



Evaluating Sistema Scotland – Initial Findings Report

Summary

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Introduction

Sistema Scotland and the Big Noise programme

Sistema Scotland is a charity on a mission to transform lives through music. Sistema Scotland's Big Noise programme in Raploch, Stirling, and in Govanhill, Glasgow is a high-profile social intervention. Through the Big Noise programme Sistema Scotland believes that children from disadvantaged backgrounds can gain significant social benefits and acquire a range of life skills by playing in a symphony orchestra. Based on the Venezuelan *El Sistema* model, Sistema Scotland utilises music-making to foster confidence, discipline, teamwork, pride and aspiration in the children and young people taking part, their families and across their wider community.

Big Noise Raploch was established in 2008 and Big Noise Govanhill in 2013. Both sites deliver an intensive orchestral programme for preschool and school-age children and young people (currently totalling approximately 1,300 participants). A variety of music-teaching formats are delivered during school time, after school and over school holidays. The Big Noise programme also involves regular performances and wider opportunities for development such as trips and concert performances.

Sistema Scotland is at a pivotal stage of its development as the programme seeks to expand Big Noise delivery across Scotland. At this stage it is clear that more needs to be learned concerning how Sistema Scotland operates, whether the Big Noise programmes represent 'good value' and whether the organisation achieves the desired impacts on the children and young people participating, their families and their wider community.

Role and focus of the evaluation

This evaluation has been established to capture important learning from the implementation and impact of Sistema Scotland's work in Raploch and Govanhill. Our aim is to further the understanding, within Scotland and beyond, of what is required to deliver effective, targeted, early years, community-based social interventions within disadvantaged areas; and what such interventions might achieve. At its core, the evaluation seeks to ascertain the contribution made by Sistema Scotland to transforming the health, wellbeing and prospects of children and young people living in the areas where Big Noise programmes are delivered. This is a long-term aim, and what is reported here relates to early findings on process and short-term impacts, together with theorised pathways to longer-term impacts. The evaluation seeks to build as complete an understanding as possible of the processes that are integral to the Sistema Scotland approach and the pathways between that approach and the theorised impacts. Furthermore, the evaluation will consider the role that the Sistema Scotland approach might play in helping to generate better, and more equitable, population health outcomes in Stirling and Glasgow.

Figure 1: Sistema Scotland in context; links to national policy, gaps in current evidence and what this evaluation will add.

Health inequalities: Health inequalities reflect wider social inequalities in societies, their roots lying within poverty, social exclusion and the poorer life circumstances and opportunities available to some families and communities. The manifestations of health inequalities change over time. In Scotland in recent decades, for example, mental ill health, alcohol- and drug-related problems, obesity and its associated disease conditions have all become more prevalent. These contemporary diseases exert a disproportionate grip on disadvantaged communities and are a key driver of health inequalities within Scotland.

Social interventions: To support positive change within disadvantaged communities a range of ‘social interventions’ have come to the fore in recent years. The implementation of social interventions can be varied but most have common goals of strengthening and improving communities, addressing damaging social behaviours and enhancing social and life skills and employability. It is recognised that social interventions have the potential to improve health and wellbeing.

Early years: In recognition of the pivotal influence of the early years on future life and health trajectories a number of universal services and interventions have been targeted to this life stage. Evidence is clear that high-quality, sustained and immersive early years interventions yield greatest life-course impact.

Arts: In recent years the arts have been increasingly utilised as a means for delivering social interventions. The arts can have a positive impact on health and wellbeing and on academic performance within the school setting. However ‘measuring’ the impacts of the arts is an inherently complex and contested area.

Gaps in current evidence: There is little evidence or understanding of arts-based early interventions: their delivery, their life-course effects and their potential contribution to addressing social and health inequalities. The causal pathways in the field are under-theorised. Many interventions are fixed term as they rely on short-term funding. Partly as a consequence of these two features, evaluations are relatively weak in relation to long-term analyses of outcomes, use of control groups, evidence of causal pathways, consideration of replication or up-scaling and economic cost-benefit analyses.

What this evaluation will add: This evaluation considers Sistema Scotland’s Big Noise programme to be an early years, arts-based, targeted social intervention. Over time, the evaluation will assess the short- and long-term impacts of the programme and will determine the contribution of Big Noise to addressing health and social inequalities. The evaluation will generate an understanding of how Big Noise is delivered and what elements of programme delivery underpin potential short- and long-term positive change. This initial report presents findings from the first phase of the evaluation covering a 19-month period (September 2013 to March 2015). When the evaluation fieldwork began in September 2013 Big Noise Govanhill had been operating for approximately six months, and Big Noise Raploch had been established for five years, six months.

Methods

This initial phase of the evaluation has involved the collaboration of three partners delivering three distinct components, as summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of evaluation components.

Evaluation component (organisation responsible)	Aims	Methods
1. Process learning, assessment of short-term impacts and explication of impact pathways (Glasgow Centre for Population Health with additional resource from Audit Scotland)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. To elucidate key features of how Sistema Scotland and Big Noise (Raploch and Govanhill) operate and develop learning themes of wider relevance. b. To identify programme impacts achieved in Raploch and Govanhill. c. To explicate anticipated longer-term programme impact pathways. 	<p>Qualitative methods used to gather views from approximately 250 individuals, including those involved in delivering the programme, children participating, and wider stakeholders.</p> <p>Quantitative analysis of programme engagement and related data.</p> <p>Evidence reviews and triangulation to produce logic models presenting pathways to longer-term impacts.</p>
2. Assessment of the quality of education and learning within Big Noise Raploch (Education Scotland)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. To examine how well Big Noise Raploch participants learn and achieve. b. To assess the extent to which Big Noise Raploch is increasing the life chances, and promoting & securing wellbeing for children, young people and their families. c. To explore how well Big Noise Raploch contributes to building a stronger, more resilient community. 	<p>Week-long assessment by six professional educational assessors.</p> <p>Range of qualitative methods adopted, underpinned by expert, professional judgement of assessors.</p>
3. Health economic cost-benefit analysis of Big Noise Govanhill (Glasgow Caledonian University)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. To consider whether the costs of Big Noise Govanhill would be greater or lesser in magnitude than the potential benefits that the programme is predicted to deliver. 	<p>Quantitative analysis, based on programme costs and anticipated benefits/impacts, underpinned by literature review.</p> <p>Projected net present value (NPV) of Big Noise Govanhill calculated for four time points up to 70 years after programme delivery.</p> <p>Method consistent with that used to estimate the social impact of <i>El Sistema</i> in Venezuela in 2007, by the Inter-American Development Bank.</p>

Results

Evaluation component 1: Glasgow Centre for Population Health

As part of this component of the evaluation, Audit Scotland contributed a seconded researcher, working three days per week alongside the GCPH team during evaluation fieldwork (September 2013 to March 2015).

Sistema Scotland and Big Noise process learning

From the qualitative fieldwork seven process learning themes have been developed to describe how the delivery of the Big Noise programmes align with the vision of Sistema Scotland. The themes are:

Inclusivity and accessibility – Sistema Scotland makes its Big Noise programmes universally available to children and young people enrolled in schools within its intervention areas: there is no audition process and no fee for participation. Sistema Scotland actively promotes Big Noise take up with children, young people and families with lower levels of engagement and complex needs. The programme can be tailored to individual needs and aspirations in order to overcome barriers to engagement.

Intensity and immersion – Big Noise staff begin teaching children at preschool age and continue to school leaving age, which provides potential for engagement across the whole of childhood and adolescence. After-school programmes run up to four sessions per week, during term time and most school holidays. This immersion in Big Noise gives children access to an intensive music education and the sustained development of a range of life skills.

Collective learning and teaching: the orchestral model – Big Noise tuition takes place primarily in groups, so that children learn both the basics of music and instrument skills as part of an ensemble or whole orchestra, from the beginning of their musical careers. This is understood to provide context for and meaning to their learning, as well as providing an environment in which they can develop a wide range of social and life skills. It is also an efficient, effective and inherently reflective teaching model.

Reputation and the pursuit of excellence – Sistema is a highly ambitious organisation, with its aim to transform the lives of children while operating as a model charity. It pursues excellence in every goal, and this includes musical excellence, which is supported by a rigorous recruitment process that seeks out highly skilled and motivated candidates, from musicians to Board members. It is this combination of ambition and ability that the organisation sees as vital to achieving its goals.

Building relationships – Strong relationships are vital to Sistema Scotland, at every level of the organisation. The relationship between Big Noise musicians and participants and family is vital in securing the social and emotional development of participants. This relationship is central to Sistema Scotland's goals and the delivery of the Big Noise programme. Sistema Scotland also requires strong relationships with a range strategic and operational partners in the delivery of Big Noise.

Innovation and flexibility – While the *El Sistema* movement is orientated around strong guiding principles, it also insists that “there is no manual”: approaches to delivery are keenly tailored to local needs and resources. Such a bespoke approach, alongside the ambition of Sistema Scotland's aims, mean that innovation and flexibility is required in the day-to-day delivery of Big Noise programmes.

Longevity and commitment – Once Sistema Scotland opens a Big Noise site the organisation is committed to delivering its programme over the long term in the belief that only consistent year-on-year work with children from nursery age to young adulthood can create the kind of generational positive social change that it seeks to achieve. Sistema's commitment to communities was cited by partners as one of the organisation's core strengths but also a real challenge given current short-term funding arrangements.

Measuring the impacts of Big Noise

The GCPH has employed a range of qualitative research approaches to develop an understanding of Big Noise and to assess the impacts and outcomes of the programme on participants, families and the wider community. In this section we have organised this evidence into a series of 'logic models' which each represent distinct Big Noise outcome pathways. The logic models are presented in the full report available on the GCPH website. What follows here is a short summary of each logic model outlining key elements of the impact pathway.

Not all pathways will be experienced by all Big Noise participants and the scale and types of impact will depend on an individual's own experiences and needs. Consistent and long-term engagement with the programme is likely to encourage better outcomes for an individual. Sistema Scotland's focus on areas with concentrations of deprivation enables the programme's impacts to be achieved where need is high. All things being equal, if the impacts of Big Noise are large enough to compensate for other drivers of inequality, then there may be a reduction in social and health inequalities faced by the children, young people and their communities in the long term. The seven impact pathways for participants are summarised below:

Boosting engagement with learning and education – This pathway is concerned with the crossover benefits of Big Noise participation on wider education and learning. There are established links between participation in musical learning and enhanced wider academic achievement. Strong evaluation evidence indicates that children who participate in the Big Noise orchestra demonstrate improved language and other skills, as well as higher levels of confidence and pride. School attendance rates for Big Noise participants in both Raploch and Govanhill are higher than for those who do not engage with the programme within the target population. It is theorised that improved levels of attendance and academic performance, aspiration and post-school destinations for Big Noise participants, may lead to improved employability and employment outcomes in the long term.

Developing and building life skills – This pathway outlines the life skills that children and young people are supported to develop through engagement with Big Noise. Many of these skills stem from the programme outputs: namely the experiential and ensemble learning that children and young people engage in and the exposure to challenges and reward that learning an instrument and taking part in performances provide. In the short term this develops participants' creativity, adaptability, problem-solving and decision-making skills, team working, collaboration and co-operation skills and their self-discipline and control. It is anticipated that over the long term, employability and employment outcomes (and others) may be enhanced.

Securing emotional wellbeing – The impact of Big Noise on participants' emotional wellbeing was regularly cited as a key benefit of the programme. In the short term, these impacts stem from the happiness and enjoyment that playing and being exposed to music, in a safe, positive environment offers. Over the medium term, playing their instrument may also develop into an emotional outlet for participants. In addition, the Big Noise environment offers a sense of security and belonging, which it is anticipated will support the development of mutual support networks and resilience among participants over the medium term.

Building social skills and networks – Participation in Big Noise offers children and young people substantial and sustained opportunities to build on and develop the social skills they learn at home and at school. It also offers unique opportunities for children and families to mix socially with others from within and outwith their communities. This increased social interaction and social mixing may potentially lead to increased cultural tolerance and understanding as well as a broadening of friendship and peer groups among Big Noise participants in the long term.

Respite and protection – This outcomes pathway maps out the role of Big Noise in two key areas: (a) protection of children and young people from stress in their home environment and (b) the diversion of young people from activities, such as alcohol and drug use and antisocial behaviour; both areas having the potential to damage the health and wellbeing of participants. The intensive and immersive aspects of the Big Noise orchestra, and in particular the relationships that participants are able to build with Big Noise musicians, as well as the programme's free and inclusive quality, are the foundation of this pathway.

Developing as a musician – This pathway maps out the impacts associated with the development of participants' musical knowledge, skills and abilities. The high quality and intensive nature of provision in place at Big Noise, and the broad range of group and individual learning formats are central to this pathway. In the long term, the development of musical skills has the potential to increase cultural participation, to broaden friendship and peer groups, to improve outcomes from education and learning and to enhance employability and employment outcomes.

Encouraging healthy behaviours – This evaluation found some areas in which participation in Big Noise orchestral programmes has the potential to encourage healthy behaviours – for example in relation to diet and exercise – and mitigate against the uptake of damaging behaviours.

Each of these seven theorised pathways has the potential to impact positively on the long-term health and wellbeing of participants. This can be through protection from factors that are damaging to health, through building resilience and developing positive peer groups, through improving educational and employment outcomes and the acquisition of a range of life skills and increased opportunities.

The complete findings of Evaluation Component 1, including a description of a range of opportunities for enhancing Big Noise delivery identified by the GCPH, are detailed in the full evaluation report which is available on the GCPH website: www.gcph.co.uk.

Evaluation component 2: Education Scotland

How well do Big Noise Raploch participants learn and achieve?

A significant number of children and young people achieve exceptionally well through the Big Noise programme in Raploch. From nursery to Primary 7, all children educated on the Raploch campus experience high quality musicianship lessons delivered during the school day by Big Noise tutors. In addition, from Primary 3 to Secondary 4, a significant number of children and young people are increasing their skills playing a musical instrument through involvement in the after-school orchestra programme and individual specialist tuition. As a result of these opportunities, almost all children and young people demonstrate a very strong musical awareness.

Children and young people are increasing their confidence and self-esteem as they learn and perform together in small ensembles and when they come together in one of the Big Noise orchestras. They are developing a strong sense of belonging and understand that others rely on them to do their best. Most respond well to the rewards schemes that staff have introduced and work hard to improve. Over time and with careful planning by staff, most children develop the necessary resilience to concentrate during the practise sessions after a full day at school.

As a result of their engagement with Big Noise many children and young people from Raploch achieve tremendous success performing locally, nationally and internationally. They proudly represented their community performing at, for example, the Commonwealth Games, at Stirling Castle for the Ryder Cup guests and during a recent visit to Venezuela. Young people are able to reflect on how this trip increased their knowledge of the wider world and supported them to develop independence and resilience through being away from home and experiencing a different language and culture.

How well is Big Noise Raploch increasing the life chances, promoting and securing wellbeing for children, young people and their families?

Children, young people and their families enjoy being part of Big Noise. They feel challenged to learn and experience new things and consequently Big Noise has become an important part of the lives of many families in the community. Many parents spoke with pride about their children's increasing achievements with Big Noise. They enjoy their children's performances. Some spoke also of their increasing understanding of the importance of encouraging commitment and perseverance for children and young people's learning through Big Noise and in school. Parents and children who attend Baby Noise benefit from well-planned, relaxed and enjoyable sessions which promote early learning and health and wellbeing. Big Noise provides valuable opportunities for socialising with others in a new and unique context. A few adults in the community are also learning new skills and developing their musical awareness through participating in The Noise adult orchestra.

Through concerts within the local community, Big Noise participants of all ages have promoted a wider appreciation of music and the performing arts. Relationships between Big Noise staff and children and young people and their families are positive and mutually respectful. Parents find the Big Noise staff team approachable, caring and consistent in the support and encouragement they offer the children and young people particularly during times of challenge and disruption to family life. Big Noise staff are developing effective partnerships with staff in schools, social work and educational psychology. As a result, they have a sound understanding of the varied social and emotional needs of the children and young people in their care.

How well does Big Noise Raploch contribute to building a stronger more resilient community?

Big Noise has demonstrated a long-term commitment to the community of Raploch which has led to increased participation from the community over time. The majority of children and young people living in the community now participate in the after-school programme and as a result are engaged in positive activities outside of school and during the holiday periods. All staff and volunteers working in their various roles across the organisation demonstrate high levels of professionalism and commitment to the overall aim of transforming lives through music.

The complete findings from Evaluation component 2, including a range of Education Scotland recommendations to improve Big Noise delivery are currently available on the Education Scotland website: www.educationscotland.gov.uk and are also included in the full evaluation report which is available on the GCPH website: www.gcpht.co.uk.

Evaluation component 3: Glasgow Caledonian University

The economic component of the evaluation considered the tangible impacts, and what could be argued are intangible impacts, of the intervention. Table 2 details key variables resulting from the cost-benefit analysis of Big Noise Govanhill. Net present value (NPV) is the critical focus of cost-benefit analysis because this indicates the value of the investment. Projects with a positive NPV increase the net worth for society.

Table 2. Cost-benefit analysis Big Noise Govanhill – appraisal results adjusted for time horizon.

	0 to 6 years	0 to 9 years	0 to 15 years	0 to 70 years
Present value: costs	£0.76m	£-0.03m	£-2.70m	£-9.47m
Present value: benefits	£9.94m	£15.54m	£26.21m	£79.89m
Net present value	£9.18m	£15.57m	£28.91m	£89.37m

The economic component of the evaluation is based on conservative estimates of selected programme impacts identified within the GCPH logic models. The cost-benefit analysis projects that Big Noise Govanhill will deliver more social benefit than the resources used to deliver the programme, for those social gains and losses that could be monetised.

At each time horizon considered, and for all scenarios analysed, the net present value of Big Noise Govanhill remained positive, indicating that the project has the potential to increase the net worth for society over its lifetime. This is apparent in the increasing net present value over time: at year six of programme delivery the net present value is estimated to be £9.18m. This rises to £15.57m and £28.91m at years nine and 15 respectively.

For a time horizon of 0-70 years, when potential health gains over a participant's lifetime are captured, the net present value of benefits is estimated to be £89.73m. These projections are positive and underline firstly that Big Noise Govanhill represents a worthwhile investment, and secondly that the short-term benefits of the programme, based on this economic modelling, have the potential to translate favourably in economic terms as early as year six of programme delivery.

The complete findings from evaluation component 3 are detailed in the full evaluation report which is available on the GCPH website: www.gcpheval.co.uk – also included on the GCPH website are appendices relating to the Glasgow Caledonian University economic evaluation; one summarising the literature which informed the choice of methods and another which makes clear the assumptions within the analysis.

Discussion

This evaluation strongly endorses Sistema Scotland's approaches to delivery; the short- and medium-term impacts of the programme evidenced at this stage of the evaluation are convincing. Looking to the future and to the longer term, it is theorised that the Big Noise programme has the potential to significantly enhance participants' lives, prospects, health and wellbeing through a variety of identified pathways. Sistema Scotland works with a range of partners in delivering Big Noise and their contributions must also be recognised; the schools in both Raploch and Govanhill have demonstrated considerable commitment to Big Noise.

This evaluation is relevant to several areas of policy and has elucidated a number of requirements for the achievement of deep social change in disadvantaged communities. With these requirements come a consequential set of challenges.

Our findings add to an 'under-theorised' evidence base concerning the targeted use of the arts in addressing social, health and other inequalities. The intervention studied is also an example of a community-based social intervention, being introduced as part of wider processes of area-based regeneration. The process learning themes developed through this evaluation describe the approaches found to be central in this case to embedding the programme and the individual and collective processes of change within the communities. The early impacts are extremely positive and, taken together with wider evidence, provide the basis for logic models describing the changes that may be possible in the longer term.

High-level synthesis of findings

When brought together, the positive findings from each distinct component of this evaluation reinforce each other and cast further light on the characteristics of delivery that are core to achieving Sistema Scotland's impacts. For example, the GCPH process learning themes identified the strengths and challenges of the group learning process, central to the orchestral model and inclusive of children who demonstrate challenging and disruptive behaviour. Managing disruptive behaviour within orchestra practise requires the musicians to demonstrate flexibility, innovation and intensive attention to the children. Education Scotland's favourable assessment of the educational and learning quality of the programme suggests that this behavioural challenge is being well managed and effectively reviewed by Big Noise staff on a day-to-day basis.

The short-term impacts and outcomes reported by the GCPH are strikingly comparable with the findings of Education Scotland's assessment of educational and learning quality and its finding that a significant number of participants are 'achieving exceptionally well'. For example, Education Scotland found consistent evidence of participants' 'boosting of confidence and self-esteem'; the musicians' role in raising aspirations and encouragement to 'live healthy lives' was also highlighted as was the acquisition of 'a wide range of skills for life and work such as self-discipline, time management and organisation'.

The GCPH reporting of increased school attendance among Big Noise participants in Raploch and in Govanhill compared with the rest of the eligible population is an important finding highlighting the positive spillover of Big Noise engagement to wider education; which is consistent with wider evidence in this field. This and other positive evidence generated by the GCPH and Education Scotland form the foundations of the logic models from which future impacts to life prospects, health and wellbeing are theorised across a range of potential pathways. The economic component of the evaluation is based on the GCPH logic models and on selected short- and medium-term impacts of Big Noise reported by the GCPH and Education Scotland. The economic projections are positive over a 70-year period and also translate favourably in economic terms as early as year six of programme delivery.

People change lives

A recurring theme across this evaluation is the emphasis Sistema Scotland places on the quality of the relationship between musician and participant. It is this quality of relationship that is so important to the theorised impact pathways. Indeed many of the strengths of the Big Noise delivery as reported in the process learning themes are designed to enable the opportunity for this relationship to flourish. Consistent with other social regeneration evidence and narrative, Sistema Scotland's vision could be described as 'people change lives' not services or programmes or necessarily even music. 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 an uncomfortable and unpopular concept within risk-averse organisational cultures. Finally how can the quality of a relationship be satisfactorily measured or evaluated - and is this needed?

The unique contribution of excellence

Evidence generated in this evaluation indicates that Sistema Scotland pursues excellence in every aspect of the organisation and delivery of Big Noise. Sistema Scotland places emphasis on teaching staff being professional musicians and encourages staff to maintain their musical career outwith the Big Noise. Based on the findings of this evaluation, we suggest that excellence may be an important ingredient within the delivery of social interventions. Excellence appears to mean more than 'high quality'. Whereas 'high quality' may lead to participant satisfaction, continued engagement and better outcomes, 'excellence' also inspires, raises aspiration and contributes significantly to the quality of relationship fostered between musician and participant.

Long-term interventions

The deep social change that Sistema Scotland aspires to achieve within disadvantaged communities is predicated on being a permanent, visible and stable part of community life over the long term. This long-term perspective is at odds with current political terms, and the funding processes and structures within Scotland particularly those for third sector organisations. The question as to whether the appropriate societal conditions are in place for long-term interventions like Big Noise to flourish within short-term political and funding timelines requires consideration.

Preventative spend

Sistema Scotland encounters much of the same resistance to achieving an increase in preventative spend as is seen in other areas of service delivery. A key barrier here is the long-term nature of the impacts and outcomes most likely to convince funders of the value of investment in preventative approaches. There is also the issue of preventative approaches being in direct competition for the resources required to sustain 'normal' vital services, and the need to make cuts in these (or at least manage growth in demand) to enable preventative approaches to take place.

Links to policy context

Table 3 summarises how the work of Sistema Scotland relates to the Scottish Government's 2014-15 Programme for Government. This Programme prioritises a strong economy, addressing inequalities and empowering Scottish communities through service reform, and sits within the long-term social and economic policy frameworks for Scotland.

Table 3. Sistema Scotland contributions to Programme for Government 2014-15.

Programme for Government 2014-15	Sistema Scotland contributions
Creating more, better-paid jobs in a strong, sustainable economy	Sistema Scotland employs 59 people, offering good employment terms and conditions, training opportunities and progression routes. At the core of Sistema Scotland's approach is providing the opportunity for programme participants to acquire a range of skills which in the long term will make them more likely to live happier, healthier lives and make positive contributions to society including the economy. The Big Noise offers after-school and school holiday provision; offering parents and guardians free childcare, potentially reducing barriers to employment for some parents and guardians.
Building a fairer Scotland and tackling inequality	Big Noise programmes are targeted to disadvantaged communities, delivering a sustained, immersive and inclusive programme which aspires for excellence in its delivery. This evaluation makes clear that Big Noise has the potential to improve a range of outcomes over the participants' life-course, raising these outcomes more in line with the rest of society. If sustained, these programme benefits will enable participants to achieve better educational and employment outcomes and to lead fuller, healthier lives. Big Noise programmes actively reduce barriers to participation for children and young people with complex needs or from troubled home lives.
Passing power to people and communities	The Big Noise programme is empowering; enabling children and young people to see that their future is not predetermined and that with the right attitude and work ethic their goals can be achieved. This evaluation has demonstrated that participants display increased confidence, self-esteem, raised aspiration and enhanced ability to visualise goals. These (and other) positive benefits of the programme may contribute to a range of life skills which make it more likely for participants to engage with service providers, community issues and political processes.

Key messages for policy and practice

- This evaluation highlights a range of characteristics which can potentially enhance the outcomes of social interventions. Crucially the focus on developing quality relationships with individual participants, the role of excellence, the innovation and flexibility required to promote inclusion and collective, intensive and immersive programme designs are all important policy and practice considerations.
- Those delivering social interventions might consider the characteristics of the Big Noise programme. Although contexts of programme delivery can vary substantially, the process learning themes are generalisable across social interventions.
- Sistema Scotland experiences a degree of resistance concerning its funding and preventative investment. There is a clear policy priority here in terms of how preventative approaches are resourced and where accountability for preventative investment and delivery lies. A challenge remains to create the conditions where long-term interventions of quality, such as Big Noise, can flourish amid limiting political and funding timelines. This would require strong leadership and new forms of cross-party dialogue, consultation and support.
- A key strength of Sistema Scotland's approach is to ensure that each Big Noise centre is tailored to the specific needs of the community and target population within each site. Service delivery is underpinned by a clear organisational philosophy and vision but each Big Noise centre and its programme is unique. There is significant scope within programme delivery to be flexible and innovative to accommodate specific individual needs, particularly in terms of promoting inclusion for those with complex needs.

Key messages for future research and evaluation

- Community-based social interventions are widely funded yet there remains a lack of evidence concerning their outcomes and theory of impacts. Evaluation in this field has been relatively poorly resourced and is extremely challenging. More research, evaluation and evidence is needed. Evaluations of social interventions should value different forms of evidence and adopt methods (recognising their strengths and weaknesses) that capture a range of perspectives. The positive human experience and emotion resulting from participation in a social intervention or from the development of a valuable relationship is central to the impacts and outcomes that are delivered, but less quantifiable. Methodological innovation is needed, within long-term studies, to provide robust evidence about the processes and impacts delivered.
- This evaluation demonstrates the contributions that can be made by non-academic or research professionals to the research and evaluation process. The GCPH has developed an evaluation framework which seeks to strengthen the quality of evidence and address some existing gaps and weaknesses. Evident within this is the need for different theoretical and applied perspectives, and the current evaluation has benefitted considerably from the professional expertise, experience and perspectives of both Education Scotland and Audit Scotland working collaboratively alongside the GCPH and Glasgow Caledonian University colleagues.

Conclusion

This report documents the findings of an initial phase of evaluation assessing the delivery and impacts of the Sistema Scotland's Big Noise programme. A key strength of this initial report has been the collaboration established between a range of partners; offering and contributing complementary professional expertise, perspectives and experience in the common pursuit of learning from Sistema Scotland's work. Moving forward from this initial phase, the GCPH will continue to lead the evaluation and will begin linking a range of quantitative outcomes to measure the long-term impacts of the Big Noise programme. A range of other approaches may also be used to investigate specific programme cause-effect relationships.

At this early stage in Big Noise participants' lives and in the anticipated timeline of programme outcomes the scope of what can be reported is limited to short- and medium-term impacts. This evaluation strongly endorses Sistema Scotland's approaches to delivery: the impacts of the programme evidenced at this stage of the evaluation are clear. What is also certain is that Sistema Scotland's Big Noise programme has the potential to significantly enhance participants' lives, prospects, health and wellbeing through a variety of identified pathways in the long term. Any endorsement of Sistema Scotland is also an endorsement of a range of local partners who contribute to the delivery of Big Noise; the schools in both Raploch and Govanhill deserve considerable recognition for their commitment.

This evaluation also raises important considerations relating to the society Scotland aspires to be. It is important to consider whether conditions are conducive to embedding long-term social programmes within prioritised communities. If preventative spend is to be an enduring approach in creating a stronger, fairer economy, to reducing inequality and empowering individuals and communities then clarity as to how it is resourced amid constrained finances and already stretched services is essential. Learning from Sistema Scotland's approaches it is also important to consider how the delivery of excellence and the quality of relationship between provider and participant within social interventions can be conceptualised and emphasised at a societal level.

History suggests that the achievement of better prospects for disadvantaged communities and fairer outcomes within Scotland as a whole, will not be achieved through continuing with established approaches. Innovation, sustained commitment and more person-centred ways of working will be needed. Sistema Scotland offers a model which encompasses all of these. It is essential that, as a society, we learn from Sistema Scotland's approach and evaluate the impacts of the Big Noise programme over time.







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