Summary

Linked to the Venezuelan programme which produced the acclaimed Simon Bolivar youth orchestra, Sistema England In Harmony was introduced in England by Julian Lloyd-Webber in 2008. The In Harmony Programme has been singled out as distinctive in that it enables whole school orchestral playing, inspiring pupils, parents and communities through the power of music-making. Six In Harmony schemes are now running in some of the most deprived parts of the country with £3 million funding from Arts Council England for 2012-15.

Evaluation of In Harmony: year 1 by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), assesses the Programme’s early outcomes. It finds that In Harmony appears to be encouraging positive attitudes towards learning, as well as developing pupils’ musical skills. Ofsted noted In Harmony’s contribution to the pupils’ social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing in two recent inspection reports (see Related Briefings). However, at this early stage, there is little evidence to support the Programme’s positive impact on parental ability to support their children’s aspirations or a stronger sense of community.

This briefing is of interest to all local authority Music Service co-ordinators and cultural education champions as well as stakeholder organisations involved in the musical education delivery.

Briefing in full

The In Harmony Programme in England draws on the principles of the Venezuelan El Sistema programme. The El Sistema orchestral music-making programme was developed in 1975 as “social action through music”, helping draw young people away from drugs and crime. In this country, In Harmony started as the In Harmony Community Development Programme in October 2008 under the then Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). Three pilot projects were established in Lambeth, Liverpool and Norwich for some 1000 children. In 2012, Arts Council England became responsible for the In Harmony Programme; its Advisory Group includes the DfE, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, and the national monitoring board that oversees the implementation of the National Plan for Music Education.

According to NFER, what is distinctive about In Harmony compared to primary classroom education and peripatetic instrumental tuition is the discipline of orchestral music-making, the input from professional musicians and the whole school approach. The aim of the In Harmony Programme is to develop cohesive communities by harnessing the power and the discipline of community-based whole school orchestral music-making and learning to:

- help children improve their skills and chances in life
- to help families improve their wellbeing
- to strengthen community cohesion.
Darren Henley, author of the 2011 National Plan for Music Education, recommended that the *In Harmony* Programme form a key part of the national plan for music education:

“The programme will be expanded to enable children from across the country to benefit from the programme’s success, to support existing projects to become self-sustaining, and to ensure alignment with the work of hubs. To reduce exclusive dependence on central government support and as a base for further expansion, projects may also be able to draw on charitable /business support or on Lottery funds” (p.20).

**Schemes across England**

Because of £3 million funding from 2012 for three years, Liverpool and Lambeth *In Harmony* were joined by four other successful applicants in Newcastle, Nottingham, Leeds, and Telford and Wrekin. Norwich *Sistema* runs as an independent programme under Norfolk and Norwich Community Arts; it has a link with the *In Harmony* programme and the international *Sistema* network.

**The Purpose of the National Evaluation**

The purpose of evaluating the twelve schools in six *In Harmony* schemes was to establish its effectiveness so far, and to inform the programme’s future development by exploring its impacts on the children’s social, emotional and educational development, as well as impacts on families, schools and wider communities. In addition, part of the evaluation’s remit was to measure each scheme’s progress in attracting investment to secure its future. The evaluation methods include:

- an online pupil survey carried out as baseline, mid- and end-points
- two consecutive case study visits to six sites with interviews with headteachers, teachers, *In Harmony* providers, musical practitioners, and children and their parents
- data on *In Harmony* provision and participation each term
- business and funding plan information
- analysis of the National Pupil Database to find Key Stage attainment, school attendance and exclusion data.

This Interim Report is based on data from a baseline and comparison group survey conducted in spring 2013 (see Appendix B of the report), *In Harmony* provision and participation data for spring 2013, and perceptual and anecdotal data from case studies on five sites carried out in the summer 2013 (Appendix C). Recognising the limitations of this research, no *absolutely certain “causal link”* can be established between *In Harmony* and the observed outcomes. Reduced involvement in drugs and crime, or reduced incidence of being Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) are longer-term outcomes which cannot be investigated in this short term evaluation.

**Theory of Change Model**

*In Harmony* is underpinned by a theory of change model that is reflected in the indicators used for this evaluation. The model focuses on the academic and social disadvantage experienced by many children from deprived backgrounds, identifying underlying causes such as unemployment, poor community cohesion, as well as pupils’ ill-preparedness to learn at the beginning of their school life and parents’ lack of confidence to support their aspirations.
School motivations: better engagement in learning

Headteachers in the five case-study schools all reported that they took part in the Programme to improve children’s skills and engagement in learning and to raise standards of achievement:

“What I wanted for the children here was that their aspirations were raised. One of the things they’ve never been good at is trying new things. Our school development plan has a specific focus on children’s independence … I knew that music would make a difference because the children have to do it themselves” (headteacher) (p.8).

Target Groups and Provision

The Programme targets children from nursery to Year 6 and beyond, as well as children from other schools attending In Harmony activities, parents, staff and other members of the community. Children in the whole school play instruments together for extended periods several times a week, and perform for parents and the community. It is up to each school to tailor the approach; there is local variation for implementation.

Liverpool In Harmony’s weekly schedule includes:

- group instrumental lessons in violin, viola, cello and double bass two mornings a week
- whole school singing every morning
- weekly musicianship and composition classes
- West Everton’s Children’s orchestra rehearsals on Friday afternoons at Liverpool Philharmonic
- regular performances by the Children’s Orchestra and chamber ensembles at the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall, St Georges Hall Concert Room and in different parts of the community.

In addition, there are regular after-school clubs and group instrumental rehearsals that include children from the area but attending other schools. There are after-school rehearsals for West Everton Junior Strings (Years 4-6 chamber ensemble), West Everton Mini-Strings (Years 2-3), Seafish, Starfish and Clownfish instrumental groups, and the orchestral brass and percussion groups.

For older children, there are after-school rehearsals for the West Everton Super Strings (Year 7+ chamber group), the West Everton String Quartet (Years 7, 8 & 9) and In Harmony String Quarter (Year 7 children).

In general, across schools, Key Stage 1 pupils learn string instruments whereas Key Stage 2 pupils learn brass. In one area, singing and chorale is an important part of the Programme. Most schools are involving all their year groups although some exceptions include two schools which involve selected Year 6 pupils only, as well as the other Year groups. The total amount of tuition and rehearsal varies across schools. During the 2013 spring term, the range of hours was from 50 hours for all year groups in one school to lower total allocations from 30 hours, allocated in varying amounts to different year groups.

Fitting in with Curriculum Time

Most In Harmony provision took place in school curriculum time, rather than through extra-curricular opportunities (Appendix D details the allocation of time in the twelve schools). Schools have re-organised their timetables and curriculum to offer the In Harmony programme:
“This has taken considerable effort to achieve. One school, for example, changed the time of the school day to finish at 3.30pm on Mondays to Thursdays instead of 3pm to accommodate In Harmony tuition and orchestral sessions on those days. The headteacher and governors consulted with parents on this, and now have an earlier finish of 1.30pm on a Friday to recognise the longer days earlier in the week” (p.9).

Partnerships and Resources

All scheme sites have funding for three years to provide professional music expertise, and to provide musical instruments for children. The musical tuition and coaching involves both the pupils and the teachers learning how to play instruments and working alongside the professional musicians. At one of the schools, all the teachers, school secretary and cook are learning instruments; the headteacher is learning the double bass.

*In Harmony* is being delivered by one of two principal models. One model operates through a National Portfolio Organisation as lead partner; in the second, the local authority music services take the lead role. National Portfolio Organisations are those funded by ACE since April 2012 through an open-access process replacing the previous regular funding programme.

The *In Harmony Sistema England website* lists the lead partners for each scheme. *In Harmony Lambeth* is delivered by the Southbank Centre in conjunction with Lambeth Council’s Children and Young People’s Service. *In Harmony Liverpool* is led by Liverpool Philharmonic. *In Harmony Opera North* in Leeds is led by Opera North. *In Harmony Newcastle Gateshead* is led by the Sage Gateshead live music venue and centre for music education. *In Harmony Nottingham* is led by Nottingham City Council and delivered by the Nottingham City Music Service. *In Harmony Telford and Wrekin* is led by Telford and Wrekin Music.

Where the local authority music services are the lead partner, musicians are employed from local university and professional orchestras or peripatetic music services. Some lead partners are also linking *In Harmony* activities to other local music initiatives such as the Music Education Hubs, Musical Bridges, and other local music ensembles for young people.

(As communicated on its [website](http://www.inharmonysistema.org.uk), Arts Council England (ACE) encourages Music Education Hubs to have strong partnerships with local authorities, schools, practitioners and communities to provide quality music education. ACE’s guidance to National Portfolio Organisations for 2015-18 funding applications states that it will fund a small number of 'Bridge' organisations to help cultural education “flourish” in and out of school. Museums, arts organisations or arts education agencies would be well suited for this role.)

Other *In Harmony* delivery partners are going beyond musical circles, bringing in services such as a local GP practice, Council Adult Learning, Culture and Leisure Services or local community project onto their strategic boards.

Outcomes

According to the *In Harmony* theory of change, these are the outcomes which participation would be expected to produce compared to pupils, families and communities with similar backgrounds outside the Programme:

- for children, better school attendance, improved wellbeing, attainment in literacy and numeracy and musical skills; improved future prospects in terms of education, employment and training and avoidance of drugs and crime
• for parents, improved relationships with their children, better understanding of how to help their children to achieve their life goals, greater involvement in schools
• for communities, a greater sense of community.

In addition, In Harmony projects are expected to attract investment and support, and develop a sustainable model which is not exclusively dependent on central government support. These are the principal outcomes which were identified in the evaluation:

1. Headteachers, parents and delivery teams felt that musical performance has the power to engage those from all cultural backgrounds.

2. In Harmony appears to be developing children’s musical skills.

3. In Harmony appears to be improving pupils’ social and emotional wellbeing and encouraging positive attitudes towards learning. This conclusion is based on indicators assessing pupils’ own attitudes towards learning, confidence, self-esteem and aspirations, parents’ perceptions and teachers’ enhanced expectations of pupils:

   compared to the “baseline pupil survey: analyses of pupil responses from In Harmony schools and comparison schools according to the following factors: musical enjoyment and achievement; desire to play and/or continue playing a musical instrument in a group; desire to sing and/or continue singing in a group” p19.

4. With respect to better academic performance, especially in numeracy and literacy, and regular school attendance, evidence from the National Pupil Database will be gathered later in the school evaluation. However, interviewers were told about some improvements in pupils’ performance, such as better phonic ability, especially among pupils with English as a second language, as well as improvements in school attendance.

Readers may find useful the following testimonial from an In Harmony Lambeth school headteacher testimonial.

5. There is some limited evidence that In Harmony is “helping parents have a wider view of their children’s assessments”. However: “There was very little evidence from the initial case study interviews to indicate that parents felt more able to help their children achieve their goals as a result of Harmony” (p.27).

6. On parental engagement, there were different experiences. However, there was a consensus among headteachers and In Harmony providers about the need to find new ways of increasing parental involvement, for example, by inviting parents onto the strategic boards and by organising events such as a ‘bring your parent and instrument’ day.

7. There was much less evidence for wider community engagement, but there are plans for wider community engagement for the remainder of the Programme. These include setting up a parent-pupil orchestra, using community venues for rehearsal and performance, inviting members of the local community to school concerts and establishing intergenerational music projects.

Funding

The local In Harmony projects are responsible for planning their future financial viability beyond 2015. NFER researchers found that funding plans for 2015 onwards were only at an early stage. Secure future viability had yet to be demonstrated. Planned income-generating strategies included
investigating the Pupil Premium, making strategic links with other initiatives such as Musical Bridges, tapping into funding streams through the Council Culture and Tourism Boards and applying for funding from venture capital and philanthropy. (ACE announced on 7 January 2014 that it will continue strategic funding between 2015 and 2018 for the In Harmony programme; the exact amount is still subject to negotiation with the government.)

Ongoing practical challenges
The practical challenges associated with In Harmony provision touch on matters such as timetabling and embedding provision within the curriculum. Maintaining partnerships has been successful thanks to the enthusiasm of school and In Harmony providers. On the other hand, communication remains an aspect requiring greater attention since parents need to be kept informed to support their children’s involvement. Instrument storage has sometimes required practical solutions such as building a new storage shed.

One question still in abeyance is the effect of the Programme on community cohesion. It will be important to investigate the impact of schools’ differing emphasis on the community dimension. Might the result be a shift in the assumptions of the In Harmony model concerning its potential for improving community cohesion? Another question concerns the transition to secondary school which both schools and In Harmony providers are considering. In addition, there is the matter of meeting the growing interest and demand for tuition and musical instruments in the future.

What could a viable future model look like? The Interim Report suggests:

“…children’s musicianship could be developed by teachers who have taken part in In Harmony, supported by further training … Instrumental expertise could be supported by professional musicians, and/or music undergraduates; and the organisational aspects of the work could be linked to or led by the Music Education Hubs or Arts Council Bridge Organisations. In terms of continuity and progression, a range of pathways could be developed and supported, for example, supporting schools’ key stage 3 curriculum development; and making overt pathways into youth orchestras and other local area music ensembles” (p.35).

Comment
When then Prime Minister Gordon Brown backed Julian Lloyd-Webber’s In Harmony project proposal in 2008, its focus as a Community Development Programme reflected El Sistema’s continuing social action mission. Marshall Marcus, Director of the Baroque Programme at Funda Musical Bolívar heading El Sistema in Venezuela, and Southbank Director of Music until 2011, has explained that when El Sistema started in the mid-seventies in Venezuela, it was to give an opportunity to play musical instruments in an orchestra to those who otherwise would not have a chance to play:

“… it's essentially a social project…It's about the social development of us within our own culture and our society, and it uses music, particularly playing together in orchestras, as the vehicle for that. But in the end I think Maestro Abreu (founder) is always very clear it's about the way that we as individuals in society work together and develop.”

Darren Henley in his 2011 National Plan for Music proposed partnerships with the private sector and charities as a mechanism for complementary funding to deliver it. This approach illustrates the tension between In Harmony as a social project and In Harmony as a music project, and raises the
question of adequate funding resources for all children’s access to musical training, as promised in the last Conservative election manifesto.

In his June 2010 Guardian blog about a Radio 4 documentary on Sistema Scotland, Tom Service commented:

“El Sistema is wonderful, but the huge publicity its British manifestations garner must not blind us to the work that is already happening on our doorstep, the often miraculous work that our music teachers and youth ensembles do on a daily basis. Yes, there isn't enough of it (and it's essential right now that we hold the Tories to their manifesto commitments on music education), but yet again the solution is obvious and straightforward: what we need to do is make the work of the Music Services free to all of our schoolchildren, from the moment a child first picks up an instrument or sings together in class, to their membership of a youth orchestra or choir.”

The *In Harmony* project has clearly got great potential judging from its Venezuelan experience and this evaluation of the first year of the project in England. Those local authorities which are currently hosting a project may wish to see how they can promote support for their projects are 2015 and spread information about the successes to their neighbouring authorities.

**Related Briefings**

*Music Hubs: Ofsted Report* (December 2013)

For more information about this, or any other LGiU member briefing, please contact Janet Sillett, Briefings Manager, on janet.sillett@lgiu.org.uk