

Babigloo Music for Babies

Executive Summary: Youth Music Catalyzer Fund Evaluation (2023–2025)

This report evaluates the two-year expansion of Babigloo Music for Babies, a non-verbal, multi-sensory music programme for infants and their caregivers in Dorset. Supported by a Youth Music Catalyser Fund grant, Babigloo scaled its operations from East Dorset to a county-wide service between 2023 and 2025.

Key Achievements and Findings

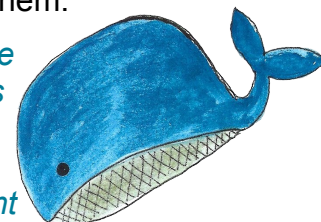
Impact on Families:

The programme successfully improved family wellbeing and integrated music into daily home lives. Parents reported increased bonding, improved mood, and enhanced child development in areas such as communication, listening, and motor skills.

One parent interviewed spoke of having been made homeless whilst pregnant and she highlighted that many families might have undergone challenges that affect them:

“I know that someone else next to me was struggling – wasn’t able to breastfeed and was devastated about that, and [Babigloo] was something that she could offer her child, (...) so everyone’s got something that – and (Babigloo) don’t realise they’re helping for”.

Participating Parent



Scaling and Reach: Babigloo achieve significant growth increasing its reach, and benefiting 335 families (406 adults and 335 children) in this phase, compared to 94 families in the previous phase 2022-23.

Strategic Partnerships: While an original goal to influence a formal Early Years Music strategy was delayed by restructuring at the Dorset Music Service, Babigloo successfully embedded itself within the Dorset Family Hub Network, working across 12 hubs in 23 venues and is part of the new Octagon Music Hub Special Interest Group (SIG) for Early Years Music.

Programmatic Learning: A pilot "Next Steps" programme for children aged 1–2 years revealed that the increased mobility of older children conflicted with the "calm, relaxing atmosphere" essential to the Babigloo approach. Consequently, the team decided to return their focus exclusively to the 0–12 month age group.

“(Babigloo) Inspired me to do similar activities at home”.

“We have learned a lot, so much about musical things we can try at home”.

Participating Parent

Diverse Partnerships: Attendance was supported by 12 different Family Hubs and arts venues, which played a crucial role in recruiting and supporting families to attend.

Geographical Expansion: By recruiting music leaders based in specific areas like North and West Dorset, the project successfully delivered sessions in eight dispersed locations that were previously unreachable by the original founding team alone.



Next Steps

Babigloo intends to build on this success by securing further funding to maintain its county-wide presence and exploring a digital offer (such as YouTube resources) to enhance the experience for families at home.

“Protected and precious time to connect with my child in a peaceful environment”.

“Even the group itself, it gives me a purpose to go out of the house. Because there's some days where, you know, you're exhausted and everything. But going there from 10 weeks old has made me go out, made me, you know, socialise and him socialise”.

Participating Parent

Organisational Development

The evaluation highlights Babigloo's transition from a small founding team to a more sustainable, professionally managed organisation.

Key developments included:

Team Expansion: Recruited and trained four new music leaders, reducing the average team age from 58 to 48 and decreasing travel-related carbon emissions by hiring locally based practitioners.

“My goals have been met extremely well. Through Babigloo, I have gained confidence in communicating in English, learned new ways of using music with very young children, and felt more connected and integrated into the community. The work has allowed me to continue engaging with music, which is a big part of my identity and professional background”.

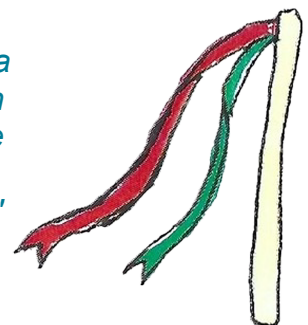
*Music Leader
'Homes for Ukraine'
Strategy Dorset Council*

“The shadowing sessions I did to start were useful and eased me into it well. It's an unusual thing so needed a lot of time getting use to the concept, also dealing with vulnerable people and babies so first impressions and being confident for the families is vital”.

Music Leader

Managerial Formalisation: Established dedicated management and administrative roles to handle the logistics of multi-site delivery.

“This scaled up phase with an expanded team required a new approach to management and administration. Colin Phillimore took on the role of managing the project – the formalising of his managerial role and associated remuneration was enabled by the Youth Music funding.”

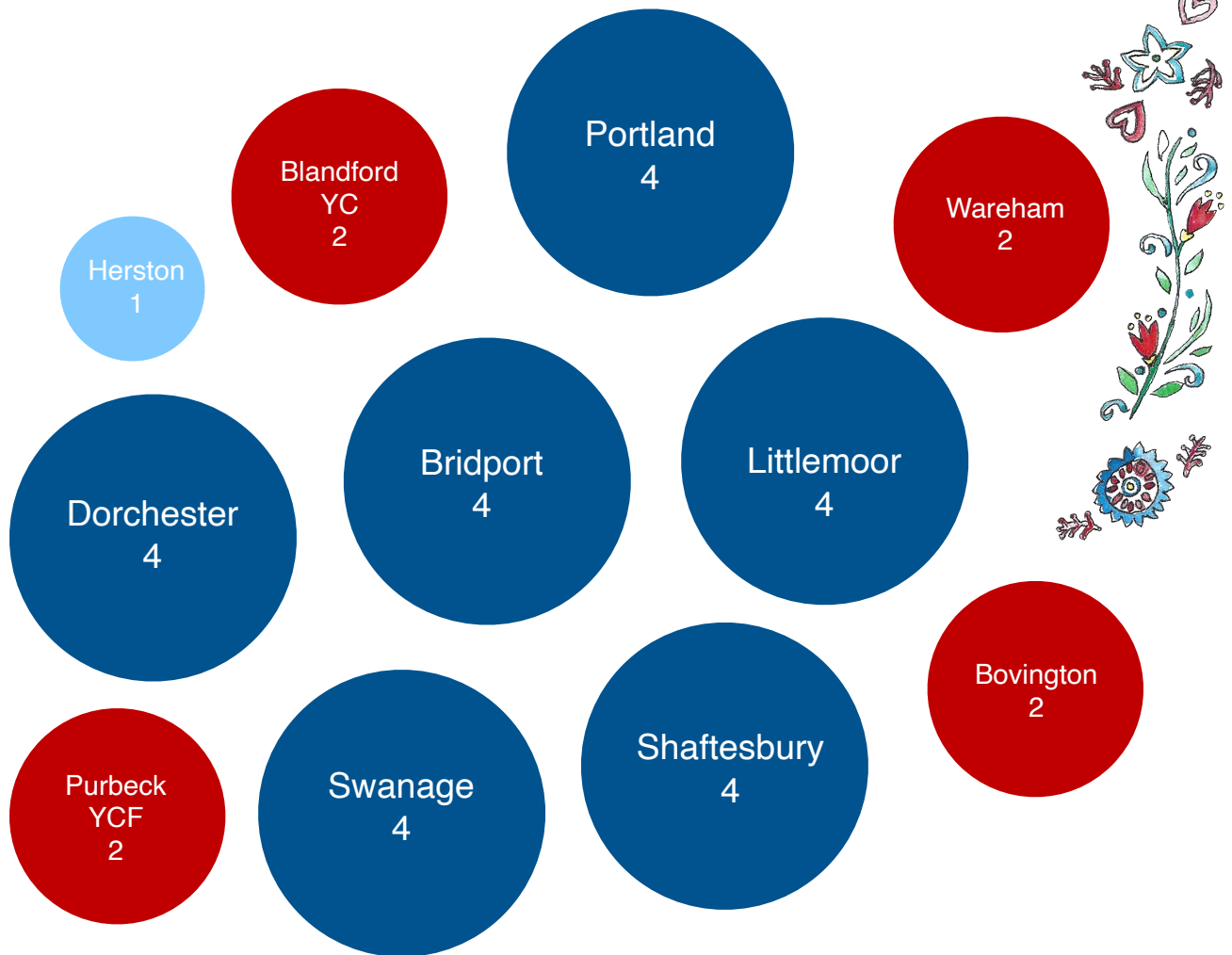


Sustainability Challenges: The team concluded that a commercial "pay-to-attend" model is not viable as it would fundamentally alter the "unconditional care" that defines the service, meaning future sustainability remains dependent on grant funding.

"Expanding the team was not a one-way exchange of Babigloo training others and offering work, but there were reciprocal benefits to Babigloo of widening the music leading team – bringing different perspectives and skills that enhanced Babigloo."

Evaluator's summary

Key Attendance Insights: Babigloo Youth Music Catalyzer Fund 2024-25



Venue	Number of programmes delivered	Venue	Number of programmes delivered
Littlemoor	4	Swanage	4
Portland	4	Bovington	2
Bridport	4	Wareham	2
Dorchester	4	Shaftesbury	4
Purbeck YCF	2	Blandford YC	2

Conclusion

The path Babigloo has taken to scale up and reach a greater number of families has been taken in a sustainable way. It has added capacity, but the associated admin and management have been manageable. Growing too quickly is a risk for any organisation, but the evidence presented in this report suggests that Babigloo have expanded successfully and retained the important essence of the approach.

There is a challenge to overcome in securing funding for further work but work towards this by the Babigloo team is ongoing. This evaluation adds to the already significant amount of evaluation evidence from previous programmes about the value Babigloo has for families. Intended outcomes have been achieved and learning which develops the practice has occurred.

**Taken from Full Report produced by Dr Nell Farrally
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Graphics throughout Liv Handley (Participating Parent)

Babigloo would like to thank all babies and participant families, venues and its key partners including:

Dorset Family Hub Network

Dorset Early Years

Octagon Music Hub

Dorset Music Service (Octagon)

Bridport Arts Centre

Shaftesbury Arts Centre

Dorpip

Swanage & Purbeck Development Trust
Centre

BSharp ME (West)

The Arts Development Co.

Activate

Take Art Ltd

Soundwaves South West

And especially:

