



UNIVERSITY OF  
**LIVERPOOL**

# **Playing at Home:**

How Families Engage with In Harmony Liverpool



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## What is In Harmony Liverpool?

*In Harmony Liverpool* (referred to here as *In Harmony*) is one of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic's (RLP) most significant learning programmes. Established in 2009, it started with the staff and children of Faith Primary School in West Everton, Liverpool, and has now extended to engage with children aged 0 – 16 years and their families living in Everton. The programme is inspired by *El Sistema* from Venezuela, the social action through music programme whereby children from communities who may not ordinarily have access to classical musical instruments and musical education are given instruments and coaching by professional musicians and may play in an orchestra. For *In Harmony*, the emphasis is on inclusivity and community and all children are involved in the project, irrespective of their musical abilities and level of their engagement. The programme ranges from sessions with parents and pre-school children to develop an awareness of rhythm and music making to West Everton Super Strings (WESS) for young people aged 11 to 16 years. However the core of *In Harmony* remains the programme of musical education within schools, whereby children are involved in a minimum of 4 ½ hours of musical education each week with a dedicated team of musicians from the RLP, and perform to their families and wider audiences. The *In Harmony* team includes a manager, part of whose role is to liaise with the school and the families and carers of the children, to ensure that they are informed of events and can raise any issues. There is a clear emphasis on continuity and the importance of relationships as part of developing a shared love of music and playing an instrument.

## Playing at Home

*Playing at Home* is an exploratory project set up to research the experiences of family members of children who participate in *In Harmony* in Liverpool. Originally, I intended to explore how the children's participation in *In Harmony* affected the musical experiences of the families and consider how this related to their interactions with *In Harmony* and the school. However early conversations with the parents and carers soon revealed this to be a rather limited ideation of the changing relationships and the flow of information and knowledge that occurred from their engagement with *In Harmony* and so I went on to think about more innovative and appropriate ways of researching and describing these relationships. Eight families agreed to take part in the research, and completed individual and paired narrative interviews in their homes in sessions that lasted from one to three hours. They also completed other activities that included: drawing maps and photographing the sites of music in their homes; locating the people in their wider social networks who are interested in, or involved in, *In Harmony*; and writing 'playlists' of their favourite music from their earliest memories to the present. All the families whose views, reflections, maps, playlists and photographs appear here agreed to their inclusion in this report, and the research was approved by the University of Liverpool Ethics Committee. All personal names have been changed, although parents were made aware that they might still be identified by people in their community.

## Overview of the findings

All of the family members who agreed to take part were strongly supportive of the work of *In Harmony*, although families were not selected on this basis and all were prompted to raise any issues and to reflect on anything they thought could be improved about the project. Participants identified the different ways that *In Harmony* had transformed theirs and their children's lives by: supporting their child and giving them new skills and opportunities; transforming their experiences of spaces and places; and renewing and/or developing their enjoyment of music and giving them a new appreciation of musical education. While these are all important findings, and add to the growing body of evidence that demonstrates the success of *In Harmony*, the most notable finding from this research was the families own, hardly acknowledged, contribution to the success of *In Harmony* through their unqualified and active support of their children and the project on a daily basis. In the following sections, I will develop these ideas, firstly in terms of the families' experiences of the impact of the project on their child(ren) and on their own lives and then go on to consider the families' contribution to the success of *In Harmony*.

### **Families' engagement with *In Harmony***

Families praised the structure of *In Harmony*, as one that created a positive environment for their children's learning and progression. The timing of music lessons during school time was key to the project's success as it would be too difficult for some parents to take/ pick up children from school to take them on to another venue for music lessons, and only the children of the most motivated or non-working parents would have been able to take part:

*Mum - It's brilliant because like I say as well, I've always said oh we'll put her into dance or put her into this and we've always both worked full-time, so it's hard to get around that and once you've finished you just basically, you do want to get home and stuff and do tea. And with the school, they've just had that structure and it's been from the day she started... So she's just had that throughout and it's just so lucky to have that there....*

*Daughter – Mum, even the teachers have to – even Sister Moira [Headteacher].*

*Dad – But I even think there's some kids in the school you'd never imagine would ever be playing an instrument or even liking things like that have got involved in it ... you can see it in them. Family 008*

The high level of inclusivity of *In Harmony* meant that all children had the same opportunities, and this helped to avoid any elitism or grievances among the parents. Many parents had developed a good relationship with the *In Harmony* Team who were described as approachable and friendly, and parents admired their musical abilities. While the parents were aware that the school supported the children's engagement with *In Harmony*, they had particular praise for the different kinds of teaching related to learning music with *In Harmony*. The unconditional support for children and families and the determination by the *In Harmony* team to include all the children in the school was praised by parents, and they mentioned how much they and the children appreciated the involvement of the same musicians and other members of the *In Harmony* team as they were able to develop meaningful relationships with them over time:

*I think as well, they don't pull any child down, they don't moan about any child, every child's got a right to be there and every child has got a choice to be there. And I think that's what makes it ... they're not forced into doing it, it's a choice. But I think having a good support network as well helps a lot.... I think, as I say, with *In Harmony*, there's so many people there to speak to, do you know what I mean? And as I say, not one of them will pull them down. I mean [son] can be quite unruly really, and not once will they say, 'That's it, you're shocking, you can't come', they'll work with you to find a way. Family 004 Mum*

Families were very clear that they could not have afforded to pay for the instruments and music lessons without the scheme, and were candid in admitting that prior to *In Harmony*, music lessons would not have been a priority for them. However once their child had acquired a recognisable level of skill playing an instrument, families were willing to support them by paying towards lessons at

secondary school and any additional costs as they recognised the unique contribution of music to their child's overall education and development.

### *Positive influence on the children*

All the parents and carers were able to reflect on multiple positive outcomes for their children as a direct result of the *In Harmony* project. While the ability to play an instrument, read music and appreciate classical music was valued, the parents also talked about their children's increased confidence as a result of performing on stage in front of larger audiences and interacting with adults connected with *In Harmony*. They believed that taking part *In Harmony* had helped their child to experience new social situations and places, and they described how they could see a positive and real difference in their child after they returned from performances, and this was sustained over time. The chance to travel to and perform in other cities in the UK such as London, Birmingham, and Derry was valued by parents as a means of expanding their child(ren)'s horizons and ambitions as well as improving their confidence:

*I enjoy it because it also gets them out the house, the after school side of it, do you know what I mean? And also it gives them, which I found, and I only found this out the other week, it gives them a sense of being a adult, like going to London for two days without you. Do you know what I mean? London's a big place to let your child go but there's no worry. And I also think it gives the kids a bit of ... 'I'm an adult, I can...' so you know, 'I've been to places', Birmingham the other week, London, they were playing the Proms last year...*  
Family 004 Mum

Some parents mentioned that their child had increased their levels of concentration and focus, and this translated into other areas of their life, such as schoolwork and sport. In addition, families believed that the participation in *In Harmony*, particularly the performances, had helped their child to think about how they could achieve other goals and ambitions and meant that they had a very positive outlook when they had the chance to take part in new activities and develop new skills. One father had said that the focus and dedication his son had developed playing an instrument had become evident in his approach to football, and he was more engaged with training. One young girl had started gymnastics and her mother believed that not only had *In Harmony* helped her understand beat and rhythm when performing gymnastic routines, but that the strength and discipline of the gymnastics may also have improved her music:



*... And starting to count her notes... and it's like, 'No you've got to wait for the beat to come in', and I think the music's helped her to do that because she didn't have a clue where the beginning to the middle to the end of the music was... And I think since her playing the music... it's built her confidence up a lot. Because [daughter] was a shy and timid kid and stood back. And now the determination in her is unbelievable. And even Rod, the music teacher, has even noticed it, the concentration in her is like from, on a scale, from 3 to 10.*  
Family 003 Mum

### Transforming Space and Place

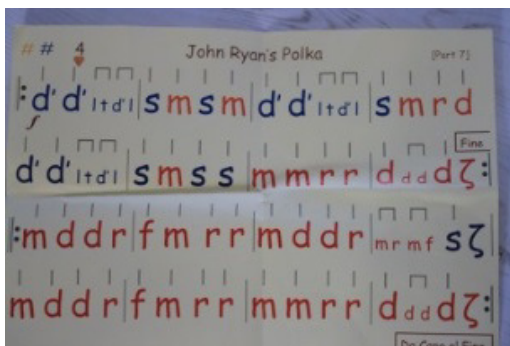
The children's positive experiences of taking part in *In Harmony* also had a transformative effect on parents' use of place and space both within their homes and in their communities.



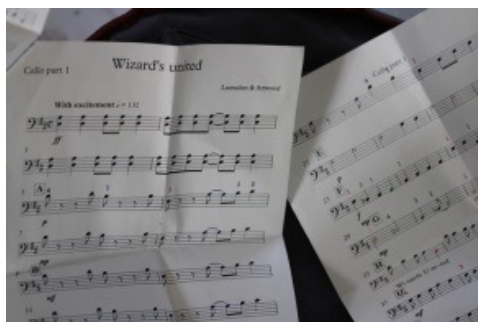
This transformation related not on to the physical spaces, but their emotional and social significance for families, as they felt welcomed to the school and other venues and they enjoyed the visits.

### *Changing the landscape within their homes*

Families made space for the temporary storage of instruments in their homes, privileging areas where the instruments would be safe and secure, including their own bedrooms. Some families had additional instruments in their homes, including a piano, acoustic and electric guitars and drums, although not all were routinely played. Although sheet music was usually stored away in school bags and folders, and few parents said they could read music, parents were familiar with many of the different sheets which the children had either shown to them or used during a home practice session, and most parents knew the names of the songs and could remember when they were performed and rehearsed.

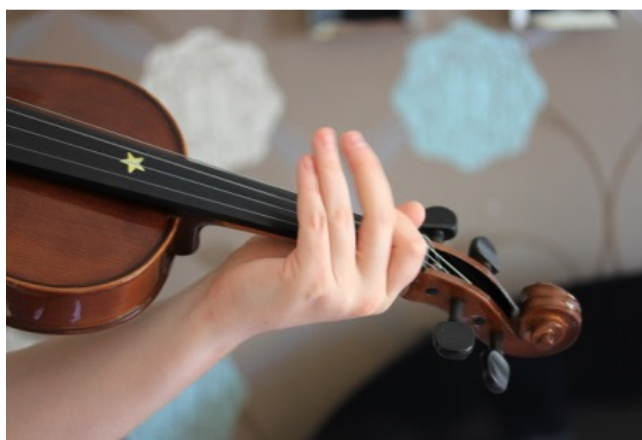






Some children had designated practice areas in shared family areas of their homes where they could practice relatively undisturbed by younger family members and generally the families accommodated their children's temporary needs for space, time and relative quiet by adjusting their own and other family member's routines.

*In Harmony at Home* was offered to families, whereby musicians from the project would come and perform with the child in their home, to an audience of invited families and friends. <sup>1</sup>These were a source of pride and pleasure for families and some arranged their own informal concerts for their child(ren) to play for friends and relatives.



*Dad –In Harmony... They played at our wedding and [daughter] played with them... and obviously a lot of our friends and family knew that she obviously plays it and that was the first time that most of them had seen her do it and they were talking about her more than they were talking about our wedding.*

*Daughter - On my seventh birthday, two people came and we performed a little concert in the house.*

*Dad – Yeah, two ... she got chose to do a little concert in this house and they come to do it ...*

Family 008

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1: Family and Wider Community Links

### *Changing relations to their community and the wider world*

Outside the home, parents attended concerts and events at the school and in the Friary, the RLP's rehearsal space in West Everton as well as at major venues throughout the city. These new opportunities led to an increased number of informal encounters with teachers and other school staff and the musicians working with In Harmony, and a shared chance to celebrate their child(ren)'s progress. Families commented on their children's opportunities to play alongside, and learn from, musicians from the RLP. Visits from other world renowned musicians to *In Harmony* were appreciated, particularly if it was a name that was already familiar to themselves and their wider community so that they could share their experiences:

*I remember... [daughter] wasn't even on the stage because she wasn't old enough... she just done the small performance, and they were on with Julian Lloyd-Webber, and they sang Hey Jude! Oh my God, I was in floods of tears, just screaming, crying my eyes out. And it was like, it was unbelievable that ... who gets the opportunity to go and sit on stage with Julian Lloyd-Webber and be able to play music? Come on... that is an achievement ... when you tell anyone about that, it's like wow, how unbelievable is that?! And he's in the school, he goes the school, he knows the kids, I think he knows half the kids by names. And that is like... how important he is... you stand there and the hairs stand up on your arms and you think, 'Oh my God!' You know? ... And the kids love him. Family 003 Mum*

Family members who had lived all their lives in Liverpool described how they found themselves going to places in the city (St George's Hall and the Philharmonic Hall) for the first time, suggesting a new connection with their city and neighbourhood. The visits to other venues outside the city to see their children perform were also major life events for some parents, particularly the visit to the Royal Albert Hall in London to see their children play at the BBC Promenade Concerts ('Proms'), and this was both a source of pride and a direct contribution to their overall sense of wellbeing:

*I thought it was fantastic, I thought it was brilliant.  
So you were behind it from the word go?  
Yeah, the fact that it's the Philharmonic... I thought, I said to them, you'll never get a chance like that again. You know to play in the Albert Hall, BBC Proms. What kid gets the chance to do that? Family 002 Dad*

Parents believed that publicity surrounding their child(ren)'s achievements in the local and national press and other media had improved the standing of the community of West Everton within Liverpool. This shared pride in the achievements of the children of West Everton suggests that the people who live there may view their own community differently, and part of this change is associated with the families' awareness that people from outside their community see the area differently too.

*Sometimes when the kids are leaving at 3 o'clock, In Harmony will play in the school yard while the parents are there. And when I seen that, I was like, I was like what's going on?*



*There's parents in pyjamas and you know coming to pick the kids up and that ... but I was just standing there like, this is unreal you know? Especially good for like Everton as well because it's, well it's not the best area in the world, but I think it's making it... this is helping it, and it's making it more, you know, people see it a lot more positively.* Family 008 Dad

The stated commitment by *In Harmony* to work with the children over a number of years and the intention to continue in the future was vital to maintaining the parents' long term support, as they had lost faith in successive short-term schemes intended to transform their neighbourhood. While it is a complex picture, the school environment, home life and *In Harmony* clearly interacted to produce very positive results in their children that went far beyond their initial aspirations for their child and their hopes for what could be achieved by a music project:

*... I've definitely been to see the [In Harmony] concerts and seen people walking in and they're like, they don't look too pleased walking in, walking out they look, they feel great, they feel like you know just had a makeover, you know inspired? It does inspire people, it gives them a whole set of different... well it gives everyone different feelings doesn't it?* Family 008 Mum

### Changing families' relationship with music and musical education

While participants had listened to music throughout their lives, and some had attended live music performances in pubs, clubs and arenas before they had children (and a few continued to do so), most participants felt that their child(ren)'s participation in *In Harmony* had reinvigorated their enjoyment of music, as seeing their child play and listening to music with them had acquired new meaning. Similarly, families were aware that the team working with *In Harmony* delivered musical education in a supportive and exciting way for their children, and contrasted this favourably with their own opportunities for learning about music and playing during their own (fairly recent) childhoods. These findings suggest that *In Harmony* has had a transformative effect on families' relationship with music and musical education, and these changes positively support their children's engagement with the project and growing appreciation of music.

### Transforming musical education

Most family members had received little or no musical education. Some parents had learned to play musical instruments, usually during early childhood, and this had been variously supported through schools, churches and other organisations. However few had maintained their engagement into secondary school, and only one parent still regularly played an instrument in a marching band:

*Do you know we didn't get the opportunity for instruments at school, the school I was in, we never got to learn an instrument, not the way these, the chance these get even in the juniors. Trumpets and recorders and violins, guitars, we never got none of that, we never got a chance to learn an instrument in school.* Family 002 Dad

When parents' recalled their own, mostly poor, experiences of any musical education, they clearly valued the opportunity for their child to engage with music at such a young age, and so avoid the feelings that they had had of being left behind or disadvantaged compared to children from other, more affluent, areas of the city:

*No, no... singing but... A recorder, I think that's the most we ever ventured. But in high school... you need to get kids when they're young to get them involved... because that wasn't in my primary school... it didn't entertain me to take it up in high school. Yeah, well the kids that are playing it in secondary school have already played it from primary school. So you're ten steps behind. So what's the point? ... Because they're all developed on to a different level. Now when our kids go to high school, they have that ability...* Family 003 Mum

Families described how *In Harmony* had also changed the profile of children of playing an instrument within the community, as rather than being a 'geek' it was 'normal' and something younger children aspired to. One father reflected that this might mean that his child would make different, more positive choices in terms of friends at secondary school than he did, and sustain their interest in music:

*Oh yeah, trust me, if I could go back in time now to school I would definitely have hung around with the musically talented kids than the ones I did actually hang around with! Because I just missed out on... I mean I could still start now, it's still not too late to start now but just with work and stuff, it's too awkward for me now.* Family 008 Dad

### *Changing relationships with music*

Most parents did listen to music, in the home, on personal devices with headphones and in their cars and in only one family was their television the sole source of music in the home:

*... music is very important in my life, I can really say. So lots of music along the years, whether it's 70s, 80s, you know... I mean really from 50s, 60s, I love music from then on, every decade's songs I like.... often music was often in the background, whether I'm travelling to work or*



*commuting you know, that time it was Walkman, with the headphones... earphones! And back home the radio, the cassette player, with the tape.* Family 007 Mum



Most family members produced lengthy 'playlists' of their favourite tracks throughout their lives and there was a marked association between the music they recalled, and moments in times connected to people, places and other sensory experiences<sup>2</sup>:

*I like a lot of old music, like Stevie Wonder, Motown, things like that, the Bee Gees, that's what I grew up with, it was always on in the kitchen. Like a memory I've got is Sunday dinner being made and my mum in the kitchen with the Bee Gees on. Do you know what I mean?! That's my memory.* Family 004 Mum

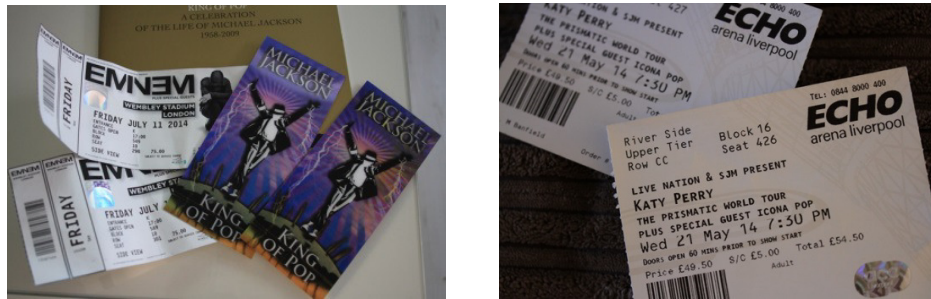
Some parents talked about their re-engagement' with music as something they had somehow lost since leaving school and becoming a parent, and all parents agreed that the presence of music in their homes and families was a positive and enjoyable part of family life. As a result of *In Harmony*, some families described how they now found themselves listening to classical music with more pleasure and enjoyment as pieces became familiar, even seeking out opportunities to hear live music and sometimes classical music performed in other settings. Some parents had started to go to

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<sup>2</sup> Appendix 2: Personal Playlist

performances of live music with their children, suggesting that concert attendance was becoming a normalised part of family activity:

*So we do a lot of things as a family, is music if you know what I mean, like concerts and days out and things like that, a lot of it is that type of activities, rather than going the pictures or ... we would rather go and have something to eat and then go and watch a concert. Family 004 Mum*



As mentioned before, some families had had concerts in their homes or in other settings through *In Harmony at Home*, or their child had performed for family and friends at their home and other venues. Any recordings of their children's performances were played and replayed through social media and were accessed by friends and family.

Parents shared their musical tastes with their children, such as Michael Jackson, Elvis and classic Motown as well as more recent bands such as Coldplay, although some described how their children were highly critical of their musical tastes. Some families had recently been to a Katy Perry concert at the Echo arena in Liverpool with their children, and others had plans to take their children to see performances at other venues. Some families described how they sang together, or played music to one another, for example, one family had the Frozen CD and sang along to the songs and another family cited their shared, favourite 'family' songs:

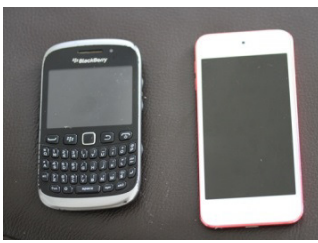
*Dad - Little Lion Man.*

*Mum - [Dad] made a dance up to it for the kids, you know when we were in Cornwall. And now whenever it comes on it's hilarious because you see the whole family and like you could be like out somewhere ...*

*Son - Anywhere. And you can see, we could all be different places and we're all doing the dance that [dad's] doing, all over the place, and it's so funny! Family 001*

As well as live music, most families had access to recorded music through their televisions, radios and other electronic devices, and as well as more fixed devices such as televisions and computers which

were in bedrooms and shared rooms, music was also played through phones and other portable devices so could be playing in every room of the house and their cars<sup>3</sup>:



*Mum – And then we've got to put one in every room because we listen to music in every room.*

*Daughter – The television, in the kitchen, upstairs on my mum's telly...*

*Dad – We're actually are quite crazy in this house because I could be sitting down here listening to one song, [mum] could be in a room listening to another, [daughter] could be doing something in her room... Family 008*

Families appreciated the varied repertoire played at *In Harmony* concerts and found it accessible as they had heard the music before and were able to enjoy it more because of this familiarity. For example the performances of Beethoven's *9th Symphony*, O Fortuna from *Carmina Burana* and the theme to *The Pirates of the Caribbean* were as popular as *the Beatles* and *One Direction*:

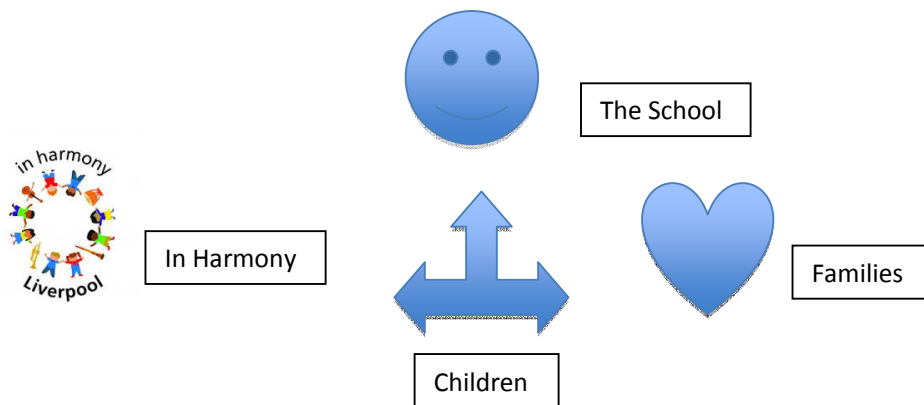
*I enjoy it, I do enjoy it, I really do, I love going to watch them... , if it was just classical music, I think it would become one of them ...But the fact that you know they mix in, they jazz it up a little bit, you know, that helps it. And they play songs people know always helps as well. It's brilliant, I love it, I do love it, I love going to see them. Family 002 Dad*

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<sup>3</sup> Appendix 3 – Musical Maps of Family Homes

### How families support *In Harmony*

Families described how children brought their experiences of taking part in *In Harmony* back into their homes, transforming the lives of the families. However, rather than there being a uni-directional flow of knowledge and experience via *In Harmony* to the families, the emotional, practical and social support provided by parents to their child(ren) on a day to day basis meant that was an important ‘reverse’ flow from the homes to the project and the school.



Rather than being passive recipients of the programme, this research indicates that families are active agents, and that their actions represent a previously unrecognised and underestimated contribution to the success of the project thus far. As all the parents involved in the research supported the programme, these examples cannot be generalised to all the families. However they do indicate the type and level of support provided by some families and the range of support and adjustments parents are making to support and enhance their child(ren)’s participation in *In Harmony*. The support families offered to their children was both practical and emotional and I have used the concepts of: *Practical and emotional support*; and *Pride and spreading the word*, as a way of capturing the range of these everyday activities.

### *Practical and emotional support*

This active support from families was not ‘time neutral’ and represented an investment of time and energy to promote their child’s musical experiences. Families described how they continuously adjusted their working and domestic lives and routines to ensure that their child(ren) could take up all the opportunities offered to them to perform. Working family members always tried to take leave or adjust their shifts if possible to see their child perform, and used holidays and flexi-time to try to be there if they could. Families with older children, who had to take them/ pick them up for rehearsals if they lived outside the area, also had to manage their family time to ensure their children could attend.

*...he’s already involved in so much music. Because he’s also in the WESS [West Everton Super Strings] on Saturday morning. So that’s a lot. So I don’t want him to miss other stuff that he likes too ... So he does stay back for chess and then dad picks him up and takes him all the way to music then and then picks him up again... Saturday morning music, 9 to*

*12pm. But we were willing, like I say, we were willing to make all these sacrifices, all the commitment of taking him.* Family 007 Mum

Families co-operated to ensure that children could make the performances and rehearsals, and some had to drive to drop off and collect their children around other commitments at weekends and evenings. Family members were aware that their attending a concert or performance was important to their child, and so prioritised this over activities that they or their children may have committed to.

*Well they all play football and you know different after school activities. They all do it but the music's the main one, I make sure that's the main one... if they come in, just say for instance a Monday night, the little fella, might say, it's gardening club, can I go to that? When's that on? It's a Monday night. Well you can't because you do In Harmony. That's first. If it was on a different day, fair enough, but the music's the, that's the main thing.*  
Family 002 Dad

There were also accounts of reminders, nudges to practice or remember dates, repeated conversations to ensure the children knew what an opportunity this was for them, intended to help their children see the value of rehearsals and taking part in performances. Families were careful not to overdo this however, aware that any 'pressure' from them could adversely affect their child(ren)'s engagement, and so like much of the emotional work in parenting, it was carefully managed to ensure it was just enough to help them rather than discourage them. However some parents were concerned that they were not doing enough to help their child, and said they lacked confidence as they had never learned an instrument and didn't read music and so they were not sure if what they were doing was the right thing. Others felt that they didn't really know how their child was doing compared to other children, and mentioned that it would be helpful to know the level they were at and have a clear explanation of what this meant in terms of their progress.

Some families included children who had moved to secondary school, and while some had stayed within *In Harmony*, and attended rehearsals and performances, many more were no longer talking music lessons or engaging with *In Harmony*. It was recognised that secondary schools simply did not offer the supportive environment that their children had been used to, and the combined efforts of the *In Harmony* team and parents were often unable to convince the young people to continue to learn and play. One mother recalled her own experience of moving to secondary school and the lack of support she had received from school or her family:

*...when did you start learning the recorder?*

*In senior school. First year senior school. I was in the choir as well. I loved it, yeah, I enjoyed it, and then I got promoted to the, it's a tenor? It's a tenor isn't it, the big one? Yeah. I used to love that, my fingers used to stretch. But yeah, I can't really remember being very, pushed very much for it or my mum not paying too much attention into it. So I think it just fizzled out really. Whereas if you've got that support, you think you're more interested in it. No one*



*was really bothered that I done it really, so if I wanted to not do it, it was easy enough, whereas if it would have been, 'Why aren't you at this class tonight?' or, 'When's your show?', so ... Or even the teachers - I wasn't really pushed over it. So ... Family oo8 Mum*

This example emphasises how important it is for young people to have multiple sources of support and encouragement, and how both schools and parents (as well as *In Harmony*) have a role to play for the children making the transition to secondary school. While many families regretted that their child had chosen not to continue with music, even the families who included young people who did still play were aware that this could change as their child progressed in secondary school and developed other interests and took on new commitments. However families still valued the experience their children had had, and as they had had such a substantial grounding, they hoped that their interest would sustain or revive at a later date.

### *Pride and spreading the word*

On a personal level, parents talked about their pride in their child(ren)'s achievements and this was variously evidenced in their homes by framed certificates, cabinets with medals and cups, and shelves of trophies and awards, mostly related to sports and dance, in shared space and in the children's rooms.



Only one parent had a framed certificate for a musical grade on their wall and most of the material I was shown that related to *In Harmony* were photographs and video recordings of concerts. It was clear from most of the accounts from parents that they provided frequent, almost daily, low level but sustained encouragement for their children's participation in *In Harmony*, with more targeted support to encourage them at specific time points, typically around performances or practice sessions.

*Yeah, especially seeing how well [daughter]'s doing and how good, how much she's come on leaps and bounds, then now we know we can encourage her even more, then she's going to be even better isn't she, so...? Family 008 Dad*

Parents described their emotions and the pleasure they experienced watching and listening to them play at home and in public at concerts and performances.

*But even like down to going to the birthday concerts and taking family, you know? This year's one, oh I was in tears, I've still got them on my iPod where all the gold stuff came down... You'd have to be pretty cold to say it didn't make you well up or make you proud because it does, it really, really does. Family 004 Mum*

This pride created a very positive environment for the children of the family, who would join family members after the concerts to be praised and share their own excitement and this was actively shared with wider family and friends. The children were aware of their parents' activities and conversations and this cumulative effect not only enhanced their self-esteem, but the self-esteem of their parents and wider family. This enjoyment of their child's performances extended beyond their immediate households, to relatives, friends and work colleagues who shared/ viewed photographs, posted their thoughts and responses on social media and watched the clips posted on the RLP's website and on You Tube:

*But like you know they come home and they've done personal concerts in the living room, with In Harmony on home visits and you know ... even now, like we were looking a lot of the time, like we'll look on You Tube, and we do follow them on You Tube, like when they went down to the Nucleo Centre last week, we couldn't, obviously we could go but it was a bit too far for a half an hour concert, so we You Tubed it, and got it up on You Tube, so. Family 004 Mum*

Members of the wider family living in the city and elsewhere in the country were prepared to travel to see the children perform, and maintained contact with performances and the child's progress via social media.

*But then you've got my mum... My mum will never miss anything if she can help it... [son's] Nan and his auntie come from Speke. And then we have [partner's] mum, dad and auntie*

*who come from Torquay just to watch... they've, at times, they've travelled up just to watch them... So it's like a 450 mile round trip to watch the kids. And my mum, my dad, auntie, my grandmother, my brother, my sister... Family 001 Mum*

Parents felt that they were more closely connected to the RLP through *In Harmony*, and reflected on how this represented a form of capital that they used to enhance relationships with people outside their community.

*But yeah, I mean you show people in work and they're like wow, that's ... the story I told you earlier about the lad who's sort of part-time musician at our place and couldn't believe it was kids on the video ...I mean that's just us, I mean you go round and talk to every other family, I mean it's ... that's what I'm ... this is what I'm saying like across Merseyside, it's now well-renowned. Family 001 Dad*

The involvement of wider families, by attending performances of *In Harmony* and hearing and reading about the children's progress, meant that some younger relatives had also been inspired by the children to start to learn an instrument, suggesting the importance of having role models *within* a child's family and social network.

*I mean her Nan, [father's] mum, she took in foster kids and the little girl... I think it was about two years ago when she knew that [daughter] was, took the violin up properly. And she started private lessons up there for [foster child], to try and keep in with [daughter]. [Foster child], 's two years older than [daughter], so [foster child], must be eleven. Family 003 Mum*

## Key Findings

- Families were very supportive of the project and believed that their children had benefitted from their participation by learning a new skill, exploring a possible talent, and growing in confidence. They could also see the potential of such a project to transform their child(ren)'s lives by enabling them to consider new opportunities and pathways that their musical experiences may open for them.
- Families praised the ways in which the project worked, and valued that much of the education and rehearsals took place in the school and that there was minimal financial costs for them. The individual members of the *In Harmony* team were praised and respected by parents not only for their musical skills, but also for their abilities to teach and engage so positively with their children to bring out the best in them. The continuity of the project was also key and the access the families had to the *In Harmony* manager and wider team to raise issues or concerns and to receive personal information about their child was vital to its success.
- *In Harmony* had changed the domestic and social landscapes of their homes, by introducing instruments, performances and practice sessions, and different music into their lives. This led to the development and shaping of new routines and shared memories, which families believed had a positive effect on family life. While parents were aware that their child(ren)'s engagement in *In Harmony* also created some stresses and strains, they were willing to invest their time and energy to ensure that their child(ren) were able to take part to the best of their ability.
- Engagement in the project had also altered families' relationship with their community, as there was a feeling that their own, and other people's view of their community was much more positive because of *In Harmony*. Families also visited historic venues within Liverpool and in other cities that they had never previously thought that they would enter. This had led to other visits to places in Liverpool and elsewhere and reflected a growing confidence or a revived interest to engage with live musical performances.
- Families who had not previously had good experiences of musical education were now positive about the benefits to their children, and full of praise for the *In Harmony* team. This meant that they supported and encouraged their children to engage with the project and helped them over any issues of motivation or disengagement.
- *In Harmony* had also influenced some parent's enjoyment of music, as some described themselves as listening to more music, and also enjoying new music that they may not have listened to before. Most families shared their enjoyment of music with their children, creating a positive and supportive environment for their children to develop their own appreciation and musical tastes.
- Families tended to think about their own support in terms of 'events', such as their coming to see their child perform and their showing and articulating their enjoyment of these events. While this role as

‘audience’ clearly had a role to play it was the emotional support evidenced in their accounts of the everyday encouragement and rewards of praise and appreciation of their child’s developing musical ability, and the practical support in terms of the adjustments that they made to their own personal and working lives to ensure that their child could participate fully in the project that made the most substantial and sustained contribution to their child’s successful engagement, and therefore to the success of the project.

- Participants described how proud they were of their children’s ability to play music in an orchestra, and how they communicated this pride not only to their children but to their family and friends. Social media, and the inclusive nature of In Harmony concerts mean that friends, family and even work colleagues shared their enjoyment of concerts either remotely or by coming to venues to see the children perform.
- The amplification of the pride experienced by immediate family to wider family and friends extends the reach of In Harmony’s work to communities that they might otherwise not reach. Word of mouth through face to face contact, boosted by social media that emulate such encounters such as FaceBook, represents a powerful way of convincing people of the authenticity of the experiences. While people may be wary of the ‘hype’ that may lie behind slick media presentations, they are more trusting of ‘real life’ experiences articulated by the actors themselves.

### Recommendations

The model ***In Harmony*** has developed is appreciated by parents and future developments should consider:

- The importance of stability and commitment to the families and communities
- The work needed to convince parents and family members who did not have good experiences of musical education that the programme will be different by being inclusive, supportive and enjoyable for all involved
- Ways of recognising the work and contribution of parents and families in the success of *In Harmony*
- Communication and engagement with working families and wider family members who need notice to plan their work or travel to enable them to attend concerts and events
- The timing of some events so that working parents can attend some events outside normal working hours
- The award of medals and certificates so that families have a tangible reminder of their child’s achievements that can also be shown to visitors and others via social media
- Providing families with a greater sense of how their child is progressing compared to national standards
- Further guidance to parents about music and practice to reassure them that they are doing enough to support their children

- How the children's talent and experience is recognised and supported as they move to secondary school, perhaps by the development of a 'passport' to accompany children when they leave as well as more formal liaison by *In Harmony*.
- Transitions to secondary school more generally, to ensure that children can manage to engage with a new system and feel supported by the school to continue if they wish

### **Next Stages of the Research**

The next stage of the research will be to use the text, photographs taken in some of the families' homes and other images to present the ideas and experiences of these families to a wider audience. The selected images will be collated and shown as posters in collaboration with the participants at a venue in their community and possibly at the Philharmonic Hall, Hope St, Liverpool.

### **Acknowledgements**

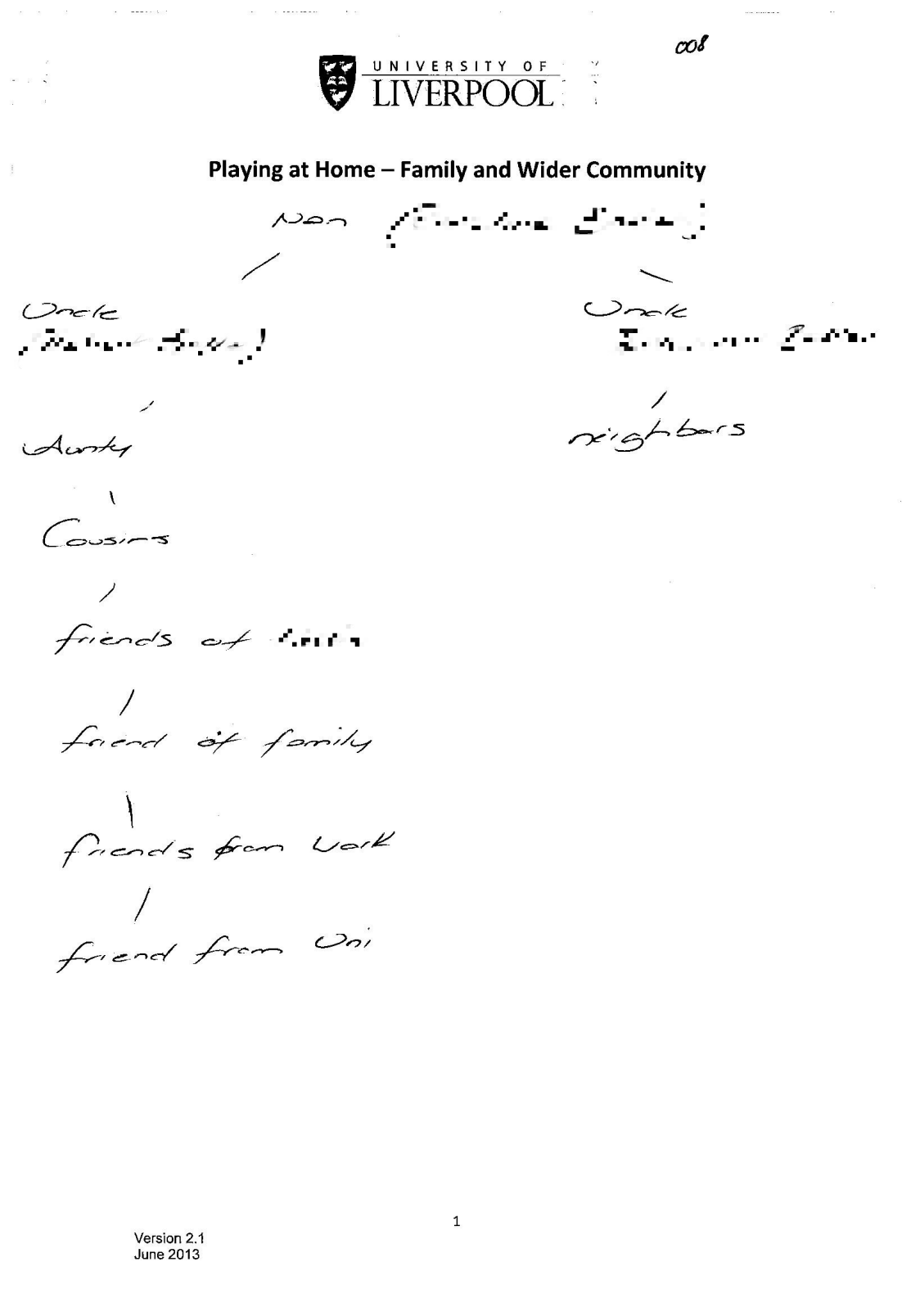
This summary report was written by Prof. Jude Robinson from the School of Law and Social Justice at the University of Liverpool, with advice from Peter Garden, Zoe Armfield, and Laura Twemlow from Liverpool Philharmonic, and Susanne Burns, In Harmony Liverpool Evaluator. I continue to be grateful for the enthusiastic participation of the family members who generously gave up their time and allowed me to spend time in their homes. This research was supported by monies from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

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## Appendix 1 – Family and Wider Community Links





## Appendix 2 – Musical Maps of Family Homes

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Number	Name of song/ music and name of singer/ band/ composer	When did you listen to this? Why is it special/ memorable?
1	Michael Jackson Smooth Criminal	Dancing as a child (age 9/10). With friends (Last Week.)
2	Queen (Greatest Hits)	Mum playing around the house. Age 4/5 first memory
3	UB40 (Mixture of songs)	Mum and Dad playing Records around the house. Age 4/5.
4	Oasis (Mixture)	Two older brothers in there room (wouldn't let me in so id sit in my room and listen to it) Age 11/12.
5		
6	Take That (Mixture)	Making up dances as a child with friends Age 10/11/12/13.
7	Brian Adams Everything I do	Brother Playing in his room
8	Mark Owen Babe. Take That	Age 9/10.
9	DJ + Duncan Let's get ready to Rumble	Age 10 Dance Routines with best friend
10	relight my fire Take That	Age 10/11 (had it live on video, used to watch it everyday after school)
11	<del>Backstreet</del>	
12		
13	Backstreet boys. (Backstreet Back)	Making up dances with friends. Age 10/11.
14	The Beatles most songs	Listening with all family members (Beatles festival.) disposal
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		

## Appendix 3 – Musical Maps of Family Homes

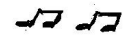
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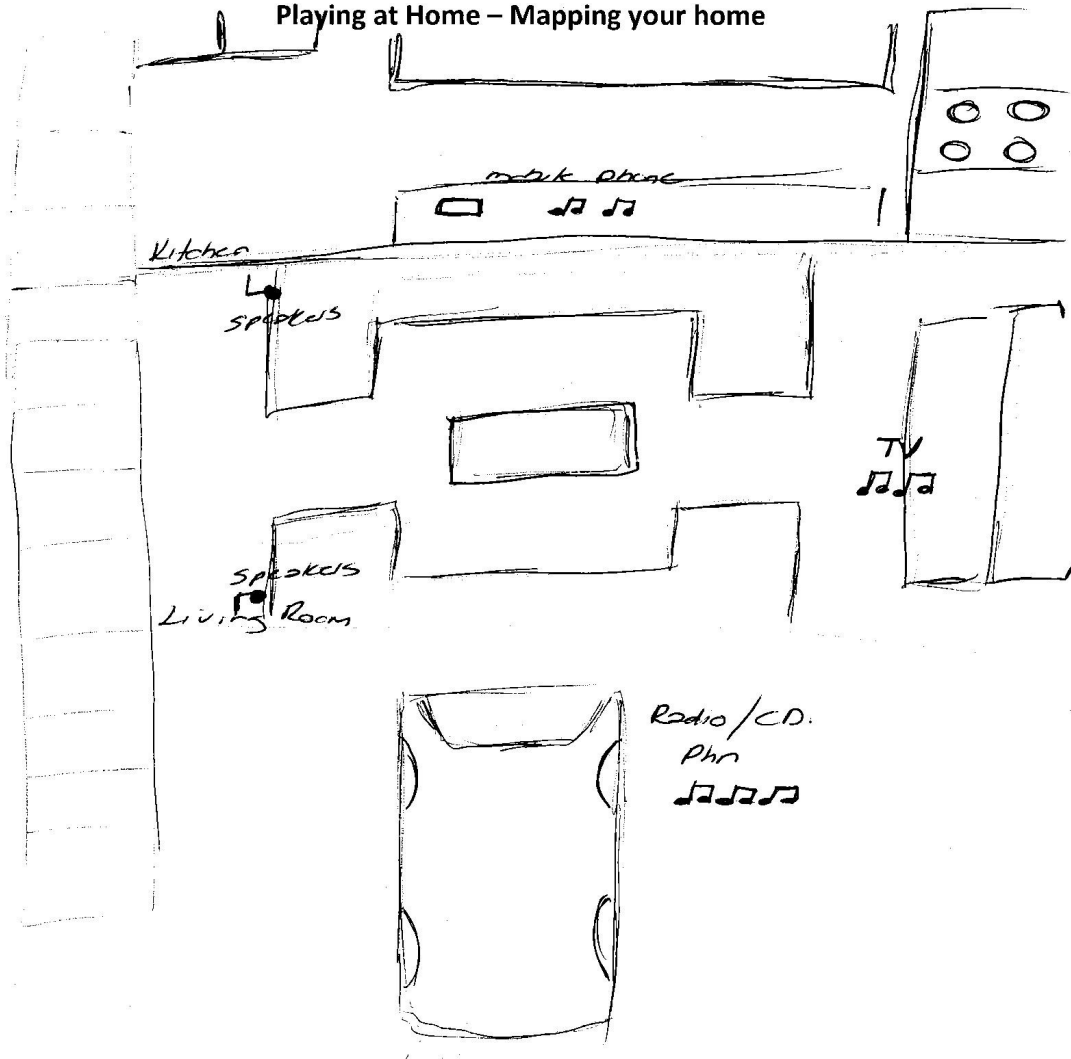
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### Playing at Home – Mapping your home





In Harmony Liverpool was established in Everton in 2009 and is led by Liverpool Philharmonic's team of professional music leaders, including musicians of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, with partners Faith Primary School, The Beacon CE Primary School, Everton Nursery School and Family Centre, Resonate Liverpool's Music Hub, West Everton Community Council, The Shewsy Youth Centre, Liverpool Hope University, University of Liverpool and participating children and families.

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Austin & Hope Pilkington Trust | The Beacon CE Primary School | The Eric and Margaret Kinder Charitable Trust | The Ernest Cook Trust | Everton Nursery School and Family Centre | Faith Primary School | The Grodner Family | The Hemby Trust | Liverpooljazz | Lord Leverhulme's Charitable Trust | The Oglesby Charitable Trust In Harmony Fund | The Rushworth Foundation | West Lancashire Freemasons Charity | Anonymous donors

