

# People change lives

Consolidating five years of evaluation learning from Sistema Scotland's Big Noise centres in Stirling, Glasgow & Aberdeen

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Throughout this report boxes like this are included which present additional information, insights and hyperlinks to support the key messages and narrative presented.

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## Report summary

### Take home messages

This report consolidates and summarises five years of evaluation learning undertaken by the Glasgow Centre for Population Health within Sistema Scotland's Big Noise centres in Glasgow, Stirling and Aberdeen. The key, 'take home' messages within this report are as follows:

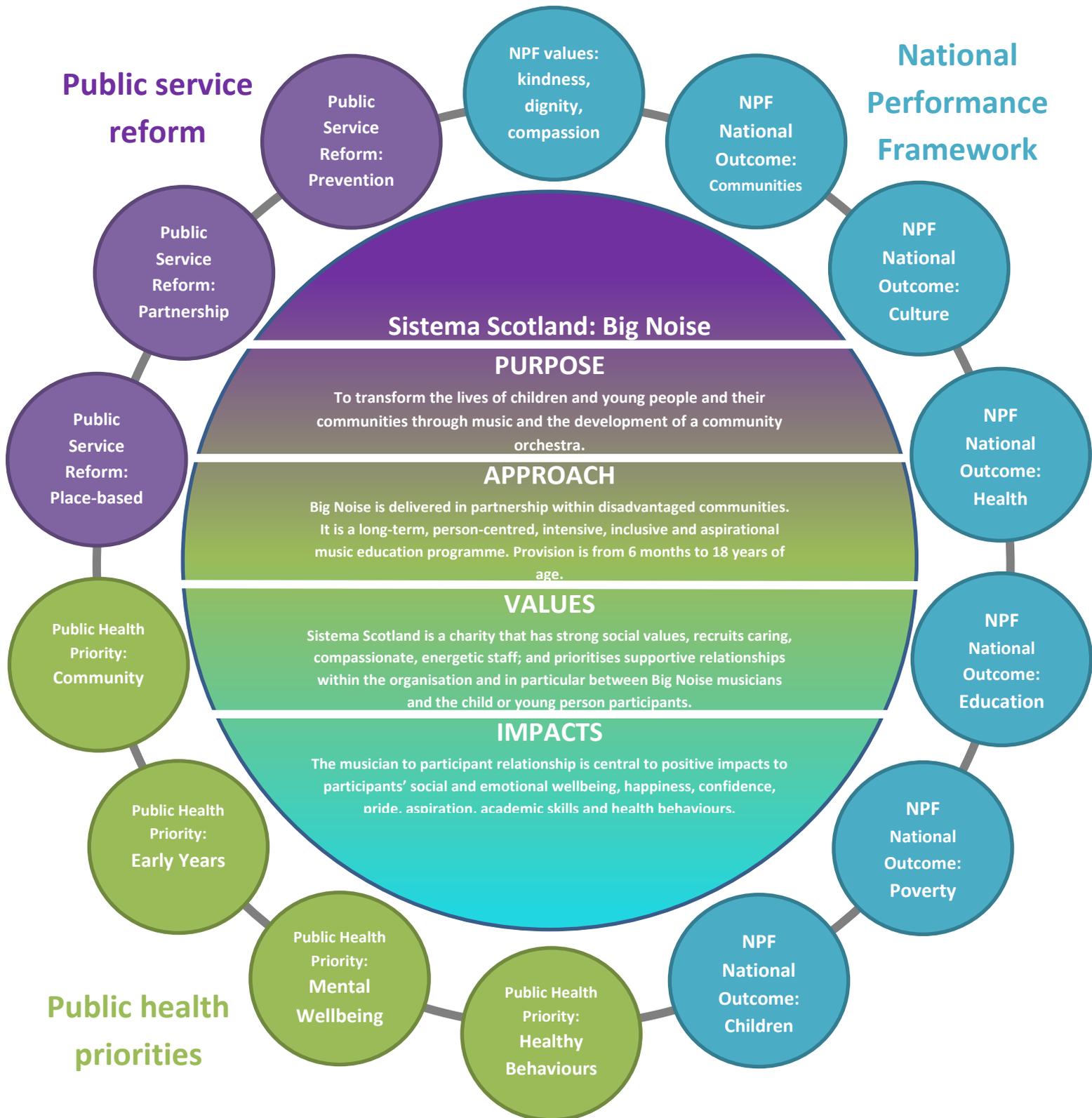
- **Big Noise is achieving important impacts** on the children and young people taking part including:
  - increasing confidence, discipline, pride, and aspiration
  - improved team-working, communication, and leadership
  - enhanced academic skills including listening, concentration, and creativity
  - increased resilience, happiness, sense of belonging and fulfilment
  - strong musical skills development
  - uptake of physical activity and healthy eating, avoidance of damaging behaviours
  - development of positive social groups, peer relationships and cultural engagement
  - respite and protection for vulnerable participants.
  
- **People change lives** – the strong impacts Big Noise is having on participants is based largely upon a long-term, encouraging, trusting and supportive relationship between musician and participant. Musicians act as educators, mentors and role models supporting positive behaviours and life choices. An important factor in this is Sistema Scotland's recruitment practice which emphasises musicians being caring, compassionate, energetic and patient alongside having strong social values.
  
- **Addressing health inequalities** – evidence is clear that the types of impacts Big Noise is achieving at present act upon important determinants of health and wellbeing in adulthood. Because Big Noise is targeted to disadvantaged communities it therefore has the potential to reduce health inequalities in later life. This evaluation also includes an economic analysis which concludes with the long-term projection that for every £1 spent on Big Noise delivery; around £9 of social benefit is generated.
  
- **The way in which Big Noise is delivered** is important in supporting this relationship and in achieving the impacts reported. Big Noise is a long-term, high quality, person-centred, intensive, inclusive and aspirational programme, which includes provision during school holidays. None of this is easy and the programme is extremely demanding on Big Noise staff and predicated on strong partnership working. In particular, credit is due to the schools for their commitment to the successful delivery of Big Noise in each site.

## Policy implications of this evaluation

The way in which Big Noise is delivered and the types of impacts described in this report align closely with national policy and service reform agendas. The key policy implications are as follows:

- **Policy designed to promote equitable outcomes and reduce inequalities** should prioritise long-term, nurturing and supportive adult to child or young person mentoring relationships within disadvantaged communities. This evaluation indicates that this approach can have strong preventative impacts; promoting wellbeing, education, healthy behaviours, positive peer groups and a range of opportunities across the early years and school years. This evaluation also recognises the contribution arts-based interventions can make in addressing inequalities. Big Noise is creative and expressive – cultivating positive relationships, aspiration, a strong work ethic and collective learning and co-operation.
- **National Performance Framework (NPF).** The outcomes that Big Noise is achieving align and contribute to a range of NPF Outcomes and their indicators including culture, health, education, poverty, communities and children. Contributions across these NPF outcomes within the disadvantaged communities that Big Noise serves, underpins crosscutting NPF themes of addressing inequalities and in promoting sustainable, inclusive economic growth. The ambition and scope of the NPF is such that it includes measurable indicators and outcomes but also acknowledges the importance of less quantifiable influences on how the NPF outcomes are achieved. The NPF supports values of kindness, dignity, compassion and respect. Sistema Scotland embodies this ethos, which is not only a matter of human rights and ethics but is a fundamental part of how they achieve their purpose. The “musician-participant” relationship is based on these NPF values and is central to how the positive impacts of the programme are achieved.
- **Public service reform.** Big Noise represents a targeted “up-stream” prevention approach designed to promote and reinforce positive outcomes, behaviours and experiences over the early years and school years. Indeed the long-term economic projection is that for every £1 spent on Big Noise delivery; around £9 of social benefit is generated. Big Noise is delivered in partnership with schools and also draws upon the expertise of a range of other partners when supporting vulnerable children or young people. Big Noise is person-centred particularly in relation to maintaining participant engagement and in supporting individual goals and aspirations. Big Noise has a distinct emphasis on place; where regular community concerts and performances bring together families and the wider community.
- **Public health priorities.** Big Noise is a quality, intensive early years (and school years) programme which seeks to enhance the reputation of the communities in which it is delivered. Big Noise also promotes social connections within the community through regular concerts and events. One of the most consistent impacts observed across the three Big Noise centres has been participant mental and emotional wellbeing. These positive impacts are achieved through the “musician-participant” relationship and a programme design which emphasises fun, enjoyment, esteem, pride, teamwork and a sense of belonging. Furthermore the programme promotes healthy eating, physical activity and the avoidance of damaging behaviours such as drug and alcohol misuse.

Figure 1: Sistema Scotland, Big Noise overview and links to several national policies and outcomes.



## Conclusion and next steps

Innovation, sustained commitment and more person-centred ways of working will be central to the achievement of better prospects for disadvantaged communities and fairer outcomes within Scotland as a whole. In these regards Sistema Scotland has shown vision and leadership in the design and delivery of Big Noise. At the heart of Big Noise is a quality, meaningful and trusted relationship between musician and participant. Big Noise musicians are educators, mentors and can become role models. It is through these types of relationships that "people change lives". This learning is important and is relevant to both policy and practice.

It is important therefore, that as a society, we learn from Sistema Scotland's approach and evaluate the impacts of the Big Noise programme over time. The evaluation reports strong and consistent positive impacts to participants' lives. Currently the evaluation is at an important juncture; 2019/20 marks a transition towards assessing the influence of Big Noise on life-course outcomes beginning with educational attainment impacts among the oldest cohort of Big Noise Raploch participants.

## Setting the scene

Where you are born and live and the levels of education and income your parents achieve are highly likely to influence the life you live, how long you will live and the opportunities you have<sup>1</sup>. These ‘socioeconomic inequalities’ in health, wellbeing, education and opportunity are generational and have been evident since records began, actually widening in recent years<sup>2</sup>.

A range of services, organisations and interventions have made sustained, collective contributions to overall improvements to health and living conditions in Scotland<sup>3</sup>. However the rate of improvement has not been achieved equitably, with disadvantaged communities facing a range of deeply entrenched poor social, economic, health, educational and environmental markers compared with the rest of Scottish society<sup>4</sup>.

High quality universal public services such as health, education and social care have a vital role to play in addressing inequalities<sup>5</sup>. As do approaches which target resources to poorer communities and which tailor delivery to promote access and inclusion within these communities. Area-based regeneration is one such targeted approach; investing in the physical, economic and social fabric of community life within disadvantaged areas<sup>6</sup>. Over several decades of regeneration across the UK we have learned that there is a lack of consensus as to how to effectively implement the social elements of regeneration and it is much harder to understand and measure social impacts in comparison to the physical and economic dimensions of regeneration<sup>7</sup>. Definitions of ‘social regeneration’ or ‘social intervention’ tend to describe community-based activities designed for people and aimed at addressing damaging social behaviours, reducing social exclusion, improving community cohesion, learning new skills, enhancing employability and generally promoting positive life chances within prioritised disadvantaged areas and communities<sup>8</sup>.

Social policy in Scotland is aligned with international evidence in prioritising the early years as the key life-stage during which future health trajectories are determined. The early years are a time when evidence-based, effective universal services and high-quality interventions which are intensive and sustained can yield greatest impact<sup>9</sup>. Policies to mitigate inequalities in the early years include a focus on parenting, quality pre-school provision, and action to promote health-promoting behaviours. The evidence base concerning targeted social interventions for disadvantaged pre-schoolers or high-risk families and children is less clear cut; with some interventions being short-term and many evaluations lacking in methodological rigour particularly the absence of long-term analysis of outcomes, use of control groups, development of ‘theories of change’ to illuminate *how* impacts are achieved, consideration of replication or up-scaling and economic components<sup>10</sup>.

To address this gap in understanding of how to deliver social interventions in the early years it is vital to broaden the ‘solution space’; or the range of activities, innovations, resources and perspectives brought to the pursuit of positive outcomes within poorer areas. Organisations such as Sistema Scotland offer unique contributions and fresh insights as to the types of

Research tells us that people who engage with arts and culture live longer, healthier lives compared to those who do not – even when adjusting for all other influences.

Young people who learn a musical instrument are more likely to achieve better school qualifications than those who do not play.

[Click here to learn more](#)

community-based approaches required to address inequalities and transform lives.

Sistema Scotland is a charity “on a mission to transform lives through music”<sup>11</sup>. Through its Big Noise programme Sistema Scotland believes that children from disadvantaged backgrounds can gain significant social and life skills by playing in an intensive, immersive music education programme based on the symphony orchestra. Inspired by the Venezuelan *El Sistema* model<sup>12</sup>, Sistema Scotland uses collective music-making to foster wellbeing, confidence, pride and aspiration among the children and young people taking part. Big Noise is also a community beacon, a positive focal point, a social intervention which dovetails with other regeneration efforts, bringing families and wider community members together in regular local concerts and events.

Since 2013 the Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH)<sup>13</sup> has been evaluating Sistema Scotland's Big Noise programme. The GCPH evaluation has been designed in such a way as to avoid the methodological weaknesses seen in other studies. The evaluation has produced a range of reports and peer reviewed publications – which makes clear the range of positive impacts observed on participants<sup>14,15</sup>. Sistema Scotland's approach also offers important learning as to the processes involved in the delivery of effective social regeneration and early-years interventions designed to address inequalities.

The next section makes clear the purpose of the report, followed by an overview of the evaluation design, then a summary of the range of methods used to date. What follows next is a high level overview of the evaluation findings to date including detailing the range of participant impacts observed; re-iterating the Big Noise delivery principles and impact pathways first published in 2015. Next the report details the recent progress of Sistema Scotland and its three Big Noise centres in Stirling, Glasgow and Aberdeen. The Big Noise centre in Dundee has its own developing evaluation framework, distinct from the GCPH evaluation. Within this section ‘fresh insights’ based on fieldwork over the past year are also presented. The report then consolidates, prioritises and summarises the key learning over the past five years of the evaluation – presenting ‘take home messages’. The report concludes with some summary ‘final thoughts’ and looks forward to the next exciting phase of the evaluation. All sections of the report begin with ‘main points’ section to support readers in understanding the report's narrative.

## The purpose of this report

This report is intended to consolidate and summarise the learning from the first five years of a ‘life-course evaluation’ of Sistema Scotland’s Big Noise programme. This report provides an overview of the range of observed impacts Big Noise is having on participants’ lives and how this contributes to various policy directives and the outcomes integral to the National Performance Framework. Crucial to understanding these impacts is recognition of their complexity and long-term nature as well as the principles of Big Noise delivery which underpin them, details of which are all provided in this report.

The report marks an important juncture in the evaluation design developed by the GCPH. It is designed to conclude ‘Phase 1’ and support the transition into ‘Phase 2’ (described in the next section) of the GCPH evaluation, highlighting the key findings from an expansive range of data gathered to date.

The aim of this report is to inform the development of policy and practice which recognises the importance of social and early years interventions, their potential benefits and the key decisions which must be made concerning their role within community-based regeneration and in wider society. This report is also designed to support community and delivery organisations involved in social and early years interventions and implementation.

Regeneration of disadvantaged communities involves action on the physical, economic and social components of the area

There is a lack of consensus and evidence concerning how best to implement social regeneration.

[Click here to learn more](#)

## Sistema Scotland overview and recent developments

Sistema Scotland is a registered charity with 107 employees, equating to 68.2 full time equivalent posts. The executive team is headed by a Chief Executive who reports to the Board. The Board meets on a quarterly basis and is responsible for the strategic direction of the charity. The Board currently comprises nine non-executive members drawn from a variety of professional backgrounds relevant to the work of the charity. Sistema Scotland oversees the operation of four Big Noise centres: Raploch, Stirling (established 2008); Govanhill, Glasgow (established 2013); Torry, Aberdeen (established 2015); and Douglas, Dundee (established 2017) which are working with a combined total of approximately 2,600 children and young people. The Big Noise centres are funded through a range of partnerships with the private and public sectors.

2017/18 has been another challenging and successful year for Sistema Scotland, building on the strong mission, organisational ethos and delivery principles which continue to underpin the daily work within the Big Noise centres. During 2017/18 Big Noise has continued delivery in Stirling, Glasgow and Aberdeen and has also expanded to include a fourth community in Douglas, Dundee. In 2018, the tenth birthday of Sistema Scotland was marked and the year included a number of memorable events celebrating the achievements of the children and their communities over the first decade.

A 10-year birthday community event was hosted in January 2018 in Raploch and attended by around 400 community members, partners and supporters. Hosted by Sistema Scotland board member Sally Magnusson, attendees enjoyed a range of performances. During the event, members of Sistema Scotland's Youth Board shared their views on the impacts Big Noise has had on their lives. In May 2018, Sistema Scotland brought together children, young people, families and community members from all four Big Noise centres to Edinburgh for a parliamentary debate and a reception at the Scottish Parliament, again marking the 10th birthday of Sistema Scotland. Eleven MSPs from across the political parties addressed the debate and recognised the considerable achievements to date of the charity. Eighty children performed in the Scottish Parliament for MSPs, funders, partners and community members; board member Sally Magnusson interviewed children at different stages of their Big Noise journey to share what Big Noise means to them. The First Minister Nicola Sturgeon MSP addressed the gathering celebrating the achievements to date of Sistema Scotland and Chairman and Founder Richard Holloway made an impassioned call to politicians to support Sistema Scotland as a way of working towards a fairer Scotland. With the growing network of four Big Noise centres, cross-centre collaboration and learning has been a key development for Sistema Scotland this past year and will be an ongoing priority moving forward. In July 2017 Big Noise participants from Raploch, Govanhill and Torry took part in the first three-centre

Sistema Scotland was inspired by the El Sistema model founded in Venezuela in 1975 by Venezuelan musician and activist José Antonio Abreu. It subsequently adopted the mission statement "Music for Social Change."

Big Noise Raploch was the first programme to be developed and has been celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> birthday with a range of high profile concerts and performances.

[Click here to read more about Sistema Scotland and the development of the Big Noise centres](#)

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sharing concert, with Torry participants staying on in Raploch as a residential for a few days. Scottish classical violinist and Sistema Scotland board member Nicola Benedetti CBE visited Big Noise Raploch in December to spend the day working with members of the Raploch Red Orchestra and Big Noise Govanhill's United Orchestra, challenging and inspiring the children.

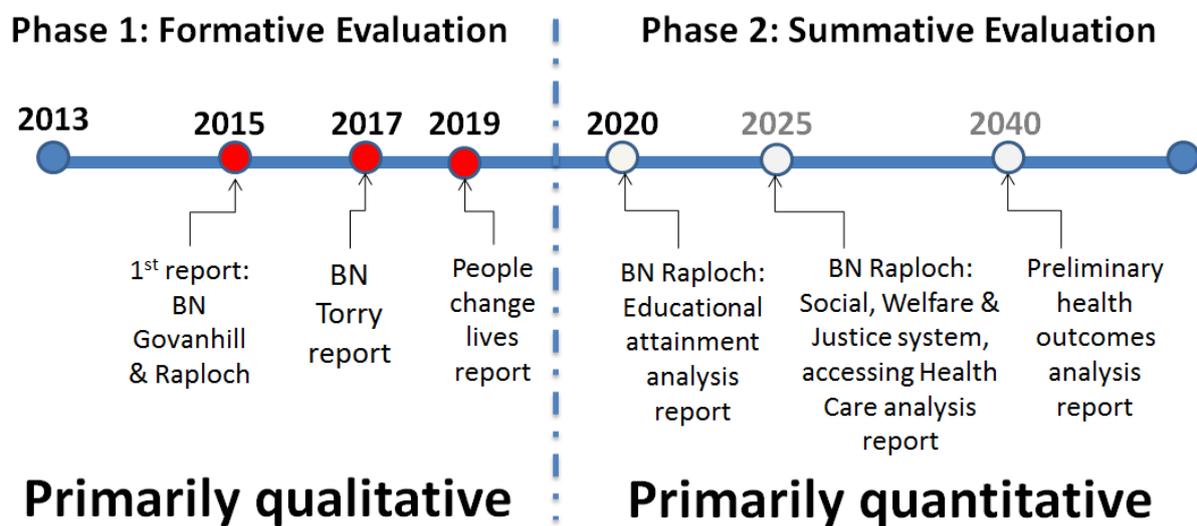
## Evaluation design and methods

A comprehensive evaluation plan was published in 2014<sup>16</sup>, the aims of the evaluation are:

**Evaluation aim 1.** Assess, over the long term, the outcomes of the Big Noise programme in terms of social and behavioural development, educational performance and attainment and future impacts on the lives, health and wellbeing of the children and young people participating in the programme. Additionally, the social impacts at the family and community levels will be assessed.

**Evaluation aim 2.** Gain insight into Sistema Scotland's ethos and vision and its approach to selecting programme sites, adapting programme delivery to local structures and requirements, local partnership working and the characteristics of the staff and implementation, which are critical to enhancing inclusion, engagement and retention and achieving positive outcomes for the participants, families and wider community.

Figure 1: Evaluation design overview.



In responding to these aims the GCPH has developed an evaluation methodology which will track the impacts of Big Noise on participants as they transition into adulthood. The evaluation has two phases – Phase 1, a formative evaluation has been undertaken over the period 2013-2018 and deploys a range of primarily qualitative approaches to understand how Big Noise is delivered, observe the early impacts of the programme and to map out how these impacts are likely to unfold over time and influence later life-course outcomes. Phase 1 has generated three substantive reports (including this one) and a range of peer reviewed journal publications based on these reports (detailed in Appendix A). Figure 2 depicts the timeline of the evaluation, the substantive outputs and the two evaluation 'phases':

Phase 2 marks the beginning of a summative evaluation, from 2020 onwards – which will use quantitative analysis of life-course outcomes to assess the long-term impact of the Big Noise programme. Outcome analysis will focus on the educational and health outcomes of participants as well as their contact with the welfare, justice and social care systems. All analysis within Phase 2 involves the outcomes for Big Noise participants being compared with those of a similar sociodemographic profile who have not accessed Big Noise. Big Noise Raploch is the longest

established Big Noise centre (established in 2008) and thus has the oldest participants, meaning that the early Phase 2 analysis planned for 2020 and 2025 focuses on the outcomes of Big Noise Raploch participants.

In total, the following methods have been used over the past five years in completing Phase 1 of evaluation activity. For more information on the specific use of these methods, the justification for their use and how the data generated has been analysed and reported please see the evaluation plan<sup>16</sup>, and appendices accompanying the first evaluation findings report in 2015<sup>17</sup>:

- 190 in-depth semi-structured interviews (Big Noise participants, parents, school teachers, Sistema Scotland staff and board members, Big Noise musicians, volunteers).
- 1,900 hours of structured observation of Big Noise delivery.
- 240 children taking part in participant drawing exercise (aged 4 to 8).
- 70 school teachers taking part in online educational impacts survey.
- 40 Big Noise musicians taking part in focus groups.
- 18 Big Noise Raploch participants taking part in 'school leavers' focus groups, questionnaires and individual interviews (aged 15 to 17).
- 16 non-participants taking part in focus groups exploring barriers to engagement (aged 14 to 16).
- 15 in-depth case studies of Big Noise participants.
- 6 Big Noise Raploch participants taking part in participatory filmmaking exercise (aged 14 to 16).
- Sociodemographic profiling of participant engagement across Big Noise centres in Raploch, Govanhill and Torry.
- An economic cost-benefit analysis of Big Noise Govanhill<sup>A</sup>.

Evaluations of community-based arts interventions have tended to be short-term and lack quantitative assessment of health and social impacts particularly in relation to a control group.

Furthermore, reports of evaluations have paid little attention to how interventions are delivered and in what ways this relates to the impacts – this has limited the 'transferability' of findings.

The GCPH evaluation of Big Noise addresses these weaknesses seen in the evidence base to date.

[Click here to learn more](#)

Phase 1 of the evaluation was undertaken with a range of partners including Audit Scotland, Education Scotland and Glasgow Caledonian University. Audit Scotland worked alongside the GCPH in delivering the main evaluation. Education Scotland undertook an assessment of the learning and education quality in Big Noise Raploch and health economists from Glasgow Caledonian University performed a cost benefit analysis using data from Big Noise Govanhill. For more detail regarding the ways in which these organisations have contributed to the evaluation please again see the appendices accompanying the first evaluation findings report in 2015<sup>14</sup>.

Qualitative data generated in various forms has been subject to a rigorous thematic approach, which is one of the most common approaches to analysing qualitative data, especially within the field of health-related research<sup>17</sup>. Thematic analysis involves coding textual data into categories that

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<sup>A</sup> Please note that the totals detailed in the above description of methods used over phase 1 of the evaluation differ from those reported in 2015, as they now include subsequent fieldwork across all three Big Noise centres.

summarise and systemise the content of the data. The advantage of this approach in this context is that the analysis provides a useful summary of the views and experiences of those taking part in the evaluation and an overview of the range and diversity of the ideas presented<sup>19</sup>. The quality of the analysis was ensured through the close collaboration of multiple analysts from different professional backgrounds throughout the various analysis processes over the past five years<sup>19</sup>.

An interesting approach utilised in researching the views of young Big Noise participants over phase 1 of the evaluation has been creative drawing exercises. The approach developed was based on established age-appropriate methodologies where child participants are asked to draw a response to a short series of basic questions<sup>20</sup>. This approach has been shown to be more effective than traditional qualitative methods (for example, interviews or focus groups) in enabling young children to participate in research and as a means of developing and articulating their views and beliefs<sup>21</sup>.

The exercises were split into three sections, where the children were asked to draw (and annotate with help of musicians, teachers and the researcher) 'What do you like best about Big Noise?', 'What do you not like at Big Noise?' and 'How do you feel at Big Noise?' The exercise was explained to the children at the start of the session, and it was made clear that they could choose whether to take part, to draw something different, or not to draw at all. The participants' parents were provided with an information sheet in advance of the exercise explaining the process and an opt-out form was also provided if parents did not want their child to take part. No opt-out forms were received.

During the exercise the researcher, musicians, teachers and volunteers assisted the children with annotating and discussing their drawings. The annotation was appropriate to ensure the children's views were made clear and to minimise any assumptions made during the analysis<sup>22</sup>. Each group had a facilitator who prompted the children to describe their drawings and discuss the reasons for their choice of drawing. Picking up on particular aspects of the drawing proved to be a useful stimulus for discussion with children becoming co-interpreters of their own image<sup>23</sup>. The vast majority of participants drew relevant pictures which were used in the analysis. The data used in analysis, therefore, comprised the drawings and text produced by the children participating.

The primarily qualitative methods deployed by the GCPH during phase 1 of the evaluation and the findings reported to date have been subject to peer review; the mental and emotional impacts have been published in the *Journal of Public Mental Health*.

[Click here to access the journal publication](#)

## What we know so far and why it is important

First and foremost we have observed a range of positive impacts on the children and young people who take part in Big Noise. The methods utilised have been explicit in identifying the impacts Big Noise brings in addition to those expected through schooling and through a settled home life. The findings are consistent across the Big Noise centres in Glasgow, Stirling and Aberdeen despite different community contexts and participant demographics. Broadly, the impacts can be summarised as follows:

- increasing confidence, discipline, pride, and aspiration
- improved team-working, communication, and leadership
- enhanced academic skills including listening, concentration, and creativity
- increased resilience, happiness, sense of belonging and fulfilment
- strong musical skills development
- uptake of physical activity and healthy eating, avoidance of damaging behaviours
- development of positive social groups, peer relationships and cultural engagement
- respite and protection for vulnerable participants.

These impacts are positive and represent strong evaluation findings in their own right. The impacts reported by the GCPH (based on this report and the evaluation of Big Noise Raploch and Govanhill published in 2015<sup>14</sup> and the evaluation of Big Noise Torry in 2017<sup>24</sup>) are consistent with Education Scotland's assessments (published in 2015 and 2017<sup>25</sup>) of the quality of Big Noise education and learning.

Considering these impacts in more detail, the GCPH has reported seven impact pathways which present the impacts and link them to medium-term outcomes and potential longer-term outcomes. The causal links between the short-, medium- and long-term outcomes are evidence-based. We have reviewed other research, and the balance of evidence supports the links to the potential long-term outcomes that we propose. For example, a strong and consistent finding reported was that Big Noise participants demonstrate enhanced skills that support their learning within school. If, over the medium-term these skills align with other impacts such as increased motivation, pride and aspiration then it may mean that Big Noise participants achieve better school qualifications and post-school destinations. Wider evidence tells us that ultimately this may lead to attaining a higher paying, more fulfilled job which in turn will have a positive impact on health, wellbeing and life expectancy<sup>26</sup>.

The scale and types of impact on participants will depend on their own experiences and needs. Consistent and long-term engagement with the programme is likely to encourage better outcomes in the long term. Sistema Scotland's focus on

Big Noise aims to address entrenched inequalities over the long-term. In turn, the impacts of the programme are likely to unfold over years to come.

Strong impacts on participants have been observed so far. These impacts represent the starting point of theorised 'impact pathways' – that is, how these impacts in the short-term may translate into longer-term or life-course outcomes for the participants.

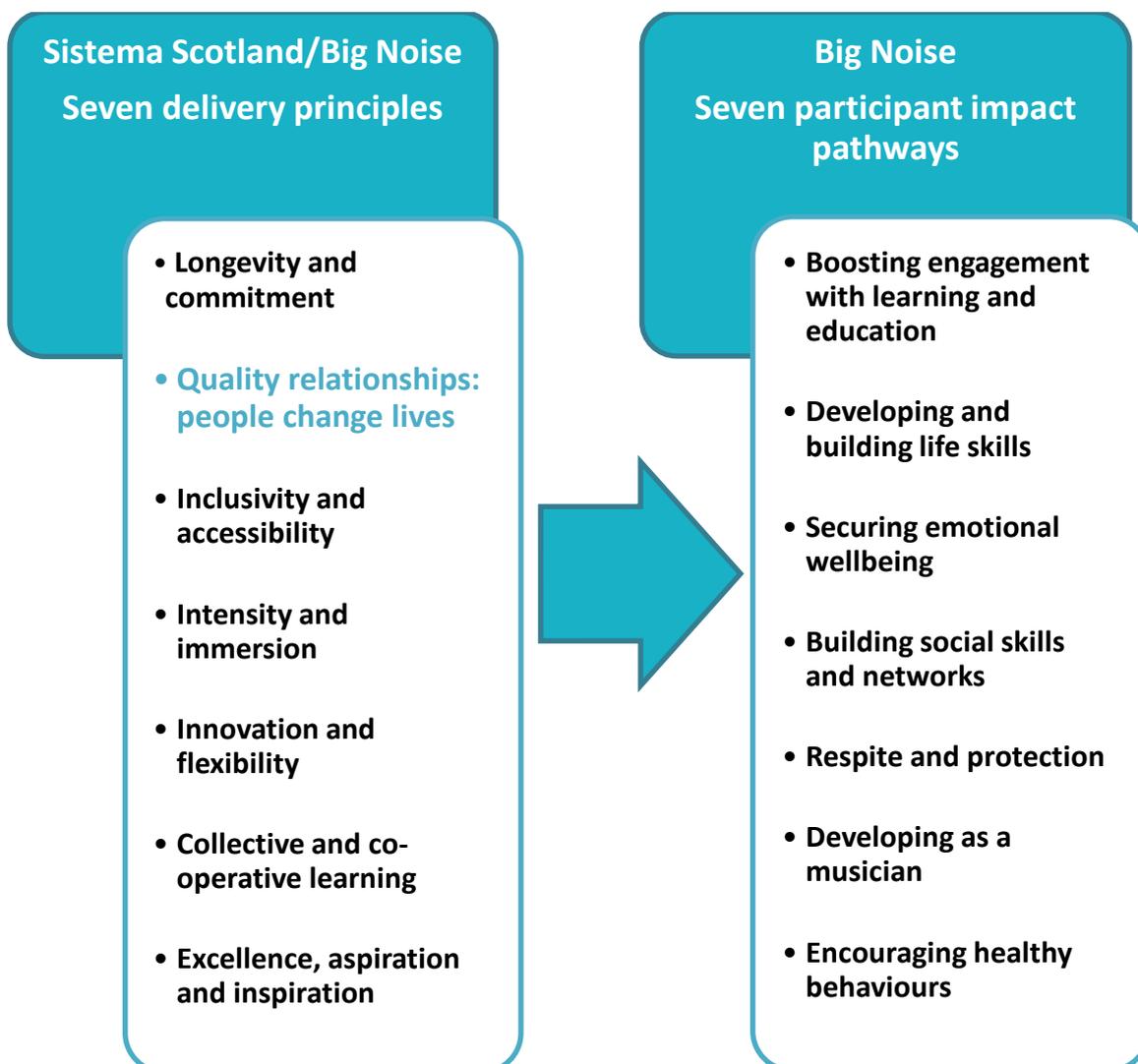
A key strength of the impact pathways is that they are 'evidence-based' - they have been developed using well-established research in a variety of fields.

[Click here to see the full impact pathways](#)

areas of Scotland where deprivation is concentrated enables the programme's impacts to be achieved where need is high. All things being equal, if the impacts of the Big Noise programme are large enough to compensate for other drivers of inequality, the social and health inequalities seen in the communities where Big Noise is delivered may be reduced in the long term. There are also impacts on families and the community as a whole although these are less well defined; including raised aspirations, feelings of ambition, raised pride and hope for the future.

Importantly the evaluation also seeks to understand how these impacts are being achieved and if they are likely to impact on later life, and in what ways. This is why the GCPH has developed Big Noise delivery principles which define the key elements of how Big Noise works and how these impacts are achieved. Big Noise is a high quality, long-term, intensive intervention which is innovative and flexible in tailoring its delivery to individual circumstances in order to be more accessible and facilitate a more consistent engagement with the programme. At the core of the Big Noise delivery principles is the quality of relationship between Big Noise musician and participant. This becomes a trusted, respectful and reciprocal relationship where the musician can become a role model and mentor as well as an educator. Through the collective learning model and pursuit of musical excellence that orchestral practice and performance enable, the musician-participant and participant-participant, relationships are able to strengthen further. The below figure depicts the seven Big Noise delivery principles on the left and the seven impact pathways on the right. The delivery principle 'Quality relationships: people change lives' is highlighted given its importance and centrality to the positive impacts we report.

Figure 2: Overview of Sistema Scotland/Big Noise delivery principles and participant impact pathways.



The Big Noise delivery principles and impact pathways illuminate important learning and impacts in relation to social and early years interventions, and in broader terms, approaches to address inequalities. They also align closely with national indicators and outcomes within the National Performance Framework<sup>27</sup> and the 2018 Public Health Priorities<sup>28</sup>, and embody ways of working described within the Public Service reform agenda. These policy links are articulated in the Report Summary section.

The 2015 initial finding report also included an economic evaluation as proof of concept<sup>14</sup>. A cost-benefit analysis was undertaken by colleagues at Glasgow Caledonian University. The analysis was undertaken to assess the potential of Big Noise Govanhill in terms of the impact from resources used in its delivery. The analysis considered the economic costs of Big Noise Govanhill at that time and used the impact pathways developed by the GCPH to quantify some of the key theorised long-term impacts. A range of assumptions were inherent within the economic model, but the evaluation indicated that Big Noise Govanhill had the potential to generate greater social benefits than the social costs to deliver it. In weighing up the impacts, the result was that for every £1 spent; around £9 of social benefit was generated. Positive impacts within the analysis included improved post-

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Scotland's Big Noise centres in Stirling, Glasgow and Aberdeen

school destinations and enhanced wellbeing, reduced antisocial behaviour, reduced demand on Police, and more efficient use of Social Services. The cost-benefit analysis was predicated on the assumption that claims for achievable outcomes were probable. Longitudinal data about actual outcomes for participants (such as those that will be generated in phase 2 of this evaluation) will be important for future economic analysis and research.

## Big Noise Raploch

### Community and Big Noise delivery overview

Raploch is within Stirling, one of Scotland's newest cities, which lies to the south of the river Forth in central Scotland. The community currently has a population of approximately 3,000 and is steeped in history and Scottish folklore.

In recent decades the wider area of Stirling has enjoyed increasing economic activity and prosperity, relative to the rest of Scotland, and Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data from 2016 show that the level of income deprivation in Stirling is below that of Scotland as a whole. Despite this, Raploch has not fared as well, and the gap between Raploch and the rest of Stirling has grown. Raploch has a range of health and social inequalities, including relatively low life expectancy, high crime, high unemployment and, until recently, poorer quality housing<sup>29</sup>.

At the time of writing 501 children and young people actively participate in Big Noise Raploch. Currently 14 babies and toddlers attend 'Baby Noise' with a further 84 attending provision within their nursery setting; both groups receiving 30 minutes of provision per week. The in-school provision reaches 238 Primary 1 (one hour per week) and Primary 2 children (one and a half hours per week). A further 165 children and young people attend the elective after-school programme from Primary 3 onwards (after-school provision ranges from 2 and a half hours per week in Primary 3, up to 10 hours per week for senior high school students). Overall Big Noise after-school currently engages with 44% of the eligible pupil population. At the time of writing efforts are ongoing to enhance this after-school take-up rate including the development of a 10-week block of pre-brass and percussion instrument tuition and band practice at the start of Primary 4.

There are 21 musicians delivering Big Noise Raploch, equating to 14 full time equivalent posts. There is an operations manager and two part-time administrators to support the organisation of the centre in Raploch. Seven support workers and 12 volunteers play a crucial role in the ongoing delivery of the programme.

All those attending Big Noise Raploch after school also receive a one-to-one or paired musical tuition during school time of 20-30 minutes. Additional practice clubs are held twice weekly for half an hour at lunchtimes. Big Noise Raploch also provides holiday clubs during the Easter, Summer and October school holidays. These consist of daytime provision of up to 19 hours a week, ending in a local concert performed by participants with families invited. During some holiday clubs there are also residential trips for one or two nights. In addition to orchestral practice sessions, individual programmes have been developed for students struggling to engage with the after-school provision, currently 35 children utilise this additional provision. Supplementary classes are also held for senior pupils preparing for exams and auditions, both for musical performance and theory. To promote community engagement Big Noise Raploch also hold 'sharing sessions' that families can attend.

At present Big Noise Raploch is formalising a memorandum of understanding with Forth Valley College in order to support the progression of participants of school-leaving age into college courses, training and apprenticeships. The programme is also evolving to support participants in gaining work experience within and out with Big Noise delivery, in order to support post-school progression and related applications and CV development. This has involved 'young teachers and leaders' who gain experience in delivering aspects of the programme. The programme has also sought accreditation

for some of its activities and opportunities for participants such as Youth Scotland Awards and Duke of Edinburgh Awards. Big Noise Raploch has also developed a youth board comprising participants that feed into the programme's governance structures. As described in the overview of Sistema Scotland, Big Noise Raploch also hosted and contributed to around 20 concerts and events in 2018.

### Fresh insights from Big Noise Raploch

Over the past year, assessing the contribution of Big Noise over the latter stages of schooling has been a priority for the evaluation in Big Noise Raploch. In particular the influence of Big Noise and the musician-participant relationship on post-school destinations has been explored. For details as to the methods used within Big Noise Raploch in generating these new insights, please see Appendix B.

Previous findings have made clear the potential of Big Noise musicians as role models and this was an area discussed with the young people. Overall 16 of the 18 participants (89%) confirmed that they considered one of the Big Noise musicians to be an adult role model who they looked up to and identified as having a positive influence on their lives. Two of the 18 participants (11%) reported having no adult role model in their lives. Of the 16 participants who identified a Big Noise role model, 9 (56%) confirmed that this was the only adult role model in their lives, the remaining seven participants (44%) reported having another non-parental adult role model. The below participant touches upon several recurring themes emerging from the analysis concerning Big Noise role models – appreciation of opportunities in life, building confidence, recognising positive behaviours and the influence of these impacts on shaping positive post-school destinations:

Many Big Noise Raploch participants are now at or approaching school leaving age. Some of these participants have been taking part in Big Noise for 10 years.

Here, using qualitative methods we explore how the relationship between Big Noise musicians and participants may have influenced the transition into post-school destinations.

Moving forward the evaluation will use statistical modelling to assess the contribution Big Noise has made to school qualification attainment and post-school destinations. This analysis will commence in 2019/20.

[To learn more about the next phase of the evaluation click here](#)

*"Big Noise has had an impact in my life and has pushed me to see many open opportunities in and out of school. Obviously Big Noise was a programme which was created to keep kids off the street and if I wasn't involved in the programme I don't know where I would be. Having Big Noise staff as role models is such a positive thing because at the age of S1 [11 to 12 years] I was so shy, now I'm an outgoing person by watching them teach and the way they treat us which has made me a much more confident person at the age of 16. Big Noise has made me want to do volunteering and working with kids by watching how great they were with us all and hopefully coming to volunteer here will keep me in music as if I wasn't it would be a massive hole in my personality."*

(Big Noise Raploch participant, aged 16)

Within the online questionnaire high school teachers in Raploch were asked to describe the participant-musician relationship in five words. Although none specifically referred to Big Noise

musicians being role models, all ten teachers chose words describing a positive, trusting and nurturing relationship:

*“Confident, accepting, caring, positive, encouraging”*

*“Rapport, trust, mentor, encourager, honesty”*

*“Good, positive, influential, reliable, supportive”*

(Raploch high school teachers)

An emergent theme from the analysis of participant views was that there appeared to be a gender dimension regarding whether they had a Big Noise role model; male participants tended to identify male musicians as role models and female participants generally recognised female musicians as role models. The length of time the participants had known the musician they identified as a role model varied significantly from less than one year to ten years. Two thirds (11 of the 16 participants) had, however, known their role model musician for between six and ten years. The nature of the musician-participant interaction appeared to be a more significant factor in whether the participant considered the musician to be a role model than the length of time they had known them. Fourteen of the 16 (88%) participants who reported having a Big Noise role model identified musicians whom they had had consistent one-to-one musical tuition with as their role model. One-to-one tuition varies depending on the specific circumstances, needs and stage of musical development of the participant and is predicated on the basic premise of the musician spending devoted time for intensive practice and tuition with the participant on their own every week. Often during one-to-one tuition musicians will play instruments demonstrating specific skills that the participant may need to work on. Participants and musicians may also play together. Participants emphasised the length of time they had been part of Big Noise and known the musician, the trust they have developed and the way in which they admired their musical and teaching skills as important in their perception of them as a role model:

*“Just a bond has been built up over the time [with Big Noise musician]. A sense of trust as well”*

*“I feel like I can talk to anyone at Big Noise as they are all trustworthy and listen when you need someone to speak to”*

*“I love the way she teaches and it shows me how to improve helping others”.*

*“Since I started Big Noise I have known [Big Noise musician]. I have always wanted to be as great a violin player as her.”*

*“...it’s been a big part of my life from when I was very young and Big Noise has taught me skills that I need for school and outside of school”*

(Big Noise Raploch participants, aged 16 to 18)

Participants felt that central to the feeling that Big Noise musicians were role models, was the fact that musicians provided emotional and practical support in participants’ lives, and were inspirational. The participants consistently expressed how the musicians “were there when they

needed them", that they helped keep them on track in school, listened to them and the participants trusted them. All 16 participants who identified a Big Noise role model stated that they were an important person to have in their life. On a scale of importance, ranked 1-5 (where 1 is not important and 5 is extremely important), 33% said they were important, 47% said very important and 20% said extremely important. The musicians had been pivotal to the development of the participants' musical skills and their continued long-term participation in Big Noise, and had also played an important role in helping them shape their post-school destinations. This included playing a key role in supporting them to secure places on further/higher education courses and in helping participants prepare for job interviews.

Some of the participants expressed a desire to go into a music profession and said that Big Noise had supported them in this and allowed them to gain experience in sound engineering and staging performances. Others said that Big Noise had supported them in finding suitable courses, assisting with applications and giving them relevant experience to support applications. Some participants wanted to go into childcare and related training and were given work experience as classroom assistants in Baby Noise and in Big Noise nursery classes. The skills gained and experiences from trips and performances as a result of being part of Big Noise provided them with content for CVs which many of their peers didn't have. Indeed all 18 participants had intentions to go into positive future destinations at the end of the school year. These included staying on at school, starting a college course, beginning a new job or apprenticeship, volunteering, taking part in a training course and looking for a job.

High school teachers also had a positive perception as to the influence Big Noise participation will have on school qualification attainment (seven of the ten teachers described a positive influence on attainment) and post-school destinations (8 of the 10 described a positive influence on destinations):

*"yes [when asked about Big Noise influence on post school destination] wider options available to them and they have the reassurance of knowing they have already achieved something worthwhile so can set their sights higher"*

*"Yes [when asked about Big Noise influence on school attainment] pupils feel empowered to achieve. Pupils believe in themselves and have the support to keep going through the hard times."*

One teacher made the point that there are likely to be positive impacts to attainment but also that the impacts of Big Noise are long-term, and may not be seen until participants begin careers:

*"I would think for the majority it would [Big Noise having a positive influence on school attainment] although for some the benefits may not be seen until years later in their careers – positive destinations."*

The participants spoke very clearly about the positive impact their Big Noise role model had had on their post-school destinations and the decision-making process concerning this important transition. Participants were also clear that the skills and experiences gained from Big Noise had a strong bearing on their positive destinations:

*“Yes, as being on many different trips has impacted me in many different ways. I would say my upbringing has been even better because Big Noise has helped me and gave me something to do. I now have many things to put on my CV because of Big Noise. I would say I have gained lots of skills while being a part of Big Noise”*

*“I want to go onto teaching and the people from Big Noise have showed me how to deal with teaching and the problems and how to react to these problems”*

*“Yeah, massively because they [Big Noise musicians] can give you advice for future plans and have guided me onto now to get the right courses for college that I want to do”*

*“[Big Noise musician] had helped me learn the flute and also helped me with school and supported me when I left Big Noise to start my first job”*

*“I never knew until recently I wanted to study music and [Big Noise musician] made me realise I wanted to, he made me a better player and to understand music more... he helped me come to the choice that I wanted to stay at school for S6 then go to uni [university]”*

*“They [Big Noise musician] have always been quite close to my transition in achieving my career goal to be a nursery nurse. They helped me get work experience through Baby Noise/P1 and P2 [Big Noise]”*

(Big Noise Raploch participants, aged 16 to 18)

The participants also expressed that they felt inspired by the high level of musical accomplishment of the musicians, their work ethic and achievements, obtained through dedication and development of skills over a long period of time. The understanding that it was primarily hard work that had furnished the musicians with a range of opportunities, experiences and life skills was recognised as inspiring by the participants. Participants also spoke of how the relationship with musicians had raised their self-esteem and aspirations, encouraging them to pursue their goals, particularly in relation to the important decisions young people encounter as they leave school. Participants also credited the musicians' methods of teaching, specifically recognising that it was tailored to the personality of the participants and what motivated them. The participants also identified that Big Noise had taught them skills which could be used in other areas of life and that the experiences they'd gained through trips and performances had helped them be more prepared for new experiences in the future.

*“The fact that he [musician] has been to so much places and that he always wants to do better makes him important in my life”*

*“Because they [Big Noise musicians] would make you think about things and how you can achieve anything in life”*

*“Big Noise has helped me with my confidence and facing new challenges and has shaped me into the person I am today. I think if I did not take part in Big Noise I would not be where I am today”*

Consolidating five years of evaluation learning from Sistema  
Scotland's Big Noise centres in Stirling, Glasgow and Aberdeen

*"Yes, they [Big Noise musicians] gave me more confidence towards helping me want to do something with my life"*

(Big Noise Raploch participants, aged 16 to 18)

## Big Noise Govanhill

### Community and programme delivery overview

Govanhill is situated in Glasgow, south of the river Clyde between the Gorbals, Mount Florida and Queens Park. The Govanhill area was formed in 1877 and currently has a population of approximately 16,000. Govanhill's history is closely associated with William Dixon, a leading ironmonger at the time. The main avenue running through Govanhill is called Dixon Avenue and many local streets were named after the daughters of William Dixon Jr, such as Allison Street, Daisy Street, and Annette Street.

Govanhill has a transient and ever changing community and has been home to successive waves of migrants, most notably from Ireland, Central and South Asia, East Asia and, more recently, Eastern Europe including those of Roma descent. It is estimated that community members of around 50 nationalities currently reside in Govanhill, this mix of minority ethnic groups accounting for almost 90% of the Govanhill population. This highly diverse mix of nationalities, languages, religions and cultures has created a vibrant and dynamic neighbourhood, where a broad range of communities intersect. In recent years however, Govanhill has earned a reputation as a neighbourhood with many challenges; the area experiences inequalities across a range of social, economic, health and environmental markers<sup>30</sup>. Govanhill has also witnessed the proliferation of 'rogue' landlords in the area and a marked increase of overcrowding and below tolerable standard living conditions<sup>31</sup>.

Big Noise Govanhill currently works with approximately 1,200 participants from four primary schools in the area. This comprises 36 Baby Noise participants with a further 170 attending nursery provision. 1,080 children attend the in-school provision for Primary 1 (60 minutes per week in three schools, 30 minutes in one of the schools) and Primary 2 (two of the schools receiving 90 minutes per week, one school having 45 minutes and the remaining school receiving 30 minutes per week). The after-school provision in Govanhill currently engages with 205 children from Primary 3 onwards; which represents 18% of those eligible to take part.

After-school participants receive three 90 minute sessions per week on average. The programme for adults currently works with 11 individuals. As the largest centre, Big Noise Govanhill has 23 musicians, equating to 17 full-time equivalent posts. In addition to an operations manager and two administrators, six part-time support workers and 23 volunteers provide essential support in delivering the programme.

### Fresh insights from Big Noise Govanhill

The positive impacts of Big Noise on the language acquisition of ethnic minority pupils in Govanhill for whom English is not their first language was first reported by the GCPH in 2015. Since then Big Noise Govanhill has purposefully refined the programme to maximise these impacts. The evaluation

Govanhill is the most diverse neighbourhood in Scotland. The diversity presents a range of cultural and language considerations when delivering services in the area.

Big Noise Govanhill works with a total of 1,200 children and young people and has effectively embedded itself with the community and works closely with a range of partner organisations in the area, not least the local schools.

[Click here to learn more about Govanhill and partnership service delivery within the area](#)

priority for the past year within Govanhill has been to develop a more detailed understanding of how the programme impacts on language acquisition among pupils whose first language is not English. In particular the views of school teachers was deemed to be vital as this was not explored in depth in the 2015 report. For details of the methods used within Big Noise Govanhill in generating these new insights please see Appendix B.

In addition to the intensive learning within the school environment, Big Noise offers children new, creative and enjoyable methods of learning new words, phrases, constructing sentences and of communicating in general. Through Big Noise, children learn the sounds and patterns of language, and discover different ways to use their voice (e.g. loud, softly, fast and slow tempo, low and high tones). They also learn ways to describe what they hear; learning adjectives (long, short, fast, slow). Big Noise Govanhill also uses musical notes and accents to support storytelling. Learning through music also enables a form of communication without an explanation in English which represents a foundation from which to build language acquisition, which is particularly helpful for Roma children who often have very little English when first starting school and who may be completely new to a learning environment. These updates to the curriculum in Govanhill have been successful and are being rolled out in the other Big Noise centres.

School teachers in Govanhill believe that the children who participate in the Big Noise after-school programme gain valuable skills concerning language development; they hear sounds and words which then transfer to phonological awareness, which aids them in blending the sounds and structuring sentences. In Govanhill, 86% of teachers described observing increased confidence in children who attend Big Noise after-school, including children being more confident speaking out loud in class, interacting with others and talking in front of groups. Forty-three percent of teachers saw improvements in overall communication, with 66% noticing increases in listening skills, 51% in oral skills, 43% in concentration and 37% in understanding. Cumulatively, the majority (97%) of school teachers across Govanhill believe that participation in Big Noise could impact positively on the children's futures. These points are illustrated through a range of quotes from Big Noise teachers:

*"The majority of our children are learning English as an additional language [EAL]. Big Noise staff encourage the children to answer questions, describe music and sing a variety of songs. Subsequently, their language is always developing."*

*"All my learners are EAL learners and cannot access the curriculum at the age-appropriate level as a result. Some are very close to being on track, others are quite far behind due to a combination of lack of English and lack of school experience. However, Big Noise does help to develop learners' confidence and social English, as well as some specific technical vocabulary."*

*"As an EAL teacher I do not have my own class but work with different groups of children. The children are all EAL Romanian/Slovakian children, many who are new to English or at Early Acquisition. Yes many children do show new-found confidence and are expanding their musical knowledge and skills which becomes evident when children are talking about Big Noise to others. Children are making new friends and there is a good impact on the community where parents like to participate in much needed whole community activities."*

*Overall I think Big Noise is hugely valuable to our school and community providing necessary and valuable learning that otherwise our children would not get and gain from."*

(Govanhill primary school teachers)

The cultural diversity in Govanhill cannot be overstated, with an estimated 50 languages spoken in the area. In addition to supporting the development through schooling, the language, communication and musical skills acquisition through Big Noise also support socialisation among children in Govanhill with different languages and from different cultures. Again music serves as a commonly recognised and understood medium, a foundation from which friendships and social networks can be established. The importance of social connections also comes to the fore when supporting the transition into secondary school. August 2018 marked the first Big Noise Govanhill participants beginning their secondary education; through Big Noise, participants from different primary schools already know each other and have existing social connections. Big Noise Govanhill musicians reflect on the social connections formed through Big Noise and the challenges of maintaining engagement during the transition from primary to secondary school:

*"Their relationship is so strong with each other [among participants] as well, and they all come from different schools, so this could be their place where they all meet each other. When you go over the road [to Big Noise after-school provision] after school they just sit and entertain themselves, and they're so close together. So that may be bringing them back socially."*

*"So we're proactive about that [maintaining Big Noise engagement as participants transition into High School], but that's a hard bit where a relationship [musician-participant relationship] really matters, and how we've got through to that child up to then, and making them see the good in it [continued participation in Big Noise], and see if we can make them understand why they're doing it. By that point I think that's a good thing, but that's going to be tough."*

*"They might face other issues. As they go towards secondary school, it's going to be a tough time for these kids; they're in a more pressured environment, there's going to be more demanded of them and of their time, and who's going to manage to cut it in high school? And yet, actually, I hope they'll take a skill with them [playing an instrument] into the high school that they can be confident with."*

(Big Noise Govanhill musicians)

## Big Noise Torry

### Community and programme delivery overview

Located just south of the River Dee in the city of Aberdeen, Torry is a community dating back to 1495. Until the late 19th century when the Victoria Bridge was completed, Torry was physically independent from the city. The current population of Torry stands at around 11,000. Until recent years Torry has been home to a settled White indigenous community, with generations of families living in the area. Similar to Govanhill, the last decade has seen a sharp increase in migration to the area, particularly of Eastern European families and individuals moving to Scotland for employment opportunities. This has seen the community becoming increasingly diverse, with currently a third of pupils in Torry schools living in households where English is not the first language spoken<sup>32</sup>.

According to official statistics, Torry is a disadvantaged community in socioeconomic terms. Torry has higher unemployment and poverty rates in comparison with the rest of Aberdeen City and Scotland as a whole. Furthermore the area exhibits higher rates of adults claiming out-of-work benefits, incapacity benefits and severe disability allowance. However over the last few years there have been several improvements in the area's SIMD profile<sup>33</sup>.

At the time of writing, Big Noise Torry is working with 527 children. There are 16 baby and infant members of 'Little Noise'. A further 139 participants take part within nursery provision. There are a total of 211 children in Primary 1 and 2 who currently take part in in-school provision receiving 90 minutes of tuition per week. From Primary 3 to Primary 5, 151 children attend after-school provision (representing a 43% take-up rate among the eligible population) and receive just under 4 hours of Big Noise provision per week, on average. There are ten adults currently engaged in 'The Noise'.

There are 12 musicians delivering the programme in Torry, equating to just under ten full-time equivalent posts, there is also an operations manager and a full-time administrator. Seven part-time support workers and 15 volunteers also contribute to delivery within the centre.

### Fresh insights from Big Noise Torry

Big Noise Torry is the most recently established of the three Big Noise centres participating in the GCPH evaluation. However despite its infancy, the delivery of the programme faces some important changes over the next year or so. It is important that the evaluation is cognisant of this. Furthermore it was deemed a priority to further the understanding of the ways in which the participant-musician relationship is formed and nurtured over the early years of primary school; on the balance of findings published to date it was felt that this vital aspect of programme delivery would benefit from further elucidation. For details as to the methods used within Big Noise Torry in generating these new insights please see Appendix B.

A priority area of planning and development concerning the delivery of Big Noise Torry over the past year has been accommodating the closure of the established Big Noise centre within Torry Academy. The closure of the Academy for redevelopment has meant that until the new facility is opened, Big Noise staff are now located within an office space on Victoria Road in the heart of Torry. Rather than being delivered collectively, Big Noise provision is now delivered within the two intake schools; Walker Road Primary and Tullos Primary. There are benefits to these changes in delivery; firstly it negates the need for walking lines which were required previously to accompany Big Noise participants from their primary schools to Torry Academy. Although the walking groups represent a

good opportunity for physical activity, children found the walking groups challenging at times especially in winter months. Walking lines are now required in only one of the after-school evenings a week. It is hoped that Big Noise being delivered within the school setting may enhance programme engagement and retention, it also means longer tuition times and a smaller participant/musician ratio.

Potential downsides to the new programme delivery in Torry are the disruption to the established programme delivery and reduced opportunities for integration and socialisation of pupils across both schools. However the programme still involves weekly practice where pupils from both schools come together, there is also plenty of opportunity to come together for orchestral performances. The Big Noise adult orchestra continues to develop in Torry and has a core membership of around ten adults.

Another development within Big Noise Torry has been for Primary 3 children who now receive 'in-school' provision. Previously in-school tuition has been delivered to Primary 1 and 2 pupils only, while beginning in Primary 3 had meant the transition into elective 'after-school' delivery. The now universal delivery of in-school provision over the first three years of primary school in Torry is designed to support instrumental tuition and the further development of musical skills which may enhance the uptake of after-school provision. The delivery of Big Noise Torry has also been tailored to maximise cross-over impacts on the development of academic skills and school attainment. There has been enhanced focus on counting, phonetics, storytelling and singing within Big Noise provision with a view to enhancing participant literacy and numeracy skills.

Big Noise Torry is also implementing systems and processes to support regular consultation with children and their families concerning their development and ongoing participation within the programme. Alongside this, specific partnership working and additional time and resource has been allocated to support priority children and those with specific or additional support needs. Plans are in place to develop a Big Noise Torry youth board to encourage the voice of participants and their families within the programme development and governance.

With Big Noise Torry now in its fourth year the musicians have been reflecting that they have taken pride in the ways in which their relationships with participants have nurtured and grown beyond that of the initial educator-pupil dynamic. The children call the musicians by their first name, and there is an emphasis on fun and enjoyment as well as learning. Big Noise Torry has also recently implemented small instrumental tuition groups for after-school participants where 2 or 3 children will spend devoted time with the musician. The programme also incorporates opportunities for the musicians to have non-teaching time with the children – during snack time for example. These opportunities enable casual and unstructured interactions, however, the musicians utilise this time to learn about the children's interests and hobbies and hopes for the future. On occasion children may discuss concerns or problems they are having. The children often initiate these interactions, which shows that they are comfortable with the musicians and feel confident and safe in the Big Noise environment.

Musicians reflect that both the structured interactions through musical development and the less formal naturalistic conversations that occur are vital in forming the basis of a relationship which underpins the impacts this evaluation reports. The musicians emphasise that although the conversations outwith musical delivery occur naturally, they use them to be encouraging, supportive

and convey positive messages. By informally learning more about the children and their lives, what they enjoy, what motivates them, musicians can also tie in this knowledge to aspects of the children's musical skills development:

*"every conversation we have I think each of us are still thinking about learning points for the kids"*

*"as long as they are safe we can have casual chats with them"*

*"the kids actually initiate these interactions, like at snack time or something some kids in particular will come up and talk to you"*

*"we are teachers but we are hopefully bringing them a fun aspect to their life here, we are fostering this culture of enjoyment here"*

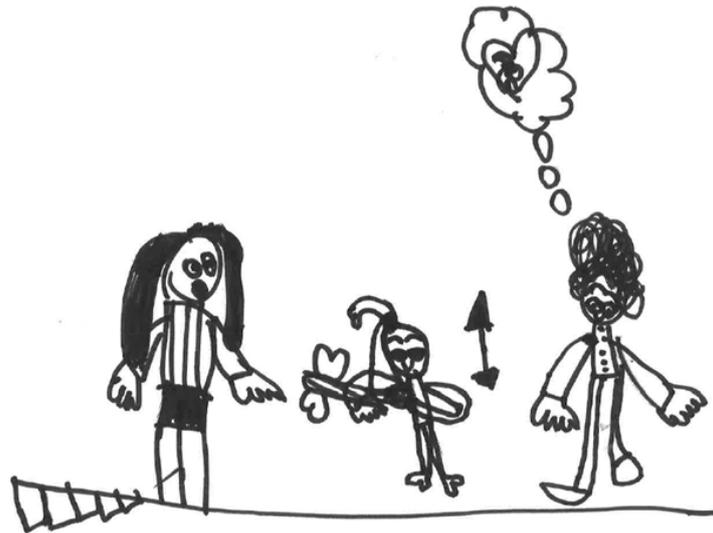
(Big Noise Torry musicians)

Big Noise Torry also now offers multiple opportunities throughout the year for families to become more involved with the programme and to feel part of their child's development through Big Noise. 'Take a musician home for tea' is an approach used across the Big Noise centres. It involves one or two musicians going to a child's home after school and with the child, putting on a mini-concert for their family. Family lessons are also offered during the holiday clubs, where parents and guardians can join their child for a lesson. Indeed half of school teachers surveyed in Torry also noticed increased parental involvement in their child's schooling and development in the families whose children participate in Big Noise.

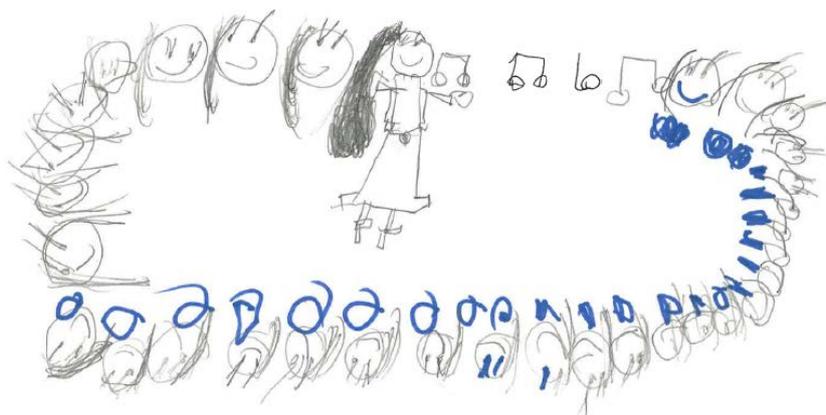
The drawings created by Big Noise Torry participants and the annotations associated with the participants' interpretations of the drawing show the positive depiction of musicians in many instances. The below drawing by a Primary 4 (aged 8 years) after-school participant in Torry depicts the child playing their instrument (cello) on the right and the musician helping them on the left. The participant made a specific point of drawing the red Big Noise sweatshirt he associates with the musician. Drawings by after-school participants more commonly depicted the musician in a teaching capacity, while the younger children depicted their enjoyment of spending time and doing activities with the musicians:



Another Primary 4 Big Noise Torry after-school participant (aged 8 years) drew a picture depicting herself in the middle playing the violin, flanked by two musicians that she clearly identified and spoke positively of. The participant made clear that the two-way arrow denotes the movement of her playing and that the musician on the right is thinking a 'love heart' to convey how well she is playing and their appreciation of the music:



Finally a younger participant (aged 6 years, Primary 2) was keen to emphasise the whole class singing within the in-school provision. The musician is depicted within the centre of the class. The child had written "I like when we sit in a circle and sing". A common theme shown in the in-school participants' drawings was that they enjoyed coming together as a group and learning the songs and games the Big Noise musicians taught them:



## Take home messages

### People change lives

The positive impacts of Big Noise on participants' lives are striking and important; the impacts are consistent across the three Big Noise centres. Looking to the future the types of positive impacts reported such as those on education, esteem, confidence, social skills and health behaviours can be reinforced through years of intensive participation; meaning that the programme has the potential to transform lives and impact on inequalities.

The learning from the first five years of the evaluation of Big Noise has been expansive and relevant to a range of areas of practice and delivery, and policy priorities such as the Scottish National Performance Framework and the Public Health Priorities. However when distilling down all of the Big Noise delivery principles and the evidenced impacts, the core message from the evaluation so far would have to be 'people change lives'. Amid the vibrancy and breadth of activities that Sistema Scotland delivers within communities, with babies, children and young people, lies a relationship between Big Noise musician and participant. It is this relationship that is the primary driver of the positive impacts we report.

In essence the Big Noise delivery principles are designed to enable, support and nurture this relationship. The delivery principles underpin the development of the community orchestra and fundamentally support a long-term, structured, encouraging, trusted and rewarding interaction between musician and participant. Through years of Big Noise participation the nature and characteristics of the relationship will evolve and change depending on the age of the participant and the milestones, challenges and opportunities they face in life. It may also transpire that participants have a quality, long-term relationship with more than one musician, for example when they learn a new instrument.

Within the early years elements of Big Noise delivery the focus of the relationship is on basic musical skills development, phonetics and socialisation. The transition into the more intensive after-school programme requires significant encouragement, praise and support from Big Noise musicians. During this phase, discipline, work ethic and determination are beginning to be cultivated in order to undertake the difficult, long-term instrumental skills development necessary to succeed in the

The emphasis on relationship quality is not new in a range of fields including psychotherapy practice, where the 'therapeutic alliance' between therapist and patient is the most robust predictor of treatment success.

The support for long-term relationships is also echoed in psychotherapy where 'attachment theory' emphasises the importance of consistent, long-term contact between therapist and patient as the foundation for promoting successful outcomes, especially positive behaviour change among children and young people.

A 2019 rapid review of evidence by NHS Health Scotland entitled 'The relationship between a trusted adult and adolescent health and education outcomes' outlines the importance and impacts of relationships similar to that cultivated within Big Noise. The review also makes clear the characteristics of a 'quality' adult-child/young person relationship which re-enforce the approach of Big Noise and the findings in this report.

[To access the review please click here.](#)

orchestra. This also requires significant skills as musical educators, where musicians pay close attention to what motivates individual participants, the pace of their learning and the quality of their participation in order to effectively tailor the programme to maintain engagement over the long term.

Moving on to high school and the participants' teenage years, the mentoring and role model dimensions of the musician's role appear to come to the fore. During this challenging phase of life where the pressures of developing one's sense of self, schooling and exams can be acute, musicians assume a calm, consistent and assuring presence. Continued participation in the orchestra practice and performances, although challenging, can be a creative and emotional outlet which reduces stress among teenage participants, and takes place within a positive peer group, encouraging esteem, confidence and aspiration. The wider opportunities that Big Noise participation affords participants such as residential trips and performances with esteemed orchestras and musicians serve to further underpin these positive impacts and the participant to musician relationship. Big Noise Raploch participants who are approaching school-leaving age refer to Big Noise musicians as role models and clearly articulate the positive part they have played during study, exams and in helping shape their positive post-school destination choices.

Given the centrality and importance of the positive adult-young person relationship at the heart of the delivery and impacts of Big Noise, it is worthwhile considering the transferability of this core dimension of the programme. An important question therefore is whether a comparable adult-child/young person relationship and the observed impacts can be achieved through a medium other than music. It is reasonable to infer that if another intervention, for example a sports programme was underpinned by the same principles as Big Noise delivery and enabled a positive and trusted, long-term adult-young person relationship then it may support similar impacts to those seen in Big Noise. However the musical dimension does appear to be intrinsic to the skills development, co-operative learning and the impacts to emotional wellbeing that we report. Musical development is not directly competitive and also provides a near instantaneous method of collective feedback and reinforcement of positive behaviours. There are also less tangible, emotive and aspirational qualities inherent in music, musical skills development and collective performances.

### **Characteristics of staff that can change lives**

The quality of the participant-musician relationship that Big Noise is able to cultivate relates profoundly to the ethos and culture of Sistema Scotland. Specifically the recruitment practices of Sistema Scotland place significant emphasis on emotional intelligence and the human values and characteristics of candidates alongside their musical and teaching skills. In contrast to most professional or behavioural job specifications or recruitment criteria, Sistema Scotland seeks out what could be described as human or relational qualities in candidates. Sistema Scotland actively recruits musicians with strong social values who are energetic, compassionate, enthusiastic, caring and determined and also demonstrate a long-term commitment to addressing inequalities. These traits also support the delivery of the programme through peer support. During recent focus groups with musicians from Big Noise Govanhill, it was clear that the musicians care for, support and encourage each other during the delivery of the programme, especially when dealing with particularly busy or stressful times or situations. Table 1 illustrates the characteristics Big Noise seeks in musicians in contrast to traditional recruitment specifications:

**Table 1. Big Noise musician recruitment characteristics.**

<b>Traditional professional or behavioural recruitment specifications</b>	<b>Additional personal characteristics deemed essential by Sistema Scotland</b>
Knowledgeable	Social values
Experienced	Caring
Reliable	Supportive
Proven	Encouraging
Motivated	Nurturing
Analytical	Compassionate
Outcome-focused	Determined
Self-starter	Patient
Team player	Energetic

## Discussion and considerations

### Organisational emphasis on relationships

Based on the take-home messages from this evaluation, Sistema Scotland may wish to further consider the centrality and importance of the participant-musician relationship and ways in which programme delivery might be tailored to support this relationship and its longevity. It may be worthwhile considering whether every participant should be allocated a dedicated 'lead' or 'named musician' for their duration with Big Noise. This musician would establish and develop a long-term relationship with the participant from which the range of described mentoring, support and guidance can be delivered in addition to the musical skills development which may take place with potentially a range of musicians and a number of instruments. There may be merit in this named musician meeting regularly with the participant over and above normal Big Noise engagement, clearly this has resource implications and may not be feasible.

It is difficult to assess whether such a deliberate and somewhat prescriptive approach would add value to the more naturalistic way in which relationships develop and bonds are forged between participant and musician within Big Noise at present. Sistema Scotland may wish to reflect on some of the characteristics the older Big Noise participants in Raploch articulated as important in terms of identifying certain musicians as role models. This group identified musicians with whom they had spent one-to-one time, and who were the same gender as themselves, as important factors in perceiving them to be role models. The sample size used in identifying these characteristics was small but the findings were consistent. Sistema Scotland may wish to perform its own assessment as to the validity of these characteristics in relationship building and the merits in tailoring Big Noise delivery in order to promote them.

### Targeting communities or individuals?

Given the emphasis the evaluation findings place on the adult-young person relationship it is worthwhile considering insights from other interventions based on a mentoring relationships. There are not many organisations in Scotland that offer a similar long-term, intensive intervention which promotes the positive adult-child/young person relationship in the same way as Big Noise. One such intervention worth considering, however, is MCR Pathways, a school-based one-to-one mentoring programme supporting young people in "or on the edges" of the care system to realise their full potential through education<sup>35</sup>. The vision of MCR Pathways is to support young people who experience disadvantage to have the same educational outcomes, career opportunities and life chances as any other young person.

The MCR Pathways programme is designed to be sustained over the long-term, with volunteer mentors typically meeting with the young people for an hour each week during term time. At the time of writing MCR Pathways is currently supporting 1,316 young people from S1-S6 and is now embedded in all 30 Glasgow secondary schools. The programme has not been evaluated by an external, independent organisation but has reported some strong impacts to educational attainment and post-school destinations<sup>34</sup>.

Consideration of the MCR Pathways programme raises the question as to whether Big Noise could incorporate a clearer individualised targeting approach within the current community model. The use of 'in-care' status to trigger MCR Pathways' mentoring engagement is significantly more

targeted to individual need and disadvantage than a community-wide approach like that of Big Noise. For example, whereas many MCR Pathways participants are care-experienced just 4% of S1 to S6 pupils residing in Raploch<sup>B</sup> (representing the eligible secondary school population for Big Noise Raploch) are currently within care system. Those who are care-experienced endure some of the starkest inequalities in Scotland, including educational outcomes. To this end, the educational attainment impacts MCR Pathways report, are likely to be more significant than those that Big Noise might achieve. However, arguably Big Noise has more expansive aims than MCR Pathways; including that of being a community beacon, seeking community betterment and renewal, working alongside other services and engaging families – as well as transforming individual lives. Big Noise does have targeted elements within each of its communities. For example within Govanhill there is an additional strand of programme delivery to support children from the Roma community; within Torry a targeted programme exists within the school to support children with additional educational needs; and within Raploch a personalised individual programme for young people of school-leaving age has been developed to support those with vulnerabilities which are recognised by local partners (such as lack of parental support, high risk of homelessness, requiring additional tutoring to achieve post-school destinations etc). Furthermore, Big Noise is a high-quality, intensive, arts-based programme, whose understanding of what is required to address inequalities is rightly more extensive than seeking to enhance educational attainment in isolation; vitally important though that goal is.

The evaluation is clear that the delivery of Big Noise and regular, local performances increases social connections among participants and within the wider community. Community members we have spoken to describe their increased pride and aspiration in the area. However, assessing the impacts of any intervention at a 'community level' is recognised by academics as inherently complex with impacts often being overstated, unsubstantiated and under-theorised. Quantitative approaches are notoriously difficult given issues of attribution especially amid the range of other service delivery, regeneration and investment and shifting demographics in some Big Noise sites. There is also the matter of perspectives involved in assessing impacts at a community level; community perspectives on what matters to them and what to measure will be diverse and may not align well with the information that funders desire or with what are considered reliable evaluation methods.

Sistema Scotland may however wish to reflect on aspects of MCR Pathways' approach and how their way of working targets those with greatest need. Sistema Scotland's mission is to address inequality; there is generally the recognition among stakeholders that this is a long-term endeavour, perhaps even generational. However Sistema Scotland is ultimately held accountable by funders whose timescales are likely to be significantly shorter. By incorporating an individually targeted approach alongside its community focus, Big Noise could potentially strengthen its impact on inequalities. The potential outcomes would also be easier to quantify.

Achieving the right balance between community and individual targeting would be challenging for Big Noise. Individual targeting may be more suitable at a city-wide or regional level, depending on the geographies, given that the number of care-experienced children and young people within a community might be too small to develop an orchestra. There would therefore be logistical challenges in participants travelling to Big Noise centres; a strength of current Big Noise delivery is

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<sup>B</sup> Care-experienced rate provided by Stirling Council in September 2018.

its delivery in the heart of communities which is important in promoting accessibility. Sistema Scotland has also shown great skill in developing Big Noise programmes which although exclusively targeted to areas of disadvantage; taps into community identity and aspiration, avoiding stigma and stereotype. What is clear is that given the scale and enduring nature of social and health inequalities in Scotland, both Sistema Scotland and MCR Pathways have roles to play alongside other innovative approaches and organisations. Sistema Scotland has proven itself to be an organisation committed to continuous improvement in the pursuit of reducing inequalities; the comparison of the targeting mechanisms adopted by both organisations is raised in this spirit.

There is also an ethical and moral set of questions concerning whether interventions should tailor their delivery to be more measurable and to achieve starker impacts that are more likely to satisfy stakeholder and funder expectation as opposed to having the resilience to endure with inherently more complex tasks such as reversing the fortunes of communities which have been disadvantaged for generations.

Staying with Big Noise's community focus, in order to be maximally effective in reducing inequalities in outcomes then it requires to not only take place in areas with relatively high levels of deprivation, the programme also needs to include and retain the children and young people in those areas with greatest need (which would include care-experienced children and young people, those with disabilities, or other social or health issues). Sistema Scotland is acutely aware of this issue but it should remain an ongoing strategic and operation priority, predicated on strong partnership working within the communities that Big Noise operates.

## Next steps for the evaluation

This report presents high-level findings, take-home messages and some important considerations for the delivery of Big Noise moving forward. It concludes and consolidates learning from the first phase of the GCPH-led evaluation of the Big Noise programme. The first phase of the evaluation used primarily qualitative methods to understand and articulate the impacts on participants observed at present and how these are likely to unfold over the life-course of the participants.

The next phase of the evaluation will begin with a quantitative assessment of the contribution Big Noise makes to school qualification attainment and post-school destination in Raploch. It is estimated that by 2019/20 there will be enough Big Noise 'graduates' to be able to perform a statistical analysis. The analysis will be done by comparing the attainment and destinations of Big Noise participants with those of other young people in Stirling of a similar sociodemographic profile. Statistical modelling software will be used to isolate the independent effect Big Noise participation may or may not have on attainment and post-school destination. It is important that the analysis takes account of the fact that Big Noise participants are not a homogenous group and will have varying characteristics that may influence the statistical modelling and the findings. For example, the length of time engaged with the programme will vary among participants and it is anticipated that this may influence the analysis. It may be that during analysis the effect size is calculated for different characteristic categories within the participants group. At the time of writing the GCPH is developing a data sharing agreement with Stirling Council in order to undertake this analysis.

## Final thoughts

The positive impacts on Big Noise participants that we report are strong and consistent across the three centres discussed, and have been assessed from a variety of perspectives and methods. The methods and findings reported in relation to the positive impacts on mental and emotional wellbeing have been examined by independent experts in the process of peer review. These and other impacts reported act on important determinants of future health and wellbeing such as academic skills, health behaviours, self-esteem, confidence and social connections. Because Big Noise is targeted to disadvantaged areas it is working to reduce socioeconomic inequalities in health, income and opportunity. *How* Big Noise does this is vitally important and this is an element of the evaluation that we have spent much time exploring. To summarise, ‘people change lives’ – not interventions or programmes or even music for that matter.

The delivery of Big Noise is designed to underpin a quality, meaningful and trusted relationship between musicians and participants. Big Noise musicians are educators, mentors and can become role models. This is achieved through the intensive, immersive, structured and importantly long-term programme design of Big Noise. Learning a musical instrument and playing in an orchestra to large crowds is a difficult undertaking demanding time, patience, dedication, a strong work ethic and confidence. The relationship with musicians is central to all of this, tailoring the programme to maintain participant engagement, being present during trips and residencies, providing regular encouragement and praise as well as discipline and critique, when needed. Big Noise participants gain musical expertise as well as a range of other life skills which may contribute towards broadening their horizons, widening their opportunities and achieving their potential.

None of this is easy. Some of the participant behaviours encountered on a daily basis in the normal delivery of Big Noise are without question challenging. Musicians describe the daily challenges they face, including lows as well as highs, they also describe supporting and encouraging each other during difficult times. From an organisational perspective, one of the key challenges in developing the type of positive and inspiring adult-child/young person relationship described in this report is to recruit the right people to deliver the programme. To this end, Sistema Scotland has proven adept at identifying musicians with strong social values, energy, resilience and compassion. The organisation has also successfully created a culture which values and fosters – rather than stifles – these traits. Many organisations could potentially learn from this.

At a societal level, a challenging set of questions remain as to how this quality of relationship is conceptualised within policy, is represented and prioritised within funding criteria and structures and is planned for and implemented locally. Prioritising the quality of relationship between service provider and recipient may also be a challenging concept within organisational cultures held to account for delivering outcomes rather than processes.

Looking to the past, it is clear that achieving better prospects for disadvantaged communities and fairer outcomes within Scotland as a whole, cannot be accomplished through sticking with established approaches. Innovation, sustained commitment and more person-centred ways of working which nurture and support positive, encouraging relationships are needed. Sistema Scotland offers a model which encompasses all of these across the early years and throughout schooling. It is important therefore, that as a society, we learn from Sistema Scotland’s approach and evaluate the impacts of the Big Noise programme over time.

## Appendix A: Evaluation reports and related publications

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## Appendix B: Methods used to generate 'Fresh Insights' sections

### Big Noise Raploch

Within Big Noise Raploch the evaluation has focused recently on developing a richer understanding of the Big Noise musician-young person relationship and how it impacts upon post-school destinations. To do this, a mix of questionnaires (18 completed questionnaires), semi-structured one-to-one interviews (7 participant interviews) and in-depth focus groups (2 focus groups with a total of 6 participants) were deployed with 18 young people who are Big Noise participants, aged 15-18; comprising eight male participants and ten female. The participants were purposively sampled based on their age, duration of Big Noise participation and availability to attend the interview/focus group. Online questionnaires were completed by ten high school teachers in Raploch. The purpose of the online questionnaire was to assess teachers' views on the impacts of Big Noise broadly and also to explore aspects of the participant-musician relationship.

Interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded with participant consent and transcribed verbatim by an external agency. Data from the teachers' questionnaire were largely textual and extracted to be included in the analysis. Data were analysed using a thematic approach which involved coding participants' responses into categories that summarise and systemise the content of the data. The quality of the analysis was ensured through the close collaboration of two analysts Katie Moore (KM) and Chris Harkins (CH) throughout the process. The analysts read through the questionnaires and interview and focus group transcripts several times, in order to familiarise themselves with the data and identify key issues and initial codes. Initial codes were identified by each of the analysts independently and data relevant to each code was collated. In subsequent meetings this coding was discussed and refined. Interpretations of identified themes were re-assessed as necessary. Direct quotes from the data were grouped under thematic headings providing a clear illustration of each theme and also some indication of the frequency with which each theme was addressed. Finally, the themes were refined through investigation both of similar and anomalous examples.

Towards the end of the analysis no new themes emerged, which suggests that the major themes had been identified. Quotations were chosen to illustrate particular points and are included in an anonymised form. While the participant and teacher sample size is commensurate with qualitative research of this type, they are small in relation to the total numbers involved, and findings should therefore be seen in that light. The researchers approached both the participants and teachers at a difficult and busy time, towards the end of the school year. However the consistency of key themes expressed by the participants and the teachers is striking.

### Big Noise Govanhill

The positive impacts of Big Noise on the language acquisition of ethnic minority pupils in Govanhill for whom English is not their first language was first reported by the GCPH in 2015. Since then Big Noise Govanhill has purposefully refined the programme to maximise these impacts. The evaluation priority for the past year within Govanhill has been to develop a more detailed understanding of how the programme impacts on this vital area of learning. In particular, the views of school teachers were deemed to be vital as they were not explored in depth in the 2015 report.

Online questionnaires were completed by 39 teachers within the four catchment primary schools and one nursery teacher from one of the two nurseries involved in Big Noise Govanhill. The

questionnaire focused on teachers' perceptions of skills development and attainment, relationships between the participants and musicians, and overall impact of participation on the children, schools and community.

Two focus groups were undertaken with a total of 13 Big Noise Govanhill musicians. The focus group schedules considered broadly the challenges of Big Noise delivery in Govanhill, the musician-participant relationship, the impacts of Big Noise on community, families and participants and specifically how the programme delivery supports language acquisition. An in-depth interview was also undertaken with the Big Noise Govanhill team leader exploring the same issues as the focus groups with musicians.

Textual data were extracted from the online survey responses and focus groups were audio-recorded with musician consent and transcribed verbatim by an external agency. The combined data were analysed using a thematic approach similar to that described in the previous section exploring the views of Big Noise Raploch participants. This essentially involved coding participants' responses into categories that summarise and systemise the content of the data. The quality of the analysis was ensured through the close collaboration of two analysts (KM & CH) throughout the process; however KM led the analysis and coding. Regular meetings between the analysts served to scrutinise coding and emerging themes, importantly CH was able to contextualise emerging themes, comparing and contrasting with the findings in 2015. Informal discussions also took place between the analysts and Big Noise musicians in terms of fact checking and the terminology with which the findings are reported.

### **Big Noise Torry**

A priority in the continued evaluation of Big Noise Torry was to further the understanding of the ways in which the participant-musician relationship is formed and nurtured over the early years of primary school; on the balance of findings published to date it was felt that this vital aspect of programme delivery would benefit from further elucidation. To do this, qualitative data collected in 2017 as part of the evaluation of Big Noise Torry published at that time was revisited and analysed with this new focus. This 2017 data included a creative drawing exercise (130 Big Noise participants aged 4-7 years), structured programme delivery observation (170 hours) semi-structured interviews with Big Noise musicians (13 in total) and online questionnaires with primary school teachers in Torry. The analysis of these existing data was supplemented with further observation of programme delivery (40 hours) and interviews with the team leader (telephone interview) and musicians (4 in total).

Again a thematic analysis was utilised, where drawings and their annotations, observation field notes, transcribed interviews and extracted questionnaire answers constituted the data used in analysis. In this instance however the data was approached with a pragmatic inclusion framework concerning relevance to the participant-musician relationship, rather than a more expansive coding of all data. KM led the analysis and has a strong understanding of the programme delivery in Torry having conducted all of the fieldwork over a two-year period. KM and CH met on four occasions over the analysis process to discuss and refine coding to support the interpretation of the data.

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