories and musical play
- Singing and Song-writing
- Musical Development Matters
- Observing and documenting musical play
- The elements of music
- Music and stories
- Enabling musical/creative environments

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Option 3

Mix of CPD and in-setting delivery

Number of sessions: 4-7 CPD with 3-12 in-setting sessions

This flexible model can be adapted to your setting's needs or budget. CPD sessions (which could involve other local EY settings, to reduce cost) are interspersed with in-setting sessions. This enables the music leader to model activities from the CPD session with EYPs, and to support them whilst they trial and familiarise themselves with the activities themselves. The model is flexible but requires at least one in-setting session between each CPD.

Option 4

Music & Stories

Number of sessions: 10 sessions: 8 consecutive sessions, then 2 follow-ups

This is a short-term and more intensive project taking place during one term (8 weeks) with two subsequent follow-up visits to the setting over the following 6-12 weeks. The focus is music and stories: a set text is chosen by the music leader and EYP together, and will form the focus of the project for the whole 8 weeks. Each week, music leader and EYP meet to plan together for 30 minutes, then deliver one or two sessions together, then meet again off the nursery floor for a 30-minute reflection and review. The project was trialled in collaboration with NHS Speech and Language Therapists and is designed to give EYPs new skills with which to support children's language development through music and stories.

Evaluation

Creative Futures is able to conduct a detailed evaluation of the impact of the programme should you wish it. There would be an additional cost.

We'd love to talk to you about how we could work together

Please give us a call or email to have a chat about what we could bring to your setting or school:
hello@creativefuturesuk.com Mobile: 07980 820 323

"The sessions have helped me in understanding the value of music for children's development, communication and enjoyment, inspired my practice, have helped me to observe musical behaviours, have taught me about the elements of music. Suggestions and ideas were easy to implement without the need to purchase extra resources." (EYP participating in Creative Futures' Sound Communities project)

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