

[The Family Music Hub – Early Education Trailblazer funding April-November 2022](#)

The Family Music Hub project had 2 outcomes:

1. **Early Childhood practitioners (e.g., librarians, family outreach workers) develop a democratic and inclusive model of EC family music making practice.**
2. **The Family Music Hub initiative and strategy is developed.**

Three strands of work were included in The Family Music Hub (TFMH) project:

1. **Organisational and vision development**
2. **Action research**
3. **Bringing together knowledge, data and evaluation**

[What did we learn?](#)

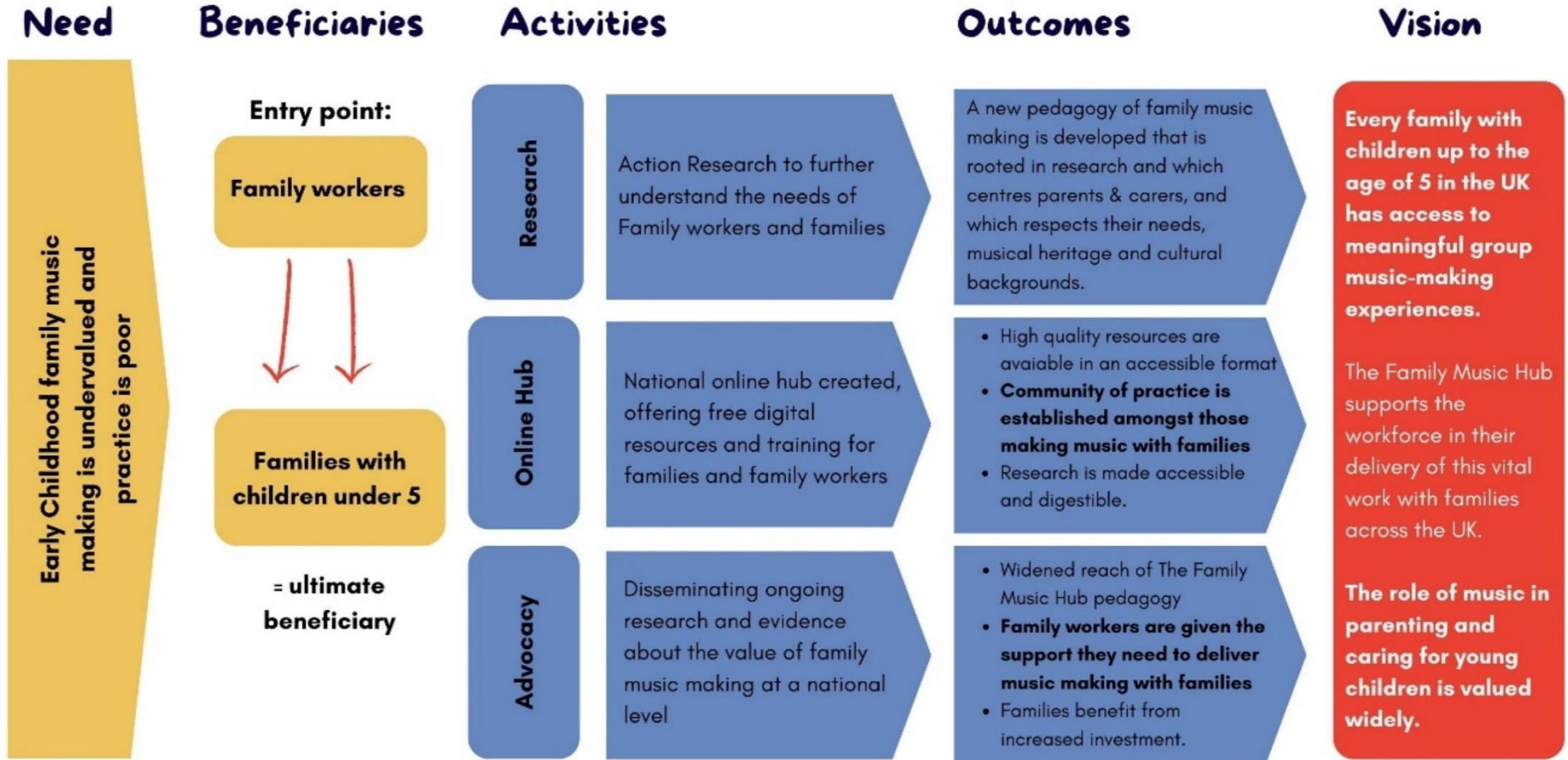
1. Organisational and vision development

- Through the process of working with consultants on creating a Lean Canvas and Theory of Change the core team were able to dig deep into the collective ‘why’ that underpins their aims and vision.
- Time and space to discuss deeply and challenge one another is crucial for an organisation to grow from a firm foundation of ethics, values and clear principles. The team were able to create a vision that can be articulated clearly and concisely. Having the funding to enable them to commission consultants to challenge and support them was fundamental to develop the groundwork for The Family Music Hub.
- Having time to research enabled them team to understand the shifting landscape of children’s centres and family hubs.
- Through market and academic research, the team were able to deepen their understanding of:
 - the commodity of children’s music and commercialism of family music making.
 - the literature concerning ‘musical parenting’, the gap in research and practice and how research is used to manipulate and sell ideas and services
- The team learnt that a Community Interest Company organisational structure is the best fit to fulfil their aims and vision.

[The Family Music Hub Lean Canvas can be accessed here.](#)
[The full Family Music Hub Theory of Change can be accessed here.](#)



Theory of Change



2. Action research

The Family Music Hub project involved 2 action research questions:

- 1. How do we change the nature of group family music making with under 5s so that it enables parents and carers to recognise their own and their children's innate musical skills and heritage and its importance in raising children?**
- 2. What support, training and resources do practitioners need to make this change happen in their practice?**

Action research data was collected via:

- Questionnaires
- Audio recordings of sessions from CPD days
- Audio recordings from case study visits
- Core teams notes through meetings notes, journals
- Core team written conversations on slack
- Notes from observations
- Brainstorming from practitioners on CPD days using post it notes
- Documenting Likert scale movement activities
- Written documentation from Design Sprints
- Mentimeter

Data has been collated and analysed using excel, Miro boards and discussions amongst the core team. The findings can be accessed via The Family Music Hub Miro board here:

[Findings and learning](#)

[Existing Practice](#)

Reach and the potential to make change

By working with 8 EY family workers and librarians, TFMH had the potential to reach and transform music provision for 250 families.

The nature of Early Childhood Music Education (ECME) for families

Experiences vary massively as music is part of so many different types of groups (e.g., stay and play, library rhyme time, baby massage, home visits, targeted groups), and even within these, each category each setting has their own timings, recruitment arrangements (open to all/targeted), length of course etc.

Resources

Practitioners use a wide variety of resources with songs rhymes stories CD player and instruments coming up as most frequently mentioned.

Rationale

Practitioners cited multiple rationales for including music in their sessions. They already saw musical activity as educational for parents, as an inclusive tool ('universal language') and as a way to reach families. Music for its intrinsic value did not feature in their answers.

Mindset change

Personal experiences

All practitioners had recollections of their own experiences of being musically parented and through their stories, they came to recognise the musical parenting role as going beyond biological parenting.

Perceptions of the term 'musical'

Predominantly our practitioners recognised the term as referring to talent and being quite exclusive. Through discussions, few comments emerged reflecting the idea that we are all musical.

Perceptions of the term 'research'

Through discussion our practitioners recognised and explored two perspectives - research as alienating and as explorative.

Perceptions of the term 'music'

Comments focussed on the actual sounds heard and on meaningfulness.

Mindset

During the course of the research, it became clear that the family workers already had a strong focus on educating the families and nurturing their parenting skills in generic terms but it wasn't clear that their music practice reflected this focus. As a result of the training they seemed to recognise the value of music more. They talked more confidently about ECME research and recognised the role of families and their musical parenting skills. They thought about ways to develop their practice to reflect their new understanding.

Inform

Pedagogy

TFMH Team benefitted from the process of having to inform and educate the practitioners. Through a series of planning meetings, the team had to articulate, consolidate and interrogate their collective thinking about TFMH pedagogy. The identification of core beliefs, non-negotiable characteristics and the start of a ever-growing list of potential delivery 'channels' was useful in terms of training and in terms of evaluation - it helped TFMH team and practitioners to identify and discuss strengths/weaknesses.

Research

Through discussion, TFMH team identified ECME research to share in an accessible way with practitioners and explored and evaluated different ways of sharing this information. The feedback from practitioners was positive but in practice they did not retain the learning sufficiently well or gain a deep enough understanding to be able to confidently pass the information on to families.

Repertoire

TFMH team introduced practical musical activities that were underpinned by beliefs and key characteristics. Whilst these activities were well received, practitioners did not use them in their delivery to families.

Anomalies

- Small sample size – the team gathered data from just 8 practitioners on day 1 and by the end of the project were only able to collect data from 4 practitioners.
- Question style - open questions were asked which, whilst eliciting lots of information, has made it hard to compare answers or know whether we have complete answers - practitioners may have forgotten to write down certain ideas/information.
- Practitioners knew that TFMH team wanted them to rethink ECME so it is possible that some of the answers might have been chosen to please us and offer answers they thought were wanted.

How did you reflect and adapt over the course of your grant?

The 3 members of the core team reflected weekly together as a minimum, either face to face or virtually, they often met twice in a week and continued reflective conversations on slack throughout the week in between meetings. The reflective process enabled the team to adapt the content of the CPD days, the processes of capturing data, identifying elements of data that were missing.

Working with two external consultants on The Theory of change and Lean Canvas enabled the team to reflect with 2 people outside of the initiative which proved to be very effective and enabled thinking and ideas to be challenged and grow.

What does this mean for how you or others work in the future?

- It is clear that, by working with EY Family Workers and Librarians TFMH has the potential to change ECME for significant numbers of families in many groups and settings. TFMH should continue to reach families by working with the practitioners who deliver ECME to families with children under 5.
- TFMH has to embrace and work with a variety of formats within the ECME sector by creating a responsive and flexible pedagogy.
- TFMH team should consider whether (and which) resources should be part of the key ingredients in their approach and whether guidance/training would be helpful/necessary.
- Future research around the rationale for ECME should delve deeper into the idea of music for its own intrinsic value.
- It would be of value to investigate the baseline with a much larger group of practitioners – e.g., via online questionnaire.

3. Bringing together knowledge, data and evaluation

Bringing together knowledge, data and evaluation has enabled the team to develop their thinking, vision and plans moving forward. The learning gained from the action research has enabled what is needed to support practitioners to develop a democratic and inclusive model of EC family music making practice to be identified. The TFMH' S intention is to build on the model that includes action research, a CPD programme and a hub (e.g., website/app) and that these 3 aspects will continue to inform one another, i.e., all 3 strands are interdependent and will continuously inform the growth of one another.

Findings from the design sprint activity which will inform the development of TFMH hub and CPD programme can be viewed using the links below.

For the Online hub findings click [here](#).

For the CPD programme click [here](#).