



All Together Now Report 2023

***When I'm feeling shy
Find the strength to try
Songs let my feelings fly high***

***I am proud to be me
I feel happy and free
Singing my own melody***

Year 10 contribution to project song ['Keep Singing Every Day'](#)

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Introduction

All Together Now presented an opportunity to explore and test a formalised structure of an already established project approach. All Together Now was designed to be delivered by a professional community music organisation, working in schools for young people with special education needs and/or disability (SEN/D), enabled by the music education hub and evaluated by the institute of education at the local university.

This report provides an overview of the implementation of the project. Variations from the original plan are outlined, and the key limiters and enablers are identified. The report is based on the analysis of videos of project events, musician notes, musician interviews and project documents – including new compositions by the groups of young people taking part.

It cannot be overlooked that restrictions arising from the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020-2022 had an impact on timescales, the delivery, and methods of the All Together Now project.

Description

Partnership

Wren Music (Wren) have been building communities with music since 1983. The organisation's website describes: *"Our skilled musicians use folk arts to empower people from all backgrounds to make music, with voice or instruments. We've developed a special no-experience-necessary approach and taking part with us is fun! We celebrate success and ability, and address barriers to include people who may feel on the outside."* Wren Music's pedagogy for music session delivery is established and was not due to be significantly changed for All Together Now.

Plymouth Music Education Hub (PMEH) offer a range of musical services, projects and opportunities throughout Plymouth schools and within the community. PMEH have worked with Wren Music on different projects over many years, starting with city-wide singing projects 2012 to 2014. The two organisations have an established history of working together in SEN/D schools. This relationship has evolved on the foundation of the existing relationship between Wren Music and a PMEH consultant who co-delivered projects in Plymouth schools in the 1990s.

Institute of Education, University of Plymouth works with a range of partners to offer high quality research, undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. A Lecturer in Education (Music) was involved in the project to evaluate the impact of the intervention on teachers and school staff. This relationship was further strengthened by this evaluator's concurrent role as Chair of the PMEH Board.



Figure 1: diagram showing schools which individuals were involved in All Together Now

Support from Paul Hamlyn Foundation

At the set-up of the project the partnership was offered support from a consultant appointed by Paul Hamlyn Foundation. This consultant held meetings with the head of PMEH, a representative from Wren and the independent evaluator. They reviewed the project plans and advised on how to focus the evaluation to be able to best demonstrate the impact of the project.

This support led to the partnership hosting a shared workshop in December 2020 to bring stronger definition to the project outcomes. Six outcome areas were defined, as it was envisaged the project would likely have an impact on young people, schools, the partnership, and the Wren musicians.

Project Structure

A detailed and repeatable delivery structure was agreed at the start of the project. This was developed by the Wren Music team based on their perceptions of what had worked in the past, and what additional activities would help the project to best achieve the defined outcomes. Within this structure some elements were designated as 'must' and others as 'flexible'. For example, delivery sessions **must** occur in consecutive weeks, while timetabling of those sessions was **flexible**, i.e., this could be the morning or afternoon, depending on the timetable requirements in each school.

The partnership felt it was important that schools understood the requirements of being involved in the project and had a full understanding of the project model, and that this was communicated in writing. This was an attempt to prevent scheduling breakdowns which may occur if schools entered the project without knowing the full extent of their commitment. Figure 2 shows the 'School Information Sheet' which was circulated.



Figure 2: School information sheet, outlining the project structure and school commitment

The project was designed to be delivered in all seven SEN/D schools in Plymouth. Unfortunately, one school was unable to participate due to changes in management during the timescales of the project. The other six schools took part, each receiving one half term of activity.

Representatives from five of the six schools attended a kickoff meeting via Zoom in February 2021. At this time most of the schools were reopened (following lockdowns) but restrictions were still in place for visitors to the schools.

Delivery of music sessions with school staff and young people began in September 2021, and was contained within the academic year 2021/2022.

Despite the robust planned structure, real-world factors led to some differences in the actuality of the delivery. These were summarised by the musician delivery team from in their final reflection and are outlined in the table below.

Planned	Actual
Set Up Meeting School leaders with staff from PMEH and delivery organisation	As planned plus inclusion of evaluator from University of Plymouth
Foundation Session (0) Whole staff team experience the project	5 out of 6 schools only involved staff directly involved in the project.
Delivery Sessions (1-5) Musicians visit two separate groups (cohorts) within each school. Seeing them at the same time each week for 5 consecutive weeks.	One school received 4 of the 5 planned delivery sessions as Covid-19 prevented musicians from having access to school for the last 2 weeks.
Sharing Session (6) An informal performance to the wider school community	Covid-19 restrictions meant the sharing session audiences were restricted. Only one school allowed parents into school buildings, and one did not take place due to Covid-19.
Topping Out Session (7) Musicians return to celebrate the achievements of the sharing and encourage staff to continue with the musical activities.	One school received the topping out session after some delay due to Covid-19, and another did not receive one as Covid-19 prevented musicians from accessing the school.
Finale No joint finale was planned	The project enjoyed a shared finale performance at Woodfest 2022. See 'finale event' below.

The table below shows the actual delivery of different elements of the project.

School	1	2	3	4	5	6
Delivery Window	Sep-Oct 2021	Nov-Dec 2021	Feb-Mar 2022	Apr-May 2022	Apr-May 2022	May-Jun 2022
Foundation attendees	Direct staff	All staff, in covid 'bubbles'	Direct staff	Direct staff, no senior	Direct staff	Direct staff
Cohort 1	Year 10	5-11 years old	Primary – mixed ages	13-15 years old	Primary – mixed ages	Primary – mixed ages
Cohort 2	Year 8	11-16 years old	Primary – mixed ages	6-14 years old	Primary – mixed ages	Primary – mixed ages
Delivery sessions	Five	Five	Five	Five	Five	Four (covid)

Sharing audience <i>Both ATN cohorts plus</i>	Parents and staff	Staff and students from another school	Staff and students from another school	Whole school	Staff	No sharing (covid)
Topping Out	As planned	January (covid)	As planned	Not delivered	As planned	Not delivered (covid)



Figure 3: stills from films of sharing sessions in December 2021 and May 2022

Delivery Sessions

Three musicians from Wren Music were involved in the project. Musician 1 has worked for Wren Music for ten years. They have an undergraduate degree in music performance and enjoyed a childhood playing folk music with their family, at school and out of school. Musician 2 has an undergraduate degree in music and during the delivery period for All Together Now was simultaneously studying for a masters in music therapy. They joined Wren Music in 2020, and they are a professional folk performer, with a particular interest in instrumental music and folk dance. Musician 3 has a diploma in music and an honorary masters for services to music education and was the co-founder of Wren Music. They pioneered the Wren Music pedagogy which has evolved and adapted as new musicians have joined the organisation. The musicians are all multi-instrumentalist and have a combined 60 years of experience in delivering community music workshops with all ages and abilities.

Each delivery session followed a similar structure, although the repertoire and teaching methods were adapted for each setting. Some adaptations were planned, for example where the team had pre-existing knowledge of the staff or ethos of each school. Some adaptations were made in the moment, changing the activity if a particular piece was not popular, or if the young people taking part struggled to engage with a particular activity on a particular day. All staff present in the room for the session were encouraged to join in with the activities.

Standard session structure

1. Hello song

In this section young people heard and joined in the same song each session.

2. Warm Up

Young people took part in physical and vocal warm-up with games and activities.

3. Tune – playing instruments

In this section young people saw different instruments being demonstrated. Young people were supported to choose an instrument to play, and then were taught a simple motif which was designed to fit with the rest of the group's motifs. So, each young person learned a very short and simple piece of music in just a few moments. This motif was adapted based on each individual's needs. As the weeks progressed the same tune was revisited so that young people could become familiar with their instrument and their motif.

4. Song – singing

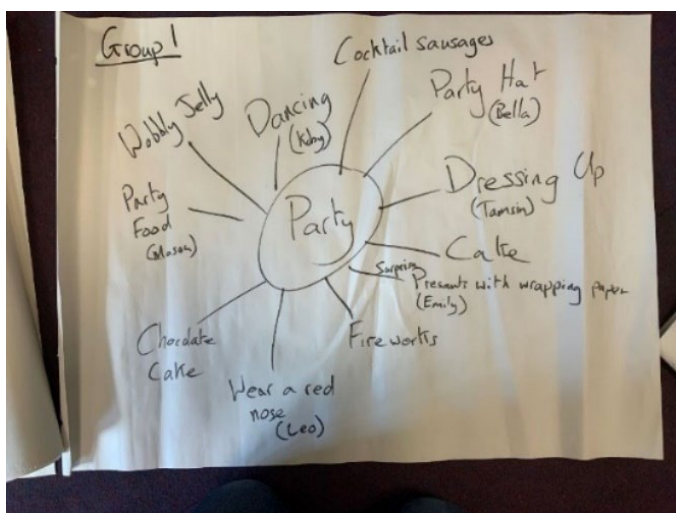
In this section young people heard and learned a song. The songs used always had elements which could be adapted or rewritten. This was adjusted based on each cohort's needs. For example, from the first session, one young person in school three joined in the singing via her speech computer. In session four, after three repetitions of the same material, she chose to join in using her voice.

5. Creative activity – devising something new

This section included different methods depending on the needs and abilities of the group of young people. All cohorts composed a song. In some schools this meant replacing one word or one line in an existing song, and for one school it meant writing new lyrics with a new melody too. Figure 4 shows one group's initial 'brainstorm' of things that each young person felt was required for a party, and the finished composition entitled *This Is How We Party*.

6. Goodbye Song

The same song was repeated each session to signal to the young people that the session was coming to an end.



This Is How We Party
Tune from Oats and Beans and Barley Grow
Lyrics by Jenny Read, Jon Dyer and Mill Ford Students 2022

Verse 1 - Group 1
Dressing up in special clothes
Party hat and big red nose
Presents in paper what a surprise
Fireworks lighting up the skies
This is how we party

Chorus
Now's the time to celebrate
Gather round and don't be late
Dance and sing and clap your hands
Voices ring across the land
This is how we party

Verse 2 - Group 2
Play a game of duck, duck goose
Then we drink up all the juice
Party food means lots of crisps
Chocolate cake and ketchup and chips
This is how we party

Chorus

Verse 3 - Group 1
Dancing puts me in a good mood
Eating lots of party food
Wobbly jelly and chocolate cake
Cocktail sausages on a plate
This is how we party

Chorus

Verse 4 - Group 2
My sisters here let's play a game
By myself just ain't the same
Singing to my favourite track
Musical chairs to hit The Road Jack
This is how we party

Chorus

Chorus
This is how we party

wrenmusic.co.uk

Figure 4: 'brainstorm' of things that make a party and finished lyrics with score.

Monitoring Structure

Planned	Actual
Independent evaluator interviews school staff at set up, and observes foundation session	As planned
Staff and musicians will complete a short survey after every session	Musician notes after every session Staff survey by independent evaluator
Young people will complete a short survey during and after delivery phase	Not carried out (see data collection section below)
Observation of sharing session, and conversation with audience members	As planned, carried out by third musician, and 3 of 6 were filmed
Reflection session with musicians	As planned
Independent evaluator returns after six months to follow up interviews	As planned, carried out by teacher

Finale event: Woodfest 2022

The project plan did not include provision for a mixed schools event. However, another event – *Woodfest* – was already being planned by one of the teachers involved in All Together Now. The partnership took the opportunity to bring the schools together. With one school not able to take part in the project (see page 6), the extra musician capacity in summer term allowed the team to re-visit all participating schools for one session each. This was in preparation for their attendance at *Woodfest*. This joint event saw young people from different schools travelling to one school to share the day together. This included a premiere performance of a new project song written during the summer term, which had one verse contributed by each participating school.



Figure 5: Still from film of Wren musician Jon leading warm-up for young people from different schools, before the All Together Now sharing element of *Woodfest*.

What were the enabling factors for All Together Now?

Consistent and skilled delivery team

In almost all delivery sessions some element of what was planned was changed in response to the young people’s engagement. These changes were handled

with minimal communication between musicians. The musician team work together many days a week in many different settings, meaning their knowledge of each other and their and modes of communication are well developed. In conversation with colleagues, the musicians discussed seeing what was happening in the session, and 'knowing without talking' what needed to happen or change to keep the young people engaged in the activity. These changes are mentioned in passing through the musician session notes. *"K couldn't dance but made a band with Paul. L and M elected not to dance."* (School 5, session 5.) Seeing the same musicians at the same time each week allowed young people to form bonds with the musicians. Musician notes include many references to children becoming emotional when the goodbye song began, because they enjoyed the sessions so much. Furthermore, having a delivery team of three with two needed at each session allowed for continuity in the case of disruption. Four instances of musician illness were managed by substituting the third musician for the one who was ill. In these cases, the young people had a familiar face leading the session with a second worker who behaved similarly to the worker who was absent. This maintained an atmosphere as familiar and predictable as possible.

Trusted connections

With huge pressures on teachers' time, and the added pressures arising from Covid-19 restrictions, pre-existing trusted relationships have proved vital to being able to access schools and young people. The consultant who designed the project has long-standing experience of delivering projects in partnership with the musicians. This led the consultant to be confident to describe the activities and the benefits to potential participating schools, which created a chain of trust. The consultant introduced the schools to the most senior musician, who carried out the set-up meeting. This musician then usually (4 out of 6) handed over delivery to the other two musicians. In the musician reflection it was noted *"It started with that really. An initial email from [the consultant] is opened by a teacher. An email from me wouldn't be [opened]. Not until they've met us and seen we're alright."* (Musician project reflection)

In one school there was a closer pre-existing relationship between the music teacher and the musicians. The music teacher had previously attended a training course led by the musicians and was dubbed the teacher champion by the project partnership. The trust from this musician permeated the rest of the school and impacted how the project stakeholders perceived their relationships. *"R [teacher] met Paul in the rain to help with the instruments. We were well looked after with tea biscuits and a trolley. They think of us as a family."* (Musician notes, school 6 session 5.)

Teacher and support staff attitudes

In all schools, the staff that were present in the delivery sessions took an active interest in the activities and supported the young people to engage. This included taking a sensitive approach on how much to support each young person and

helping to make pathways into the activity for individuals. *"Really great facilitation from support staff including signing to choose instrument, choosing instruments based on child interest and ease of use/stimulus, helping them to play without taking over."* (Musician notes, school 3 session 4.)

The teachers and support staff helped bridge the gap between the musicians and the young people, often helping each to understand the other – for example, by using sign language. In one school the staff took particular care to ensure that the experience for young people signing was in keeping with the rhythms and pace of the song. *"The teachers worked together on... the makaton. The actions now really connect with the rhythm of the song."* (Musician notes, school 2 session 2.)

Staff commented on young people making musical choices, including taking turns, allowing others to play, choosing an instrument to play, following instructions, and actively joining in the activities. *"M [child] followed Jon's instructions on accordion. Teacher over the moon and was excited that she caught it on video."* (Musician notes, school 3 session 1.)

As a result of teacher enthusiasm, new links were made between schools. One All Together Now cohort was transported to other participating schools to make recordings of the other young people. The musicians noted that the attitude of the visitors – stemming from the attitude of their teacher – helped to create an atmosphere of support for the performing young people. *"[The visiting school] were amazing. Very supportive, respectful, and professional. [The visiting teacher] really appreciates coming."* (Musician notes, school 2 session 5.)

The independent evaluator will assess the impact on teacher and staff attitudes. However, in their reflection the musicians perceived that a longer intervention would have been needed to have a meaningful impact on teacher confidence using music, but that this project may have encouraged teachers to be open to working with visiting musicians more in future. It was also perceived that schools where the project was less visible to senior leaders would be less likely to routinely include this kind of activity into the school day.

Musical equipment

Musicians attended all delivery sessions with a van full of acoustic instruments from the folk genre. Having a range of instruments to choose from allowed the young people to make simple musical choices from the very beginning. Young people became familiar with the idea of a 'home instrument'. This meant they could choose to play something different in each week, but for the performance piece they would practice and improve with their home instrument.

Some instruments were held close to the body (e.g., accordion and autoharp) meaning the vibrations fulfilled a sensory need for the young people playing them. Others were placed on a table (e.g., dulcimer) and young people could approach them as much as they felt comfortable to do so. For young people

using speech computers sounds of instruments and lines of songs were recorded into the computer so they could choose when to play their part. "*D [young person] loved the autoharp. His friend told us that he doesn't talk but sometimes makes noises.*" (Musician notes, school 4 session 2).

Some instruments were unfamiliar to young people at the start of the project, but by the end they were able to identify and know how to hold and play the range of instruments. At the sharing session where parents and families were able to attend, musicians finished the event with an open workshop. This allowed the young people to be the experts and show their family members how to hold the instrument and join in with the piece of music.



Figure 6: images of autoharp, accordion and dulcimer

Folk repertoire

The repertoire used on the project drew heavily on folk traditions of repetition, call and response, and cumulative songs. This built familiarity for the young people within each piece of music. As well as repeating Hello and Goodbye songs, core repertoire was repeated each week to further build familiarity.

Tunes: Folk tunes chosen for the project followed the same format – a format usual for folk tunes: two short melodies each repeated twice to form the overall structure. This AABB format constituted one time through the tune. Young people were shown how to play a simple motif which fitted with the A music. String instruments were open tuned, so that taking part required strumming only. Then the young people took a rest while the musicians played the B music. This embedded the skill of taking turns, with everyone waiting while the B music is played. For the performance arrangement of the A music, the young people chose which groups of instruments played together at any one time. This meant that turn taking was achieved between different groups of young people, as well as between the young people and the musicians.

"Most year 8s had been at [primary school] when we visited and remembered their song from pre-covid... Very enthusiastic with joining and good at listening and stopping." (Musician notes, school 1 session 1)

Songs: All songs used were adapted in some way. In its simplest form this was done by including a young person's name, or adding bars between verses to allow young people who needed more time to get ready for the next verse. These kinds of adaptations are not possible if using a pre-recorded backing track or if musicians struggle to improvise. Many songs used the technique of substitution to swap existing lyrics for references that are meaningful to the young people. In

the most complex example, the young people undertook a total composition, writing new words and a new melody, with the help of the musicians.

Exmoor Ram (traditional) From the singing of Nobby Clarke Swimbridge, 1970	Plymouth Pangolin By school 1 year 8s Plymouth, 2021
As I went out to Exmoor It was a market day I saw the finest ram sir That ever was fed on hay	As I went out to Plymouth It was a market day I saw the finest pangolin That ever did come my way
Now if you don't believe me You think I tell a lie Just go out to Pinkery And see as well as I	Now if you don't believe me You think I tell a lie Just go out to Barbican And see as well as I

Figure 7: Comparison between traditional and new 'substitution' folk song

For cumulative songs, a new element was introduced each week. In week one young people learned the chorus or refrain, then in week two the final and penultimate verses to sing with the chorus, and so on. This allowed familiarity with the material to grow and be embedded over time.

The tables below show the base repertoire used in each school. As you can see, some material was repeated between cohorts and some was used in more than one school.

School	1	1	2	2	3	3
Cohort	1	2	1	2	1	2
Tune	Czerwone (Polish)	Hunt The Squirrel	Hunt The Squirrel	Seven Stars	Uncle Bernard's Polka	Floral Dance
Song	We All Belong	Exmoor Ram	Shining Star	Sing the Season	Sunshine	Holidays Song
Creative piece	We Are Not Alone	The Plymouth Pangolin	Sing the Season	Journey Song	This is How We Party	This is How We Party

School	4	4	5	5	6	6
Cohort	1	2	1	2	1	2
Tune	100 Pipers	Feel The Beat	Laride	Laride	Fish n Taters	Fish n Taters
Song	Friends Across The World	Friends Across The World	Tom's Gone	Adventure Song	Everlasting Circle	Everlasting Circle
Creative piece	Heave Away	Plympton Song	<i>Dance</i>	Driving in the Car	Mashed Potato Song	What I Like To Eat

Using the example of *Hunt The Squirrel*, the arrangement in school 1 and school 2 will have been different for each audience. The set of instruments playing was different, as each band was made up of the instruments that those young people chose. The arrangement was different, with the young people determining which sets of instruments play together at any one time. It is a central feature of folk music that the same core content can be adapted and made different to suit a range of situations.

What were the limiting factors for All Together Now?

Covid-19 restrictions

Every school's involvement in All Together Now experienced disruption because of Covid-19. With musicians, teachers, TAs and children all needing to isolate at different times. Most schools were operating a 'bubbles' system where children from different classes or cohorts could not interact with each other.

One school invited all staff to participate in the foundation session, as was described in the project plan. However, because individuals from different bubbles on the staff team could not interact, be in close proximity, or share equipment, it proved difficult to provide them with the intended experience. Musicians described that this foundation session resulted in some staff feeling more anxious about the project, when it was designed to achieve the opposite. After this, it was requested that the foundation session be limited to staff members from the same bubble, who could interact fully.

The element of the delivery structure that was most impacted by Covid-19 restrictions was the sharing session. The plan was for as many members of the school community as possible to form the audience for the sharing. In their reflection the musicians agreed that parents and carers can be the most impactful audience for the young people. Parents and carers "*recognise progress and see the young people doing stuff they aren't used to seeing them do, so they celebrate it more*" (musician reflection). Five out of six of the schools had restrictions in place which prevented families from accessing the school site. Only one school held a performance with families in attendance.

Staff illness and isolation caused most school staff to be working at their capacity. The musicians noted that in all but one school the music lead was not able to participate in the All Together Now music sessions because other commitments took priority on that day. Musicians felt this impacted on the extent to which their methods, techniques and musical modelling would be embedded into the school beyond the project.

The team within the delivery organisation described that the set-up period of the project wasn't entirely clear, largely due to ongoing delays in the project start date arising from Covid-19. Initial project documentation was shared from the commissioning organisation, and edits were suggested from the delivery organisation without a full understanding of what would have been possible.

Furthermore, the feedback from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation evaluation consultant meant that the project documentation was further refreshed in November 2020, and again in December 2020. This meant that when delivery commenced in September 2021 many different versions existed – and each identified slightly different investigation questions – which caused some confusion as the project progressed.

Topping Out Session

The project plan suggested that the Topping Out session would give the staff a chance to lead on the musical activities. Musicians felt that the staff were not ready to do this. Furthermore, they felt it was too much pressure to expect teachers to do this with the musicians (perceived as the experts) present in the room. The musicians adjusted the Topping Out session to be an extra delivery session the week after the sharing. This enabled them to see the young people again in a familiar room, to discuss the sharing, and to further embed the music learned following the excitement of the difference of the sharing.

After each session the musicians captured what they felt was noteworthy engagement from certain young people in the group. These notes were typed into a secure, password protected system on the van journey back from the school. Some of these include the young person's direct voice. "J [young person] said 'That was fun and amazing. I give you ten out of ten.'" (Musician notes, school 4 session 1).

Data collection was not carried out as planned with surveys to the young people and their support staff. At the set-up of the project the commissioner had foregrounded the need for the project to be light touch and straightforward for the school staff to be part of. The musicians described how stretched the staff were as restrictions changed and teachers had to manage with depleted staff numbers (due to covid absences and isolations). Data collection from young people was adjusted to become part of the Topping Out session. Musicians asked questions of the young people and support staff and made audio recordings of their responses. In the musician reflection the musicians discussed this approach and felt that with hindsight this format was not well suited to these cohorts.

"The feedback we tried to collect wasn't very successful... I'm not sure it achieved much... It was a bit painful. Getting the feedback was really hard work. Because with feedback you want to ask open questions. A lot of these young people need direct questions... And particularly with autistic spectrum it's 'what are you actually asking me here?' or it's not specific enough. So immediately there's a tension there. We tried to adapt but you know..." (Musician project reflection)

Venues

Logistical factors played a big feature in the reflection session and the musician notes. To borrow the concept of a *hierarchy of needs*, when conceptualising a successful project, having access to a suitable space to work in and the right

equipment would be the basic 'physiological needs' level. In every school there was at least one logistical issue, including: doors locked, the room not suitable, all parking spaces full, a lot of pre-existing equipment in the rehearsal room (e.g., gym equipment), not the right equipment in the rehearsal room, and the room being a long way from the parking space. *"We need chairs!"* (Musician notes, school 4 session 1).

In the musician's reflection the different features of a rehearsal room were discussed: acoustics/atmosphere, amount of existing other stuff in the room, distance from the parking space, and consistency of availability. The musicians ranked the elements according to which they felt was most important for the successful delivery of a project and chose consistency as number one.

"Consistency is by far the most important feature. I've had experience running sessions with children with additional needs where, absolutely, moving a room has set us back weeks. Equally, I've worked in a not ideal room, but the fact that it's the same room [every week] makes all the... it's just an extra factor. It absolutely has an impact with this cohort." (Musician project reflection)

The project structure included specification that the performance would ideally be to a wide variety of stakeholders (other students, staff, parents and families where possible). Covid-19 restrictions (no families on site and students in bubbles) prevented this from happening in most settings. However, musicians agreed that in future iterations of the project more flexibility may need to be built into this element. In one school in particular, the move to an unfamiliar room for the performance meant the young people were challenged and therefore unable to perform their best and showcase the extent of their achievements to the audience. It should be included as a routine conversation at the end of session three to decide what kind of performance will suit each particular cohort.

Conclusions

This report has summarised the All Together Now project. It presented a description of the plans, noted where there had been variation, and identified the key limiters and enablers of the project.

Some potential changes to the project structure have been outlined – principally building in additional flexibility and a dedicated meeting to discuss what type of sharing event is suitable for each cohort, and adjusting the focus and scope of the Topping Out session.

The impact of Covid-19 restrictions could not have been foreseen, and the achievement of the delivery of the project despite this significant limiting factor is testament to the tenacity and flexibility of teachers, schools and musicians.