

Additional Information Appendices

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Appendix 1: GCPH Big Noise Evaluation Bibliography

1. Core Evaluation Framework & Evidence Base

Glasgow Centre for Population Health (2014). Evaluating Sistema Scotland: Evaluation plan for Big Noise programme. Glasgow: GCPH. <https://www.gcph.co.uk/our-work/40-evaluation-of-sistema-scotland>

Glasgow Centre for Population Health (2014). The impacts of art on health and wellbeing: Systematic literature reviews. Glasgow: GCPH. <https://www.gcph.co.uk/latest/publications/278-the-impacts-of-art-on-health-and-wellbeing-systematic-literature-reviews>

2. Core GCPH Evaluation Outputs

Garnham, L., Campbell, A., Harkins, C., Tannahill, C., Kelly, L., Crossland, J., Watson, P., Maxwell, S., Halawi, J., Urquhart, A., Ross, S., Pandolfi, I., Fenocchi, L., Mason, H., & Donaldson, C. (2015). Evaluating Sistema Scotland: Initial findings report. Glasgow: GCPH. https://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/000/000/277/Evaluating_Sistema_Scotland_FINAL_original.pdf

Glasgow Centre for Population Health (2016). Briefing paper 50: Principles for effective social regeneration. Glasgow: GCPH. <https://www.gcph.co.uk/our-work/40-evaluation-of-sistema-scotland>

Moore, K., & Harkins, C. (2017). Evaluating Sistema Scotland: Big Noise Torry – Initial findings report. Glasgow: GCPH. <https://www.gcph.co.uk/our-work/40-evaluation-of-sistema-scotland>

Glasgow Centre for Population Health (2017). Evaluating Sistema Scotland: Initial findings report (summary). Glasgow: GCPH. https://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/000/000/303/Sistema_summary_updated_original.pdf

Harkins, C., & Moore, K. (2019). People change lives: Consolidating five years of evaluation learning from Sistema Scotland's Big Noise centres. Glasgow: GCPH. <https://makeabignoise.org.uk/uploads/Evaluation%20Reports/People%20Change%20Lives%20GCPH%202019.pdf>

Glasgow Centre for Population Health (2022). Statistical analysis of educational outcomes among Big Noise Raploch participants. Glasgow: GCPH. <https://www.gcph.co.uk/our-work/40-evaluation-of-sistema-scotland>

3. Commissioned Systematic Reviews

Toma, M. (2014). The impact of art attendance and participation on health and wellbeing: A systematic review. Glasgow: GCPH.

https://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/files/6090572/GCPH_Art_and_Health_Sys_Review_WP1.pdf

Glasgow Centre for Population Health (2014). Arts participation and academic performance ('Arts and smarts'): Systematic review. Glasgow: GCPH.

<https://www.gcph.co.uk/latest/publications/278-the-impacts-of-art-on-health-and-wellbeing-systematic-literature-reviews>

Glasgow Centre for Population Health (2014). Community-based music programmes, health and inequalities: Systematic review. Glasgow: GCPH.

<https://www.gcph.co.uk/latest/publications/278-the-impacts-of-art-on-health-and-wellbeing-systematic-literature-reviews>

4. Commissioned / Linked Evaluation

Jindal-Snape, D., Asi, D., Robb, A., Barrable, A., Murray, C., Ross, E., & Austin, H. (2021). Sistema Scotland: Evaluation of Big Noise Douglas. Dundee: University of Dundee. <https://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/en/publications/sistema-scotland-evaluation-of-big-noise-douglas>

5. Peer-Reviewed Papers

Harkins, C., Garnham, L., Campbell, A., & Tannahill, C. (2016). Hitting the right note for child and adolescent mental and emotional wellbeing. *Journal of Public Mental Health*, 15(1), 25–36. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPMH-02-2016-0001>

Garnham, L. M., & Campbell, A. (2016). It makes me feel happy and joyful: The evaluation of arts-based social interventions in public health. *Journal of Public Health*, 38(4), e589–e591. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdv174>

Garnham, L. M., & Harkins, C. (2017). Transforming lives through music: The role of public health evaluation in arts interventions. *Journal of Public Health*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdx036>

Appendix 2: Economic Appraisal



Economic Appraisal

This appraisal is based on the methodology used in the economic evaluation of the Big Noise project in Govanhill carried out by Glasgow Caledonian University in 2015. Drawing on data provided by Sistema Scotland, the Glasgow City Region Intelligence Hub has produced an updated economic appraisal.

This appraisal differs in some respects to the previous one. Some long-term benefits were not monetised in this appraisal including improved happiness, life expectancy and employment outcomes due to an increase in social skills and engagement with education. Capital costs have been included in this appraisal, but they were not in the previous one as they were deemed to be sunk costs and irrevocable. Moreover, project close down costs were included previously but have not been here due to a lack of data. In accordance with the Green Book guidance, the value for money of the proposed intervention has been considered.

The indicator measured through cost-benefit analysis (CBA) is known as the Benefit-Cost Ratio:

- The Benefit-Cost Ratio (BCR) is defined as a ratio of the present value of benefits to the present value of costs.

The BCR should also be interpreted alongside qualitative benefits and non-monetisable benefits.

The principal assumptions are the following:

- The appraisal period is 5 years
- In line with the Green Book guidance, the economic appraisal applies a 3.5% discount rate. The discount rate converts future costs and benefits into present value.

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- All costs and benefits are also converted to real prices before applying discounting – accounting for the impacts of inflation.

The Intelligence Hub has utilised the HM Treasury approved Business Case Economic Model (BCEM) to undertake this appraisal.

Costs

The project costs have been provided by Sistema's finance team and are outlined in the table below:

Costs	
Infrastructure	£504,936
GDP Deflator	£487,581
Present Value @3.5%	£455,812
Revenue Costs	
Total	£4,853,056
GDP Deflator	£4,676,943
Present Value @3.5%	£4,355,492

Benefits

The quantifiable benefits include;

- Utility from Concert Attendees – as per previous methodologies the CBA uses the average price of a cinema ticket as a substitute value of utility
- Participation in School Wellbeing/Resilience programmes – estimated at approx. £2,300 per year of participation¹
- Avoidance of anti-social behaviour instances – estimated as 11% of participants as per previous methodologies, valued at £750 per annum²
- Volunteering benefits – quantified through hours worked at real living wage

Gross impacts: The total spend on Big Noise generates gross benefits of £90,295,823

Net Additional Impacts: Only a proportion of benefits would occur within Glasgow due to mobility of labour, competition from other similar services firms and supply chains. To take account of these factors, the additionality assumptions detailed in the table below have been used to calculate the net additional benefits. The figures in the table are additionality assumption for social and educational interventions derived from the English Partnerships, the National Regeneration Agency additionality guide.

¹ UK Government, [Wellbeing Appraisal Supplementary Guide](#)

² UK Government,

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7dbd4340f0b65d8b4e3357/cost_benefit_analysis_guidance_for_local_partnerships.pdf

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Additionality Factors:	Leakage	Displacement	Multipliers	Deadweight
Local Authority Level	10%	25%	1.1	10%
Glasgow City Region	25%	20%	1.5	10%
Scotland	5%	10%	1.6	10%

In terms of gross value-added impacts, the project is expected to produce £60,340,183 in Glasgow City, £73,139,616 in Glasgow City Region and £111,172,217 in Scotland.

Value for Money

The CBA results indicate that the project delivers more social benefit than resources used, from the baseline scenario of no intervention.

The programme achieves a benefit-cost ratio of £3.25 for Glasgow, £3.94 for Glasgow City Region and £5.99 for Scotland.

Strengths and Limitations

The following benefits have not been used in this appraisal, but were used in the economic evaluation carried out by Glasgow Caledonian University in 2015:

- Increased social skills leading to medium and long-term employment outcomes and community behaviours.
- Improved engagement with education is assumed to translate into improved post school destination and employment outcomes.
- The value of better individual health outcomes measured using the proxy of increased utility ('happiness/enjoyment') of participation.
- Improved health outcomes are assumed to result in a change in life-course trajectory that could close the gap in life expectancy rates between Govanhill and Scotland.

These benefits have not been included as they cannot be easily monetised without robust data.

Other benefits that neither appraisal was able to monetise are listed in the Potential Alternative/Additional Indicators section below. Including these benefits would improve the BCR of the project.

Some benefits that have been monetised in this appraisal are based on academic research which are limited by sample sizes and may be inaccurate.

Capital costs were not considered in the previous appraisal as they were deemed to be sunk costs and irrevocable. This means that the costs had already been incurred and could not be retrieved. In this appraisal capital costs have been considered in line with the UK Government Green Book guidance. Removing these costs would improve the BCR.

Project close-down costs were considered in the previous appraisal but have not been used here due to a to a lack of data. Including these costs would decrease the BCR.

Leakage, displacement, multipliers, and deadweight assumptions may not reflect reality but have been based on recommended values from the UK Government Green Book.

Social Impact Evaluation

Comprehensive plans for the ‘life-course’ evaluation of the wider social impacts of Sistema Scotland’s Big Noise programme were outlined by Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH) in 2014³ and have been revisited throughout the evaluation process. The evaluation involves two distinct but overlapping phases: Phase 1 – a primarily qualitative formative evaluation^{4,5} – and Phase 2 – a longitudinal, mixed-methods summative evaluation⁶. GCPH are the evaluation lead, with Education Scotland, Audit Scotland and Glasgow Caledonian University having been involved in its design and delivery.

Compiled following systematic reviews of the literature relevant to the impact of arts-based projects⁷, the evaluation plans outlined a wide and suitable range of qualitative and quantitative methods to gather different types of data pertaining to implementation of the project, and the range of impacts which can be expected to flow from a community-based intervention of this kind in the short-, medium- and longer-term. On whole, GCPH’s evaluation strikes a balance between providing a broad and comprehensive understanding of the impacts of Big Noise, while not placing too great an administrative burden on Big Noise staff. A small number of additional or alternative indicators have been presented below.

The evaluation of the programme has placed focus on three levels of impact – on the children taking part in the programme, their families, and the wider communities within which Big Noise has been delivered. In the initial evaluation, a significant focus was placed on exploring benefits flowing to the wider community. Informal follow-up conversations with those involved in the evaluation suggest that, across the decade since, the most meaningful impacts have been seen at the level of individual programme participants. Indeed, it appears that a place-based intervention of this kind – while valuable – would, at best, be able to mitigate against the effects of wider structural drivers of social, economic and health inequalities.

³ Harkins C. (2014). *Evaluating Sistema Scotland*. Glasgow: GCPH.

⁴ Harkins C, Garnham L, Campbell A & Tannahill, C. (2016). Hitting the right note for child and adolescent mental and emotional wellbeing: A formative qualitative evaluation of Sistema Scotland’s “Big Noise” orchestral programme. *Journal of Public Mental Health*, 15(1): 25-36.
<https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1108/JPMH-11-2015-0047>

⁵ Harkins, C. & Moore, K. (2019). *People change lives: Consolidating five years of evaluation learning from Sistema Scotland’s Big Noise centres in Stirling, Glasgow & Aberdeen*. Glasgow: GCPH.

⁶ Harkins, C. (2022). *Statistical analysis of educational outcomes among Big Noise Raploch participants*. Glasgow: GCPH.

⁷ GCPH (2014). *A narrative synthesis of evidence relating to the impact of arts and community-based arts interventions on health, wellbeing and educational attainment (Systematic literature reviews, Work Packages 1, 2 and 3)*. Glasgow: GCPH.

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One challenge with the evaluation plans, as presented, is that much of the data central to understanding the impact of Big Noise are held by external (primarily statutory) organisations. This includes data on participants, and non-participant comparator populations. Data in relation to educational outcomes, for example, are held by Local Authorities. There is a risk that these organisations will not have the resource to share these data with Big Noise evaluators in a timely manner (particularly as this administrative data will have to be ‘cleaned’, and data linkage to be established). For future evaluation of other Big Noise sites, and for the evaluation of similar programmes, attempts should be made to establish clear and comprehensive data sharing agreements and protocols with local authorities and other partner agencies as early as possible. A potential workaround for Sistema would be to bring, where possible, some of this data capture in-house. However, this can place substantial administrative burdens on staff, and the additional time and resources must be factored into delivery plans and resourcing. Training must also be provided to staff for relevant data gathering methodologies, where necessary, and there remain risks around the robustness of such approaches. Further, given the life-course evaluation ambitions it is challenging to see how much of this could feasibly be undertaken in-house without significant development of data sharing and linkage.

Potential Alternative/Additional Indicators

As recognised by GCPH, dynamic and contextually driven programmes such as Big Noise require broad and flexible evaluation plans and frameworks. This allows for aspects of the programme to be prioritised or deprioritised as its working becomes clearer, and for the inclusion of unforeseen outcomes emerging through close engagement with the programme, or through new evidence in relevant fields or shifts in the policy context.

A recent review by O’Prey and colleagues⁸ found 30 social impact frameworks either developed specifically for evaluation of arts-based or cultural interventions, or those developed for other purposes but relevant to arts-based interventions. Engagement with those frameworks most relevant to a wellbeing programme such as Big Noise – and with the wider literature relevant to the delivery and evaluation of wellbeing programmes for children and adolescents – suggest additional or alternative indicators which may be added to the evaluation framework.

- **Child and Adolescent Mental Health:** The evaluation plan states that the Strengths and Difficulties (SDQ) Questionnaire will be used to track social development and wellbeing in the short- to -mid-term (during pre-school and

⁸ O’Prey, L.; Parkinson, A.; Knight, E. & Usher, S. (2022). Social Impact Framework Review. Wavehill Social and Economic Research. Available at: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/22291/download?attachment> [Accessed 03/03/2025].

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school years). While this five-point framework is valuable, there is scope to use an additional indicator more closely focused on mental health, particularly for older children. PHS have compiled an overview of such indicators⁹, although their review highlights a lack of indicators of mental health status for those under 12 years of age. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) involvement may be a useful indicator, including for those of younger age groups.

- **Resilience:** While resilience has been captured within the qualitative component of the evaluation, there is scope for inclusion of a quantitative measure of resilience across both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the evaluation. There are a range of such measures which have been developed in the existing literature, including for those under 12 years of age¹⁰.
- **Future Orientation:** Data from the Health and Wellbeing Census includes a measure of the percentage of P5-S6 pupils who agree or strongly agree that they feel positive about their future. This indicator, and others relating to, for example, pupils' locus of control, would be useful to understand whether these are important mechanisms underlying any observed differences educational or employment trajectories. Qualitative data may explore pupils' perceptions of what educational and career trajectories they feel are open to them upon leaving school.
- **Role of Involvement in Big Noise Programme in Identifying Unmet Needs or Risks:** There is the possibility that safeguarding concerns and other risks or unmet development needs may be uncovered through involvement in the programme, such as through being shared with a trusted staff member or volunteer. The evaluation may ask those involved in the delivery programme whether this has taken place, and how the identification of such needs may be supported.
- **Long-Term Employment Data:** While the initial evaluation plan includes a measure of post-school destination, a means of capturing life-course data pertaining to employment – including whether full/part time, income, job security and job satisfaction – would be beneficial. It is recognised that such data is not routinely available, and that capturing this for former Big Noise participants and a control sample this would be challenging.
- **Further Control Data:** It would also be beneficial to capture further relevant data which may provide insight into confounders, mediators or effect modifiers

⁹ Public Health Scotland (2022). *Children and Young People's Mental Health Indicators*. Available at: <https://publichealthscotland.scot/media/12206/children-and-young-people-mental-health-indicator-set.pdf> [Accessed 26/02/2026].

¹⁰ Hall, J.R.; Deery, B.; Sciberras, E.; Kern, M. & Quach, J. (2024). How are we measuring resilience in children? A systematic review. *Mental Health & Prevention*. 200351. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mhp.2024.200351>

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in the relationship between participation and any observed outcomes. The Health and Wellbeing Census, for example, contains data on P5-S6 pupils who report having a trusted adult who they can trust and can talk to about personal problems. Similarly, aspects of the home learning environment – including whether children have quiet space to study, and whether parents are involved in their children’s learning – also play important roles in children’s educational development, as, of course, do household socioeconomic economic conditions. Again, it is recognised that capturing such data may be challenging, but may be possible through qualitative interviews with participants’ parents during Phase 1.

- **Programme metrics:** There is scope to capture further data on aspects of programme delivery, which may be useful to contextualise differences between different Big Noise locations. These may include staff-to-child ratios, or relevant qualifications/experience of those delivering the programme.
- **Reasons for Not Taking Part in Big Noise:** It would be beneficial, where possible, to explore why some children do not take part in the Big Noise programme, or to capture more systematically why they decide to drop-out. This would offer useful insight for identifying barriers to engagement.
- **Theoretical Approach:** There remains scope for greater integration of theory in the evaluation of wellbeing interventions, including Big Noise. A ‘realist’ approach may be well suited in this context¹¹. Big Noise is now operational across six locations in Scotland. While each of these sites share common aspects, and while the embedding of key delivery principles enhances confidence that impacts will be consistent, various factors may yet influence the programme’s functioning and impacts. These include differences in the local contexts, including local education policy frameworks, school teaching staff experience, and the socioeconomic and wider demographic profile of those taking part in the programme. Further, there are differences in the delivery of the programme across these sites, including the ages of pupils to which the intervention is offered. This suggests the potential of a realist (or realist-informed) approach to evaluation. Such approaches foreground contextual elements and explore “what works, for whom, in what context, and how?”¹².
- **Framing of Potential Impact:** The 2019 evaluation report *People Change Lives*¹³ suggests that:

“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

¹¹ Pawson, R. & Tilley, N. (1997). *Realistic Evaluation*. London: SAGE Publications.

¹² Wong, G., Westhorp, G., Manzano, A., Greenhalgh, J. Jagosh, J. & Greenhalgh, T. (2016). RAMESES II reporting standards for realist evaluations. *BMC Medicine*, 14(1): 96.

¹³ Harkins, C. & Moore, K. (2019). *People Change Lives: Consolidating five years of evaluation learning from Sistema Scotland’s Big Noise centres in Stirling, Glasgow and Aberdeen*. Glasgow: GCPH.

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health inequalities seen in the communities where Big Noise is delivered may be reduced in the long term” (p. 17).

The 2010s onwards have seen a shift from UK and Scottish national governments onto *place-based approaches* to address health inequalities¹⁴. This has intertwined with the implementation of austerity, centring on unprecedented cuts to local government budgets – skewed towards the areas of greater disadvantage (such as those which Sistema targets¹⁵) – and cuts to social security payments. A wealth of evidence¹⁶ suggests that these austerity policies have been behind the worsening, since around 2012, of inequalities in mortality, and the *deterioration* of mortality for those living in the most 40% deprived communities¹⁷. Given the risks both of arts-based evaluations being seen as positively biased by the advocacy-orientations of their evaluators and of governments seeking to justify cuts to social security and vital social services, it is important not to overstate the potential for a relatively small-scale programme such as Big Noise to swim against this tide and to reduce economic, social and health inequalities. Closer mapping of the results of the evaluation onto a robust programme theory, which delineates inputs, mechanisms of change and hypothesised outcomes across all levels and a broad range of domains would be beneficial in producing greater clarity around its actual and potential outcomes.

¹⁴ McCartney, G. & Popay, J. (2025). Are place-based approaches to reducing health inequalities a highway to success or a policy dead-end? *Journal of Critical Public Health*, 2(2): 39-50.

¹⁵ Taylor-Robinson, D. & Gosling, R. (2011). Local authority budget cuts and health inequalities. *BMJ*, 342: d1487.

¹⁶ Walsh, D. & McCartney, G. (2025). *Social Murder?: Austerity and Life Expectancy in the UK*. Bristol: Policy Press.

¹⁷ de Haro Moro, M. T., Schofield, L., Munoz-Arroyo, R., McCartney, G., & Walsh, D. (2025) A new era of inequality: Profound changes to mortality in England, Scotland, and 10 major British cities. *European Journal of Public Health*, 35(2), 235–241

Appendix 3: Principles of Delivery Review

The delivery principles used in this review were first identified through Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH) studies of Big Noise, which highlighted the core practices that underpin effective delivery and sustained impact.¹ These seven principles are: longevity and commitment; meaningful relationships; inclusivity and accessibility; intensity and immersion; innovation and flexibility; collective and cooperative learning; and excellence and aspiration.

This review examines how these principles are applied across Big Noise today, drawing on programme data, qualitative research with staff and partners, and direct observation. Together, these sources provide a rounded picture of day-to-day delivery, highlighting both strengths and areas for further development.

The findings confirm that the seven delivery principles are applied consistently across all centres and remain central to how Big Noise creates impact. Different delivery models produce coherent outcomes across musical development, wellbeing, social connection and post-school pathways, demonstrating that Big Noise operates as a stable, principle led system rather than a programme shaped by local variation.

1. Longevity and commitment

Big Noise is built on a strong commitment to long-term support, with an intervention model focused on lasting change in young people's lives. Each centre is designed to be a stable, long-term presence in its community, growing alongside local children, young people and families. This long-term approach shapes everything from funding decisions to how the programme anticipates and responds to participants' changing needs as they grow.

Growing with the Children

This research shows that Big Noise regularly reviews community needs and adapts its offer to remain relevant and supportive. This is particularly evident in its approach to helping young people move beyond school, with an extended offer that supports participants into the next stage of their lives.

This support can include help with records of achievement, accreditation, work experience, volunteering or apprenticeships, assistance with CVs, auditions and further education applications, connections into wider networks, and ongoing guidance from trusted staff.

This long-term, relationship based approach reflects Big Noise's commitment to staying connected beyond school, providing continued support, stability and opportunity as young people transition into adulthood.

Funding Sustainability

Big Noise is funded through a mix of public funding, charitable grants and philanthropic support. This investment covers staffing, instruments, musical resources and programme delivery across school and community settings. Keeping the programme free of charge is central to ensuring all children can take part, regardless of their circumstances. While multi-year funding commitments have improved stability, short-term grants and wider economic pressures continue to make long-term planning challenging.

Long-term Staffing

Big Noise has taken a proactive, long-range approach to staffing by investing in future talent. This includes creating a dedicated Big Noise module for student musicians at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, introducing them to the programme's approach and preparing a well-equipped pool of potential future staff.

“I was a participant since primary three, I think, and then graduated in April this year, and school this year. And then I did my summer internship here and then applied for a job [at Big Noise] and eventually got it!”

Former Participant/ current Staff, Big Noise Govanhill, Case study (2025)

“Big Noise has been the one thing that's been constant for me throughout that five and a half years I've been at Uni, and then it got me a job. I work in one of the Primary schools... I wanted to take a year out before going back to Uni, but I thought I need a job. And I really don't think I would have got that job if it wasn't for me being at Big Noise.”

Volunteer, Big Noise Raploch & Fallin, Case study (2025)

2. Developing meaningful relationships

Big Noise places strong emphasis on building trusted, meaningful relationships with children, young people and their families. These relationships are highly valued by participants and are seen as a key driver of positive change.

Human connection sits at the heart of the Big Noise model. Regular small-group and one-to-one time with staff supports the development of encouraging and trusting relationships between tutors, participants and families.

The research found that many participants develop strong bonds with their music tutors, with support often extending beyond musical learning to advice and guidance more widely. While close relationships with individual staff are common, participants also described the wider Big Noise team as approachable, welcoming and trustworthy. This team-based approach helps create a nurturing culture across the organisation and reduces reliance on any one individual, limiting disruption when staff changes occur.

Managing Staff

Big Noise places strong value on its staff and works hard to attract, develop and retain the right people. Staff wellbeing and voice are prioritised through supportive line management and access to external support. This focus is reflected in turnover and absence rates that are lower than the sector average, despite challenging working environments. The evaluation did note that communication with children and families about staff changes could sometimes be clearer and earlier, which would help children feel more prepared and supported when changes occur.

Teachers were like family too. Strong relationships.

Participant, Leavers Focus Group, Big Noise Raploch & Fallin, (2025)

I could come and talk to Big Noise anytime Yeah, I know that. I've done that before. they've always said that, they say, Well look, come upstairs. Come upstairs and see us, don't be sitting out if there's something going on, come and see us. they're quite happy with that.

Participant, Douglas Community Group, Big Noise Douglas, Case study (2025)

The staff are lovely. They're just so nice. They're helpful, and they're just, like, really understanding. If you have a bad day, they'll talk to you about it. They'll help you about and all that.

Participant, Big Noise Raploch & Fallin, Case study (2025)

3. Inclusivity and accessibility

Big Noise centres are deliberately based in communities facing high levels of socio-economic disadvantage. Working with local authorities and partners, areas are selected based on need, local opportunities, school engagement and the ability to host the programme. This targeted approach helps ensure Big Noise reaches children and families who stand to benefit most from long-term support.

Targeting Need

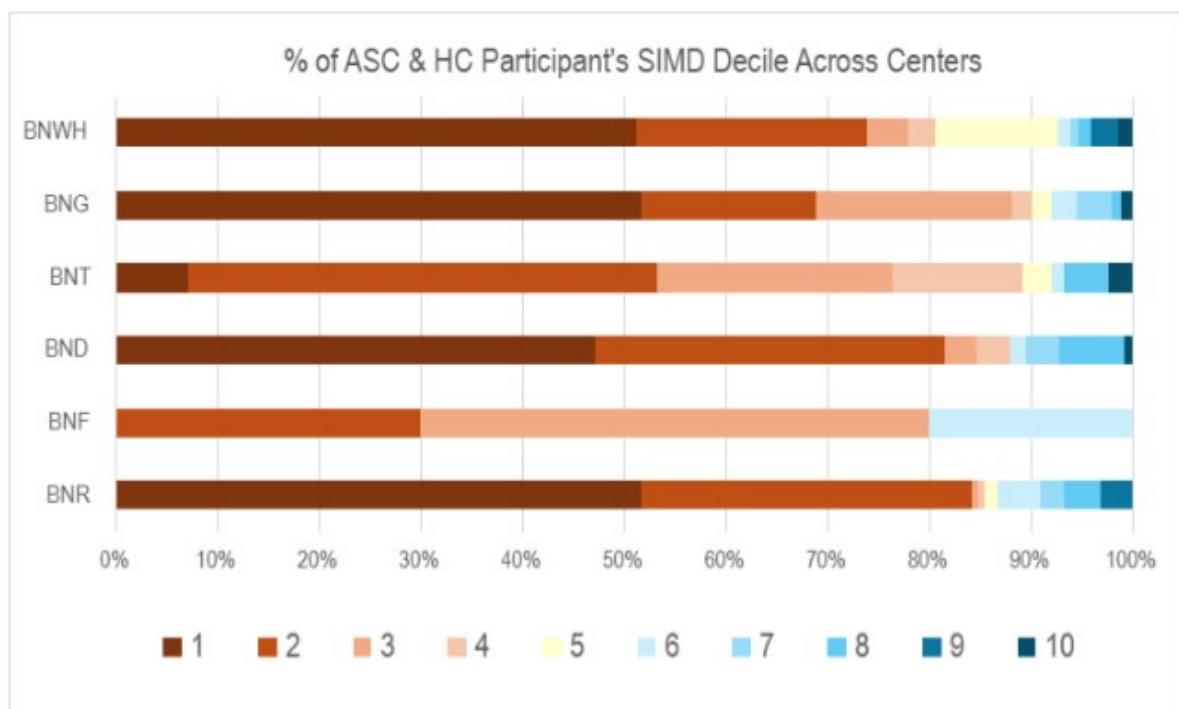
Most children and young people involved in Big Noise live in disadvantaged communities.

Around 83% of Big Noise participants live in the 30% most disadvantaged areas in Scotland. Almost four in ten (39%) live in the most disadvantaged areas.

These figures are based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), which brings together information on income, jobs, health, education, housing, access to services and crime to show how disadvantaged an area is overall.

The chart below shows where Big Noise Afterschool and Holiday Club participants live, grouped by level of disadvantage based on their home postcode.

Exhibit 1: Proportion of Big Noise After-School and Holiday Club Participants living in SIMD categories 1-10



Programme Reach, Take-up and Attendance

This research found that making participation as easy and effective as possible is a major priority for Big Noise.

Strong reach through core delivery:

As of September, 2025, Big Noise reached **3,600 children and young people across six centres**, with around **3,050 taking part weekly** through in school and nursery programmes. A small reduction from the previous year reflects lower nursery enrolments rather than reduced engagement.

Growing after-school participation:

945 children and young people are signed up to the after-school programme, continuing steady growth since 2022. Primary participation has risen to **31% of those eligible**, while secondary participation remains stable at around **10%**, consistent with previous patterns.

High attendance and sustained engagement:

Attendance remains strong, with **80% average monthly attendance** for primary cohorts and **72% overall**. Average nightly afterschool attendance was **386 children**, and **68% of participants** were signed up for their full eligible attendance, showing high commitment within a flexible model.

Supporting take-up and retention:

Staff are working with schools to engage parents and carers earlier, helping build awareness and relationships ahead of Primary 3. Sustaining engagement remains a challenge, and staff respond by offering flexible participation and targeted support at key drop-off points, helping children and young people stay connected and re-engage over time.

My friend stopped playing when they got to high school because it was too stressful.... so I had gotten into a real love of music, right from when I joined it, and it was just a passion of mine, and I just wanted to keep doing it, even though it was stressful. I didn't go for the first week just to settle down into high school, but then I came back the next week. (Participant, Big Noise Raploch & Fallin, Case study 2025)

Accessibility

Centres are chosen for their central locations so families can reach them more easily, though some buildings still present accessibility challenges. To remove financial barriers, Big Noise provides its programme completely free of charge. This includes not only access to activities, but also food, transport, and support for additional opportunities such as membership fees, audition costs, and residential trips. Together, these measures ensure that all children, regardless of circumstances, can take part

fully in everything Big Noise offers. There are no prior skills requirements either, just catchment area limitations.

Building up awareness levels of the Big Noise programme is a constant and developing process across the Big Noise sites. Some is systematic, for example, through the in-school delivery programme, but much is still proactive with staff chapping on doors, or handing out fliers at shopping centres or libraries, enabling a friendly face and chat to pursue to encourage people to come along. Translated materials are readily available for most community languages and each Big Noise centres work within local third sector and local community group networks to ensure other organisations are aware of, and signpost people to, the Big Noise. Big Noise staff report difficulties in making initial contact with families who are not engaged in the programme, due to limited time and capacity to build trust and understanding around the offer but always look for ways to develop links with families early on to encourage participation.

“We troubleshoot any individual's barriers to participation e.g. if there is an issue with parents working hours/ childcare / any issues with families moving house away from Torry we offer them transport home. We offer to walk them home if there is a pick-up/collection issue.

We continue to reach out and publicise the supports available to families to help them sign their children up to the programme.... through written info, social media, fliers and posters, texts and emails, in-person sharing events and open doors afternoons, in-school promotional events before ASC enrolment.”

(Just A minute! Inclusion Staff Survey, Big Noise Torry, 2025)

Referrals from Partner Organisations

Various informal referrals are made to the Big Noise from Health Visitors. Social Work, local food banks or other local charity organisations within the area. Community class times and venues are coordinated with other local services and activities to maximise participation and complement what is already happening in the area. For example, during the Wester Hailes Summer Holiday Club, Big Noise staff partnered with another third-sector organisation to move children between two half-day programmes, creating a full day of support through a combination of activities. This approach helped working parents who needed full-day childcare during the holidays.

Inclusion

This research found inclusivity is a priority for Big Noise, as they aim to support the maximum level of engagement and to enable each and every child to achieve their full potential. Many participants, both children and adults, have diagnosed Additional Support Needs (ASN) whilst others are waiting for referrals for diagnosis. Internal monitoring data limitations can't produce overall accurate figures, but statistics show

as of Feb 2026, **339 families** (approximately one third of families) have been identified as requiring additional support for a range of reasons. Those needs are met through the standard flex and design embedded into the programme.

Observations and staff survey findings highlighted the extensive additional support offered across Big Noise to promote participation and achievement. Support Workers are trained to identify and respond to learning needs, providing safe, stimulating and therapeutic experiences for participants who struggle to engage fully in the after-school programme. Time-outs, shorter sessions, reduced attendance days, varied activities, defined roles and calm spaces are all used to adapt delivery to individual needs. Staff also receive regular training on ASN provision and learning approaches, share good practice across teams, and draw on external guidance to ensure their methods remain current and effective for each individual child.

Participants and parents praise the staff and their ability and openness to consider all options for what is best for each child.

I feel like their [Big Noise] caring about every single person and understanding their needs, Like, if, let's say if, obviously my autism, people that were autistic, they might need, like, go find some like for sensory needs or anything like ADHD, where they can't sit down give them like, a wee stress ball to play doh or something or something to play with to distract them. So I think they do care about everyone's welfare and needs.

(Participant, Raploch & Fallin Big Noise, case study 2025)

I am friends with a couple of other mums that have kids at Big Noise, and it's the same with them, that they feel in the same boat as I do, is that if they've got a concern for their child, or their child's not enjoying it, that it's.. if you're struggling, we'll see what your struggles are first, and integrate that into the session. Like (child) gets to have five minute brain breaks if he's really struggling with his time playing and like that, someone takes him away, let someone wander the hall and come back again. Someone's always with him, yeah.

(Parent, Douglas Big Noise, case study 2025)

(My child) has ADHD, actually is on medication for it throughout the school day. It only lasts up to the end of the school day, And (Big Noise) have the option to give him an extra, like, five milligram of his medication in here if they feel like, you know, he's kind of struggling a wee bit or unfocused. But they, they tend not to give it and they tend to, even when maybe it seems a wee bit dysregulated, try to get him to manage and regulate himself, without it. Which I think is really, really good as well, because I think that's the whole point in music being therapeutic for them. It's teaching him how to focus without that, and me seeing him and being within these classes the last four

weeks, it's like amazing to see how much he can try and push himself, and how much they get the focus.

(Parent, Raploch & Fallin Big Noise, case study 2025)

Big Noise staff have highlighted some current limitations within the programme, mainly linked to accessibility challenges in certain buildings. Staff working in Big Noise Govanhill noted that the facilities and physical access at their site can make it harder for some children and families to take part. By contrast, other Big Noise centres have been designed specifically with the programme in mind and are better able to support delivery through high-quality, accessible spaces and appropriate storage facilities.

Staff identified opportunities to further strengthen accessibility and inclusion by further developing wider staff skills and knowledge, improving flexible spaces, increasing staff diversity to better reflect the communities served, expanding musical repertoires, adapting programme design to sustain engagement of older young people beyond primary school, working more intensively with participants, and involving additional support needs specialist schools within the community.

Many other people also struggle for various reasons and the Big Noise manages this additional support provision through its Priority Family approach. This work targets the most vulnerable groups and supports wider needs including child poverty, food scarcity, cost of living, wellbeing support for families, and signposting to other services.

There are various levels of support offered to the participants and families within the Big Noise communities through the **Priority Family pathway** which has been embedded across all Centres. This approach works in partnership identifies any participant and family who may benefit from additional or tailored support. In practical terms. This means Big Noise get in touch with families and offer early-years activities, parental support, accessibility measures, personalised musical and wellbeing provision, in-session adjustments, celebration of achievements, retention pathways, transition support, signposting, and information-sharing with schools all designed to help children access and thrive within the long-term Big Noise journey. There are currently 339¹ participants being supported across the centres through this targeted approach, approximately a third of all after-school participants and those in receipt of individual support.

This may include;

- Care experienced children
- Children in conflict with the law
- Children in homeless families
- Families with disabled children

- Children who live in households affected by substance misuse
- Children at risk of or in situations of domestic abuse and violence
- Staged intervention tracks (regarding learning needs, learning plans or other areas where additional support is needed)
- Children living with parents who have mental health problems or learning disabilities
- Children who have not been attending school regularly
- Children who have been identified by the school as benefiting from Big Noise – this includes Primary school children and High School.

There are also 115 participants receiving individual programmes which include 1:1 or 1:2 tuition sessions, offered to those who are struggling to participate in the full After-School programme. These sessions help them build skills and confidence while maintaining a strong connection to Big Noise as they prepare to transition into fuller participation.

The individual programmes are very important (lessons for children who are not able to join in with orchestra/band) as is Nurture in and out of school. Staff need to continue with targeted training for dealing with ASN, trauma etc. so that we can tailor these programmes correctly for each child.

(Staff member, Just a Minute! Survey, Douglas Big Noise, 2025)

Big Noise recently completed an internal Inclusion self-assessment, drawing on the views and experiences of staff, participants and expert partner organisations. The process reviewed teaching practices, demographic monitoring, partnerships, staffing skills and composition, as well as the support and training offered. It also examined infrastructure and decision-making processes. The resulting actions will help further strengthen the programme's inclusivity and accessibility, both for current participants and for those who are not yet able to engage fully.

I think we are inclusive but could always do more.

(Staff member, Just a Minute! Survey, Douglas Big Noise, 2025)

4. Intensity and Immersion

Big Noise offers a graduated model of engagement, ranging from a weekly 45-minute in school session to extended after-school provision of up to two hours per session, across up to four days per week, alongside residentials and events.

While in school delivery provides broad access, the after-school programme (ASC) is where depth of engagement is most evident. Attendance data shows strong and sustained participation, with primary school groups reaching their highest average monthly attendance since 2022 (80%) and overall attendance remaining high at 72%.

Importantly, the average number of children attending each after-school session has remained stable at 386 per evening, even as centres have expanded the offer and spread delivery across more nights. This indicates continued high demand and an ability to maintain engagement as opportunities grow.

Patterns of participation reinforce this picture. Around 68% of ASC participants attend their full eligible sessions each week, while many others take part on two or three nights, showing that immersion is flexible rather than all-or-nothing. Overall, children who opt into ASC attend regularly and sustain their involvement over time, supporting Big Noise's intensive and immersive approach to musical, social and emotional development.

5. Innovation and flexibility

Big Noise demonstrates flexibility and innovation through a delivery model that allows staff to respond quickly to individual and community needs. Supportive decision-making and management structures enable practitioners to adapt provision as circumstances change, offering person centred support without unnecessary barriers.

Local area planning plays an important role in shaping tailored delivery across centres. Programmes respond to local demand and context, including community specific options such as trad ensembles, choirs and percussion groups. These provide accessible routes into participation for those who may not play an instrument or who bring different musical skills. Musical content is also shaped by local culture, helping services feel relevant to the communities they serve.

Flexibility is also reflected in age responsive provision, with post-school pathway support developed in more established sites, and in the use of partnerships to strengthen local delivery. Practical adaptations—such as locally informed food choices and flexible approaches for children and young people with ASN—further support inclusion.

A strong “can-do” culture encourages staff to test new ideas and refine practice over time. While staff noted that additional specialist partnerships (particularly around ASN and mental health) and limited capacity can sometimes constrain delivery, they overall feel well-placed to adapt the programme to changing community needs.

I've had (staff member) come and speak to me going, oh, let's he's doing this is what's happening. Like, how can we figure and change this? I've had (staff member) come to us and say the same thing.... they're all great with them. And definitely it is a one on one with the kids. And it's not, I don't just see it with (child).

(Parent, Douglas Big Noise, Case study 2025)

There is such a wide range of individual needs - and tailoring the programme and delivery to fit these is a key part of our team culture, interactions, planning, discussion and thinking.

(Staff member, Just a Minute! Survey, Douglas Big Noise, 2025)

6. Collective and co-operative learning

Big Noise delivers collective learning through group-based music-making, where children and young people learn, practise and perform together. Progress relies on listening, responding to others and working as a group, encouraging collaboration, peer support and shared responsibility. Orchestral groups are organised by time in the programme and skill level, with more experienced participants supporting others.

Ensemble learning fosters strong motivation and a sense of belonging, helping children feel part of something bigger than themselves. Inclusive group options—such as choirs, percussion and mixed ability ensembles—allow participants with different skills and needs to contribute meaningfully. Through playing together, Big Noise supports musical development alongside teamwork, communication and social confidence.

Staff highlighted the challenge of balancing pace so that children who are progressing at different speeds can play together confidently. Where possible, additional support is provided through one-to-one or small group sessions to build skills and confidence. Some staff would welcome greater capacity to offer more advanced challenge for those developing quickly.

It's not just that you have to communicate with other people in the orchestra. You can't just do your own thing, because it has to sound, basically all just one instrument, basically, yeah, violins have to sound like one. Everybody just has to sound like one.

(Participant, Big Noise Raploch & Fallin, Case study 2025)

7. Excellence, aspiration and inspiration

Big Noise demonstrates excellence through high-quality teaching rooted in recognised music education practice, inclusion and continual improvement. Staff reflect on their delivery, aim high for every child and adapt their approach to meet participants where they are. Excellence is defined not by fixed benchmarks, but by creating ensembles and learning spaces where each child can contribute, feel valued and develop musical and wider skills over time.

This commitment is strengthened through a wide network of music and cultural partnerships, which provide free, supported access to concerts, workshops, mentoring and opportunities to work with professional musicians. These experiences broaden horizons, raise aspirations and bring specialist expertise back into the organisation through staff development and shared learning.

Beyond music, Big Noise nurtures ambition through long-term, supportive relationships with staff, volunteers and families. Encouragement and high expectations build confidence, pride and self-belief, with benefits extending into home life. Together, high-quality teaching, strong partnerships and trusted relationships create an environment where excellence and aspiration are part of everyday practice, supporting Big Noise's wider goal of lasting social change.

Going through school with (music) exams was easier because past practice from Big Noise, the standard was already set"

(Big Noise participant, Leavers Focus Group, Big Noise Raploch & Fallin, 2024)

Hanging around with Musicians] I feel like it inspires you to just if you keep, if you stick with it, then that's what you can be like.

(Participant, Big Noise Torry, Case Study, 2025)

Summary Conclusion

This review confirms that the seven Delivery Principles identified through previous GCPH work remain firmly embedded across Big Noise and continue to drive consistent impact across centres. While each site adapts delivery to its local context, the principles are applied in a coherent and intentional way, ensuring impact stems from a shared, organisation wide approach rather than local variation.

Together, the principles operate as a connected system. Long-term commitment, trusted relationships and inclusive practice support emotional wellbeing and belonging. Intensity, immersion and high-quality teaching underpin sustained engagement and musical progression, while collective learning links musical, social and emotional development. Innovation and flexibility allow delivery to adapt to changing individual and community needs, strengthening participation over time.

Importantly, these principles extend beyond school age. Longevity, aspiration and partnership working support positive post-school pathways into further education, employment, volunteering and cultural participation, reinforcing Big Noise as a long-term programme that grows with children and young people.

Areas for enhancement include expanding access to specialist expertise (particularly around Additional Support Needs and mental health), increasing capacity to challenge participants who are excelling, and addressing accessibility constraints in some settings. Continued focus on workforce development, communication during staff transitions and partnership working will help sustain consistent delivery as the programme evolves.

Overall, the evidence shows that Big Noise's impacts on musical development, wellbeing, social connection and post-school outcomes are driven by the combined and consistent application of all seven Delivery Principles, explaining both the breadth and durability of impact across the organisation.

Appendix 4: Prioritisation Analysis of Key Programme Elements

Purpose of the analysis

This appendix presents a prioritisation analysis of the key elements of the Big Noise programme. The purpose of the analysis is to identify which aspects of delivery are most influential in driving impact across multiple domains, and to support interpretation of findings presented in the main report. The analysis does not introduce new impact areas but rather synthesises existing evidence to clarify **relative importance** among programme elements.

Methodology

The prioritisation analysis was developed as a **structured synthesis exercise**, drawing on multiple strands of evidence available through the evaluation. It is informed by:

- The reviewer’s cumulative knowledge and observation of Big Noise delivery in practice
- Qualitative evidence gathered through participant case studies and interviews
- Staff and partner survey responses
- Themes emerging across key impact areas, including musical development, emotional wellbeing, social networks and post-school pathways

Programme elements were reviewed and ranked using three criteria:

1. **Breadth of impact** – the extent to which an element contributes across multiple outcome domains (musical, emotional, social and future pathways).
2. **Strength and consistency of evidence** – how frequently and clearly the element was identified as influential across different data sources and participant groups.
3. **Foundational importance** – whether the element acts as an enabling condition for other impacts, rather than as a standalone activity.

This approach supports a holistic understanding of “what matters most” within the programme, recognising that Big Noise operates as a **connected system rather than a set of discrete interventions**.

Findings: Prioritised Programme Elements

Top Priorities: Strongest and Widest Impact

1. Trusted, caring and consistent relationships

Trusted relationships with staff emerge as the most foundational element across all impact areas. These relationships create emotional safety and a sense of being valued

and understood. They underpin engagement, learning, behaviour, resilience and long-term commitment, and are consistently identified as central to emotional wellbeing, social development and successful transitions.

2. Supportive, joyful and predictable environments

Calm, inclusive and well-structured environments provide the conditions for children to feel secure, regulated and ready to learn. These environments reduce stress, increase enjoyment and support confidence, enabling musical, social and emotional development to take place simultaneously.

3. Collaborative group music-making

Ensemble-based music-making shows strong cross-cutting impact, supporting teamwork, communication, patience, emotional expression and belonging. It builds musical skills such as listening and ensemble awareness while also strengthening social bonds, pride and community connection.

Secondary Priorities: Very High Impact

4. Meaningful achievement opportunities (performances, projects, progression)

Performances and milestone opportunities build confidence, resilience and pride. They reinforce aspiration and belonging, and support both musical development and emotional wellbeing through shared achievement.

5. Long-term continuity and progression

Sustained involvement over many years provides stability and motivation, enabling skills, confidence and aspirations to build over time. Continuity supports smoother transitions into further education, employment, volunteering and wider participation.

Additional Key Pillars: Important but More Specific Impact

6. High-quality musical instruction and regular practice

Strong teaching and structured practice are essential to musical development, supporting technique, discipline, concentration and creativity. While highly important, their impact is more specialised than elements that span multiple outcome areas.

7. Real-world experience and employability preparation

Leadership roles, volunteering and workplace exposure provide valuable skills and confidence, particularly for older participants. These impacts are significant but apply to a narrower stage of the programme.

8. Exposure to aspirational environments

Experiences such as visits to national ensembles, residencies and specialist pathways are powerful motivators and aspiration-builders, though they benefit a smaller subset of participants.

Summary Conclusion

The prioritisation analysis shows that Big Noise's greatest and most wide-reaching impacts are driven by a small number of **delivery principles** that operate together across all aspects of the programme. Trusted, caring and consistent relationships; supportive, joyful and predictable environments; and collaborative group music-making emerge as the highest priorities, as they underpin progress across musical development, emotional wellbeing, social networks and long-term outcomes. These elements are not standalone activities but the conditions that make all other impacts possible.

Secondary priorities, including meaningful achievement opportunities and long-term continuity, strengthen and sustain these core foundations by building confidence, pride, aspiration and smoother transitions over time. Other important elements, such as high-quality musical instruction, employability preparation and access to aspirational experiences, add significant value, particularly for specific age groups, but rely on the foundational elements to be effective.

Overall, the analysis confirms that Big Noise's impact is driven less by individual components in isolation and more by **how key elements are layered and reinforced over time**. Prioritising protection and investment in the highest-impact foundations provides the strongest assurance of consistent outcomes across sites, while targeted enhancements to secondary and additional elements can further extend depth, progression and long-term benefit without diluting the core model.

Appendix 5: Importance of the after-school programme

The prioritisation analysis clearly shows that the after-school programme is not an optional extension of in-school delivery, but a distinct and essential environment where Big Noise's strongest impacts are realised. In-school provision provides universal reach, routine and early access, acting as an entry point to the programme. In contrast, after-school participation enables deeper emotional, social, and developmental outcomes that cannot be achieved within school structures alone.

After-school provision intensifies the programme's **three most powerful impact drivers**: trusted and consistent relationships, supportive and predictable environments, and collaborative group music-making. Longer sessions, smaller and more stable groups, and consistent staffing allow relationships to deepen and create a calmer, child-centred space where children feel safe to take risks, express themselves and build trust. Sustained ensemble music-making, rarely possible during the school day, strengthens musical skills while reinforcing belonging and social connection.

The after-school programme also provides the main platform for achievement, performance, and shared identity. Extended rehearsal time, ambitious repertoire, and preparation for concerts and projects enable children and young people to work towards collective goals, building pride, confidence and resilience. These experiences create a strong sense of ownership and belonging that cannot be replicated through in-school delivery alone.

Crucially, after-school participation drives long-term continuity and progression pathways. Sustained involvement over multiple years supports gradual skill development, specialist mentoring, leadership opportunities and preparation for transitions beyond school. Deeper peer relationships and community connections further strengthen readiness for future education, training and employment.

Overall, while in-school delivery is essential for access and engagement, it is after-school participation that allows Big Noise's highest-priority impact drivers to operate at their fullest potential. This is where the programme delivers its most transformational, enduring outcomes.

Appendix 6: Big Noise & policy

This section builds on the main reports by exploring in more depth what this evaluation, and earlier findings from GCPH, tell us about what works. It highlights the programme's key strengths and considers what this learning could mean for policy and practice more widely. In doing so, it points to how public services and community-based programmes across Scotland could increase their impact for children, young people and families.

An inequality focused, long-term approach

Big Noise is closely aligned with national goals to reduce inequality and improve outcomes across people's lives. It starts early, supports children from infancy through to early adulthood, and stays with them over time. This long-term approach helps strengthen the foundations that matter most for future wellbeing, such as learning, confidence, relationships and a sense of belonging in the community.

What Big Noise shows clearly is that reducing inequalities takes more than short-term or light-touch support. While policy often recognises the importance of tackling inequality early, it is not always clear about how much support is needed, or for how long, to make a real difference. Big Noise demonstrates that meaningful change requires sustained involvement, high levels of commitment and strong, trusting relationships built over many years.

In doing so, the programme offers a practical challenge to policy and practice. It moves the conversation beyond good intentions and shows what inequality reducing work looks like in reality: long-term, intensive and rooted in relationships. This provides valuable learning for those shaping future policy, funding and public services aimed at improving outcomes for children, young people and communities.

Prevention investment

Big Noise is a strong example of prevention in action. It reflects Scotland's policy focus on prevention and early intervention by supporting children early in life and staying with them over the long term. By building confidence, skills and relationships from a young age, Big Noise shows how preventative support can be rooted in communities and sustained over many years.

The economic findings strengthen this picture. They show that investing in Big Noise creates real social and economic value, with benefits seen across education, wellbeing and future life chances. This demonstrates that prevention is not only the right thing to do, but also a smart use of public resources.

However, while prevention is often talked about in policy, it is less consistently delivered in practice. Big Noise shows what it really means to prioritise prevention: not as a short-term project, but as a long-term, visible and trusted presence in

communities. In doing so, it highlights the gap that can exist between policy ambition and delivery on the ground, and underlines the importance of sustained, protected investment in preventative approaches that operate at the scale and intensity needed to make a lasting difference.

Working as part of a wider system

Big Noise demonstrates a whole systems approach in practice. It recognises that children's lives are shaped by a web of interconnected influences and works alongside schools, social care and community services to support children and families in a more joined-up way. Rather than operating in isolation, Big Noise sits within the wider support system around the child.

Importantly, the evaluation shows that whole systems working is not just about having the right structures or partnerships in place. What really makes the difference is how people work together. The consistency of Big Noise's presence in communities, the strength of its relationships with schools and other partners, and the trust built with children and families over time are central to its impact.

The findings also suggest that partnership working is not always developed in a consistent or systematic way across systems. This highlights an opportunity for statutory organisations to further recognise the potential of closer, more collaborative working with third sector partners — not only with Big Noise, but with community-based organisations more broadly. Creating the conditions for shared learning, appropriate data sharing, and meaningful involvement in decision making can help ensure that all partners are able to contribute fully to improving outcomes for children and young people.

While policy often calls for joined up services and system change, it does not always place enough emphasis on the relational work that makes this possible. Big Noise shows that trust, continuity and long-term relationships are not optional extras. They are essential foundations of an effective whole-systems approach that supports children, families and communities more effectively over time.

Place based change and community impact

Big Noise is closely rooted in the communities it serves. Rather than delivering short-term activity and moving on, it has a visible, long-term presence in places where children and families face the greatest challenges. This aligns strongly with Scotland's place-based policy ambitions, which recognise that improving outcomes means strengthening communities as well as supporting individuals.

Because Big Noise is embedded locally, its impact goes beyond individual children and young people. The evaluation suggests it helps shape how people feel about their community – building pride, connection and a sense that positive opportunities are

possible close to home. Parents, staff and young people describe Big Noise as something their community values and feels ownership of, contributing to feelings of belonging and shared identity.

The findings also suggest that Big Noise can act as a catalyst for wider community change. While impacts like confidence, wellbeing and musical skills are easier to measure, changes such as increased pride, stronger relationships and renewed optimism matter just as much. These outcomes are deeply human and meaningful but are not always well captured in traditional policy measures.

This highlights an important challenge for policy and public services. If success is defined too narrowly, the fuller value of place based, community-led work can be missed. Big Noise shows why measures of impact need to reflect not just individual outcomes, but also the longer-term strengthening of communities and the environments in which people live and grow.

To better support place based change and community impact, Scottish policy needs to move beyond short-term, narrowly defined measures of success and fully back long-term, relationship-driven approaches. This means broadening how impact is understood to include community pride, belonging and connection; committing to longer, more stable funding for proven place-based models; and treating trust, continuity and relationships as core public service infrastructure, not optional extras. Policy should make place-based working the default, support shared learning across communities, and align decision-making with the life-course reality of how change happens. By doing so, Scotland can close the gap between policy ambition and delivery, and better support programmes that strengthen not just individual outcomes, but the social and emotional health of communities themselves.

Education and life chances

Big Noise helps children and young people do better at school, particularly those growing up with fewer advantages. By working with them over many years, setting high expectations and providing structured, supportive learning, the programme supports not just attainment, but the wider skills that help young people succeed. These include confidence, motivation, resilience and a belief in what they can achieve.

The evaluation also shows that success in education cannot be separated from what is happening in the rest of a child's life. Factors like poverty, wellbeing and access to positive experiences all shape how young people engage with learning. Big Noise demonstrates how enrichment based approaches; combining music, relationships and stability, can strengthen educational outcomes by supporting the whole child.

This suggests an important lesson for policy. Closing the attainment gap is not just about raising scores or tracking progress, but about creating the conditions in which

young people can thrive. Approaches that are holistic, long-term and rooted in development may be more effective than focusing too narrowly on attainment alone, helping open up wider life opportunities alongside educational success.

Person-centred, relational and aspirational practice

There is a strong policy commitment to person-centred approaches and the empowerment of individuals and communities. Big Noise brings person-centred policy to life by putting children and young people first. Support is shaped around each individual and adapts as their needs, interests and circumstances change. Rather than a one-size-fits-all model, the programme grows with participants, building strong relationships and helping young people shape their own paths.

A standout finding is how consistently children and young people say they feel genuinely loved and valued—not just by particular staff, but across the whole organisation. This is a powerful outcome, and one many services aspire to as part of delivering on the Scottish Promise for Looked After Children³.

This experience was shared across families from different backgrounds, showing it is embedded in Big Noise’s culture, not dependent on individual relationships. It offers important learning for other organisations working to ensure children feel cared for, respected and valued.

Central to this was a strong sense of a “team around the child”. Parents and carers felt included and supported, working alongside staff to manage challenges together. This built trust, confidence and reassurance that families could access non-judgemental support from anyone in the organisation.

Big Noise also places strong emphasis on confidence, ambition and excellence. Children and young people are encouraged to aim high and take part in experiences—such as performances, travel and residential trips—that expand horizons and build self-belief.

While policy often focuses on reducing risk or disadvantage, Big Noise shows the importance of nurturing potential and aspiration. The evaluation suggests this is not an added extra, but a core part of helping young people thrive, an approach that, if more clearly recognised in policy, could strengthen long-term efforts to improve outcomes and tackle inequality.

Big Noise as a “super intervention”

Taken together, the findings show that Big Noise does much more than deliver a single programme. It supports children, families and communities in ways that link directly to health, education, wellbeing, community strength and how public services work together. It helps with learning, confidence, relationships and how people feel about the place they live – all at the same time.

However, this kind of wide-ranging impact does not fit neatly into how government policy and funding are currently organised. Big Noise cuts across areas such as culture, education, child poverty and health, but these are often managed through separate departments, funding streams and reporting systems. For third-sector organisations like Big Noise, this creates real challenges. Managing multiple funding agreements, reporting platforms and policy agendas takes time and capacity away from frontline delivery, particularly in organisations that are already stretched.

The evaluation highlights the need for policy and funding mechanisms to better reflect the reality of holistic, community based work. Streamlining reporting requirements, aligning funding across departments and taking a more joined-up approach to commissioning could reduce unnecessary burden and make programmes like Big Noise more sustainable. By recognising and supporting this kind of cross-cutting work more effectively, policy can help third-sector organisations focus their capacity where it matters most: delivering high-quality, long-term support for children, young people and communities.

Delivery principles in practice

This evaluation confirms that Big Noise's impact is driven as much by how the programme is delivered as by what it delivers. Core principles; long-term commitment, trusted relationships, inclusive and flexible practice, intensive engagement, collective learning and high aspirations, create the conditions in which change can take root and be sustained.

While these principles were developed within Big Noise, the evidence shows they are highly transferable to other social intervention programmes, particularly those working with children, young people and families facing disadvantage. The findings highlight that sustained relationships, safe and welcoming environments, and consistent engagement over time are not programme specific features but foundational mechanisms of impact. Importantly, a principle-led approach allows services to adapt to local contexts without losing coherence or quality, offering a model for scaling and replication without standardising experience.

At a time when many interventions are delivered within short funding cycles, this evaluation reinforces a wider lesson for policy and practice: investing in delivery quality; time, people and relationships, is critical to achieving meaningful, long-term outcomes across social interventions.

Arts interventions for public health

These findings connect strongly with Scotland's public health approach, especially the focus on prevention. They show why long-term arts programmes like Big Noise should be seen as part of early, preventative public health investment, not just as cultural or educational activity. This is reinforced by the economic findings in the report, which show that this kind of work delivers real social and economic value.

Big Noise works in communities facing high levels of disadvantage, where children and young people are more likely to experience the pressures that lead to long-term health inequality. The evaluation shows that Big Noise does not simply respond when problems arise. Instead, it helps shape everyday childhood experiences in ways that protect and strengthen future health. This includes building stable and trusting relationships, creating a strong sense of belonging, supporting learning and skill building, and giving children access to safe, positive and joyful spaces.

These benefits closely match Scotland's public health prevention frameworks, which emphasise acting early to stop problems developing in the first place. In particular, Big Noise supports the fundamental "building blocks" of health identified within national prevention models, such as the CIPFA prevention framework⁴. This places its work at the earliest stages of prevention, where action has the greatest potential to reduce long-term inequality.

Scotland's Public Service Reform Strategy⁵ and Population Health Framework⁶ both call for earlier, preventative investment that can shift outcomes across whole populations. This report provides evidence that a well-resourced, community based arts programme can play a meaningful role in delivering that ambition. The implication is not that Big Noise should be treated as a short-term or referral-based service, but that it should be recognised and supported as part of the everyday public health infrastructure of the communities it serves.

Overall, the findings show strong alignment between Big Noise and Scotland's policy ambitions around prevention, reducing inequality and joined up working. At the same time, they highlight a gap between policy intention and delivery. Big Noise illustrates that real change requires work that is long-term, consistent and built on strong relationships — elements that are not always fully reflected in policy or funding structures.

The ongoing long-term evaluation led by the Glasgow Centre for Population Health is therefore crucial. It provides sustained evidence about both impact and delivery over time. This report adds timely insight into how Big Noise is working at scale today, helping explain not just what difference it makes, but how and why it works, offering valuable direction for future policy and investment decisions.

Evaluation of social interventions

Evaluating complex social programmes, especially arts based ones, is about more than asking whether they work. It is also about understanding how change happens and why it lasts. Programmes like Big Noise influence many parts of people's lives at once – confidence, wellbeing, learning, relationships and community connection. These changes build over time, often in small but meaningful ways, and don't follow a simple or linear path.

This evaluation has been designed to respond to that complexity. It focuses on how Big Noise is working now, what participants and families are experiencing, and how change is created in practice. It looks closely at relationships, delivery quality, lived experience and the everyday conditions that support positive outcomes. In doing so, it moves beyond simple outcome measures to capture what is happening on the ground and why it matters.

Importantly, this work sits alongside the long-term evaluation led by the Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH). Earlier GCPH research helped establish the foundations of Big Noise's impact and identified the key principles that underpin its success. Ongoing and planned GCPH work continues to track longer-term outcomes over time, including transitions into adulthood and future health and life-course impacts.

This evaluation complements that wider programme of work. While the GCPH evaluation focuses on long-term change, this study provides a detailed, up-to-date picture of delivery at scale. It helps explain how the programme is functioning across multiple sites, how consistent practice is being achieved, and how impact is being experienced by those involved. The learning generated here feeds directly into the broader evidence base, strengthening understanding of both process and outcomes.

The report also recognises the challenges involved in evaluating work of this nature. It can be difficult to isolate the impact of one programme within complex social systems. Levels of engagement vary, some outcomes take years to emerge, and many important changes are hard to capture with numbers alone. There are also practical limits linked to time, resources and the need to avoid placing extra pressure on delivery teams.

By focusing on lived experience, systems thinking and real-world delivery, this evaluation adds depth and context to the wider body of evidence. Together with the ongoing GCPH work, it contributes to a more rounded understanding of Big Noise, showing not only that change happens over time, but how that change is created, sustained and supported in practice.