

PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE SOCIAL REGENERATION AND INTERVENTIONS: LEARNING FROM SISTEMA SCOTLAND

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KEY POINTS

- Regeneration has a pivotal role to play in improving population health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities, however challenges remain in evidencing its impact on health.
- Social interventions and the social aspects of regeneration are afforded less priority compared with physical and economic regeneration, and by their nature are significantly more complex to evaluate.
- A balanced mix of physical, economic and social regeneration is most likely to enhance health and wellbeing.
- There is a lack of consensus as to best practice in the delivery of social regeneration and interventions.
- Based on the evaluation of Sistema Scotland's Big Noise programme, this paper proposes and discusses seven principles for effective social interventions and social regeneration.
- The strength of Sistema Scotland's approaches appear to lie in the application of all seven principles concurrently, within the Big Noise programme.
- Practitioners, communities and citizens involved in social interventions and social regeneration should consider the application of all seven principles but may be constrained by resource and time and/or limited by the specific context and remit of the intervention or programme.
- The principles emphasise the quality and duration of relationship between regeneration agent and participant; Sistema Scotland's vision could be described as 'people change lives' not services or programmes or necessarily even music.
- These principles are proposed in order to support discussion concerning the strategic and operational delivery of social regeneration and interventions within Scotland and beyond.

INTRODUCTION

Improving outcomes for disadvantaged communities and providing fairer opportunities will require more than a continuation of established approaches alone. A range of services, organisations and interventions have made sustained, collective contributions to overall improvements to health and living conditions in Scotland. However the rate of these improvements has not been equitable; with disadvantaged communities facing a range of seemingly intractable poor social, economic, health and environmental markers compared with the rest of Scottish society¹. To address this inequality it is vital to expand the ‘solution space’; or the range of activities, innovations, resources and perspectives brought to the pursuit of positive outcomes. Organisations such as Sistema Scotland offer unique contributions and fresh insights as to the types of community-based approaches required to address inequalities and transform lives.

Sistema Scotland is a charity “on a mission to transform lives through music”². Through its Big Noise programme Sistema Scotland believes that children from disadvantaged backgrounds can gain significant social and life skills by playing in a symphony orchestra. Based on the Venezuelan *El Sistema* model³, Sistema Scotland uses music-making to foster wellbeing, confidence, pride and aspiration among the children and young people taking part.

Since 2013 the Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH) has been evaluating Sistema Scotland’s Big Noise programme. The evaluation makes clear that Sistema Scotland’s approach offers important learning as to the processes involved in the delivery of effective social interventions. This is an essential area of learning due to the lack of priority afforded to social interventions in comparison with physical (housing, environmental and infrastructure) and economic regeneration (jobs and investment). The lower status of social interventions is well reported in the grey literature⁴ and in regeneration studies in the UK⁵ and beyond⁶. Consequently, there remains a lack of consensus as to how best to deliver social interventions.

PURPOSE AND AIMS

The GCPH published the initial findings of the Sistema Scotland evaluation in June 2015⁷. The evaluation endorses the Big Noise delivery processes and finds that the programme is positively impacting on participants' wellbeing, confidence and aspiration with positive indications of improving health and wellbeing in the longer-term. The June 2015 report describes seven Big Noise delivery themes. These themes were developed in such a way as to be broad and potentially applicable in a variety of contexts. The purpose of this paper is to support the translation and possible application of these learning themes. It describes the themes as principles for effective social intervention. In doing so the principles are discussed and synthesised with wider social intervention, regeneration and related evidence.

Before the principles are considered, definitions of both *social interventions* and *social regeneration* are offered, with the benefits to individuals and society then explored. Next, evidence concerning regeneration, health and inequalities is reviewed, synthesised and summarised. This frames four key challenges facing social interventions and regeneration in relation to optimising the impact of regeneration on health.

The aim of this paper is to inform the development of policy which recognises the importance of social interventions, their potential benefits and the key decisions which must be made concerning their role within regeneration and in wider society. This paper is also designed to support community and delivery organisations involved in social interventions and implementation. Not all themes presented are applicable in all contexts; many delivery organisations may indeed already be implementing some of the principles. This paper discusses and describes the potential impacts of all principles and the strength of the principles collectively.

APPROACH AND METHODS

The principles presented in this paper are based on learning from the evaluation of Sistema Scotland's Big Noise programmes in Raploch, Stirling and in Govanhill, Glasgow. Primarily qualitative methods were deployed to gather different forms of evidence and engage a range of perspectives in elucidating Big Noise programme delivery. The evidence concerning how Sistema Scotland operates and how Big Noise is delivered was analysed, organised and summarised into seven themes. The themes emerged from the data collected. These themes are described in this paper in broader terms than those of the June 2015 GCPH report; this is in order to make them more applicable to a range of readers, interventions and settings.

The evaluation methods used are summarised in an appendix available on the GCPH website. A more detailed account of these methods is available alongside the Sistema Scotland evaluation report⁷, as is the overall planned [evaluation framework](#) which articulates the longer term vision and methods for the evaluation⁸.

BACKGROUND

Defining social interventions and social regeneration

Definitions of social interventions vary across the literature reviewed^{9,10}. The term ‘*social intervention*’ generally refers to community-based activities designed for people and aimed at addressing damaging social behaviours, reducing social exclusion, improving social cohesion, learning new skills, enhancing employability and generally promoting positive life chances within prioritised disadvantaged areas and communities. Social interventions can take many forms and are often closely aligned with specific community contexts; such as the community’s cultural identity and heritage or the use of specific community buildings or assets.

‘*Social regeneration*’ refers to social interventions and approaches which are typically embedded alongside physical and economic dimensions of a ‘*holistic*’ regeneration strategy; where an overarching vision for the community or area and co-ordinates all three aspects of regeneration (social, physical and economic)¹¹. Social regeneration appears to be an inherently less tangible process and one that is harder to articulate than either physical or economic regeneration. Throughout the literature reviewed social interventions and regeneration tend to be focused on:

- health and wellbeing
- education and skills development
- specific community contexts, facilities or greenspace
- arts and culture
- family, parenting and child wellbeing.

Despite the absence of a clear definition, there is a degree of convergence within the literature about the distinctive individual and wider societal benefits of social interventions and social regeneration:

- The **benefits to the individual** of effective social interventions and regeneration are based on the personal growth and wider opportunities made available through human interaction and relationships fostered in a safe, friendly environment. These fostered relationships encourage expression of self, creativity and individuality through the arts or other positive pursuits¹². Engagement in such activities can divert participants from damaging behaviours and enhance their skills and confidence, building the foundation for a more fulfilling role in society¹³.
- The **societal benefit** of effective social interventions and regeneration is multidimensional. A central characteristic however is the role that effective social regeneration can play in tackling social exclusion within communities and

addressing damaging social habits which impact on others as well as the individual¹⁴. Effective social regeneration can enable participants to take part in and contribute to community life and wider society in a fuller, more meaningful and more collectively beneficial manner. Effective social regeneration has been shown to increase employability and employment rates, and reduce criminality¹⁵.

Regeneration, health and inequalities

Regeneration has a pivotal role to play in improving population health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities¹⁶. In its broadest sense regeneration involves the public, private, voluntary and community sectors working together to improve the quality of community life for all¹⁷. Recent regeneration strategies have a strong focus on tackling inequalities; primarily aiming to improve life and conditions within disadvantaged communities.

Regeneration can take many forms; most recent strategies echo the employability thrust of the New Labour government's (1997-2010) poverty eradication agenda, which articulated the economic and societal benefits of addressing social exclusion at a community level¹⁸. In recent years this focus has been translated into area-based regeneration strategies targeting disadvantaged communities¹⁹ where community engagement and social inclusion techniques have dovetailed with economic and physical regeneration approaches¹⁸. Place and 'placemaking' have continued this area-based focus within recent regeneration policy recognising the evidenced interactions between the physical environment, crime, stigma, social cohesion and health²⁰.

The relationship between area-based regeneration and its impacts on the health and wellbeing of residents is methodologically difficult to establish and quantify²¹. Scrutiny of this relationship is not new, but it could be argued that the links between regeneration and health have not been articulated well in either a policy or a research context²². Until recently, it could be argued that health and wellbeing has not been seen as a central aim or objective of regeneration but rather as an emergent quality of effective regeneration. The complexity of measuring the health benefits of effective regeneration perhaps underlines this view²³. There are methodological issues, primarily attribution complexities: area-based regeneration operates amid many other drivers of health and there is huge variance in its scale and application²⁴. Health impacts at the neighbourhood or individual level are mixed with those of national, devolved and localised policies, variances in regeneration approaches, different susceptibilities to disease and exposure to particular risk factors. It is also questionable whether 'area' is the most appropriate level to assess regeneration progress: evidence suggests successful regeneration enhances social mobility, potentially leading to residents 'moving out and moving on'²⁵.

The way in which regeneration policy is approached is vital – not just the physical implementation. Studies and evaluations which make clear how contextual influences and delivery processes affect regeneration outcomes should be a priority within the field of regeneration research. Within these studies attention also needs to be paid to organisational culture within regeneration agencies, specifically how cultures affect regeneration approaches, implementation and outcomes. The skills and ability of regeneration agencies (and the suitability of organisational culture) to develop localised partnerships which enable empowered, representative community views within regeneration priority setting and decision-making has been questioned²⁶. Indeed where inclusive and authentic community consultation and involvement within regeneration has been achieved it has been shown to lead to greater community satisfaction²⁶ and increased health and wellbeing²⁷. Some, however, have argued that ‘partnership’ and ‘empowerment’ lack substance in their delivery within an inherently top-down approach to regeneration²⁸.

A look at Glasgow’s past underlines the importance of regeneration for the city’s future and the health of Glaswegians, but also flags up important considerations in regeneration implementation. Glasgow has endured several threats to its physical, economic and social infrastructure throughout the 20th century which have proven detrimental to the health of Glaswegians²⁹. De-industrialisation has been a key driver in Glasgow’s worsening life expectancy in comparison with other European cities over the past 50 years^{30,31}. Findings from the GoWell study describe that within Glasgow, far greater resource has been allocated to physical (including housing) and economic regeneration in comparison with the ‘social’ dimensions of regeneration³². This apparent lack of priority afforded to social regeneration has been reported for some time in the grey literature³³ and is widely recognised in peer-reviewed research in this field in the UK³⁴⁻³⁷ and beyond³⁸.

It is also plausible that this lack of priority and investment in social dimensions may have compromised the potential for Glasgow’s regeneration efforts to improve the health of the city’s residents³². This is because, while physical and economic regeneration enhance fundamental living circumstances and requirements which can have positive impacts on health, these forms of regeneration are not designed to address complex socio-behavioural issues which detrimentally influence health within disadvantaged communities; such as damaging social behaviours³⁹ and coping mechanisms⁴⁰, addiction⁴¹, overconsumption and obesity⁴² and social exclusion⁴³.

Reflecting the potential diversity of pathways through which regeneration may impact on health, current Scottish policy landscape calls for a holistic and integrative approach to regeneration⁴⁴. Holistic regeneration affords equal priority to physical, economic and social dimensions. However qualitative findings from GoWell emphasise the substantial challenges relating to the capacity and co-ordination of holistic regeneration implementation across the city⁴⁵.

Key challenges

The intersection of regeneration policy, evidence, implementation and population health is extremely complex. The principles described in the next section allude to the characteristics of effective social interventions and regeneration based on the evaluation of Sistema Scotland. The literature summarised above points to the following continuing challenges in regeneration delivery:

- Overcoming methodological challenges which evidence the contributions of regeneration to health and wellbeing.
- Raising the profile, delivery and practice of social interventions and the social dimensions of holistic regeneration.
- Promoting understanding of the appropriate mix of physical, economic and social regeneration and how this is most likely to enhance health and wellbeing.
- Embedding studies which evidence how contextual influences (*such as community histories, identities, needs and aspirations*) and implementation processes (*including community engagement and consultation in order that citizens can shape regeneration decisions affecting their lives*) can impact on regeneration outcomes.

Principles for effective social regeneration and interventions

Table 1 contains seven principles for effective social interventions, based on the evaluation of Sistema Scotland's Big Noise programme. These principles have been identified as being fundamental to the Sistema model. They are presented here for consideration of their wider applicability to enhance the impacts of other social interventions in the short and longer term. To support the applicability of the principles they are presented alongside complementary wider evidence; the principles are described in broader terms before making reference to their grounding in Big Noise delivery.

Big Noise programmes are considered to be distinct social interventions and are not formally integrated within a local authority regeneration strategy. Not all principles described are applicable in all contexts; this may be especially true for some social regeneration programmes embedded within holistic regeneration, which may be responding to very specific short-term community issues from the outset.

Table 1. Seven principles for effective social regeneration and interventions.

Seven principles for effective social regeneration and interventions
1. Longevity and commitment
2. Developing meaningful relationships
3. Inclusivity and accessibility
4. Intensity and immersion
5. Innovation and flexibility
6. Collective and cooperative learning
7. Excellence, aspiration and inspiration

Principle 1. Longevity and commitment

The size, scale and rate of positive social change are difficult concepts to quantify but it is more likely that sustained positive social impacts will occur when the social regeneration agency, programme or intervention is embedded within the target community for the long term. Ideally social interventions would seek to be a permanent, visible and stable part of community life. The long-term commitment of a high quality and effective intervention is likely to engender trust and recognition as well as a positive reputation with the community. This could potentially enhance intervention take up and related community engagement, especially among socially excluded individuals.

Long-term programmes are more likely to foster a quality relationship between social regeneration agent and participant (discussed in principle 2) and greater programme benefit is likely to be derived from a sustained, meaningful relationship. The support for long-term approaches is echoed in a range of fields not least within psychotherapy where ‘attachment theory’ emphasises the importance of consistent, long-term contact between therapist and patient as the foundation for successful treatments and behavioural change, especially the treatment of children and young people⁴⁶.

Sistema Scotland operates in this way, making a long-term commitment to the communities into which a Big Noise centre is introduced. With this commitment comes weighty responsibility; Sistema Scotland staff describe the pressures of demonstrating impacts in the short term and also pursuing and sustaining funding over the long term.

Scotland's policy landscape endorses long-term approaches to addressing social and health inequalities yet there remain significant barriers to delivering social interventions in a sustained way and to making long-term delivery commitments to prioritised disadvantaged communities. Much of this challenge relates to short-term political and funding timelines; especially funding available to third sector organisations. The challenge remains, therefore, to create the conditions in which long-term, high quality interventions can flourish. This would require strong leadership and new forms of cross-party and cross-organisational dialogue, consultation and support.

Principle 2. Developing meaningful relationships

Social regeneration programmes or interventions should aspire to foster a high quality relationship between programme staff members/volunteers and participants. Ideally individual participants would have a dedicated staff member who would work in a consistent and sustained way with them over the long term. To foster this quality of relationship represents an organisational wide pursuit; key considerations include the skills, abilities and characteristics of staff recruited to the programme design and delivery. The development of a strong and positive relationship is pivotal to the programme having a positive impact on participants. This emphasis on relationships is not new in a range of fields including psychotherapy practice or research, where the 'therapeutic alliance' between therapist and patient is the most robust predictor of treatment success and positive behavioural change⁴⁷.

This theme recurs across the Sistema Scotland evaluation; Big Noise delivery places a clear emphasis on fostering a trusted and encouraging relationship between musician and participant. It is this relationship that is so important to the impact observed. Indeed many of the features of Big Noise delivery are designed to enable this relationship to flourish. Consistent with other social regeneration evidence and narrative, Sistema Scotland's vision could be described as 'people change lives' not services or programmes or necessarily even music. Robinson makes this point in a 2010 compendium of learning after 30 years' experience of social regeneration in East London⁴⁸:

"People change lives. Practical knowledge and resources are necessary to succeed, but it is the 'deep value' qualities of an appropriate relationship that have the power to transform."

At a societal level a challenging set of questions remain as to how this quality of relationship is conceptualised within policy, how it is represented and prioritised within funding criteria and structures and how it is planned for and implemented locally. Prioritising the development of an enduring, trusted and positive relationship between service providers and recipients may also be an uncomfortable concept within some risk-averse organisational cultures, which are generally held to account for delivering outcomes rather than processes.

Principle 3. Inclusivity and accessibility

It is important that social interventions and social regeneration programmes are designed to be inclusive of and accessible to the target population. This involves ensuring there are no immediate barriers to participation such as cost or a required skill. It also involves the programme being able to adapt delivery to maximise take up among marginalised individuals or those with particular access issues such as language or cultural barriers. This requires an innovative and flexible organisational culture and programme delivery (described in principle 5).

The location of delivery is a key consideration here; ideally programmes would be delivered within the heart of the target community, within a recognised and valued community space⁴⁹. For some disadvantaged, socially excluded community members even a short bus journey, for example, to get to the programme location may present too much of a barrier to participation. Financial costs must also be considered; where possible travel costs should be reimbursed by the programme⁵⁰.

Consideration should also be given to the marketing and communication of the intervention or programme, with attention being paid to fostering a positive, encouraging and supportive initial contact and dialogue between the programme and a potential participant. Postal marketing approaches tend to be less successful within disadvantaged areas⁵¹ whereas face-to-face canvassing (between programme staff and community members) within popular community spaces has been cited as significantly enhancing programme take up⁵². It is during this initial face-to-face contact that a positive rapport can be established and any concerns the potential participant may have concerning the programme can be addressed in person. Even if the community member does not engage or the programme is not relevant to their needs or aspirations it is important to leave a positive impression; as they may inform and refer friends or family members to the programme or engage at a later stage.

Sistema Scotland views community and participant engagement as an ongoing priority rather than an initial fixed step in the programme delivery sequence. The objective is to support sustained engagement, fostering a positive and meaningful

relationship between participants and programme staff and volunteers. The profile of Big Noise is raised and maintained within the community through concerts and ad hoc performances. The arts, in this case music, offer a unique contribution to engagement; mini concerts on street corners have been described as ‘arresting’ – so unusual and such a break from the norm that interest and engagement among community members is potentially high. A consideration here in the engagement process is cultural relevance of the art form used, in the case of Big Noise; the 2015 evaluation concludes that classical music appears to be relevant to the majority of community members, at least to some degree. While many members of the general public may not regularly listen to classical music, in many cases it can be recognised and appreciated, when citizens encounter the intervention programme for the first time⁷.

Although sustained participant engagement is a challenge, Big Noise tailors programme delivery to specific participant circumstances and needs, including musical, behavioural and logistical considerations. Principle 5 will address the practicalities of programme flexibility and adaptability in more detail.

Principle 4. Intensity and immersion

One of the most challenging principles presented in this paper relates to the intensity and immersion of the social intervention or programme. Ideally programmes and interventions should be delivered in such a way as to foster regular and authentic engagement and contact with the participant, perhaps even several times a week over a sustained period of time.

The intensity and immersion of programme design helps foster a meaningful, quality relationship between programme worker and community member (described in principle 2). Intensive and immersive programme design also enables consistent contact which is important within attachment theory, outlined in principle 1. Programme intensity and immersion is also important for participant skills development and sense of achievement; promoting high standards which in turn enhances participant confidence, esteem, life skills and ability to learn⁵³. Social regeneration or interventions should aim for a marked ‘step change’ in these areas for their participants.

The central challenge is in delivering a programme that is attractive and culturally relevant enough among the community to promote this intensive and immersive engagement. An important balance is to ensure that these intensive and immersive programme characteristics and the commitment required to engage with them, are in fact not off-putting for some community members, especially socially-excluded

citizens or those with less predictable daily routines. Ultimately intensive and immersive programmes may represent a barrier to engagement for some. Innovation and flexibility (described in principle 5) then become important in adapting the programme to overcome such a barrier to engagement and in being able to tailor the programme to individual needs, aspirations and readiness to change or engage (discussed in principle 3).

Learning from Big Noise also suggests that the relevance of programmes can be enhanced through extensive working with communities and other service delivery agents well in advance of the programme start date. Within Govanhill – a diverse and transient urban community – Big Noise staff began community engagement six months before the programme began. This enabled a good understanding of cultural issues as well as logistic challenges that might affect programme implementation and participant engagement and retention. For example engagement concerts and performances involved playing Slovakian and Romanian Roma songs to enhance the perceived cultural relevance and to demonstrate a programme recognition and commitment to the socio-cultural heritage of these groups (Govanhill is host to the highest concentration of Roma families in Scotland). Similarly ‘walking lines’, where Big Noise staff and volunteers safely marshal child participants from school to the Big Noise centre and home again, are used to overcome an important logistical challenge identified as influencing sustained participant engagement.

Based on the learning from Sistema Scotland it may be the case that intensive and immersive programme designs are most suited to early years populations where programmes can dovetail with the school day. This promotes an easier transition into programme engagement as it complements the existing daily structure and routine. Sustained engagement with Big Noise is also promoted from multiple sources, where Big Noise musicians and staff, parents and guardians, school teachers, other local groups and clubs and peers encourage continued engagement of the participants. This example from Big Noise highlights a broader point that social interventions should seek links with established services and projects within communities as a means firstly of furthering understanding of the community but also to promote programme referrals and engagement.

Principle 5. Innovation and flexibility

Social interventions and programmes are likely to benefit from being innovative and flexible in their delivery. Primarily this is important to promote and maintain participant engagement; recognising the diversity of challenges to engagement among disadvantaged communities. Innovation should be considered as inventiveness within the programme context; trying new approaches to delivery as and when

required and being flexible with current provision, resources and ways of working. For example it may be that drop-in sessions are more appropriate within the delivery of some social interventions compared with set appointments or scheduled programme delivery times⁵⁴; or that some community members require significant one-to-one programme provision to boost confidence and skills before beginning group work⁵⁵; or that a particular community member requires a taxi to travel home, due to safety fears, after attending the programme in the evening⁵⁶.

Innovative and flexible working requires strong leadership and should be stated as a clear organisational objective and cultural norm from the outset; staff recruited to the programme should be made aware of the need for innovation and flexibility in normal working practice before being appointed. Some forms of innovation and flexibility clearly have resource implications for programmes and must be carefully considered in this regard. Does the flexibility and innovation required to promote programme engagement for a few especially vulnerable or socially excluded participants detract resources or compromise 'normal' provision for the many? Difficult decisions and judgements may need to be made.

Based on learning from Sistema Scotland, what is certain is that innovation and flexibility demand a lot from the programme staff. This often means asking team members 'to go above and beyond' and to perhaps change their work patterns, for example, at short notice. Social interventions operating in this way need to be acutely aware of staff morale and potential 'burnout'⁷.

Principle 6. Collective and cooperative learning

A central feature of effective social regeneration is the potential for personal growth and the acquisition of new skills and experiences. However the process of skill acquisition and the manner of the learning may be important to the overall outcomes of programme engagement. Group learning, where several community members learn together simultaneously, can enhance intellectual functioning and social and emotional skills as well as fostering new social connections within the community⁵⁷. Collective learning and development can be further enhanced if the programme activity involves team working or collective goals and achievements which rely on co-operative and reciprocal relationships being formed and sustained.

Within educational literature, such an approach is termed 'co-operative learning' and is one of the most commonly used educational and teaching approaches. Co-operative learning takes place through an individual's interaction with his or her environment and peers and is largely based on the theory that some of the most effective learning occurs through social contexts. There are several central

elements and benefits within co-operative learning including teamwork, individual accountability, face-to-face positive interaction and appropriate use of collaborative skills⁵⁸. Crucially, in terms of promoting readiness for employment, co-operative learning mirrors the forms of peer interaction and learning which are likely to occur in most places of work⁵⁹.

The evaluation of Sistema Scotland demonstrates how the orchestra provides a strong model for collective and co-operative learning. Only through interdependence, individual accountability, positive interaction and a range of collaborative skills can the orchestra play to a high standard. Importantly the orchestra playing (and sounding) well provides immediate feedback, satisfaction and positive reinforcement of these behaviours among participants. The collective and co-operative learning offered through Big Noise is central to a range of the programme's impact pathways.

The evaluation does however highlight the challenges in delivering such an approach. Sistema Scotland's collective and co-operative programme operates a 'no exclusion' policy, where significant efforts are made to accommodate disruptive participants demonstrating negative behaviours within the learning model. A daily consideration facing Big Noise staff is the balance between accommodating (and hence positively influencing) disruptive participants versus the potentially detrimental influence their behaviour may have on the group overall⁷.

Principle 7. Excellence, aspiration and inspiration

Social regeneration programmes and interventions may benefit from 'excellence' in their delivery and aim to inspire and to raise aspiration among participants. This may be important in enhancing mental health and wellbeing, even in the short term. Indeed based on the Sistema Scotland evaluation, excellence appears to underpin feelings of inspiration and aspiration among participants.

Sistema Scotland pursues excellence at all levels within the organisation and in the delivery of the Big Noise programme. The GCPH evaluation makes a distinction between 'excellence' and 'high quality'. Where high quality may promote engagement and enhance outcomes, excellence does this while inspiring participants and raising aspiration. The inspirational and aspirational qualities of Big Noise are fostered through the musicians; their musical skills, their work ethic, their status as a role model and mentor for participants and their relationship with participants. All of these factors are cited as enhancing participants' mental health and wellbeing across many of the impact pathways described in the full evaluation report⁷.

Despite being used in diverse areas of psychology, until recently most evidence concerning inspiration, in relation to role models, mentorship or otherwise, has remained in an early stage of development⁵⁶. This Sistema evaluation suggests that inspiration is worthy of investigation in models of social regeneration delivery to enhance participants' mental health and wellbeing.

Raising participant aspiration is also important to several Big Noise impact pathways and is described as enhancing self-esteem and expectations in relation to educational attainment, post-school destination and future job prospects. There are also shorter-term benefits – increased aspiration may have protective qualities, having been associated with reduced risk-taking behaviours and antisocial behaviour among adolescents⁶⁰. The role of the arts as a vehicle to establish the positive relationships described, to consistently expose participants to excellence and to engender feelings of inspiration and aspiration is important. What is also paramount is the characteristics and abilities of programme staff. Sistema Scotland pays close attention to staff recruitment ensuring that Big Noise musicians are currently performing and recognised musicians (as well as music teachers), are highly motivated and committed and have strong social values.

DISCUSSION

The principles described in this paper illuminate the types of programme delivery required to embed deep, positive social change within prioritised communities. But what is also clear are the significant challenges involved in delivering them. These challenges range from societal and policy issues concerning long termism and relationship quality to delivery specifics including staff characteristics and resources required to implement inclusive, intensive and innovative programmes. Importantly within flexible, collective and co-operative learning, the balance between tailoring programme design to those of highest need versus the majority of participants is a recurring and important theme.

Through proposing these principles, this paper aims to support the delivery of social regeneration and interventions within Scotland and beyond. By providing definitions of social interventions and social regeneration and a clearer direction concerning the characteristics of interventions and programmes most likely to affect deep social change (within what is a limited, complex and contextually dependent evidence base) we hope that these principles also serve to enhance the strategic and policy status of social regeneration. This in turn may support the conditions where the social elements of holistic regeneration can play a more visible, valued and supported role alongside the established and more quantifiable physical and economic forms of regeneration. In so doing the potential of holistic regeneration to positively impact on health and wellbeing and to address inequalities is likely to be enhanced.

Returning to the idea of expanding the 'solution space', this paper demonstrates the potential of a forward thinking community-based programme to illuminate societal issues; providing fresh insight and learning. Organisations like Sistema Scotland are not presented here as an alternative to public services. Instead, the impacts of social interventions like Big Noise are most likely to be optimised when embedded alongside effective physical and economic regeneration and a range of good public service provision. Collectively, innovation, sustained commitment and more person-centred ways of working are needed.

Context is vitally important to the delivery, and understanding, of social interventions. Nevertheless it is anticipated that the proposed principles in this paper are sufficiently broad as to be relevant and applicable to a range of programmes and settings. Many organisations and approaches display some of these seven principles, however our research suggests that the depth and strength of Sistema Scotland's early impacts are likely to lie in the fact that all seven are present together.

The 2015 GCPH preliminary findings⁷ noted that the inception of Big Noise centres within the communities they serve has not been as a result of 'co-production' – that is, a collaborative consultation, development and delivery with and alongside communities to identify and enhance assets. Rather, the case for Big Noise in each

site has been made by a small group of professionals with a strong vision. What is clear however is that once in place, Big Noise centres begin to utilise and make visible the individual, social and physical assets within an area in a co-productive manner. The principles presented in this paper are based on Sistema Scotland's approach and are not described as an alternative to co-production; rather they are intended to further understanding and application of the operational delivery of community-based social regeneration interventions.

The evaluation of Sistema Scotland demonstrates how the arts can be an effective vehicle through which to strive for excellence and to foster feelings of aspiration and inspiration among participants. However this can only be achieved through a quality programme and having exceptional and highly committed staff; both of which are usually resource intensive.

Social regeneration agencies and interventions would need to invest time and energy to ensure their programmes are delivered according to the principles described. This requires political and local support for long-term interventions, appropriate resource, consistently high motivation and determination among programme staff. Strong leadership, a clear vision and an organisational culture of continuous improvement and reflection are essential.

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