

“Sing-a-Ring” in Aberdeenshire



The difficulties in operating effectively and equitably across the vast area served by Aberdeenshire Council, where communities are often isolated, and resources limited, often encourages innovative partnerships involving a wide range of organisations and individuals. Creative and exciting solutions evolve to meet these challenges. “Sing-a-Ring”, an Early Years Music programme, is the result of just such a partnership initiative.

“Sing-a-Ring” is being developed through funds gained by the successful bid, for the maximum award from the Youth Music Initiative 0-5 Years Informal Sector. The application was coordinated by Sheila Waterhouse, Arts Development Officer with Aberdeenshire’s Arts Team

There is definite, demonstrable interest in, and demand for, meaningful music activity for Early Years children. Recognising that music is a crucial tool not only for the development of young children but also in supporting families and carers, representatives from **Aberdeenshire Childcare Partnership (ACP)**, whose registered members include all private and Local Authority Nurseries, Scottish Pre-School Association and the Scottish Childminding Association, **Surestart**, whose network includes Community Learning and Development, Social Work, Family Centres, Health Visitors, and Speech and Language Therapy and **Aberdeenshire’s Library and Information Service (ALIS)** who wish to develop and deliver their “Rhymetime” sessions for pre-school children and parents/carers in libraries met with Sheila Waterhouse, Arts Development Officer from **Aberdeenshire’s Arts Team** to consider ways in which an Early Years Music programme could meet their objectives. As a result, the **National Youth Choir of Scotland (NYCOS)**, already a partner in Aberdeenshire’s YMI funded Kodaly music activity in primary schools, was also included, with Lucinda Geoghegan agreeing to undertake a training and resource development programme.

In an area as large as Aberdeenshire it would be impossible to provide professionally led groups for all parents/carers and children. Also it was considered vital to reach children and parents/carers who may be unable to, or choose not to, access such groups, unaware, perhaps, of the benefits. It was agreed that a “tailor-made” programme was required to enhance the partners’ existing provision across the Shire, giving staff, volunteers and parents/carers appropriate skills and resources to lead singing, games and rhyme activities as part of their normal day.

Working with partners’ representatives, including a Speech and Language Therapist and Aberdeenshire’s Youth Music Co-ordinator, Lucinda will be developing a book, CD and DVD of appropriate material (incorporating local traditional items), with

guidelines for different ages and developmental stages, and ideas encouraging creativity and diversity of use.

Lucinda will work with two newly appointed "Sing-a-Ring" Trainers, enabling them to work with ACP, Surestart and ALIS respectively to deliver training sessions and resources to client networks across the Shire and to develop sustainable integration and adoption of "Sing-a-Ring" into the services.

While "Sing-a-Ring" has the potential to reach 12000 children in the 0-5 age bracket, it is also intended to extend the programme to P1 teachers, promoting a cohesive transition from Early Years into the existing YMI funded Kodaly activity in Aberdeenshire's primary schools.

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