

Advice for singing in early years settings during the COVID-19 pandemic

Produced by Bolton Music Service and the Start Well Communication and Language Development Team

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Bolton Start Well and Bolton Music Service have worked in partnership to produce some guidance for you to ensure you feel confident to continue to support our youngest children to access a full and rich language environment and so support their communication and language development. The uncertainty about singing in educational settings during COVID-19 is understandable, given the concerns outlined earlier in the pandemic in relation to increased aerosol virus transmission from singing and so we aim to provide you with some considerations on how you can put measures in place to continue to do this safely in your setting.

In [Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#) (updated 22nd September 2020), the Government states that it is important to continue to support children's Communication and Language development by:

- Considering how stories, singing and games can be used to help children to socialise and resettlement into familiar everyday routines.
- Planning how children can learn in age-appropriate ways about how they can keep themselves safe, including regular handwashing and using tissues.
- Considering how to encourage children to learn and practise these habits through games, songs and repetition'.

The guidance also states: *"This guidance relates to organised group activity, not to spontaneous singing, dance and role-play that young children may naturally do, and should be encouraged to do, by early years practitioners."*

Singing is an important activity that will help young children settle, feel safe, create a sense of belonging and familiarity alongside developing their Communication and Language skills. In the [Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#), the government also stated: *"As far as possible, children should benefit from a broad range of educational opportunities. Learning songs and singing are important activities that will support gaps in Communication and Language, support Early Reading, Phonics and support children to learn new vocabulary. This is an essential activity that should not be left out."*

The following advice from **Bolton Music Service** in partnership with the **Start Well Service**, is designed to help local early years settings make informed decisions on how singing can continue to play an essential role in daily practice. There are different forms of singing within good early years practice which we have detailed alongside some main considerations:

Incidental, every day singing - such as sharing number rhymes and songs during play and routines with individuals and small groups. This should continue to take place as it would normally.

- Ensuring rooms are well ventilated with windows/doors open to allow air flow.
- Encourage children to sing quietly, since quiet singing does not appear to carry any additional risk compared to other educational activities.
- Children should be encouraged to not directly sing into one another's faces.

Group singing - a short, planned, group session.

- Children can sing in their bubble, provided that the space is well-ventilated.
- Larger groups should not sing together until current guidance changes. We advise a maximum of 15 children at the moment.
- Children from different bubbles can sing together in a small group (less than 15) provided that a 2-meter social distancing between all participants is in place and that the space is well-ventilated.
- Holding singing sessions outside where there is space and better ventilation and increasing ventilation whenever possible (open windows etc) as this will reduce the risks of aerosols created by singing/chanting hanging in the air.
- Ensure that windows and doors are open whenever possible, to reduce the risk of any virus particles building up in the air.
- Encourage children to sing quietly, since quiet singing does not appear to carry any additional risk compared to other educational activities.
- Ensure there is plenty of space for children to keep distanced with good ventilation if singing, especially in groups inside. Consider asking all those singing, including the adults, to face in the same direction. Consider sitting children in rows behind each other.
- Consider organising singing in smaller groups and encourage children to stand/sit in a position so they are not directly singing into one another's faces.
- Limit the time spent on continuous singing activities to 15 minutes and then revisit later in the day if appropriate.
- When playing recorded music, keep the volume lower to prevent the need for children and adults to raise their voices.

Using musical instruments and equipment:

- Enhanced cleaning of instruments and equipment is required.
- Do not share or pass round instruments in small groups.
- Instruments should be cleaned between use following Government guidance on cleaning and handling equipment available at [hygiene: handwashing, sanitation facilities and toilets](#).
- Handwashing before and after using instruments or handling song or nursery rhyme books or puppets.
- Avoid using instruments that are put into the mouth.

Making music with others can be a social experience, whether this is an adult/child exchanging sounds or two or more children making music with pots, pans or traditional instruments. This interaction with others, whether this is with one other person or a group, is personal to each individual and is often an expression of feelings (Musical Development Matters).

Related documents:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>

For further information, and helpful advice, on singing in schools please visit <https://www.musicmark.org.uk/news/back-to-school-back-to-singing/>

<https://www.early-education.org.uk/musical-development-matters-download> for settings to refer to.

<https://network.youthmusic.org.uk/vocalising-and-singing> link to support understanding as to why singing is so important.

[Bolton Start Well at Home](#) is a Facebook page to share with families to encourage singing with their children at home.

For further information or advice please contact:

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