Connecting Parents through Peer Support, Music and Wellbeing

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Executive Summary

Introduction

'We are all working together amazingly, and it's nice to see the collaboration of all the partners together.'

Parents 1st UK, B3 CIC and Live Music Now succeeded in gaining a PHAB (Public Health Accelerator Bid) grant from Essex County Council. The grant was to develop and deliver an innovative new project, which took place in Tendring (including Clacton and Jaywick) and Basildon between September 2024 and March 2026.

Connecting Parents through Peer Support, Music and Wellbeing aimed to reduce inequalities in perinatal health and wellbeing for mothers, fathers, partners and babies. While the project was aimed at all parents facing health inequalities, there was a particular focus on Black African and Caribbean mothers, who face more profound maternal health inequalities.

WSA Community was the evaluation partner for the project. We worked with the partners to agree clear outcomes for the evaluation, forming a Theory of Change.

Context

Basildon and Tendring have the highest mortality and morbidity rates in Essex. In addition, African, Caribbean, Asian and vulnerable families are impacted by high levels of perinatal health inequality.

The project's partners worked together to deliver the following four core element:

1. ***A series of group-work activities delivered by B3:*** These informal and culturally focused groups, led by an experienced midwife, targeted pre- and post-birth Black African and Caribbean women as a means of nurturing healthy lifestyles, mutual social support and a sense of belonging.
2. ***The Lullaby Project delivered by Live Music Now:*** Pre- and post-birth mothers, fathers / partners were invited in 8 cohorts to create a lullaby for their baby. Supported by experienced musicians worked alongside them to build their confidence and talents
3. ***Peer-support activities delivered by Parents 1st and B3:*** Building on existing activities and networks, as well as forging new relationships through outreach, peer supporters nurtured parent engagement.
4. ***Development and delivery of new training:*** This addressed some identified gaps in the existing training by Parents 1st for peer supporters, and focused on improved cultural competence and a perinatal mental-health training package for the Live Music Now musicians.

Changes for parents

'It's definitely changed for us, in the sense of we only went to like one play group, and then we went to the Lullaby, and now it's like

branched out, and I'll meet up with the mums regularly. And – you know? – we're at different groups every day of the week.'

The evaluation unpacks a wide range of findings with the following outcomes having been achieved for parents and families:

1. ***Better informed/more confident about bonding with their babies:*** Parents felt better informed in general about parenting, and about caring for themselves and their babies, which led to a sense of improved resilience. This along with closer bonding were key to the experiences of parents during this project.
2. ***Expanded social relationships:*** Parents valued the new relationships they built with others in the neutral settings of the project, which led to a sense of informal peer support. Being able to share experiences was reassuring and validated the thoughts and emotions of participants, resulting in them feeling better able to cope with the challenges of parenthood.
3. ***Reduced isolation and improved mental wellbeing:*** Parents reported reduced isolation with some parents who didn't know any others before now going to a number of groups and having felt they had built connections. This led to improvements in mental wellbeing.
4. ***More prepared for labour or birth:*** Pregnant parents spoke of more positive birthing experiences as a direct result of the project. (This applied to Cohorts 3 and 4: in the first half of the programme, this outcome was difficult to measure, as no pregnant parents were involved in Cohorts 1 and 2.)
5. ***More confident about accessing public services:*** Parents learnt about other local parenting groups and sessions, and – where the involvement of healthcare professionals was required – parents felt more confident communicating with them.
6. ***Celebration of heritage and cultural competence:*** The project brought parents from different cultures together and there was a focus, in the music workshops, on embracing cultural heritage and sharing music across cultures.

Changes for Partners

'I've learned that over the time that [I'm] with the groups there's this communal, community learning, and supporting of one another.'

1. ***Improvements in work-related wellbeing:*** All partner organisations and those involved in project delivery who we interviewed reported increases in wellbeing and a sense of fulfilment from their involvement in the project.
2. ***Music building relationships:*** There was clear evidence from all the partners that the unique and trusting relationships that musicians developed with parents while creating their lullabies meant that parents felt more comfortable sharing how they felt more quickly than they would without the musical element. Some shared vulnerabilities and more personal matters.
3. ***Partnership working:*** The partners all outlined the benefits of working together and recognised that each organisation brought something different to

the collective offer of the project. The teams in both Basildon and Clacton found ways to connect and work together, and acknowledged a shared set of values.

4. ***Outcomes for specific partners:*** As lead partner, **Parents 1st** coordinated the partnership and was involved in the management and reporting. The project helped to support the evolution of **B3 (Bumps, Birth and Belonging)**, building their capacity and knowledge, and establishing lasting relationships and communities in areas of Essex where they hadn't previously worked. **Live Music Now** brought the music expertise, but reported how helpful it was to work with Parents 1st and B3 because they had on-the-ground relationships with parents, and access to local services and partners in the community.

Key Learnings

'The individual relationships between the peer supporters and the musicians and how they've come together collectively to lift up the parents that we've been working with. You know, the confidence, the resilience, the ability to form those ongoing bonds.'

What has been clear through this evaluation is that the relational approach of the project was of huge benefit to all involved. Relationships were key throughout the project, between musicians and peer supporters; peer supporters and parents; musicians and parents; peer supporters and other local organisations (e.g. family hubs); and, above all, at senior and ground level between the three key partners.

For parents and families:

- musicians were able to learn more about the parents, their families, and their heritage and background, and to deliver focused sessions that encompassed these aspects of family life
- the group support provided more holistic discussions, reassuring participants and building confidence
- the differing needs of parents in different cohorts aligned with the situation in different local areas, with higher levels of deprivation in Clacton resulting in more vulnerable parents attending there, often with greater need for support
- the need for and impact of culturally tailored support cannot be underestimated, with the B3 sessions notable for the informal peer support they made possible

For partners:

- Peer supporters really supported the parenting conversations, and the musicians were confident that parents' needs would be supported by Parents 1st or B3 between sessions. The partnership was particularly strong in this way, with peer support working alongside musicians very successfully.
- The project's training and support were pivotal to supporting all partners.
- All partners talked about the potential for future joint working, in terms of both informal ongoing support and, where possible, securing continued funding.

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Acknowledgments

With many thanks to all the parents and families, including dads/partners and grandparents, who spoke to us as part of this evaluation. We appreciate the three partner organisations for spending time with us through interviews or focus groups and also providing data to help tell the story of change the project has made.

Introduction

Parents 1st UK, B3 CIC and Live Music Now succeeded in gaining a PHAB (Public Health Accelerator Bid) grant from Essex County Council. The grant was to develop and deliver an innovative new project from September 2024 to March 2026, with each of the three partners bringing complementary experience and skills:

- **Parents 1st UK:** an Essex-based charity with well-established perinatal peer-support programmes operating in the target areas. Parents 1st wove perinatal peer support into the fabric of the project.
- **B3 (Bumps, Birth and Belonging) CIC:** an Essex-based social enterprise specialising in supporting Afro-Caribbean and minoritised parents during the perinatal period. B3 brought cultural expertise in working with Black African and Caribbean mothers.
- **Live Music Now:** a national charity that creates inclusive, measurable social impact through music. Live Music Now uses music to improve perinatal mental health and baby bonding through the Lullaby Project. The Lullaby Project was new to Essex at the beginning of this project, but had previously been delivered in 17 areas across England and Wales.

Connecting Parents through Peer Support, Music and Wellbeing aimed to reduce inequalities in perinatal health and wellbeing for mothers, fathers, partners and babies. While the project was aimed at all parents facing health inequalities, there was a particular focus on Black African and Caribbean mothers, who face more profound maternal health inequalities. The project took place in Tendring (including Clacton and Jaywick) and Basildon. The base for Tendring was Clacton, hence references to Clacton throughout the report, but we recognise that some of the parents travelled to attend from other areas of Tendring.

WSA Community was the evaluation partner for this project. We have worked with the partners to agree some clear outcomes for the evaluation, forming a Theory of Change. The overall outcomes are:

1. Parents will feel more prepared for labour and birth, which will lead to more positive birthing experiences.
2. Parents and partners will be better informed and more confident about bonding, caring for themselves and their babies, and parenting more generally, which will lead to improved resilience and sense of agency.
3. Parents will feel more confident about accessing public services and communicating with professionals involved in their care.
4. Parents will feel less isolated, build new social relationships and support networks, feel better able to cope with the challenges of parenthood, and report improved wellbeing.
5. Peer supporters and musicians will have better knowledge, skills and understanding about Cultural Competency, and will experience self-reported improvements in work-related wellbeing.
6. Partnership organisations will embrace new opportunities for joint learning and creative practice, and explore the value added from partnership working.

Context

This project was established to address inequalities in perinatal mental health experiences in Basildon and Tendring. These areas have the highest mortality and morbidity rates in Essex. In addition, African, Caribbean, Asian and vulnerable families in Basildon and Tendring suffer high levels of perinatal health inequality. The mental health of parents during the perinatal period is an important public health issue that has a profound impact on the physical, social and emotional development of babies[1].

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The project's partners worked together to deliver the following four core elements:

5. ***A series of group-work activities delivered by B3:*** These informal and culturally focused groups, led by an experienced midwife, targeted pre- and post-birth Black African and Caribbean women as a means of nurturing healthy lifestyles, mutual social support and a sense of belonging. Groups were set up in Basildon and Clacton, with 16 sessions in Basildon, including 3 walks, and 15 sessions with participants from Clacton, of which 4 were virtual. In addition, 7 mums took up the in-house counselling offered by B3.
6. ***The Lullaby Project delivered by Live Music Now:*** Pre- and post-birth women, fathers and partners were invited in 8 cohorts, 4 in Basildon and 4 in Clacton, to create a lullaby for their baby. Parents were introduced to the project by their Parents 1st peer supporter, by B3, and by external advertising. Using groupwork and one-to-one support, experienced musicians worked alongside them to build their confidence and talents in creating 57 lullabies for their families (27 in Basildon and 30 in Clacton).
7. ***Peer-support activities delivered by Parents 1st and B3:*** Building on existing activities and networks, as well as forging new relationships through outreach, peer supporters nurtured parent engagement. Parents 1st peer supporters have extensive Level 3 accredited training and regular supervision, which equips them to provide continuing support to parents throughout pregnancy, during the labour and birth process, and then ongoing throughout the postnatal period. Peer supporters were present in all of the Lullaby sessions, encouraging the development of trusting relationships, as well as offering additional one-to-one support.
    a. For B3, this included one-to-one support with 6 mums.
    b. Parents 1st were already providing peer support to 11 mums, 6 in Basildon and 5 in Clacton. At referral to Lullaby, the needs of those already receiving peer support included reducing isolation and a desire to meet other mums, mental-health support, and wanting to enhance family wellbeing, relationships or parenting confidence.
    c. Parents 1st staff referred 6 parents to B3 following Lullaby.
    d. Out of those attending Lullaby in Clacton, 26 also attended regular coffee connections and one-off events.

[1] Prevalence of maternal mental illness among children and adolescents in the UK between 2005 and 2017: a national retrospective cohort analysis

8. ***Development and delivery of new training:*** This addressed some identified gaps in the existing training by Parents 1st for peer supporters, and focused on improved cultural competence. A perinatal mental-health training package was developed and delivered to the Live Music Now musicians to prepare them for any parental mental-health issues they might encounter during the Lullaby Project. This was recorded, so musicians joining the programme later could benefit from the training, too.

Methodology

We approached this evaluation using a range of methods to help capture change. These included interviews, focus groups and observations. Reflective diaries were used by peer supporters, musicians and coordinators to capture feedback in the moment. We went to the celebration events for the first and third cohorts in each area. This enabled our team to really listen to the parents and understand what had changed for them, as well as hearing their beautiful lullabies, and we gave people opportunities to share what difference this project had made for them, both in small focus groups and in paired and individual interviews. Our intention was to understand the experience of all involved, and the changes that being involved had made for parents, families and the partners involved.

Across this evaluation the following interviews and engagement took place. Please note that some people might have contributed to more than one element of the evaluation, so this count is the total number of interactions rather than the total number of people:

- 26 parents were involved through focus groups, interviews or written feedback.
- 33 parents and 6 grandparents attended the Cohort 1 and 3 celebration events and talked to our team.
- 34 stakeholders from the 3 partner organisations were interviewed or took part in a focus group, including musicians, peer supporters and coordinators.
- More than 35 people attended the Cultural Competence training, run jointly by the Public Health Nurse and B3 as part of the training package for this project. We observed this session.
- We also received reflective diaries and feedback collected from musicians at the beginning, middle and end of the cohorts.
- In addition, the Public Health Nurse supporting the project for Parents 1st shared data on the Wheel of Circumstance, showing the changes for the individual parents involved.

The data we had collected ourselves was then considered, alongside some of the secondary data collected by partners. This included Wheel of Circumstance data, showing the self-reflected progress of parents in a range of areas, including scale questions in relation to:

1. Labour and birth
2. Pregnancy
3. Parenting

4. Bonding with baby
5. Breastfeeding
6. Physical health
7. Mental health and wellbeing
8. Economic circumstances
9. Housing
10. Personal relationships
11. Social networks
12. Services

This Wheel of Circumstance data was collected for each mother, at the start and at the end of their cohort of Lullaby sessions. Before and after data was available for 47 mothers, from 7 out of 8 cohorts. When comparing the total average scores across all the domains for all the 47 mothers, 40 (85%) mothers showed positive change by the end of their Lullaby sessions and 7 (15%) mothers showed negative change. Two of the 7 mothers showing the largest negative change had faced particularly challenging personal circumstances whilst attending the lullaby sessions, including domestic violence and homelessness. Nevertheless, these mothers still showed some positive change for individual domains including improved baby bonding and breastfeeding. In fact 5 of the 7 mothers in this group had a number of areas of positive change within the Wheel of Circumstance and the other two had most areas remaining the same. When comparing the total average scores for all 47 mothers across individual domains, the largest improvements were for feeling emotionally well, feeling physically well, and improved social networks.

Demographic Information

In order to provide some contextual background information about the participants, their postcodes were used to identify areas and levels of deprivation according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). The analysis was to ensure that those who are most marginalised – and who often do not have access to support or services – were able to benefit from this programme.

	Below 10% IMD	**10%-20% IMD**
Clacton	40.5%	24.0%
Basildon	10.0%	17.5%

The table above – which amalgamates data from cohorts for both Basildon and Clacton, and from the Lullaby sessions and B3 sessions – shows that just over 40% of Clacton parents and 10% of Basildon parents are living in the most-deprived areas in England. Just under a quarter of Clacton parents (24%) and 17.5% of Basildon parents are living in the next decile (between 10% and 20%) of highest deprivation. The data suggests that this programme (especially in Clacton) is reaching those who are traditionally excluded from access to support and services due to the many factors contributing to deprivation, such as low incomes, health deprivation, crime, or reduced employment opportunities.

Additionally, the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) – a proxy indicator for risk factors that affect perinatal wellbeing – shows that in Basildon 12.5% of participating families lived in areas ranked in IDACI Decile 1 and 20% lived in Decile 2 areas; in Clacton, 43.2% of participating families lived in areas ranked in Decile 1 and 35.1% lived in Decile 2 areas. This reflects a high level of income deprivation affecting children for these participating families, again most significantly in Clacton.

	IDACI Decile 1	**IDACI Decile 2**
Clacton	43.2%	35.1%
Basildon	12.5%	20%

In terms of ethnicity, the Lullaby Project reached 68% White British mothers and 5% White European. The remainder were from various backgrounds such as Black African, Black Caribbean, Asian or Mixed/Dual Heritage.

Ethnicity	**Total**	**Percentage**
White British	42	68%
Black British	5	8%
Black African	5	8%
White European	3	5%
Black Caribbean	2	3.2%
Any other Asian background	1	1.6%
Any other Mixed or Dual Heritage background	1	1.6%
Indian	1	1.6%
Any other Black background	1	1.6%
Caribbean Mixed or Dual background	1	1.6%
Total	**62**	**100%**

B3 services that specifically catered to Black mothers reached those from both Black African and Black Caribbean backgrounds, and a few from Dual or Mixed Heritage backgrounds:

Ethnicity	Number of mothers	
Black British	6	30%
African	4	20%
Any other Mixed or Dual Heritage	3	15%
Black British African descent	3	15%
Black African	2	10%
White and Black Caribbean	1	5%
Black British Caribbean descent	1	5%
Total mothers (data available)	**20**	100%
Missing data	2	
Overall total of mothers	**22**	

Changes for Parents and Families

The outcomes listed below originate from the Theory of Change and the Evaluation Framework that we created. Parents experienced many changes, both as individuals and at a societal level, and evidence of these changes has been gathered through focus group sessions, interviews and observations.

Four broad outcomes were identified within the Evaluation Framework, each of which included specific indicators to enable us to measure more detailed changes experienced by parents:

1. Parents will feel more prepared for labour and birth, which will lead to more positive birthing experiences.
2. Parents and partners will be better informed and more confident about bonding with their babies, caring for themselves and their babies, and parenting more generally, which will lead to improved resilience and more of a sense of agency.
3. Parents will feel more confident about accessing public services and communicating with the professionals involved in their care.
4. Parents will feel less isolated, build new social relationships and support networks, feel better able to cope with the challenges of parenthood, and report improved wellbeing.

The interim evaluation highlighted that Outcome 2 and Outcome 4 above were more commonly experienced by parents, with Outcome 1 less so because there were no pregnant parents in the first two cohorts. In the third and fourth cohorts, however, pregnant parents took part, so Outcome 1 about labour and birth was more fully experienced. Outcome 3 was experienced to a limited extent overall, with parents becoming more aware of other parenting groups, or developing confidence in speaking to their current healthcare professionals; however, they did not access other public healthcare services as a direct result of this programme.

The analysis of this data has drawn out below under six main themes, exploring the degree to which parents felt more prepared for labour and birth; experienced improvements in their mental health and wellbeing; developed new and improved connections with friends and family; increased in confidence and bonded with their babies; were able to explore intergenerational and cross-cultural heritage; and found out how to access further support.

1. Parents feel more prepared for labour and birth

Individual and group peer support provided to pregnant parents through the Lullaby programme or B3 services included allaying fears about birth, providing reassurance to pregnant mothers who had previously had negative experiences in the hospital or with healthcare staff, managing birthing expectations among black and ethnic minority mothers, and even running an information session for expectant mothers.

One mother from a Black background had previously had a caesarean section but was adamant that with her second child she wanted a vaginal birth after caesarean

(VBAC), as this was culturally important to her. After having one-to-one support throughout her pregnancy from a peer supporter, where her expectations were being managed and she was being advised that anything could happen on the day of the birth, she felt that this enabled her to cope, especially when, in the end, she did have to have another caesarean.

> *'I really wanted to be induced and try and have VBAC. Unfortunately, it didn't go the way I planned. It ended up being a C-section. It was a nightmare, and I was exhausted by then, [but] that encouragement did help me know that OK, things may not go how I would like to, and how we plan, but just focus on maybe being here.'*

Another parent was particularly vulnerable after her partner left during her pregnancy. The mother's peer supporter was able to work collaboratively with the perinatal mental health team to help her access housing support, claim child benefit and receive some statutory benefits. This support was essentially life-saving:

> *'She [the peer supporter] met me at the beginning, when I was pregnant, because I almost committed suicide – I was five months pregnant – because my partner left me and my child.'*

Staff involved in the Lullaby Project and the peer support noticed how sessions gave an opportunity for mums to speak about their births, especially to other new mothers.

> *'I noticed with some of the mums, it's kind of like they would express something that they hadn't necessarily had a chance to say. Because, obviously, they've just got their little babies, they've been through this birth. They might not be able to talk to, you know, family members and other people about what they've just experienced.' (Staff member)*

> *'I was asked by a friend who's done it to take part as a healing experience, because I had a very rare, traumatic birth, and I wasn't ready to apply the first few times.'*

> *'[One parent] had such a traumatic birth experience, and when she came back out to the room [from the songwriting session with a musician]… and she said, it's the first time I've actually spoken to anybody about this. I've kept it in this whole time, so it just opened the door.' (Staff member)*

B3 also ran an information session for parents about preparing for labour and birth, which some parents found particularly beneficial as they had not received such detailed information prior to that.

'I loved the session that I had with [B3]. It was a virtual session, and we got to learn about the female anatomy. I class myself as a Type A mother, so I am always on ChatGPT, I'm always researching, so some of the stuff I knew, but it was helpful to have her expertise to kind of… validate what I knew, or, you know, kind of teach me more around, like, effacement of the cervix, and dilation, and things like that. I'm somebody that I really needed that, and you don't get that when you have your hospital, midwife, or consultant-led care at all, but this is a lot more in-depth.'

Additionally, peer support enabled some mothers to feel more prepared for labour and birth through simple guidance such as preparing their hospital bag. Normally this information is given to mothers later in their pregnancy, but having it sooner meant mothers were less anxious.

'When I needed to pack my hospital bag we had a FaceTime call, and we spoke, and then you said that you were gonna send me some things and then you sent it, and that list really helped me, and I used that list to kind of tick off everything that I needed, so I felt prepared.'

One parent who had accessed individual peer support during her pregnancy spoke of the positive impact this had on her and her baby. Having very little family support and few friends, this parent often felt isolated and lonely. During pregnancy, her child was diagnosed with restricted growth, and she struggled to navigate her pregnancy through this difficult time, especially when it came to making decisions. She appreciated how her peer-support worker helped her to think through her options in a very realistic way, and she built a strong level of trust with this worker.

'She'd go back and get resources for me on any information that I wanted to know. Obviously, she's got personal experience having her own children, so it's just… it's nice, like having an experienced friend.'

2. Improvement in mental health and wellbeing

The impact on parents' mental health and their improved wellbeing was very noticeable. Some parents highlighted their struggles just leaving the house to attend the Lullaby sessions, but explained that they had no regrets having done so, because they felt much better after attending.

'The first time, I felt like I was going to pass out, and then the second time was all right. I felt more happier.'

Parents highlighted their sense of loss when the group wasn't meeting and talked about the extremely positive impact of the meetings.

'I think it's just when I think it's something to look forward to. But I've noticed when the Lullaby group hasn't been on, I've been more stressed.'

'The Lullaby Project had a beautifully positive impact on my wellbeing. It allowed me to be creative, expressive and fun. I will forever be thankful for the opportunity presented.'

Meeting other parents who also struggled with mental health reassured some parents that their thoughts and feelings were entirely valid, which helped to reduce negative stigma around mental ill-health.

'Someone just told me that they had something where they struggled and I thought: I'm not on my own – I'm not. Because I feel like a nutcase on my own.'

'I've had depression, anxiety, and loads of things like that. So, yeah, it does help. Like, I think, actually socialising… because if you're shut in all the time you're isolated.'

Parents recognised the value of meeting other parents on a regular basis, learning about their experiences and challenges, and feeling reassured that they were not alone. This informal peer support was impactful on an emotional and practical level, which is not always easy to define. However, it had underlying holistic benefits:

'Each session is like a counselling session without people saying to you, "What's wrong and what are you doing?".'

While meeting other parents weekly and socialising helped parents to reduce anxiety and stress, the actual process of creating a lullaby and working one-to-one with the musicians was in itself a form of stress relief.

'I did feel less stressed after the sessions to be honest… especially with the dongs and the little bits I did with her, singing and playing instruments.'

'The fact that I had to go and be somewhere every week… my anxiety is going to get the better of me and I did actually enjoy it. I've met loads of new people, somehow made a coherent lullaby.'

'Overall, it has been a very therapeutic and healing experience.'

'I have found singing to be really emotionally regulating.'

Parents felt an immense level of achievement in having created a lullaby for their child, which also had a positive impact on their overall wellbeing. Those participants who felt they were not musical or had no singing ability had a particularly strong sense of accomplishment and pride that they had created something for their child that would be everlasting.

'She could listen to it when she's older and say, my mom wrote a song… we done that, and it's like I think it might make her feel like she can do anything, like she can make something of herself. She could write a song, and she can have the confidence to do that.'

'I can't believe I wrote a song!'

'It's given me more confidence, a sense of achievement.'

'This is different, it was something for me, it was an identity and a purpose.'

'Every time I sing that song everyday it reminds me of who I am.'

An important factor in the success of the one-to-one peer support was the fact that parents did not feel judged by the peer-support worker. One parent who was going through the challenges of being a new parent turned to eating more. This provided her with much-needed comfort, so not having to worry about being judged negatively by the peer supporter helped her.

Another distinct benefit of peer support was that parents had the opportunity to talk about potentially sensitive issues, which perhaps might not have been appropriate in the group sessions. One mother who was a mental-health nurse had been used to listening to other people and helping them, but she often had no one to speak to herself. Her conversations with her peer supporter allowed her the space to open up:

'I would say that, with the group, I was always kind of… a bit cautious about saying certain things, because I didn't also want things to be triggers. Whereas… the personal support, I could say what I'm thinking, and feel free about saying that.'

As well as being involved in group and peer-support sessions hosted by B3, some parents accessed the individual counselling service available to them as part of this project. One parent in particular, who had recently lost her own mother, experienced high levels of anxiety and isolation at the start, but was able to improve her overall

mental health and resilience, and take crucial steps towards processing her emotions and healing.

'I have benefited with free grief counselling following the passing of my dear mum… and [during a separate talk] I saw the breakdown of what was being taught and saw a nurse doing a talk on sickle cell. This is ultimately what caused my mother's passing. It was therefore incredibly meaningful for me to see it being talked about as it is something that has limited funding and research and isn't talked about often.'

As part of the overall improvements to their wellbeing, some parents began activities that led to healthier lifestyle behaviours. They noted how they had met people they would otherwise not have had the opportunity to meet: in some cases, this led to new friendships developing, and parents arranging to meet outside the sessions. One such activity arranged by a group of parents in the first cohort was a weekly walking group, while another parent decided to walk to the sessions as a way of improving her fitness. A parent also mentioned that, despite other challenges she was facing in her life, she was still ensuring that she went out with her baby.

These outcomes were echoed through the Wheel of Circumstance results, where the largest positive change for the second cohorts in Basildon and in Clacton was 'feeling more physically healthy'.

'It's definitely opened up a whole new mummy world for me.'

'I am able to carry on going out with the baby despite other stuff going on in my personal life.'

Musicians noted, too, that – through the course of the Lullaby Project – parents gained confidence in making decisions about their actual lullaby, when initially they had been hesitant. They began taking control of decisions about what type of music they wanted or the lyrics that should be used.

'So it was really nice to see the decision-making happening towards the end, as their input was becoming stronger and stronger.'

3. New and improved connections with friends and family

Making new friends and increasing the number of connections they had was a strong outcome for parents during the Lullaby sessions:

'Definitely met lots more friends, and then met more friends from their friends.'

'I think it's definitely helped. And you know my son gets out every day socialising every day, which is, you know, that's important.'

'I just kind of like don't socialise with people. And it really surprised me to go: oh, I've got someone's phone number like we've swapped numbers kind of thing… I've actually made a friend!'

'I really liked that we were there to make a lullaby, as I go to a lot of baby groups but often don't talk to anyone else as everyone seems to already know other people there. It can be hard to start a conversation.'

'It has given me the confidence to go to other baby groups, as I previously struggled with getting out of the house.'

A parent who had accessed one-to-one peer support noticed the improvement in her relationship with her older, first child. She said that she had been more focused on the baby, but, after the peer support, she is consciously making more time for the older child.

'So I started trying more, you know, not giving excuses because of the baby, trying to create the same time for her [elder sibling]. And, honestly, the relationship has been very awesome. Like, you know, it's as simple as we come from school, and she doesn't want to go upstairs. Now she wants us to spend time together, and I allow it. I'm not in a rush to say: "Oh, I need to get the baby", you know. I just let things flow, and that has really been helpful.'

'It helped our daughter understand that she has a brother coming, that was one of the things we were trying to figure out, was how do we get her to understand there's a new dynamic coming into our lives… so it's been a much more smoother transition for us.'

Others talked about how all the members of the family know the lullaby – in some cases, the extended family, including grandparents, too. They talked about older siblings singing it to younger siblings and about babies recognising their song. The family bonding was a definite benefit of the project.

'Really is lovely – they do say music brings people together. I think it just makes us smile and feels nice. Some things can really mount up and build up. Really makes a better connection between all of us… something for the whole family.'

'[One parent] talked about sharing the song with her mum, who also loves music, and this made me realise that the song has a life outside of our sessions and can become a part of other relationships, not just between parent and child.' (Staff member)

Similarly, at the Lullaby sessions, a parent noticed how she and her husband had become closer through the process of creating a lullaby for their child. Separately, a father who had taken part in the Lullaby programme spoke of the need for more opportunities for fathers to be included in parenting programmes.

'Me and my husband have gotten closer through filling out the book and writing the song together.'

'The project also helps people who aren't attending – for example, my husband and parents now sing to my baby much more, which she loves.'

'From a dad's perspective… this project helped [me] to be involved in something that will stay in our family forever. Sometimes parent initiatives are focused on mums and there aren't too many projects/groups for dads. This project felt like it wasn't for either parent but for both, which was nice.'

At the B3 group peer-support session, when discussing their 'village', parents mentioned who else they would like to be a part of their 'village', and most said they would like their own mums, their sisters and their aunties. They remembered how they had grown up with their aunties being a big part of their lives, but this was no longer the case for their own children, in some ways emphasising the need for more effort to be made with regard to bonding with families and friends.

'Times have changed. We grew up with our aunties – I expected that would be the same with our kids.'

4. Improved confidence and better bonding

One of the most significant outcomes from the programme as a whole – from the Lullaby sessions and group peer-support sessions – was the amount of valuable parental bonding that took place. Some parents had struggled to bond with their children due to traumatic experiences at childbirth, while others were new mums and had never expected to feel so close to their children.

'[I] always found a real struggle to really bond with my son, and just how difficult it was in the early days and pregnancy. And it [the

lullaby] was sort of asking about qualities and things like that. And as I began to think about it and write things down, it just got me thinking a bit more about what I do really appreciate about him rather than just that he's awake all night, he cries all the time… I appreciate him more.'

'It has been a lovely bonding experience for me and my baby.'

Another indication of this was parents finding new appreciation for their babies – and, in some cases, other children – and describing how positive the experience has been for their babies.

'Realising that they [children] are my safe space just as much as I am theirs.'

'For me, it was something that is out of my comfort zone, so a confidence boost to look forward, and I have achieved something. For [baby], he seems to love the music and reacts positively, so it is a nice bonding session too.'

Many parents commented that being part of this programme had built on already strong bonds. This is reflected in the Wheel of Circumstance results, where parents often scored themselves highly from the very start in terms of their level of bonding with their child.

'I found I have bonded more with my baby, which I didn't think was possible.'

'I already thought I had a strong bond with my baby but it has made our bond even stronger.'

Similarly, observations from the project team highlighted meaningful interactions that led to deeper bonding experiences:

'She finally said that she loves her child… which is something she'd not put into words.' (Staff member)

In the third cohort of Lullaby (Clacton), there was a strong healing element over the six weeks of the programme. This related both to the loss of parents and to healing after traumatic birth and life experiences. One parent lost her father while she was pregnant and incorporated some of his words into her song. Another parent who had lost her mother appreciated the fact that her child would have this lullaby, with her voice in it, in case something ever happened to her:

'So I lost my mom, and just thinking, like, if I had, like her voice, singing a song to me forever, would be really lovely. So the fact that he'll have that forever makes [me] feel like really emotional about it… but in a good way.'

The Lullaby sessions included parents who had varying levels of confidence in their parenting. Some felt confident in their skills, but others – new mothers, parents who had children later in life, or who had children after a long gap – felt less confident.

'Just constantly worried that it'd be too hard – I wouldn't be able to do it. I, you know… I wouldn't be good enough to do things and make decisions, and that I was going to get things wrong all the time, and, yeah, it's just… it's just come a lot more naturally than I expected it to. And I do think the confidence that [the peer supporter] instilled in me has helped with that.'

'Because I can ask questions, so I feel more confident, I don't have to worry about not knowing because I can just ask and be guided, so that has definitely helped being a parent.'

'Attending the Lullaby Project has changed her life completely and helped her to develop her self-confidence and recognise her worth as a person as well as a parent.' (Staff member)

During the one-to-one peer-support sessions, a parent received breastfeeding guidance and assistance from the peer-support worker. She had not seen many people around her breastfeeding, and those whom she had seen did not continue with it for long. She had also seen negative stories around breastfeeding, which made her less confident. The peer-support worker helped this parent with appropriate babywear, which was essentially a wrap that the parent could wear to make the breastfeeding process much easier. The parent spoke about the huge difference breastfeeding and wearing her baby had made, including that it was a very strong bonding experience. One particular milestone shared by the parent was when she ventured on a train journey, was able to feed her baby successfully, and felt a sense of accomplishment.

'I didn't know anyone that actually did baby wearing, so [the peer supporter] was a great help for that. And, yeah, I just feel like both [baby wearing and breastfeeding] have helped me bond so much with her, like, we're so close, it's unreal. And I do feel like both those things have contributed to that, and I wouldn't have been able to do either, I don't think, as successfully without [the peer supporter's] help.'

At one of the Lullaby sessions, a mother was struggling to breastfeed, despite seeking help from her health visitor. She felt her baby was not latching on properly,

resulting in slower growth, and she was instead encouraged to formula feed. However, after receiving support from the peer-support worker and also making friends with a fellow breastfeeding mum at the Lullaby sessions, her confidence in breastfeeding increased. Indeed, the Wheel of Circumstance results showed an improvement in confidence to breastfeed taking place in three of the four cohorts.

'I feel much more confident in my parenting now, especially with breastfeeding, as I was really struggling with this. Another breastfeeding mum attended, and talking to her helped me a lot.'

5. Exploration of intergenerational and cross-cultural heritage

Recognising and appreciating cultural backgrounds and heritage have been another key part of the programme. Although B3 specialise in working with parents from Black backgrounds, the Lullaby sessions included parents from other diverse backgrounds who also ensured their heritage was represented in their lullabies. One parent who had a Spanish background appreciated the fact that one of the musicians understood Spanish:

'My favourite part is the chorus, because it is in Spanish and that means a lot to me.'

One of the group peer-support sessions delivered by B3 was centred around 'Building your village'. This is where participants were asked (as mentioned above) who formed the 'village' of support around them, how they provided that support, and who else the parents would like to have in their village. Parents were from a variety of cultures, including Zimbabwean, Ghanaian, Barbadian, Jamaican and Nigerian, and in each case both partners were from a different backgrounds.

'I joined B3 because I wanted to also just kind of get to know other people, and then, just culturally, it was nice to have something there that we can relate to. When it comes to… the ethnicity, where different cultures, how we're treated in certain situations in regard to hospitals, appointments, all those stuff. Just knowing that there is someone available to speak to without feeling judged… OK, I can speak to someone comfortably, knowing that they may even… understand, just culturally, that background.'

One parent spoke of differences that had been challenging for her, especially as she was not familiar with the practices that were prominent in her husband's culture. Her mother-in-law was a part of her 'village' and sometimes questioned how this parent was raising her child, as it was different from what she knew. This caused the parent to lose confidence in her parenting. However, her husband was supportive, and B3 helped her to reflect on this , which made her feel better.

At the B3 group peer-support sessions, parents from a range of backgrounds discussed their own cultural heritage, expectations and practices, often finding similarities and sharing experiences. One particular group all had partners who were from one common background.

'[In other mainstream parent and child groups] I did notice I was the only person of colour in those groups, so I felt isolated e.g. when my child had eczema, I couldn't really explain this, they couldn't see it because it's not pink it's black. So it's nice to come into a group where they understand what I was facing. It's nice here that we have people with the same colour that we can communicate with.'

For mothers who were from black or ethnic minority backgrounds, they were very conscious of adapting their British identity as well as maintaining their cultural heritage when bringing up their children.

'…though I was born and raised here. Culture's a very, very big part, and culture's not just the Nigerian heritage, it's also being Black British practice and identity.'

'I think it's going to be easy for me to know what I want to drop from each [culture], and what I want to take, and how I want to kind of make a bespoke packaged parenting style for my child, for my children.'

One parent accessed more intense support from B3 through a therapist. She had six weeks of counselling sessions, which she states were very beneficial and allowed her to focus on herself, as she was so used to focusing on others:

'It's nice to know that there is access, and knowing, again, culturally as well, it was nice to have someone from same background, to speak to, because it makes a big difference in our responses, and how people respond to you as well.'

'There are a perception when it comes to Black women or African, Asian women having to be strong all the time, and, not… need as much support, as we would like or not expect to need it.'

Another essential need among Black parents related to specific health conditions that are prevalent in communities. Here the discussion of sickle cell is again important, with one parent highlighting the need for medical practitioners to become more aware of and knowledgeable about the disease, so that they can better support Black communities in early testing and diagnosis.

'I remember having an appointment with somebody who didn't understand what sickle cell was. Yeah. In 2025, we're in healthcare,

like that is a prevalent condition, blood disorder for… for people in the Black community. We could have done the test. I didn't do any of those tests… There's that gap that they don't know about it, they don't talk about it, and I think it definitely needs to be something that is spoken about more.'

6. Access to further support

As a result of attending Lullaby and group peer-support sessions, parents became more aware of services that were offered at the family hubs that they attended in each location. These tended to be other support-group sessions – for example, play groups and Home-Start – and one parent even found out about a support group for parents of twins in her area.

'A woman at Northlands told me there was a twin [support] group at Wickford… because apparently Wickford has a lot of twins!'

Awareness of professional healthcare support services, however, was more limited.

In one of the Clacton cohorts, parents attending were directly involved in setting up their own meet-up activities, open to all the mums who were part of Lullaby and others from the local area. One parent organised the weekly walking group mentioned above, while another organised a weekly café meet-up. These networks helped to engage parents beyond Lullaby and were a positive outcome of the work. They also helped to publicise and promote the Lullaby Project to further potential cohorts across a wider group of parents.

Where parents were experiencing very personal and individual challenges, their peer supporter facilitated contact between the parent and specialised support services catering to their specific needs. This included issues like safeguarding in relation to domestic violence and liaison with a wide range of support services and statutory bodies. .

Although other healthcare services were not accessed (or needed) as much as originally anticipated, the Lullaby sessions enabled a few parents to develop their confidence, especially when liaising with healthcare professionals. One parent who had unpleasant experiences with the health visitor, feeling that she had been 'told off', relayed these experiences to other parents who reassured and comforted her. This led to the parent having a much better experience when the health visitor next came round. Another was having a bad experience with her GP and, after discussion with other parents, gained the confidence to change surgery to one where she would be treated with more respect:

'The mum was kind of explaining issues that she'd had at the doctor's surgery, and, they kind of encouraged her perhaps that's not the best doctor's surgery, and that she should change to a

different doctor's surgery, because she wasn't being supported the way she should.' (Staff member)

Similarly, feeling like part of a group and making new friends helped build parents' confidence in their interactions with healthcare staff.

'I mean, definitely, I would say 100% across the board, every parent is so much more confident than the day they arrived, and would feel more confident to go and advocate for themselves.' (Staff member)

Changes for Partners

This section brings together the findings from interviews with the partner organisations, including peer supporters, musicians and those representing the three partner organisations (Parents 1st, B3 and Live Music Now). The findings are again based on the Theory of Change outcomes given in the Introduction, with the data this time shared under five key themes: how heritage and Cultural Competence were celebrated; how work-related wellbeing improved; how music helped build trusting relationships; and, finally, a consideration of the project's successes and challenges. *Please note that, for the first two of these themes, we took a broader approach to data-gathering that included musicians and partners, not just peer supporters.*

1. Celebration of Heritage and Cultural Competence

The project has brought parents from different cultures together and there has been a focus, within the music workshops, on embracing cultural heritage and sharing music across cultures.

> *'I felt that everyone felt safe to sing and join in. I loved the moment when I shared a song in Swahili, inspired by the name of one of the mums. Everyone learned it and also did some solo [call and response] with percussion.'*

In other examples, songs reflected first languages, including the bilingual lullaby, partly written in Spanish, described earlier. This also meant that there were different genres of music, reflecting the parents' choices but also the preferred style of the musician. This meant that parents created something, as a co-production, that was quite dynamic and reflected their culture.

> *'We've had musicians that have been able to reflect different genres of music, to reflect people's identity, and to use people's native language, and actually the feedback about that was so positive… if you can reflect their identity and be led by them, that's sort of a best-practice approach to take.'*

B3 have built on the support around heritage and building Cultural Competence. This is particularly the case for the peer-support group in Basildon, which has been established for the whole project and is now building a community and including parents who have come to the project via Lullaby and then stay involved in B3. The community support built has been evident across the interventions. In the second phase, B3 built a small group in Clacton, too, which has met a few times and shows there is a need to connect around culture. The members of both groups have been supported to share experiences and have gained a sense of community connection.

The B3 approach has been to reinforce confidence in and validate participants' identities, especially when there has been previous trauma. This is through the group

work but also the peer support. One example given was that wider family members did not recognise caesareans as 'proper' births; another was the support provided by B3 and the B3 community to a woman who was due to give birth but had previously suffered baby loss. Having a community that she could engage with made a massive difference, both initially through Lullaby and then through B3.

'It was just so nice to see her get out, just kind of reassured me that she's finding her feet, you know, because it can be difficult.'

To give an idea of the sharing of culture and heritage, some of the areas of discussion within the peer-support group established in Basildon by B3 were keeping native languages alive, mental health, cultural preservation, birth stories, grief, health-seeking behaviours, and how it feels moving to a new area. B3 have found that setting up a WhatsApp group to help participants who met at their peer-support group to build their own connections.

'After our telephone conversation, she said [it was so helpful] that she didn't think she needed any other support [than she had received in the B3 session]. She had previously felt so alone and isolated.'

The mix of individuals from diverse communities has increased in the second phase, as has the recognition that it is important to take time to build trust and a sense of community. The parents have valued these connections, so B3 are thinking about ways to continue to engage them. While it took longer to establish the B3 group in Clacton, there is now a distinct group who are very engaged. Working alongside the Parents 1st team in Clacton was really helpful, as they knew a number of Nigerian women, particularly, who would benefit from cultural connection:

'I'm just thinking about working in Clacton as well, just how… just being able to get the expertise of different people within Parents 1st, like the peer-support workers within Clacton and within Basildon, just getting their understanding of the, well, of the community and how to go about things the way that they was able to really help us.'

A finding emerging from the evaluation for B3 is that some Black and ethnic minority women want to engage in their peer support in a different way to the one-to-one sessions. They like being in a group with peers, with the peer supporter on hand to advise and support the whole group, sometimes picking up specific areas with individuals when needed later.

This stems, to an extent, from participants' experiences of services. When they have had one-to-one support, it is usually with a medical professional, so it doesn't feel very equal and is also time-limited. This – alongside the need for community connectivity, particularly with other women from different cultures – has solidified a

way of working that ensures peer support both through the peers in the group and the peer-support worker:

'I've learned that over the time that [I'm] with the groups there's this communal, community learning, and supporting of one another.'

This took some time to realise, with B3 on their own learning curve around what peer support and its delivery meant within this project. Through the process, B3 came to understand that a broader and more flexible approach worked better; examples of this include going on a walk with a parent or group of parents or meeting outside of more clinical settings. Since bringing in this model, engagement has increased, so this way of working has been further embedded.

A key part of the work within the project in this phase was to deliver a Cultural Competence training module for the partners. This was incredibly well planned and delivered by B3 and the Public Health Nurse, with around 35 people attending. The participants were mainly Parents 1st staff, along with two staff members from B3. The training included lots of space for discussion, as well as sharing data and information to raise cultural awareness. Some of the feedback included:

'The session was really eye-opening and made me much more aware of the issues at hand and how many parents experience cultural discrimination.'

'Raised my awareness and refreshed my knowledge of having unconscious bias.'

'Really useful, especially hearing from B3. Their insight was very beneficial and will help peer supporters in their practice. Good to have this forum to explore people's experiences and perspectives.'

In planning, it was a very important principle to ensure the training was reflective and enabled people to share around their own culture to ensure that barriers came down and a safe learning environment was created. At Parents 1st, this training is something that staff are still talking about:

'We've learnt a huge amount from B3, particularly around the cultural aspects and the challenges that the parents that they work with have faced, which has helped our team rethink how they work in different ways, and, again, that came out really, really loudly on the Cultural Competency Day.'

It has also been impactful for B3, as a new organisation, with them having learnt training skills that can be used in their work going forward. There are even now discussions about whether the module could be adapted and accredited so as to

become something that both Parents 1st and B3 can promote to support other organisations and partnerships:

'It actually becomes a qualification in its own right… So, potential there for a partnership between ourselves and B3 around that particular module, and the delivery of the training associated with that.'

2. Improvements in Work-related Wellbeing

Increases in wellbeing and a sense of fulfilment were reported by all partner organisations and those involved in project delivery who we interviewed. This was manifested differently for different people and those with different roles. One of the things that underpinned it was the alignment of shared values between the musicians and peer support, which meant that – from the onset – the peer supporters and musicians complemented each other's work.

The feedback from the musicians included appreciation of the opportunity to learn about the diverse experiences of parenthood, feeling inspired, developing their own artistic/creative practice, and recognising the parents' commitment to their lullabies and the desire to shape something personal to each parent. The value of the one-to-one time was recognised as a creative space for co-production between parent and musician as they worked on their lullaby. The safety of this space and the depth of conversation between musician and parent felt special to musicians, just as it did to parents:

'Each parent is navigating their own unique journey, with such varying connections and relationships with their child.'

'[I] feel incredibly nourished, warm and proud. Every participant has exceeded what they thought was possible. Their confidence, creativity and compassion – for themselves and one another – has been so powerful to witness.'

Some of the musicians talked about it being the best thing they do, a kind of creative work through which they feel connected in an industry that can be quite isolating or where it is easy to feel underappreciated:

'I mean, all of the musicians absolutely love doing this project. Some of them say, you know, it's the best work that they do.'

'It's just life-changing… coming from the point of view of being a musician and a songwriter, which is a very lonely, isolated job at times, to be able to… work with other musicians… having the partners there as well, and just having this whole kind of team… This project, I think, really makes you feel valued as a musician.'

The interpersonal skills of the musicians, especially when developing parents' confidence, really stood out. Some musicians were faced with quite challenging issues, with some parents sharing traumatic experiences, and they supported those parents to work out what they wanted to say in their lullabies, while ensuring they accessed the peer support on offer through each cohort. Alongside their gentle support, the musicians' real passion for sharing creativity with the parents stood out:

'Helping someone else kind of achieve what really is quite a huge thing, like, if you… if you think of yourself as not a musician, and you sign up to write, record, and perform a song – like that's massive.'

One musician, who had not worked with non-musicians before, was slightly apprehensive before joining the programme, but after seeing the end results, the creation of the lullabies and their impact on the parents, she is more confident.

'This is the first time that I've ever done songwriting with non-musicians, and that was something I was a little nervous about, because I've never done it before. I was worried that I wouldn't be able to kind of translate their feelings and thoughts into… like, into a song that they were happy with. But, actually, I think that's given me a lot of confidence, having been able to do that, and seeing what we've produced, and be really proud of them.'

Another musician talked about a session coming at a particularly difficult time for them, and how being involved had been personally healing. There was a further example of connecting with the Lullaby albums outside the session, when feeling down:

'Being part of something so nurturing and meaningful, surrounded by new life, was unexpectedly healing. I felt able to give something back to society.'

'An immense sense of pride at what we kind of achieved together, and I still go back… if I'm feeling down, if I listen to one of the Lullaby albums, like, I'll be fine in half an hour, you know.'

Another way in which the programme has supported the musicians' wellbeing is in helping them creatively to reconnect when finding it hard to write their own music. Lullaby has been important for a couple of the musicians in this way:

'Perhaps I'm in my own dry spell of, of creation; so, all of these new melodies get me in the process of writing, which is always good for my own creativity and my own process.'

The coordinators and peer supporters from Parents 1st also gave positive reports about the attention to wellbeing and the support provided for those involved, and

about the whole process of working alongside the musicians and other partners. The creative side had a very positive impact on members of the Parents 1st team:

'This is a lovely project and I said I wished this was available to my daughter and I when I was on maternity leave… I have learnt music and creativity are very therapeutic for babies and adults. No matter your age, ethnicity – music can unite.'

'I was probably as nervous as the mums on the first one. But actually… I quite enjoyed singing, and yeah, I get a lot out of that. It makes my day better, makes me feel better.'

In one case, a participant in one of the Clacton cohorts had got so much from the experience that she wanted to give back and get involved herself as a peer supporter:

'One [participant] has already registered her interest in being a volunteer peer supporter – I don't know if she mentioned this – but thinking about your question from the focus group the other day about the other benefits to Parents 1st as an organisation: this would be one too!'

One thing that came from peer supporters relating to wellbeing was a sense of strong values around the work, and a recognition of the importance of sharing experiences and learning together as parents:

'So reminding her that, yep, that's fine, and sharing my own experience, and I think that's what B3 is about, just sharing our experience. You learn through other people's experiences, whether it's similar or different… even if it's a different experience, it informs you of how things can look for other people.'

B3 recognised the importance of staff wellbeing, especially being a smaller and newer organisation. The initial peer-support training from Parents 1st was seen as very helpful in terms of identifying the needs of those they would be working with. It resulted in a noticeable increase in confidence about being able to fulfil the role. Having regular team check-ins and supervision supported the team, as did having work phones as a means of ensuring self-care for staff:

'Once work is finished, you need to be able to switch [the work phone] off and leave it alone. Or, when you're doing work like this, like heartfelt work, if someone sends you a message, you will reply because it's just in your nature.'

As well as the dedicated phones, tools like Wheels of Circumstance and the wider capacity-building support from Parents 1st supported the wellbeing of the B3 teams. It has helped with structure and provided a system for checking back, hence building confidence:

'So, through the Wheel of Circumstance, we set some goals, so I would always check in to see, OK, has she met that goal of packing the bag? What's the next thing she wants to work on?'

3. Music Building Relationships

'I feel very rewarded and touched by how this project has really benefited the families and given them something they can cherish all their lives (their words). They were all so proud of their songs on the celebration day… I feel really glad that I managed to create a song with them that they feel connected with emotionally and musically. It is a really beautiful gift to share with others my love for songwriting and make them experience this beautiful journey. And I love the songs too :)'

The impact of the creative intervention on how the parents opened up, particularly in the one-to-one sessions, was very clearly recognised and reflected in the feedback from all the partners. Clear evidence was provided by all the partners that the unique and trusting relationships that musicians developed with parents during the process of creating their lullabies meant that parents often felt more comfortable sharing how they were feeling about themselves, including vulnerabilities and more personal things, more quickly than they would without the musical element.

'I think the musicians are great at kind of bringing out that confidence through some sort of magic that they have with these ladies.'

'[Name of musician] was like my counsellor – it was like musical therapy.'

Bringing a creative element to peer-support work has been valuable for all the partners, and the musical element was a specific attraction for some parents, who wanted to have this experience with their babies. Through the gentle approach of all involved and the sense of safety created in the sessions, the levels of participation have been very positive:

'It was lovely to see the mums feel more comfortable and join in with the songs [name of musician] sang. One mum opened up to me regarding her current situation/current pregnancy.'

One musician talked about how she asked parents to talk about a typical morning – she finds this useful because it isn't asking for feelings or creative ideas, but is validating because it helps the parents recognise that they know things, and helps them to realise what they do and how amazing it is. Another talked about parents having the opportunity to say out loud what the struggles of parenting might be, as there is usually a social pressure to not do that, and explained that the process allowed for these deeper more honest discussions.

'I think that a really key part of the session is that it felt more authentic and less "performative" than some of the other workshops and performances I've done.'

'Parents engaged with each other socially, talking about their babies and their own name choices, as well as about the Lullaby Project. Confidence in singing seemed to grow as the session continued.'

Parents shared how positive the musicians had been to work with and how supportive they were. They talked about the musician being very much there just for that parent and child, and this was evident in how personal and unique everyone's songs were. One mum who suffered from anxiety said sessions were arranged at her convenience, and she never felt any pressure, which was important because when she feels under pressure she does not stick to things:

'You don't know the musicians from anywhere but they are very warm and you feel relaxed. They take your story and support [you] with ideas, and encourage you to bring out that vision.'

'It was nice to have someone that doesn't know you, making a song with you, and you are talking about your own life to them, and they are not judging.'

It is no coincidence that, to achieve such impactful and high-quality outcomes, the partnership was extremely positive. All partners strongly acknowledged that working with professional musicians and valuing them was very important to the success of this project. Parents 1st and B3 really felt they had their eyes opened to how working with a professional musician can have such a positive outcome for the parents involved. For the musicians, feelings of connection and that their work matters came across very strongly:

'To be able to, like, come into a situation like this and work with other musicians, not only other musicians, but, you know, having the partners there as well, and just having this whole kind of team… Being supported, being, like, respect the way that, you know, the respect that you are shown as a musician, which is unfortunately not always a part of your work. This project, I think, really makes you feel valued as a musician.'

The wider partnership approach supported this, and working alongside the peer supporters both ensured that parents were at ease in the sessions and helped the musicians better understand the parents' needs and other things that were going on for them.

> *'[Parent's 1st and B3] enhanced the musicians' understanding of participants as well, by being able to have those catch-ups… So I think that's been a really good support of the musicians and the delivery as well.'*

The strength of the partnerships really contributed positively to supporting the parents' experience. Some examples of this include affirming positive behaviour of children attending the session to reassure a mother who was apologising for them interrupting, and having opportunities for peer supporters to intervene or provide signposts for parents around wider issues or discussions. One specific thing that was noted by peer supporters as very positive for the parents was the physical warm-up and breathwork that the musicians did at sessions:

> *'[Name of peer-support worker] said that the physical warm-up and breathwork I did in the beginning were very useful, as some of the parents have anxiety issues and also don't have the chance to do physical activities. She said I can do more of it. I guess it's thinking about how to do it while the kids are playing around so that the parents can have a few moments to tune in to their bodies and themselves.'*

Similarly, partners talked about the impact of music on perinatal wellbeing, with evidence from the Royal College of Music cited – singing reducing the heart-rate and anxiety, and the power of singing together, were mentioned. All of this has an impact on better bonding between parent and baby, as well as having a positive impact on peer support and building connections.

In the first evaluation, there was some reflection around doing recordings remotely, which was the case for the Basildon groups. While the structure for this project in Basildon was hybrid in this way, it is being considered whether future delivery should move fully face to face.

4. Partnership Working

> *'That's probably the biggest thing that's come out of this, is being able to really learn about each other in a really relational way. You know, we're not rivals in any kind of way – we definitely have our own strengths, and we're just gonna keep on working together – but I don't think we would have really understood each other's organisation in the way that we have if this project didn't occur.'*

This programme is a three-way partnership, led by Parents 1st, working with B3 and Live Music Now. The partners have all outlined the benefits of working together and recognise that each organisation brings something different to their collective offer. The teams working in both Basildon and Clacton have found ways to connect and work together, and there is a clear acknowledgement of a shared set of values.

'We are all working together amazingly, and it's nice to see the collaboration of all the partners together.'

'The organisations are different, but have the same goals.'

While one of the biggest restraints on the project was time, being an 18-month programme, the potential for what could come beyond the 18 months for all three partners is huge. The initial challenges included the need to hit the ground running and set up ways of working together that were needed for delivery. The trust that has been built up between partners, leading to relational ways of working, cannot be underestimated, and already there are clear demonstrations of this including:

- Parents 1st asking for B3 for advice around the support of a specific parent.
- Parents 1st supporting B3 to continue to make connections, build their capacity and become more established.
- Live Music Now involving Parents 1st in sharing learning for some work they are going to be delivering in Northern Ireland.
- All partners having conversations about building on the relationships from this project, and an overall increase in trust to support each other moving forward.

It is important to acknowledge that the three organisations entered into the partnership in different places in terms both of how they were established and of their delivery models. For example, while Parents 1st, the lead partner, is well established in Essex, B3 was new, having only been established in late 2023.

a. Parents 1st

As lead partner, Parents 1st has coordinated the partnership and been involved in the management and reporting. This included leading on the funding bid, and then the early implementation and set-up. There was acknowledgement within this of the differences between all three organisations, and that maybe having had more time at the beginning to iron things out would have been beneficial:

'The biggest challenge is managing the different ways that each organisation works, and the expectations of what their individual roles were within the partnership… I think when you're developing a bid, you're looking at it from quite a high level, as to how you think it will work, but sometimes the reality can be quite different.'

Parents 1st appointed managers to coordinate the Lullaby programme in Tendring (the district Clacton is in) and Basildon. The local relationships were key to success for each cohort, and having time together with the team for each cohort was as

important. This included debriefing for the teams after sessions, and some additional sessions to check-in, supported by the manager from Live Music Now.

'The individual relationships between the peer supporters and the musicians, and how they've come together collectively to lift up the parents that we've been working with. You know, the confidence, the resilience, the ability to form those ongoing bonds.'

For the other two partners, the benefit of working with Parents 1st is clear, as explored below. The quality of the work delivered by Parents 1st was recognised by both partners, with one musician saying how good Parents 1st is and how he didn't know it existed before this project.

'It's great to sort of see how it works with the peer-support workers of Parents 1st. And it's been really valuable that they've got those people on the ground, and the first two cohorts were full, and the delivery was really successful.'

Parents 1st are also able to provide legacy information, as they are working with most of the parents involved as part of other drop-ins. This has been of huge benefit. Lullaby communities are being formed, and some work done at the end of the project to bring all the Clacton cohorts together for a special event. This kind of on-the-ground support has only come about because Parents 1st are so well established and trusted in the area and by the parents. It has helped to create a whole new level of ongoing information around the legacy of the lullabies, which is exciting for the partners to know. For example, parents from earlier cohorts are still singing their lullabies every day, whole families know all the words of their lullabies, and so on.

'They [Parents 1st] can refer people on to their own ongoing activities, and they've been able to keep relationships with the participants as well for the long term. So we're able to know a bit more about, you know, perhaps the legacy of the project. How is the lullaby still being used at home, or have those relationships continued with the other parents that people have met?'

Parents 1st have been really moved by the innovation of the Lullaby Project and seeing the impact it has had on the parents involved, as well as staff members working on the project. In the long term, they are keen to develop and extend this work. Across the organisation it is forming a key part of the narrative about how Parents 1st works with parents, and is a very positive addition to the peer-support offer.

'It gets mentioned in all of our work. You know, there's quite a significant part about it in our annual report that we're just about to publish. It goes into a lot of our funding bids around how we've

developed these partnerships and collaborations, because it's been so successful, so I think there's a value-add around what it's done for our team, as well as the parents.'

b. B3 (Bumps, Birth and Belonging)

This project helped to support B3 in their evolution, expand their capacity and knowledge, and establish lasting relationships and build communities in two areas of Essex where they weren't previously working. It amplified their very important offer, building relationships with African, Caribbean and mixed heritage families. Prior to this project, B3 were relatively new and working with just a few groups. This project has supported the organisation's growth, and while it represented a steep learning curve, it has added long-term value to B3:

'It was a big leap from, you know, just a few groups that we were doing to working with two very big organisations. So for… as a leader, learning operations, more about marketing, all the different hats that you have to… you have to wear. My hat's got very big!'

Some of the ways this has manifested itself include support in capacity-building from senior Parents 1st staff and the Public Health Nurse. Some of the feedback that came out of this capacity-building or mentoring approach was about championing what you are delivering and not undervaluing it, which was explained as:

'You're actually really underselling what B3 has actually done, you need to, you know, put this in, put that in. I was like, oh my gosh, I just didn't realise how important certain aspects were, and [name of partner] was just like, these are incredibly important, please put them in.'

Showing the value of services, along with developing further skills to run an organisation and meet the needs of funders, are long-lasting impacts that will help shape and grow B3 beyond this project:

'I'm doing another report at the moment for another funder, but I've learned from this project what's, you know, what's expected in terms of a report.'

The other partners talked about the benefit they had got from working with B3. They talked about learning a lot from them on cultural aspects and challenges that the people they work with face. For Parents 1st specifically, there was a strong view that the partnership has helped their teams think about how they work around Cultural Competence. This has included the very specific Cultural Competence training, but also the relationship forming between the B3 and Parents 1st teams:

'We've also learned a huge amount from B3, particularly around the cultural aspects and the challenges that the parents that they work with have faced, which has helped our team rethink how they work in different ways.'

c. Live Music Now

For Live Music Now, this partnership has amplified a good-practice approach that really underlines how key it has been to work with the right partner. This is the first time that LMN delivered the Lullaby Project in partnership with a charity specialising in perinatal peer support. While LMN brought the music expertise, they talked about how working with Parents 1st and B3 was hugely positive because they have the on-the-ground relationships with the parents, as well as local services and partners in the community. As locally based organisations, they are able to provide ongoing support to parents, meaning Live Music Now is able to make a bigger impact and reach those participants most in need of the project:

'I think the learning for me was what I've said before, how important a partner, you know, the right partner is on this, and I think that's why it's been so positive, having the right partners. Who can provide that, sort of, health side of things, where we bring the music.'

Bringing Lullaby from elsewhere, and the knowledge and understanding that came with this, was significant. Because it was new, some team members from the other partners were initially apprehensive or nervous. But the support and input from the LMN musicians, alongside the amazing outputs for the parents and families, soon saw confidence grow.

'The fact that they could bring knowledge and understanding from having run the lullaby element, in particular, elsewhere. And the challenges and positives that have come out from other places that have run the projects was invaluable.'

LMN have an employed specialist music in health staff team and work with freelance professional musicians, who are carefully selected and trained. This creates some variations in approach to the other partners and presented difficulties when parents didn't show up to their one-to-one sessions with the musicians, which was the case with some of the hybrid sessions. Having the partnership with Parents 1st has really helped to militate against that.

A pleasing legacy and demonstration of the depth of the partnership-working is, as mentioned above, that LMN recently got funding to run Lullaby in Northern Ireland. They will be working with a community partner and have included funding for Parents 1st to attend and share their learning from this project, as well as build relationships with their community partner in Northern Ireland.

5. Successes and Challenges

This section breaks down in more detail some of the successes and challenges of the project, based on what people said to us during the evaluation process. It is interesting to note that, while the overall areas of success and challenge haven't changed much since the interim evaluation report (July 2025), there is more to add to provide evidence for them and to show how challenges have been addressed or overcome. For clarity, we have collected them in table format.

Successes

Training / capacity-building	Ensuring all partners are trained in perinatal mental health and peer support (depending on roles) has been something that people felt was a success of the partnership. Having a lead partner who could provide this training was recognised as very positive. For the musicians who came into the project later, access to this training module really helped to set the context. *'It was great to just have the partner with that knowledge to provide really good support to the musicians on that front. So I think they've been a really good source of support to bring those… that knowledge and strength to the project that we don't have in-house.'* Similarly the Cultural Competence training delivered by both B3 and the Public Health Nurse has had a huge impact on Parents 1st, leading to further discussions around how they can support parents and highlighting where they need to reflect on practice to build cultural competence across all service delivery. The whole staff team attended, and it has encouraged much discussion and exploration of different ways of working.
Network sharing	Parents 1st have connections in Basildon and Clacton, which really helped B3 and the partnership approach. Parents 1st has promoted B3 groups extensively through their marketing to existing networks, particularly through their social media channels. *'We have been able to get our venue in these new areas due to the Parents 1st peer-support workers already based there.'* Parents 1st have also supported the planning and delivery of some joint outreach with B3 within hospitals. *'Once you're there and they see the value of your being there, it's going to be a lot easier to then go as a stand-alone service as well.'*

	Parents 1st peer-support programme staff in Clacton have played a vital role in facilitating B3 to set up a new group in Clacton, introducing several Black mothers to the group and organising a venue. With this initial support, B3 have been able to provide active support to a group in Clacton that has now delivered 15 sessions.
Creativity in peer-support approaches	The value of informal, trusting peer support relationships was clearly evident throughout the project bringing a creative element to the partners' work. Being exposed to different ways peer support can be delivered and how it can engage different groups has been a very positive element of the project. Partners feel that the Lullaby approach has added value to their offer. In addition, B3's approach to supporting participants to contribute to discussions around how to build their 'village' is another creative way of engaging and building community. *'We can still get health messages through, but in a more conversational way e.g. by discussing how to build our own "villages".'*
Learning from earlier cohorts and making changes where needed	Even between Cohort 1 and 2 people reported better flow and communication. At that stage, working relationships on the ground between team members were being consolidated, even with some personnel changes among the musicians. Further evidence of this was found in Cohorts 3 and 4, where the teams got into a much more confident and relaxed way of working, with a lot of mutual respect between musicians and peer supporters (from both Parents 1st and B3). Everyone knew their roles and supported the parents. In Cohorts 3 and 4, there were additional reflection sessions, as well as the ones at the end of the sessions. This shows that building in reflections across and at the end of cohorts is really beneficial, supporting the flow of sessions. *'It's that little, like, debrief meetings have been good, so we have a little chance to sort of have a chat at the end. But also, also we have the WhatsApp group for where we can support each other as well.'* *'The individual relationships between the peer supporters and the musicians and how they've come together collectively to lift up the parents that we've been working with. You know, the confidence, the resilience, the ability to form those ongoing bonds.'*

Wider engagement	Working on this project has produced more awareness of the project itself, and of the partner organisations. For example, carrying out sessions at the local family hub has generated more awareness of Parents 1st. In addition, more links have been reported between different services, such as mental-health services and midwives. Parents attending have been making use of other Parents 1st meet-ups, too, and organising their own meet-ups. *'We're being recognised by other organisations as well. I went to the family hub to their baby beginnings group and kind of just promoted it to them there, and they obviously also found out all about peer support while I was there.'* The benefits of working in partnership have meant reaching more people and sharing expertise to learn from each other, as well as engaging others. This will remain part of the legacy: one partner described this way of working as being 'relational', while another talked about them being strong and long-lasting. Alongside the partner relations, another key success has been the building of community in both areas, and how Lullaby has created communities in both areas, with cohorts staying in touch on WhatsApp groups, in active B3 groups, and through people meeting at other drop-ins and comparing Lullaby stories. This is further underlined by Clacton having an end-of-Lullaby event to bring back together those involved in all four cohorts: *'[Name of project manager] is still on the WhatsApp groups for all those projects. She put a little note out, like, would people be interested in coming to this? And everybody was just, yes. You know, straight away responding and saying that they would like to come.'*

Challenges

Timespan	The short length of the overall project has been a challenge in terms of time needed for outreach and to build trust, and how you can embed the work. One example is that there is potential to recruit local musicians, but this would require investment and time to train and mentor them, neither of which the project has in its current form. *'If we knew that this project was going beyond the funded period, we could invest in some local musicians and upskilling them. But one*

	project, because it's got an end date within the next year or so…? We don't actually have, you know, the resources to be doing that sort of local recruitment and mentoring and development.' For B3, as a new organisation going into different geographical areas, time has been a factor especially around how long it takes to build trust. *'I did hope that we would be able to foster that trust a bit quicker, but it has taken a bit of time to foster that trust because we are going into two new areas.'* All the partners have built something together which is so creative, and there is a real demand from parents and a sadness it is finishing. Lullaby and B3 groups are promoted by parents who want others to have the same opportunities to engage that they have had. This funding has been very positive as support for the roll-out of this project. While there is the challenge of it being short-term, the partners hope to find more funding to continue to deliver Lullaby and the ongoing support and networks developed around it by B3 and Parents 1st. Sharing this evaluation and its key messages will greatly assist the process of engaging with potential new funders.
Partner communications	At the start, all three organisations took time to find their feet. Figuring out how they would collaborate and who would take the lead on different things took time. This was slightly compounded by the first Steering Group meeting being convened quite far into the project delivery. It was suggested that perhaps having this earlier – after the first cohort and before the second – would have been beneficial. *'Just finding that common ground between the three of us… It's easy writing things down but, in reality, building those work relationships also takes time.'* There has been lots of work to build good structures around communication, including the feedback between musicians and peer supporters and more cohort meetings. As the project developed, the communication got better all round, which was very positive and led to a high level of trust and respect for each partner's specialist skills and experience.

Roles and responsibilities	Early on, there were some challenges flagged around partners understanding each other's roles, but these have since been ironed out. B3 engagement in Clacton started later, partly due to the lack of capacity of a small organisation and partly because engagement and outreach overall took longer. This has been balanced out now with more concentrated delivery in phase two, and a network of mums attending B3 activities. One area around roles that can be learnt from is around expectations of what delivery looks like. For example, B3 initially thought that all peer support had to be one-to-one, which didn't work for their cohort. It wasn't until quite far in that they realised they could streamline and broaden their delivery to meet the needs of the communities they work with who would prefer peer support to be, in the main, through group support or other activities (for example, walking). For a newer organisation that was working to a funding bid, it was important to learn about balancing funding commitments with needs, but this was also something that could have been discussed between partners earlier on, to reach that understanding. *'I just didn't realise that, you know, we could have done different outputs that would still count as, you know, engagement… It took me a minute to realise that I could pivot in a way the community needed.'*

Key Learnings

Connecting Parents through Peer Support, Music and Wellbeing has had a strong positive impact on the parents and families who participated. As the project comes to an end and each partner moves forward to embed this work and look at the next stages, we have identified some areas of learning. We hope these are of help to the partners as they move into future work and delivery.

Before going into specific learnings, what has been clear through this evaluation is that the relational approach has been of huge benefit to all involved in this project. Relationships were key throughout:

- Musicians and peer supporters
- Peer supporters and parents
- Musicians and parents
- Peer supporters with other local organisations (e.g. family hubs)
- Relationships at senior and ground level with the three key partners

Key Learning from Changes for Parents and Families

The one-to-one sessions, delivered alongside the group sessions for the Lullaby cohorts, both from peer-support workers and the musicians who worked individually with parents, proved to be highly impactful and rewarding for all involved. Parents felt that they had ***access to tailored support*** and were able to receive guidance, empathy and understanding from peer-support workers that perhaps they were not able to access elsewhere. In Lullaby sessions, ***musicians were able to learn more about the parents***, their families, heritage and background, and deliver focused sessions encompassing these aspects of family life. Similarly, peer supporters were able to witness the journeys that parents were on, often resulting in increased confidence, reduced anxiety and improved wellbeing among those parents.

> *'I honestly took to the advice, and she also told me that there's ways whereby my child, my first child, will come around when she sees that I'm trying.'*

Where the individual support presented an opportunity to speak about more personal and sensitive issues without worrying about triggering other parents, ***the group support provided more holistic discussions, reassurance and confidence-building***, where parents felt relieved that their experiences were normal, and benefited from the advice and support of fellow parents. These group sessions provided much-needed safe spaces, social interaction, new connections, and a sharing of stories and backgrounds. The ***B3 sessions provided informal peer support*** among the group, where they were able to understand and empathise at a deeper level, especially in relation to cultural backgrounds and heritage, and some of the opportunities and challenges these posed. With the Lullaby sessions, parents enjoyed coming together at regular intervals while in the process of creating their individual lullabies; they offered encouragement and support to others, and celebrated their joint achievements together. Therefore, the group sessions have been just as important as the individual sessions.

'It's definitely changed for us, in the sense of we only went to like one play group, and then we went to the Lullaby, and now it's like branched out, and I'll meet up with the mums regularly. And – you know? – we're at different groups every day of the week.'

Another piece of learning from delivering the four cohorts of the Lullaby sessions in both Basildon and Clacton was that ***the cohorts have been very different in terms of the needs of the parents.*** Some cohorts, especially in Clacton, have been attended by parents who were more vulnerable and had greater needs, especially in accessing wider statutory support. This could be reflective of the fact that more parents from Clacton were from postcodes where they experience the highest levels of deprivation. Separately, in Cohorts 1 and 2, there were no pregnant parents, while in Cohorts 3 and 4, there were a few. This meant that the benefits of support during pregnancy and birth were more visible in the latter stage of the programme.

The ***need for and impact of culturally tailored support cannot be underestimated***. B3's group and individual peer support was delivered successfully in Basildon, but was slower to take off in Clacton. Nonetheless, parents who attended B3 sessions in both areas noted that they often felt isolated when attending other parenting groups because they were the only people of colour. Meeting other parents from Black backgrounds through B3's services provided opportunities for parents to discuss cultural backgrounds and expectations, share tips related to parenting, and created a sense of community that parents had not felt before.

Finally, after taking part in Lullaby sessions, ***parents expressed their desire to find out 'what next?'*** Alongside showing commitment in attending these sessions, they thoroughly enjoyed the experience and ended with a sense of achievement when they had created their lullabies. They had forged new friendships, noticed improvements in their wellbeing, and experienced better bonding with their children. At the end of their six-week programme, they wanted to know what else they could be involved in to maintain this sense of solidarity and the connections they had made with the rest of their group. To address this, there has been a system of informal 'referral' taking place, where some Lullaby parents from Black backgrounds have been told about B3's services and have gone on to join them. In Clacton, some parents have joined ongoing drop-in sessions hosted by Parents 1st and other local parents and groups. There are also plans to have a final celebration event, where all the parents from all cohorts will come together to reflect on their experiences and achievements. This shows there is an appetite for further activities and support, especially as the impacts have been very beneficial, individually and as groups.

Key Learning from Changes for Partners

There is much to learn about how the partners in this project have ***built trust and learning*** between each other. Hearing musicians talk about the way the peer supporters really support the parenting conversations, and how they feel reassured that parents' needs will be supported by Parents 1st or B3 between sessions, as well

as by the continued relationship of both organisations with parents after Lullaby ends, demonstrates the trust and mutual respect between partners. It also shows the benefits for an organisation like Live Music Now that are provided by working with local community-based partners who are specialists in perinatal mental health.

Similarly, the peer supporters talking about the approach the musicians have and their skills in working alongside each parent again really shows how genuine and authentic the partnership has been:

'The individual relationships between the peer supporters and the musicians and how they've come together collectively to lift up the parents that we've been working with. You know, the confidence, the resilience, the ability to form those ongoing bonds.'

'I mean, all of the musicians absolutely love doing this project. And they're very, very positive about… about… about it, about the impact it's had, saying, you know, it's the best thing. Some of them say, you know, it's the best work that they do.'

The ***training and support*** that has been a part of this project has been pivotal to supporting all partners. From the perinatal mental-health module developed for the musicians, to the capacity-building support that helped B3 as a newer organisation, to the Cultural Competence training developed for the project and delivered to the Parents 1st staff, there has been growth across all three partner organisations. This has helped build knowledge and skills, as well as contributing to increasing trust and respect between partners.

In relation to this learning, Parents 1st and B3 are currently exploring the potential for the Cultural Competence training to be refined and then accredited, so it can be offered to other organisations as a training package in its own right. This shows how useful it has been to the Parents 1st team:

'And there are conversations under way as to whether we can take the cultural competency module and tweak it slightly so it's not specific to peer support. It actually becomes a qualification in its own right.'

All partners talked in some way around ***future potential for joint working***, either in terms of supporting each other or, if possible, securing continued funding. This includes thinking about offering a monthly family music session for Lullaby alumni in both areas, and about models to support B3 groups with more limited resources.

'We've talked about regular monthly, sort of, family music sessions around that to keep that network together, to provide more ongoing support and keep those relationships together.'

'We've got these mums, we can't just leave them, and I'm like, no, we don't, we can't, we're gonna figure out different ways to keep the community… keep the community engaged and together.'

Thinking about other models of delivery to sustain some of the networks, along with potential funding, is another part of the ongoing discussion:

'I believe we can create something that feels good to, like, a volunteer… like a volunteer role, to just keep mums coming together and meeting each other. And then if there's any issues or anything comes up, then we can… help them in that way.'

There were some suggestions about ***reviewing the Lullaby cohort length and structure*** going forward when considering future funding bids. While everyone agreed that, as the cohort delivery went on, they ran more smoothly, there were times when parents weren't able to attend due to holidays and illness. This did create some pressure to get things completed in a shorter time. There was the idea of increasing the cohorts to 8 weeks, not only to address this but also to balance the time for group work and the time for one-to-one sessions. In some other geographical areas, Lullaby is 8 weeks, and there is a feeling this works better:

'In terms of, like, future delivery, what we… what has been the big factor is that we want the cohorts to be longer. That's been… that's been the feedback on every project, oh, it's too short. So minimum 8 sessions when we've been delivering 6 on the in-person one.'

The other area of consideration around the structure of the sessions was to acknowledge that, while the hybrid delivery has worked, it hasn't quite given as much community connection as where the model was delivered fully in-person. There is some thought that going forward, if more funding is found, moving to a fully in-person model would be beneficial.

There was some discussion, too, about how – in an ideal world, if funding allowed – it would be more sustainable to recruit and train local musicians to build a base of musicians in Essex, as well as looking across more diverse communities.

Appendix 1

Comparison of average wheel of circumstance scores across the domains at the start and at the end of attending the Lullaby sessions				
	Before	**After**	**Positive change**	**Negative change**
Cohort 1 Basildon				
Participant 1	**8.6**	**9.1**	**√**	
Participant 2	**7.2**	**8.7**	**√**	
Participant 3	**7.8**	**8.1**	**√**	
Participant 4	**8.1**	**9**	**√**	
Participant 5	**7.4**	**7**		**√**
Participant 6	**7.4**	**9.3**	**√**	
Cohort 2 Basildon				
Participant 1	**7.4**	**3.8**		**√**
Participant 2	**7.5**	**8.36**	**√**	
Participant 3	**6.8**	**7.4**	**√**	
Participant 4	**9.3**	**9.1**		**√**
Participant 5	**7.5**	**7.9**	**√**	
Participant 6	**8.2**	**8.5**	**√**	
Cohort 3 Basildon				
Participant 1	**8.36**	**8.7**	**√**	
Participant 2	**8.9**	**9**	**√**	
Participant 3	**7.8**	**8.8**	**√**	
Participant 4	**7.2**	**8**	**√**	
Participant 5	**7.1**	**8**	**√**	
Participant 6	**6.2**	**5.7**		**√**

	Before	After	Positive change	Negative change
Cohort 1 Clacton				
Participant 1	**8.5**	**9.6**	**√**	
Participant 2	**8.2**	**8.6**	**√**	
Participant 3	**7.6**	**8**	**√**	
Participant 4	**9.7**	**9.5**		**√**
Participant 5	**8.7**	**8.9**	**√**	
Participant 6	**7**	**7.5**	**√**	
Participant 7	**7**	**5.7**		**√**
Cohort 2 Clacton				
Participant 1	**8.8**	**9.5**	**√**	
Participant 2	**8.6**	**9.8**	**√**	
Participant 3	**6.4**	**8.4**	**√**	
Participant 4	**9**	**9.2**	**√**	
Participant 5	**9.5**	**9.8**	**√**	
Participant 6	**7.9**	**8.3**	**√**	
Participant 7	**8.7**	**9**	**√**	
Cohort 3 Clacton				
Participant 1	**5.7**	**8.18**	**√**	
Participant 2	**10**	**9.54**		**√**
Participant 3	**6.9**	**8.9**	**√**	
Participant 4	**7.9**	**8.3**	**√**	
Participant 5	**8.8**	**9.36**	**√**	
Participant 6	**6.45**	**8.45**	**√**	
Participant 7	**6.27**	**7.63**	**√**	
Participant 8	**6.18**	**7.72**	**√**	

	Before	After	Positive change	Negative change
Cohort 4 Clacton				
Participant 1	**8.72**	**9.36**	**√**	
Participant 2	**6.81**	**7.63**	**√**	
Participant 3	**8.54**	**9.54**	**√**	
Participant 4	**7.7**	**8.7**	**√**	
Participant 5	**7.9**	**8.72**	**√**	
Participant 6	**9.4**	**9.9**	**√**	
Participant 7	**8.27**	**9.5**	**√**	