



Big Noise study: report for communities

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Who are we? The Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH) is a research organisation based in Glasgow. We want to better understand how to improve the health of the Scottish population and how best to close the gap in health between the richest and poorest people in Scotland.

What is this research about? Sistema Scotland has been running the Big Noise programme in Raploch, Stirling for almost eight years now and the programme in Govanhill, Glasgow is into its second year. The original Sistema organisation, based in Venezuela, has demonstrated considerable social impacts for the children involved in the orchestra, their families and the wider communities. We are interested in measuring the impacts that Big Noise can have on communities in Scotland.

We have looked at the programme and identified a number of qualities that could have a positive impact on the children who are attending Big Noise. We have also been working in partnership with a team of education assessors from Education Scotland and economists from Glasgow Caledonian University to better understand the educational quality of Big Noise programme delivery and the potential economic benefits of the programme.

Our research involved speaking to approximately 250 people involved in both Raploch and Govanhill Big Noise centres. We spoke to the musicians, staff and volunteers of Big Noise and young people who attend Big Noise as well as young people who do not go to Big Noise. We also spoke to some families, teachers, other local organisations and professionals who have been working alongside Big Noise. We asked them specific questions about Sistema Scotland as an organisation and questions about the delivery of the Big Noise programme and what impacts and changes it has had on the children and young people taking part, their families and their community as a whole.

What does the Big Noise deliver?

Big Noise delivers an orchestra programme which aims to develop musical skills as well as a range of other social and life skills. The Big Noise programme is free to all the children and young people who take part and offers the following:

- Music instrument lessons
- Musical instruments
- Orchestral rehearsals
- Transport to venue
- Snacks and drinks
- Adult volunteering opportunities
- Holiday school
- Trips away
- Events and concerts
- Adult lessons and classes
- Baby and carer classes
- Subsidised membership to other music organisations

How is Big Noise delivered?

We identified seven strengths of the Big Noise approach that we think are important to achieve positive impacts on the children and young people who take part. We hope these strengths will be considered by other organisations aiming to do similar work. These include:

- **Inclusivity and accessibility** – encouraging as many people as possible to participate in the programme in lots of different ways.
- **Intensity** – providing a programme of intensive tuition from skilled musicians every week.
- **Collective learning and teaching** – Big Noise delivery enables the benefits of socialising, learning and playing music with other children from within the community to be realised.
- **Reputation and excellence** – striving to provide the best learning experiences for the children and the best image of the orchestra, its members, the community and the organisation.
- **Building relationships** – developing strong relationships with children and young people and building relationships with families and local organisations.
- **Innovation and flexibility** – willing to take on big challenges to be ambitious and making efforts to adapt to a community's own circumstances and local needs.
- **Longevity and commitment** – taking a long-term view of what needs to happen to improve people's lives.

What the participating children and their families thought about the Big Noise programme

When we talked to the children, their parents and teachers, there were some commonly used words to describe what Big Noise meant to them and what they felt they got from the programme. The biggest words were used most often. These words are featured below.



What did Education Scotland say about Big Noise Raploch?

The Education Scotland review of the quality of education and learning provided by Big Noise, Raploch was positive overall. The team identified five key strengths in terms of the high numbers of children involved, the high quality of the staff and the children's achievements in the programme. They also recommended a number of improvements including further joint work with primary school staff on the campus and greater engagement with other community partners working in the area.

The quotes below are taken directly from the Education Scotland report. The full assessors' report from Education Scotland can be accessed here:

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/irpressreleases/irprbignoiseraploch270115.asp>

<hr/> <p><i>“High levels of participation and commitment from children and young people who are proud to be part of Big Noise.”</i></p> <hr/>	<hr/> <p><i>“The professionalism and passion of a staff team committed to transforming lives through music.”</i></p> <hr/>	<hr/> <p><i>“Significant numbers of children and young people who achieve exceptionally well in music.”</i></p> <hr/>
	<hr/> <p><i>“Children, young people and families are increasingly confident and ambitious as a result of their involvement with Big Noise.”</i></p> <hr/>	<hr/> <p><i>“Effective leadership which has supported the continued growth of the organisation.”</i></p> <hr/>

Impacts on children participating in the Big Noise programme

The GCPH has mapped out what impact Big Noise is having on children now and what the potential future impacts of the programme could be in the long term. Mapping out impacts over the short to long term in this way is called 'logic modelling'. You can view the Big Noise logic models here: www.gcph.co.uk

Table 1 summarises the logic models developed. These logic models suggest that if a child attends the Big Noise programme regularly and engages in the programme fully, the following impacts could be achieved.

Table 1. Impacts on children participating in the Big Noise programme.

Impact	How	What could this lead to in the future?
Boost a child's engagement with learning and education	Improved concentration, listening and communication skills. Improved school attendance. Improved confidence and self-esteem within the classroom.	Increased enjoyment of learning, improved school performance and employment opportunities, potentially leading to improved health and wellbeing in later life.
Developing and building a child's life skills	Increased sense of responsibility, self-esteem, confidence and motivation. Development of team working skills and stress management.	Strong independent individuals, Improved employability and empowerment. Potential to improve health and wellbeing over the long term.
Securing a child's emotional wellbeing	Increased happiness and enjoyment. Supportive environment to encourage children to make good choices, provide stability and reduce their stress levels.	Strong support from friends, reduced stress and better ability to cope during stressful times. Reduced chances of getting involved in alcohol and drug misuse and potential to improve health and wellbeing.

Table 1. Impacts on children participating in the Big Noise programme (continued).

Impact	How	What could this lead to in the future?
Building a child's social skills and networks	Increased social time and mixing with different people, improved language development, new experiences and opportunities and increased tolerance of other cultures.	Increased feelings of belonging and stronger social bonds within and outwith the community, wider social networks and better understanding of how people are different and why this is positive.
Providing respite and protection for a child	Giving children and young people a safe and positive place to spend time.	Potentially less use of drugs and alcohol and less antisocial behaviour, and the damage to health these behaviours can cause.
Developing a child as a musician	Learning music skills (reading, composing and listening skills), performance skills (confidence, shared experiences and team working abilities). Developing an interest in and knowledge of music.	Increased academic and creative skills including wider and better employment options. Increased interest in cultural activities like going to the theatre or concerts. Overall increase in happiness and potential improvements to health and wellbeing in the long term.
Encouraging healthy behaviour	Giving children and young people a safe and positive place to spend time where nutritious food is provided. Musical skills contribute to physical wellness through increased physical activity and, for some, breathing control.	Improved ability to control body through breathing and physical co-ordination. Positive attitude to food and keeping active can lead to healthier children and adults.

What about the impact on families and their community?

The research team also looked at the impacts Big Noise is having on the families and the communities of the children. For those who are very involved with the programme, possibly attending the 'The Noise' (adult programme) or Baby Noise classes or public concerts and events organised by the Big Noise – the impacts were strong. These include people feeling better about the place they live in and the people they live with, raised enjoyment and self-esteem, increased social connections and support and potentially better health and wellbeing. For other community members, the impact of the Big Noise programme has been in terms of the positive image that has been generated in the community and the wider area.

What are the economic benefits?

Economists from Glasgow Caledonian University calculated the costs of running the Big Noise, Govanhill programme and gave monetary values to the different impacts of Big Noise. They concluded that Big Noise generates greater social benefits than it actually costs to deliver it. This is because Big Noise is likely to reduce demand on other services in the future – spending money on preventing problems costs less than treating those same problems further down the line. Big Noise will help support a child in making positive choices in life, to stay in education longer, to learn skills for life and for work, to get a good job and to not take part in antisocial behaviour.

Can Big Noise do more?

Yes. Although Big Noise is a high quality programme, there is scope for improvement in the future.

Education Scotland assessors have provided feedback to Big Noise, stating that Big Noise could work more closely with schools to:

- Allow the children more of a say in how and what they learn at Big Noise
- Improve the assessment of children's achievements and learning at Big Noise, and the information given to teachers and parents about that
- Make stronger and more useful links with other community organisations in Raploch in the future.

The GCPH agree with these findings and have identified further opportunities for the Sistema Scotland Board to consider. These are:

- Offer children and young people an even wider choice of the types of things they can do at Big Noise, especially as they get older.
- Continually review who is attending Big Noise and who is not; the GCPH has identified that children and young people with additional support needs, children and young people who are from ethnic minorities and boys and young males may be less likely to attend Big Noise while teenage girls are more likely to stop coming to the programme. Understanding these patterns may allow focused actions to encourage a particular group's engagement in Big Noise.
- Develop further engagement with current parents and guardians and the wider community in the short term by encouraging families and other adults who live locally to be even more involved in Big Noise, for example, by volunteering or attending the adult orchestra.
- Forge stronger links in the coming years with volunteering, work placement, education and training organisations.
- Enhance the level of community, parent or guardian participation in the governance of Big Noise centres.

The GCPH have also recommended some things to the Scottish Government, which are:

- Funding organisations, local authorities and the Scottish Government should recognise that Big Noise benefits children and young people in a number of ways. This can lead to benefits throughout their lifetime which may improve an area's economic and health profile.
- The type of research needed to properly assess the impacts of projects like Big Noise takes decades and requires funding. Charities like Sistema Scotland may not have enough funding to do the research properly. This means that other organisations in the area like local authorities and the NHS could help. This would mean these organisations working together on the research and sharing and using the information they gather about children and young people more effectively
- Funding for programmes like Big Noise is usually short term, for example one or two years. This evaluation makes clear that for Big Noise to have the best possible impacts on children and young people, they should take part in the programme over several years – ideally from toddler age right through to secondary school leaving age. Sistema Scotland are committed to running Big Noise over many years but there are a range of barriers to this, not least the funding. Longer-term approaches like Big Noise need to be supported and longer-term funding would be beneficial.

If you would like more information on this evaluation please go to: www.gcph.co.uk or call Sistema Scotland on: 01786 462 923.

A longer report is available at www.gcph.co.uk or in hardcopy from Big Noise Raploch or Big Noise Govanhill.



www.gcph.co.uk