

# Methods Appendices

The Methods Appendices detail the data collection methods used in this evaluation. Each section describes one of the four data collections methods: participatory systems mapping, case studies, surveys and a focus group. A final section describes how this data was analysed in both the writing of the summary report and the [interactive layered map of evidence](#).

All the results and analysis are held within the **Results Appendices**.

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## Overview of Methodology

This evaluation adopted a mixed-methods design shaped around two guiding principles:

1. **Using the most appropriate method for each programme context, and**
2. **Ensuring participant voice and lived experience were at the centre of the analysis.**

## Scope and context of the Evaluation

The methodological approach for this evaluation was shaped directly by the complexity and structure of the Big Noise programme. Big Noise delivers a wide range of activities to different groups, and each element of the programme serves distinct purposes and engages participants in different ways. Given the constraints of this evaluation, it was not possible to examine every component in depth.

This evaluation focuses on two main strands of the programme which are central to the Big Noise model. The programme elements with the greatest reach are the ***In-school delivery***, engaging more than 3,050 children twice weekly and the ***After-school*** programme, which involves around 945 children for up to four days per week, for two hours each day. These components differ not only in their activities but also in the level of immersion they provide, resulting in varied impacts across participant groups. Each component required a bespoke approach to evidence gathering.

To capture the wider impacts on families and the broader community, the evaluation also included research into the **Little Noise** programme, focusing on understanding its value for participating parents / carers and children. In addition, the programme delivers a wide range of bespoke adult community activities, such as choirs, traditional music groups, ukulele workshops and adult orchestras. Each tailored to each local context. To reflect these diverse contributions, members of one community group were invited to take part in a **mapping workshop**, the findings from which have informed and enriched the development of the System Maps.

Additionally, an adult community member has contributed an in-depth case study highlighting the impact that Big Noise community groups have had on his life. Two volunteer case studies were also collected as part of the evaluation. However, further dedicated evaluation would be needed to fully understand and evidence the positive value of both the Volunteer Programme and the Community Groups.

## In-school Analysis: Teacher & Nursery Staff Survey as the Primary Lens

The **in-school programme** delivers high-quality music education to more than **3,050 children** across all Big Noise site primary and nursery schools. Children take part in **twice-weekly, 45-minute sessions** which are built into the regular school timetable.

These whole-class sessions use songs, musical games, rhythm and rhyme, movement and general musicianship. Teachers usually attend alongside the class. Children are also introduced to musical instruments as part of their early learning. In addition to whole-class work, Big Noise provides **targeted instrumental tuition** for individual pupils or small groups, offering more personalised support and opportunities for progression. The regular and repetitive nature of this programme provides an opportunity for a range of skills, knowledge and behaviours to develop over time.

For the in-school component, we used a **Teacher & Nursery Staff Survey** as the core method. Teachers hold a unique, longitudinal perspective on children's learning, social development, behaviour, and engagement across a full school context. Their professional observations provide:

- A consistent basis for assessing change over time within classroom and whole-school environments
- Comparability across year groups and cohorts
- Insight into the wider educational impacts of Big Noise, beyond musical skill alone

Teachers' perspectives therefore formed a reliable and practical evidence base for understanding in-school impacts on the class, and individual children.

### After-School Analysis: Participatory Systems Mapping Supported by Case Studies

The **Big Noise after-school programme** runs at the end of the school day and is **entirely voluntary** for children and young people to attend from primary 3 upwards. It offers a rich mix of group and individual music tuition, musicianship sessions, healthy snacks, and opportunities to socialise with children from different schools. Alongside the musical learning, participants can take part in crafts, games, and a range of events and performances throughout the year. The programme operates for up to **two hours across four days each week** for older participants, with shorter sessions tailored for younger children. The depth of this programme offers an opportunity for a range of skills and behaviours to developed over time, possibly leading to broader impacts for the individual participants. 945 children are currently signed up for after-school. (September 2025)

For the after-school programme, a more participatory and exploratory approach was required. To develop an understanding of this complexity, we used **Participatory Systems Mapping (PSM)** as the main methodological approach.

PSM was selected because it:

- Involved participants directly in explaining **how change happens** in their lives

- Showed how different influences connect and interact
- Highlighted real experiences rather than assumptions
- Helped us see Big Noise as part of a wider system, not a stand-alone factor

This participatory method was strengthened through **case studies**, which provided rich, narrative evidence. Case studies enabled a deeper exploration of individual pathways, challenges, and turning points, illustrating how engagement with Big Noise shapes participants' confidence, relationships, aspirations, and wellbeing.

### Additional Data Sources to Broaden and Deepen the Evidence Base

To complement the main analysis streams, the evaluation incorporated several further sources of participant insight and professional reflection:

- **Big Noise staff survey series** offered practitioner insights into programme delivery, observed changes in participants, and contextual factors affecting engagement.
- **Community group survey (“Little Noise”)** brought in the views and experiences of early-years programme delivery, ensuring the wider social ecosystem around Big Noise was represented.
- **Peer-designed impact survey in Torry**, created and administered by participants themselves, provided a powerful avenue for young people to define what impact means on their own terms.

These additional strands allowed triangulation of perspectives from multiple vantage points and ensured the evaluation captured the full breadth of experiences across communities.

### Central Importance of Participant Voice and Experience

Across all parts of the evaluation, we followed one key principle: **the people who take part in Big Noise should help explain what it means and why it matters**. To achieve this, we focused on:

- **Working together with participants** to design parts of the research, especially the systems-mapping work and the peer-designed survey
- **Sharing real stories and experiences** from children, young people, and families
- **Creating space for participants and people around them** to describe the real-life impacts that numbers alone cannot show

By putting participant voice at the heart of the approach, the evaluation reflects the lived experience of the Big Noise community and highlights what matters most to the people directly involved in Big Noise.

The results and analysis from all of the research are held in the Results Appendix.

## Appendix 1: Leavers Focus Group

A two-hour focus group was undertaken in December 2024 with ten young people who had recently graduated from the Big Noise Raploch After-school programme. Participants were aged between 18 and 21 years old and had all been involved in Big Noise for several years, with most having engaged consistently from early childhood (primary 4) through to leaving the programme. Big Noise senior staff contacted eligible young people in advance to inform them of the independent evaluation and to invite them to take part. Attendance was voluntary, and a suitable date and time were agreed with those who expressed interest.

### Focus Group Set-up and Facilitation

The focus group was facilitated by the independent researcher, Aileen Campbell. At the outset, the researcher outlined the purpose of the discussion and introduced a set of **semi-structured prompts** designed to encourage open, reflective conversation about participants' experiences of Big Noise and the perceived impacts of long-term involvement in the programme.

Two members of Big Noise staff attended in a supportive capacity to help create a comfortable environment and assist in encouraging participation where appropriate.

### What we did

Participants were provided with paper, sticky notes and pens to allow them to record thoughts privately or contribute ideas non-verbally during the session. All participants gave informed consent to audio recording, and contact details were collected to allow for follow-up clarification if required. Written notes created by participants were photographed to support accurate transcription and thematic analysis.

### What we spoke about

The focus group discussion explored a series of thematic areas designed to understand participants' long-term engagement with Big Noise and the perceived impacts of the programme. Semi-structured prompts were used to guide conversation across the following topics:

#### 1. Participant Background

Questions explored:

- length of involvement in Big Noise
- levels of immersion in both in-school and after-school strands
- periods of reduced engagement and reasons for disengagement
- factors influencing re-engagement with the programme

#### 2. Overall Experience of the Programme

Participants were asked to reflect on:

- Big Noise’s influence on daily routines and wider life
- significant memories or moments of impact over their years of involvement

### **3. Emotional and Wellbeing Impacts**

Discussion focused on:

- effects on mental health and general wellbeing
- changes in confidence, coping, and sense of control
- the emotional significance of Big Noise (e.g., feeling supported, empowered, or at ease)

### **4. Social and Relational Impacts**

Participants considered:

- the programme’s role in shaping relationships with family, peers and others
- opportunities for connection, belonging and community engagement

### **5. Practical Benefits**

Questions covered:

- practical challenges Big Noise helped them overcome
- specific skills, opportunities or supports gained
- any perceived benefits relating to time, money or daily functioning

### **6. Long-Term Influence**

Prompts invited participants to discuss:

- expected long-term effects of Big Noise on their lives
- likely future involvement with the programme
- anticipated personal growth linked to their participation

### **7. Comparison with Other Services**

Participants were asked to compare Big Noise with other programmes they had experienced, identifying:

- distinguishing features
- what aspects felt unique or most impactful

### **8. Summary Reflections and Future Expectations**

The session concluded with final reflections, including:

- summarising Big Noise’s impact in a single sentence

- anticipated future influence on their lives
- advice they would give to someone considering joining Big Noise
- opportunity to highlight other areas that hadn't been covered

## What Was Said

All discussion notes, audio recordings, and participant-written materials were securely stored within the researcher's protected filing system. Findings were anonymised during analysis and write-up to ensure participant confidentiality.

The results from the Leavers Focus Group are detailed in the Results Appendix.

## Appendix 2: Surveys

Various surveys were carried out throughout the evaluation period between late 2024 to October 2025. Views and experiences were gathered from a range of stakeholders across the Big Noise programme to build a triangulated picture of impact.

- A **peer-led research survey** was created and carried out by two Big Noise Torry volunteers, Dede and Chloe. They asked other young people to think about the difference Big Noise had made in their lives and chose seven statements that they felt mattered to any young person. Participants were then asked how strongly they agreed with each of these statements.
- A **Teacher and Nursery Staff Survey**, carried out in June and September 2025, gathered views from front-line staff and senior leaders on the impact of both the in-school and after-school Big Noise programmes. Staff reflected on the programme's overall influence on the school environment, the effects on their own teaching and classes receiving in-school delivery, and the changes they observed in individual children who attended the after-school sessions.
- Five **Big Noise Staff and Volunteer Surveys**, carried out between May and August 2025, gave a broad view of the Big Noise programme's delivery, practice, experiences and impacts. Together, they highlighted strengths, surfaced challenges, and identified areas where improvements could be made.
- A **Little Noise Survey** were carried out across four Big Noise community groups to explore the impacts of both Parent's or Carer's and their participating babies and toddlers.

## Appendix 2a: Peer-led Research Survey (Big Noise Torry)

### Purpose of the Peer-Research Approach

A peer-research element was included in the wider evaluation to ensure that young participants had real influence over how their peers' experiences were understood and recorded. This approach placed young people at the centre of the research design, allowing them to shape the questions, set the priorities, and choose the methods that captured impact in ways that felt meaningful to them.

### Research Leadership and Support

Two volunteer researchers, Dede and Chloe worked together and were guided by Big Noise staff to design and develop an effective research tool to gather views from their peers attending Big Noise Torry.

### Pilot Site and Learning for Future Development

As a pilot project, the peer-research was carried out at a single Big Noise site. This focussed approach helped the team understand what resources, time, and support structures were required to deliver meaningful peer-led research. Lessons from this pilot will inform how the approach could be expanded across other Big Noise centres, contributing to the potential development of future youth-led performance and information reporting.

### Recognition Through the Youth Achievement Award

The young researchers' work was formally recognised through the [Youth Achievement Award \(YAA\)](#) scheme<sup>1</sup> which has recently been adopted by Big Noise. The Award celebrated their leadership, participation, and learning, ensuring the research process not only gathered valuable insight but also contributed directly to young people's personal achievement and confidence.

### Survey Methodology

#### *Selecting the Method*

The young researchers reviewed several possible research methods and discussed the strengths and limitations of each. They concluded that a **Microsoft Forms survey** was the most practical and inclusive way to gather views from as many participants as possible, within a busy Big Noise environment. Big Noise staff assisted the researchers

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<sup>1</sup> The *Young Achievers Award* aligns with the **Youth Achievement Award (YAA)**, a nationally recognised Scottish award designed to recognise and accredit young people's personal learning, skills, and achievements. The award is delivered by **Youth Scotland** and is credit-rated by the **Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)** on the **SCQF at Levels 4–7**. It provides a flexible framework where young people set a personal challenge, take responsibility for planning and carrying it out, and then reflect on their learning and progress. [Youth Scotland Website](#)

with the design of the survey and provided iPads to help the young researchers administer the survey.

### *Planning and Administration*

Working with Big Noise staff, the young people identified suitable times and spaces to meet participants, explain the purpose of the research, and enable them to complete the survey.

Two young people from **Big Noise Torry** took the lead in designing and running the survey during:

- the **Big Noise Torry Holiday Club (July 2025)**, and
- **after-school sessions (September 2025)**.

This gave them opportunities to engage directly with their peers and apply the skills developed through the project.

### *Developing Survey Questions*

The young researchers asked participants to reflect on the difference Big Noise had made in their lives. They selected seven statements covering aspects they felt were important for any young person. Respondents were asked to indicate how strongly they agreed that Big Noise had helped them with:

- feeling more confident talking to other people
- getting better at listening
- improving how they work with others
- feeling more able to speak in groups
- feeling supported to be themselves
- finding it easier to speak to new people
- expressing their feelings

These questions reflected the young researchers' own understanding of what matters most in their day-to-day lives. Demographic information was also collected by grouping participants into broad age categories, showing whether they were younger primary pupils, older primary pupils, lower-secondary, or senior-secondary age.

The results from the peer-led survey in Big Noise Torry are detailed in the Results Appendix.

## Appendix 2b: Teacher & Nursery School Survey (2025)

We conducted an online survey of teachers and nursery staff across all Big Noise partner schools and nurseries in June and September 2025. The purpose was to capture teaching staff perceptions of the Big Noise programme's impact on schools, classes, individual children and their own practice. The results were fed into the broader findings of the research, particularly focussing on the perceptions of impact from recipients of the In-school programme, and for those children attending the After-school programme.

### Survey Content

The Microsoft Form survey was developed in consultation with Big Noise staff. It incorporated questions exploring quality-assurance priorities for delivery as well as impacts. The survey was designed to be brief to respect teachers' workloads and encourage participation. The combination of multiple-choice items, Likert-scale ratings, and open-ended questions enabled both quantifiable measures of impact and richer qualitative insights. The survey covered the following components:

1. **Respondent Information:** Staff role, school or nursery, year groups taught, and level of involvement with the Big Noise programme.
2. **Leadership Team Impact Ratings:** Senior staff assessed the programme's overall impact on areas such as musical provision, skill development, academic progress, behaviour, relationships, wellbeing, and attendance.
3. **Class-Level Impact:** Teachers rated the programme's influence on classes receiving in-school delivery, including pupil engagement, personal achievement, teamwork, and general support.
4. **Impact on Teaching Practice:** Teachers reflected on effects on their own practice, including curriculum enrichment, alternative teaching approaches, collaboration with Big Noise staff, and support for individual learners.
5. **Impact on Individual Participants:** Teachers evaluated changes observed in children attending the after-school programme, focusing on emotional wellbeing, social and life skills, and family support.
6. **Open-Ended Feedback:** Respondents provided highlights, areas for improvement, and priorities for the coming year.

### Survey Distribution

The MS Form survey was distributed through existing Big Noise mailing lists. Senior staff at each centre contacted Headteachers or Managers to introduce the survey and request its circulation to all staff involved in in-school delivery or supporting learners in

the After-school programme. Senior leadership team staff (SLT) were asked to complete a shorter, tailored version capturing their perceptions of whole-school impact.

June was selected for survey distribution as it allowed teaching staff to reflect on the full academic year and assess the impact of Big Noise delivery. Staff were also encouraged to complete the survey during in-school Big Noise sessions, where time and space were available and a Big Noise staff member could provide support if needed.

## Managing the Response

Response rates were monitored throughout the collection period, with verbal and email reminders issued to senior teaching and nursery staff until the end of the academic year, and the beginning of the October break. This provided a two-to-three-week timescale for completion for the Nurseries and Schools. The initial distribution generated forty responses across all Big Noise centres. In agreement with the Big Noise Leadership Team, the survey was redistributed in September 2025 to increase the number of responses. The survey closed at the local school October holiday break. Using the same distribution approach, the survey received a further twenty-eight responses. In total, sixty-eight responses were received.

An estimated response rate was calculated using the base number of young people participating in in-school and nursery Big Noise sessions (3,300) and an assumed average class size of 27. Approximately 122 teaching staff attend Big Noise each week alongside their classes. Of these, 51 completed the survey, representing a 42% response rate across all frontline teaching staff. This reflects a strong and appropriate level of representation for the purposes of this survey.

## Data Collection

Microsoft Forms automatically generated anonymised, summarised results, providing only respondents' school or nursery and staff role. No personal or sensitive data were collected and the excel reports were stored within the Researcher's secure system files.

## Data Analysis

The survey produced a combination of quantitative and qualitative data through Likert-scale ratings, multiple-choice items and open-ended responses. Quantitative responses were exported from Microsoft Forms into Excel for further analysis. A manual review was carried out alongside use of the AI Co-pilot tool, which supported the identification and grouping of themes and the production of initial summary outputs. All AI-generated material was then checked for accuracy and sense-checked by the researcher. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise patterns in the Likert-scale

responses, including frequency counts and the distribution of responses across the three impact levels (Not at all, Somewhat, Significant impact). Multiple-choice data were analysed by calculating the proportion of staff selecting each option, allowing percentage totals to be produced for each response category.

Qualitative data from open-ended questions were reviewed and coded thematically. Responses were grouped into recurring themes relating to the perceived impact of the programme, areas of strength, and suggestions for improvement. Themes were analysed across staff roles and settings (Nursery, Primary or Secondary schools) to identify shared perspectives and notable differences.

All data were anonymised before analysis, with only respondents' school or nursery and staff role retained. Findings from quantitative and qualitative strands were then integrated to provide a rounded understanding of staff perceptions of the Big Noise programme.

An overview report summarising the survey results was shared with Big Noise staff and the Leadership Team. Individual centre-level reports were also issued to each Head of Centre to support local reflection and planning.

The results from the Teacher & Nursery staff surveys are detailed in the Results Appendix.

## Appendix 2c: Big Noise Staff Survey “Just a Minute” Series

Big Noise staff and volunteers are a vital source of insight. Front-line teams work with young participants every day, responding to their needs and shaping their experiences. They plan and deliver in-school and after-school programmes, support families and communities, collaborate with partners, and organise performances, events and trips. Each staff member brings deep knowledge of how the programme works in practice, its strengths, challenges and potential. Their views and experiences were essential to this research, helping highlight impact, working realities and opportunities still to be explored.

### Survey Design

As of June 2025, Big Noise employed **179 staff members** and worked with **48 volunteers**, giving a total workforce of **227 people**. An online survey approach was selected as an efficient and accessible way to gather perspectives from staff across all six Big Noise centres. Given the fast-paced and varied nature of staff schedules, the survey was intentionally designed to be short and easy to complete, while still offering opportunities for respondents to add additional reflections, experiences, or comments.

Because there were several key areas requiring exploration, a **series of themed surveys was developed**. This approach enabled staff to focus on one topic at a time and to engage meaningfully within a manageable timeframe, supporting higher-quality responses without adding unnecessary pressure to their workload.

Across the five surveys, a mixed-methods approach was used. Each survey combined quantitative closed-response items, such as Likert scale questions, with qualitative free-text questions to allow respondents to elaborate on their views and provide context-rich insight.

Three demographic questions were included consistently in each survey to support cross-survey comparison and interpretation:

- **Workplace location** (Big Noise centre)
- **Role within the organisation**
- **Length of time working with Big Noise**

These items enabled analysis by centre, staff grouping, and level of organisational experience.

**Table 1** shows the five survey questions we asked. Looking at all the surveys together gives us a clear picture of what staff think across the Big Noise centres, including how the programme runs, how staff build relationships with participants, what difference they feel the work makes, how well things are organised, and how included people feel.

It also provides us with an insight into what else could be done to increase participation, reduce barriers and increase impact of the Big Noise programme

*Table 1: Questions asked in surveys*

Theme of Survey	Questions asked
Overview of the Big Noise programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Perceptions of balance between holistic and musical outcomes</li> <li>– Views on whether the programme meets participant needs</li> <li>– Perceptions of each centre’s alignment with its local community</li> <li>– Open-ended reflections on what more Big Noise could do to support participants</li> </ul>
Participant Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Views on how well the programme supports positive relationships between staff and participants</li> <li>– Challenges faced in developing positive relationships</li> <li>– Overcoming challenges</li> <li>– Further opportunities to build positive relationships</li> </ul>
Making a Difference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Sharing an example of making a difference</li> <li>– Thoughts on how Big Noise could increase it’s impact on current participants</li> <li>– Thoughts on how Big Noise could increase impact in the wider community</li> </ul>
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Thoughts on adequacy of resources (space, funding, time, skills etc.) to deliver the programme well</li> <li>– Thoughts on what could improve delivery</li> <li>– Views on how successfully Big Noise incorporate feedback from participants to enhance delivery</li> <li>– Identification of aspects of the programme which do not enhance the impacts of Big Noise</li> </ul>
Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Identification of barriers for families signing up their children for the Big Noise programme</li> <li>– Thoughts on how to reduce these barriers</li> <li>– Thoughts on how to encourage retention within the Big Noise programme</li> <li>– Thoughts on how Big Noise could be more inclusive</li> </ul>

## Survey Completion

The *Just a Minute Series* was launched in May 2025. The surveys were administered online and distributed to all staff and volunteers across Big Noise centres. They were

voluntary, anonymous, and designed to be quick to complete to encourage engagement. Senior staff were encouraged to prompt staff to submit a response and any questions around completion were directed to the Researcher.

The five surveys were conducted over three months (avoiding Shutdown in July). There was a total of 238 Staff & Volunteers. (May 2025)

- **Overview Survey (May)** – 89 responses (37% of total staff)
- **Participant Relationships Survey (May)** – 64 responses (27% of total staff)
- **Making a Difference Survey (June)** – 42 responses (18% of total staff)
- **Effectiveness Survey (June)** – 62 responses (26% of total staff)
- **Inclusion Survey (August)** – 45 responses (19% of total staff)

All Big Noise sites were represented across the survey set, including perspectives from the Central Team, frontline musicians, support workers, volunteers, and senior staff.

The results from the Just a Minute staff surveys are in Results Appendix 4.

## Appendix 2d: Little Noise Survey

The *Little Noise* programme is an early-years music initiative that brings parents, carers, and young children together with musicians to explore music in a playful, welcoming environment. Sessions offer opportunities for children to engage with live instruments, movement, singing, and sensory activities. Free snacks, coffee and tea are provided to support relaxed socialising across the attendees. It's open and free to anybody within the local community.

### *Evaluation Approach*

The evaluation of the *Little Noise* programme used a structured, in-person survey approach to gather qualitative feedback from parents and carers attending the sessions.

Before the session, participants had been informed that an evaluation would be taking place and that they might be asked to share their views. This ensured transparency and allowed attendees to decide in advance whether they wished to contribute.

Researchers visited four scheduled *Little Noise* sessions and invited attendees to take part in a short, conversational interview based on the survey questions, which the researcher recorded on the form. Alternatively, participants were offered pens and paper copies of the form so they could complete it independently and at their own pace during the session.

### *Where Surveys were carried out*

Surveys were carried out during sessions held in Raploch, Govanhill, Wester Hailes and Douglas. Fallin does not currently host *Little Noise* or *Baby Noise* sessions, and researchers were unable to attend a *Little Noise* session in Torry.

### *Participant Information and Introduction*

At the start of each interaction, the evaluator explained the purpose of the wider independent evaluation of all Big Noise programmes, outlining that the aim was to better understand the impact of *Little Noise* on both the child and the accompanying adult. Attendees were told that their feedback would contribute to the final evaluation report.

### *Informed Consent Procedure*

Participants were asked to complete a written consent form before answering any questions. The consent form covered:

- Understanding of the research purpose
- Permission to use their first name, or the option to remain anonymous via a pseudonym
- Consent for their comments to be used in reporting

- Confirmation that they were satisfied with how their words were captured
- Space for signatures and parent/guardian approval where appropriate

Participants were also given the opportunity to review and amend the notes taken to ensure accuracy and comfort with how their words were recorded.

### *Data Collection Approach*

Interviews followed a semi-structured format using the survey prompts in the form. This allowed for consistency while giving participants the freedom to elaborate. These questions were designed to explore participant experiences, perceived outcomes for children and adults, and opportunities to strengthen the programme. The questions explored:

- Duration of attendance at *Little Noise*
- How participants first heard about the programme
- Whether they live in the local area
- Benefits their child gains from attending
- Benefits they personally gain
- Any negative aspects of the sessions
- Suggested improvements to *Little Noise*
- Ways the programme could better support them
- Any additional comments they wished to share

### *Ethical Considerations*

Participation was fully voluntary, with the ability to opt out at any time. No responses were collected without signed consent. The option for anonymity protected participants' privacy, and checking notes with participants ensured the respectful and accurate representation of their views.

### *Response*

There were 27 responses in total from across the Big Noise sites; Raploch (6), Govanhill (7), Wester Hailes (7) and Douglas (6).

### *Analysis*

Responses were collated in MS Excel and analysed thematically to identify patterns in participant experiences, perceived benefits, opportunities for improvement, and any concerns or barriers raised. These themes informed the evaluation findings and provided a grounded understanding of *Little Noise*'s impact on families. The findings from each centre were reported back to local senior staff for review.

The results from the Little Noise Survey are in Results Appendix 2d.

## Appendix 3 Case Studies

### Purpose and Overview

Sixteen case studies were developed between September and December 2025 to capture detailed, first-hand accounts of young people's experiences of the Big Noise after-school programme. These case studies were designed to complement the systems mapping work by providing narrative evidence of personal journeys, perceived impacts and the pathways through which change occurred.

### Identification and Recruitment of Participants

Participants were identified in collaboration with Big Noise staff from across all Big Noise sites, who were asked in advance to suggest young people and families willing and able to share their experiences. This approach ensured a diverse range of ages, engagement levels and participant backgrounds across the case study set. **Table 1** below provides a distribution of the case studies by Big Noise site.

Table 1: Number of Case Studies by Big Noise site

<b>Big Noise Site</b>	<b>Number of Case Studies</b>
Raploch	3 (plus 2 Leavers & 2 Volunteers)
Govanhill	2
Wester Hailes	1
Torry	2
Douglas	2 (1 community member)
Fallin	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>

For individuals **under the age of 16**, written consent was obtained from a **key adult or primary contact** before any interviews took place. Young people also provided their own assent to participate. Where relevant, parents and carers were invited and some chose to attend.

### How we did it

#### Interview Arrangements

- All interviews were conducted by Aileen Campbell and/or Claire Shortt (Big Noise, Evaluation & Monitoring Officer)
- Interview times and locations were agreed in advance with families and Big Noise staff.
- The majority took place during the Big Noise after-school programme, offering a familiar and comfortable environment.

- Interviews typically lasted around one hour.
- The tone was intentionally relaxed to encourage openness and comfort.
- Parents and carers were welcome to contribute during the discussions, and their insights were recorded and used to inform both the Systems Mapping process and the wider evaluation report.
- With consent, interviews were **audio-recorded**, and notes were taken during the conversation.
- The process for giving **final consent** was explained to all participants, including how their case study might be published. Participants were informed that if final consent was not provided, their story would remain fully anonymised and used only in a confidential way within the evaluation, without any identifying details.

#### What we asked

A semi-structured interview guide was used to ensure consistency across all 16 case studies while allowing participants to speak freely in their own words. The guide covered four main areas of enquiry.

#### **1. Background and Early Experiences**

Participants were first asked about themselves, such as age, family context, school stage and how long they had been attending Big Noise. Questions also explored how they first became involved, their early impressions of sessions, and their experiences choosing and learning their instrument.

#### **2. Personal Reflections on Participation**

The young people were encouraged to describe what they enjoyed most about Big Noise, what motivated them to attend, and whether anything had felt challenging at the beginning. This included prompts about ease of access, worries about attending and changes in their engagement over time.

#### **3. Themed Exploration of Impacts**

A key question, “*What is the best thing Big Noise has done for you?*” guided the interview toward one or more of four themed impact areas. Each theme had further prompts to help participants reflect in depth:

- **Musical Development:**  
Learning skills, performing, overcoming challenges, feeling proud of progress and using musical skills beyond Big Noise.

- **Emotional Wellbeing:**  
Confidence, resilience, coping with stress, enjoyment, pride, calmness, mental health and how Big Noise supports them on difficult days.
- **Social Networks and Belonging:**  
Friendships, relationships with staff, feeling part of a community, teamwork, trust, support and confidence interacting with others.
- **Positive School Pathways:**  
Focus, aspirations, motivation, future plans, employability-related skills, and connections to other organisations or opportunities.

#### **4. Closing Reflections**

Interviews ended with open questions about anything else Big Noise had changed for them, any negatives or improvements they wished to mention, and final reflections on what music and Big Noise mean in their lives.

#### Case Study Development

Following each interview:

- Audio recordings and notes were reviewed
- A narrative case study was drafted, reflecting the participant’s voice and experiences as accurately as possible
- The written case study was sent to the participant or their parent/carer by **email** for review.

Participants were asked to:

- Request any edits to wording or detail
- Provide final signed consent for the case study to be published as part of the systems mapping outputs
- Confirm whether they wished their story to be anonymous
- Indicate whether they wished their name or photograph to be used.

This review process ensured accuracy, transparency and participant agency.

#### **Outputs and Use of Data**

Thirteen of the sixteen case studies were completed with final consent. The outstanding three case studies were fully anonymised or names were changed. These were then:

- **Summarised** for integration into the systems mapping analysis.

- Used to illustrate key pathways of change identified in the maps.
- Drawn on for **quotes** within the evaluation report to highlight lived experience and support thematic findings.

The case studies provided rich contextual insight and strengthened the understanding of how Big Noise influences emotional, social, musical and educational outcomes over time. Eight case studies were incorporated into the Systems Maps, two within each Systems map layer. This enhanced the maps by adding real people's stories, making the findings easier to understand and more relatable. It helped show not just what the impacts are, but how they actually play out in young people's lives over time.

A library of all sixteen full case studies are provided in the Results Appendix 3.

## Appendix 4: Participatory Systems Mapping

This element of the Big Noise evaluation used a technique called participatory systems mapping to explore how the Big Noise programme creates its impacts on participants. The work was led by Dr Lisa Garnham at the University of Strathclyde, in partnership with Big Noise's independent evaluator Aileen Campbell (Audit Scotland) and Big Noise staff Ianne Currie and Hannah Langdon. The research received ethical approval from the Department of Social Work and Social Policy Ethics Committee at the University of Strathclyde.

The work was designed to address a recognised gap in how Big Noise has been evaluated in the past. A previous evaluation carried out by the Glasgow Centre for Population Health between 2013 and 2015 produced detailed findings on how the programme works, but the resulting report was long and difficult to access for most audiences, including Big Noise staff themselves. The visual diagrams of programme pathways included in that report were not designed for general audiences, and could not be updated as the programme evolved. That evaluation also had limited direct involvement from programme participants and their families, primarily due to the young age of programme participants at that time. The current work sought to address all of these issues: to take a more participatory approach, and to produce a 'living' digital output that is engaging, accessible, and can be updated with new evidence over time.

### **What is Participatory Systems Mapping?**

Many social programmes like Big Noise work in ways that are complex and difficult to capture using traditional evaluation methods. Rather than following a simple, straight line from "we did X and therefore Y happened," programmes like Big Noise work through a web of interconnected relationships, influences, and feedback loops. Systems mapping is a way of making that web visible.

A systems map is a diagram that shows the different factors involved in a situation, for example, a young person's sense of belonging, their confidence, or their relationships with adults, and draws arrows to show how those factors influence one another. It can help answer the question: "How does this programme actually work?" rather than just "Does it work?".

What makes this approach *participatory* is that the map is not created by researchers working in isolation. Instead, it is built collaboratively with the people who have direct experience of the programme, in this case, staff, volunteers, young people, and families. This means the resulting map reflects the perspectives of those who know the programme best, grounding the findings in lived experience rather than theory alone (Keane et al., 2023; Barbrook-Johnson & Penn, 2022). The methodology used in this evaluation draws on the approach developed by CECAN (the Centre for the Evaluation of Complexity Across the Nexus), who are recognised leaders in this field.

## **Scale and Scope**

Workshops were planned across the four most well established Big Noise sites: Raploch and in Stirling, Govanhill in Glasgow, Torry in Aberdeen, and Douglas in Dundee. A total of eight workshops (two per site) took place in the local secondary schools and community centres where the Big Noise programme is delivered. Three groups of people were involved across these workshops: Big Noise staff and volunteers; young people currently participating in the programme (aged 16–19); and adult programme participants, community leaders, and family members of younger participants.

The design of the workshops reflected the different roles and perspectives of these groups, and also the ages of participants. The three sites with significant numbers of secondary school-aged participants (Raploch, Govanhill, and Torry) held workshops with staff and with young people. The remaining fourth site (Douglas) held workshops with staff and with adult participants and families. Workshops took place in May, June, and July 2025.

## **The Process Followed in This Evaluation**

### **Stage 1: Staff and Volunteers Workshops (2.5 hours)**

The first workshop at each site was held with Big Noise staff and volunteers, with between 8 and 13 participants per workshop. Staff were invited by their Centre manager via email, and participation was optional. Up to four researchers and facilitators from the research team were also present.

Each session began with a welcome and an introduction to systems mapping, which explained what it is, what it is used for, and what the workshop would involve. Participants were shown photographs of maps in progress from earlier work and a mock-up of what a finished interactive digital map might look like. They were given the opportunity to ask questions before the main activity began.

Working in pairs of their choosing, participants identified all of the impacts of the Big Noise programme that they could think of, drawing on their own experience and knowledge of others. Each impact was written on a large post-it note. The prompt was deliberately broad: participants were encouraged to think as widely as possible. Pairs then joined together into small groups of around four to six people to consolidate their lists, combining overlapping factors, agreeing on definitions, and adding any new ones that arose from group discussion. A facilitator from the research team supported each group, and these discussions were audio recorded.

In the second half of the workshop, the same small groups arranged their factors on large sheets of blank paper and drew arrows between them to show cause-and-effect relationships. Working through their post-it notes, they built them into a hand-drawn

systems map, tracing pathways back to specific programme activities. These discussions were also audio recorded, and photographs were taken of the completed maps (but not of participants).

### **Stage 2: Creating Digital Maps**

Following each staff workshop, the research team worked from the audio recordings and photographs of the hand-drawn maps to produce a digital version, combining the maps produced by different groups into a single digital map. The digital maps were created using the Layered Mapper webtool, previously developed as part of the SIPHER research project at the University of Strathclyde.

### **Stage 3a: Young People's Workshops (1.5 hours, Raploch, Govanhill, Torry)**

The workshops for young people (aged 16–19) followed a different format. Rather than starting from scratch, young people were shown the digital systems map already created from the staff workshop at their site and were invited to review and critique it. This approach reflected both the capabilities and preferences of young people as participants, and the value of building directly on the staff perspective.

These workshops took place during participants' usual weekly Youth Voice sessions at the Big Noise afterschool programme, with between 7 and 11 young people attending each. Snacks and drinks were provided.

After an introduction to the research and the map, participants worked in pairs or small groups of two or three, to explore printed versions of the interactive digital map created by staff. Participants then moved into facilitated groups of four to six to discuss three questions: what is *most important* to you on the staff map, what was *missing* from the staff map (impacts or pathways that young people felt had not been captured), and what *didn't look right* i.e. aspects they felt were inaccurate or needed to change. Participants annotated a printed copy of the map in pen during these discussions, or a member of the research team did this on their behalf, if they preferred not to.

Their discussions were audio recorded and transcribed. Following the workshop, the edits identified by young people were incorporated into the digital map by the research team.

### **Stage 3b: Adult Participants and Families Workshops (1.5 hours, Douglas)**

As a relatively new site at the time of this evaluation, Douglas did not have large numbers of secondary school-aged participants. As a result, a separate workshop was held for adult programme participants, community leaders, and family members of younger participants. Between 14 people attended this workshop, recruited through an existing mailing list of local adults already engaged with the programme. An online poll was used to find a suitable time, following existing practice for bringing local adults

together through the programme. Participants received a £25 voucher in recognition of their contribution.

The format closely mirrored the staff workshop outlined in Stage 2: participants were introduced to systems mapping, then worked in pairs to identify key factors, before consolidating and creating causal pathway maps in small groups. Discussions were audio recorded and photographs taken of the maps. Following the workshop, the maps created by staff and by adult participants were compared to identify areas of similarity and difference, and combined.

#### **Stage 4: Simplifying the Map**

Stages 1-3 resulted in an extremely complex map with almost 80 nodes and hundreds of connections. This needed to be simplified to create a readable and digestible final output. First, the many impacts identified by participants were sorted into four overarching themes. These were identified by analysing the workshop transcripts, maps and evidence gathered in the wider evaluation. These themes were: musical skill development, emotional wellbeing, social networks and post-school pathways.

Next, evidence from across the wider evaluation was compiled to each and every node identified by participants. Nodes that had very little underlying evidence were removed. This results in a reduction of nodes from 78 to 62.

Lastly, the connectors between nodes were significantly reduced in number, to focus only on those for which strong evidence has been identified in either the participatory mapping workshops or the wider evaluation. This allowed map 'readers' to identify clear feedback loops and pathways through the map.

#### **Stage 5: Embedding Evidence**

The final digital map was then enriched with evidence from the wider evaluation. Where audio recordings from the workshops contained quotes that the research team wished to include on the digital map, participants were contacted individually for their explicit consent before any quote was used. Staff and adult participants were contacted using the contact details provided on their consent forms; young people were contacted via their Big Noise key worker, who supported them in making their decision.

**Results Appendix 4a** outlines how the evidence base was analysed and incorporated into the summary report and the interactive layered systems map. Evidence was compiled for every one of the 62 nodes contained in the final map and is outlined in the **Results Appendix 4b**. For each node, the following was drafted and compiled:

- A succinct, plain language description of the impact itself, based on participants' initial descriptions in workshop discussions.

- An illustrative quote from participants in either the participatory mapping workshops or wider evaluation data collection.
- Quantitative data gathered as part of the wider evaluation
- The primary delivery principle(s) that underlie the node.
- Any opportunities for future development or enhancement of impact identified as part of the wider evaluation.

As well as data for each node, eight case studies were also embedded within the map. This involved identifying case studies that demonstrated specific pathways to impact that had been identified as core to the programme. For each of these case studies, the research team identified quotes from case study participants that illustrated how the programme had generated impacts on the given pathway. These participant quotes were then embedded in the connectors between nodes on the interactive map. This was designed to allow map 'readers' to follow case study participants journeys around the map, to explore long-chain pathways to impact of the programme.

### **Ethics and Consent**

All participants received a written information sheet and were asked to sign a consent form before taking part. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were free to leave the workshop at any time without giving a reason and without any impact on their involvement with Big Noise or their employment. Because the maps were produced collaboratively, it was not always possible to identify and remove individual contributions after the workshop; however, participants were clearly informed of this in advance. Any direct quotes attributed to a named participant on the digital map could be withdrawn at any point simply by contacting the research team.

Young people took part with their own consent; given the age range of participants (16–19) and the fact that they were supported throughout by familiar Big Noise staff, parental or guardian consent was not sought.

Audio recordings were stored on password-protected devices and transferred to the University of Strathclyde's secure servers following each workshop, accessible only to the named research team. Consent forms containing personal details were stored in a locked filing cabinet in a secure area of the university. All participants were anonymised in research outputs unless they gave explicit consent for a named contribution. Data will be retained for a minimum of five years from the completion of the study, after which it will be securely destroyed.

### **References**

Barbrook-Johnson, P. & Penn, A.S. (2022). *Systems Mapping: How to Build and Use Causal Models of Systems*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-01919-7>

Keane, L., Xu, R., Corrie, C., et al. (2023). Using participatory causal loop diagramming to understand complexity in health and social care: a scoping review. *SSM – Qualitative Research in Health*, 3, 100226. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmqr.2023.100226>