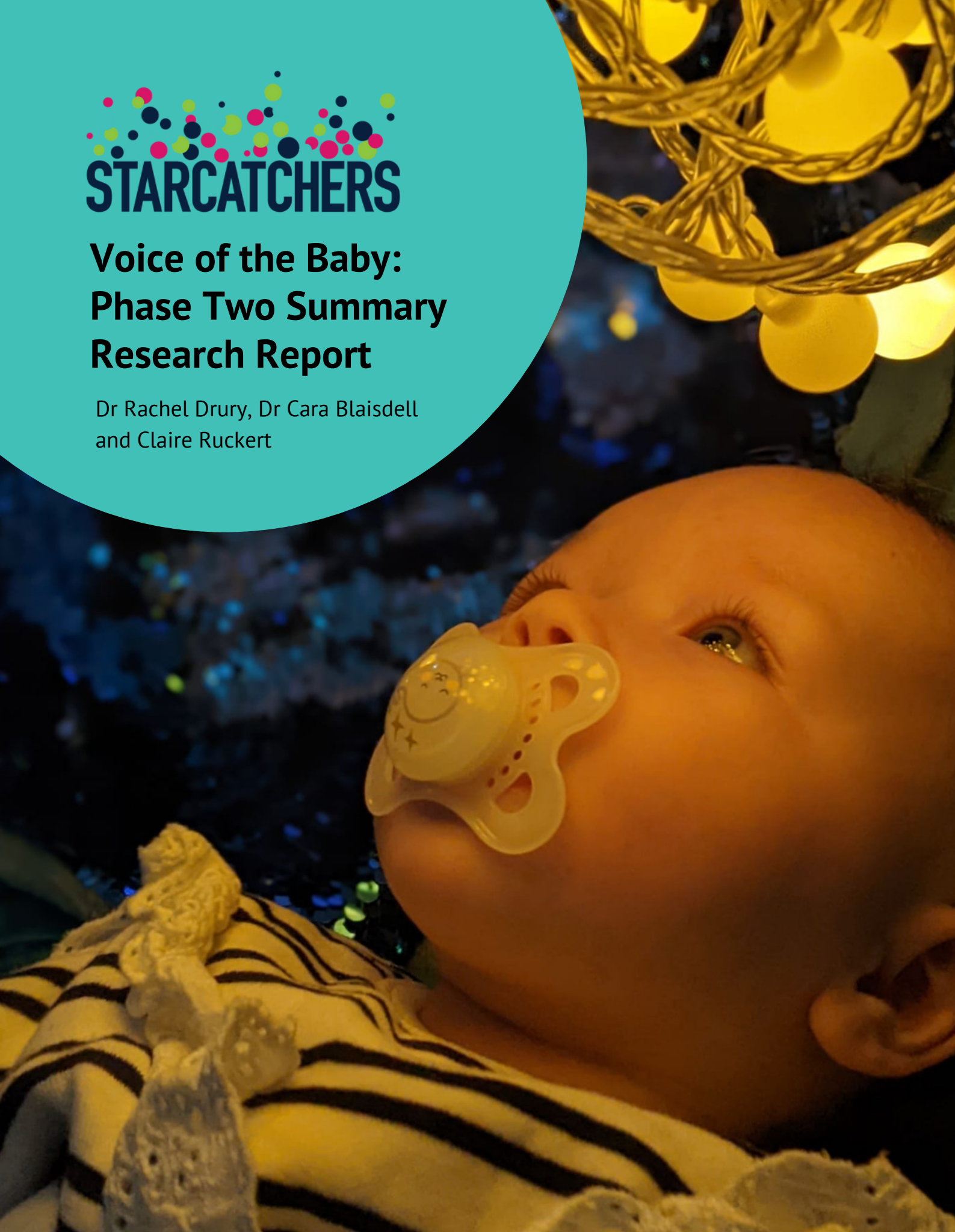




# Voice of the Baby: Phase Two Summary Research Report

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# Acknowledgements

It has been a privilege to learn from the babies, families, and artists in Phase Two of this project. Thank you to those who shared their time, experiences, ideas and practice with us. This research represents a partnership between Starcatchers, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, and Queen Margaret University, with funding from The Charles Gordon Foundation, Creative Scotland and Cattanach.

## Introduction

The Starcatchers Voice of the Baby project explored current and emerging rights-based approaches in the arts for babies and young children aged 0-3 in Scotland, with a focus on participation rights and creating an arts-based methodology for early years participation. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) enshrines children's right to express their views, on all matters affecting them, and to have those views given due weight (Article 12). Babies and young children are entitled to all the rights enshrined in the UNCRC—including the right to be heard—but in early childhood this right is often overlooked or neglected[1]. Full implementation of Article 12 requires recognition and respect for both verbal and non-verbal communication[2], and the arts offer great potential for babies to exercise their right to be heard. Participation in cultural life and the arts is itself a right enshrined in the UNCRC (Article 31) and is connected to a longer human rights history—for example, the right to participate in the cultural life of the community is enshrined in Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948). The participation of babies and young children in artistic and cultural life is not only an opportunity for babies themselves, but also has the potential to develop and transform the societies in which they live. As Scotland moves toward incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law, it is timely to investigate how the arts can enable babies and young children to exercise their right to be heard.

Phase One of the project (funded by Cattanach and Interface) investigated existing knowledge and best practice in this area, via a scoping review of peer-reviewed empirical research studies, a survey conducted with Scottish-based arts practitioners and arts organisations, and group interviews with Starcatchers staff and associate artists. In Phase Two, we visited three Starcatchers creative play projects to learn how artists support the participation rights of babies and young children in 'real life'. Bringing together our learning from those visits with the findings from Phase One, we have constructed a flexible reflective guide for practitioners across sectors, who wish to facilitate rights-based participatory practice with babies and young children through the creative arts.

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[1] UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2005

[2] UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009

Phase Two is centred around working with babies from birth who are pre-verbal or developing language skills, however, we recognise that the resulting Reflective Guide may well have a broader application with older children and young people who are non-verbal.

## Key Terms

**Participatory arts:** refers to artistic experiences that are reciprocal in nature and rely on collaboration between artist and participant(s) to inform both the creative process and outcome. Participation, therefore, refers to an engagement and interaction with artist / artistic experience.

**Pre- and/or non-verbal young children:** refers to young children (broadly in the birth to 3 year range) who may not (yet) communicate through the spoken word. The reason for this focus is that pre-and/or non-verbal young children are often left out of participation work. The reason for this focus is that pre- and/or non-verbal young children are often left out of participation work because of a lack of verbal language. For fluidity of expression, the report uses the shorthand 'young children', 'children', 'babies' and 'toddlers' according to the context.

**Rights-based approach:** refers to an approach that has the rights of the child, as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), at its core. In particular, this project focuses on young children's right to express their views freely on all matters that affect them and have those views given due weight (Article 12), and their right to rest, leisure, play, and participation in cultural life and the arts (Article 31). These rights are indivisible and interdependent.

**Significant adults:** refers to the adult(s) who bring(s) the child to the artistic experience, support(s) the child to participate, and are primarily responsible for the child's care and wellbeing within the sessions. Significant adults may be parents, relatives, or other caregivers with responsibility for the child.

**Voice of the baby:** refers to a wide range of communications including, but not limited to, verbal voice (spoken word or otherwise), non-verbal communications like movement, expression, action, sound, gestures, and silences. The term 'voice of the baby' is used in this report and project, while acknowledging the limitations of 'voice' as a shorthand for very complex communication and processes of interpretation.

## Aim and Objectives of Phase Two

Building on the learning from Phase One [3], the broad aim of Phase Two was to develop a reflective guide for practitioners across sectors, who wish to facilitate rights-based practice with babies and young children (notionally from birth to 3) through participatory arts.

### **This was achieved via the following objectives:**

1. To explore, through observation, the roles of the following in relation to participation and babies' and young children's expression of views (voice), as outlined in Article 12 of the UNCRC:
  - the young child
  - their significant adult(s)
  - the artist
  - the artistic materials and physical environment
  - others who are part of the experience
2. To observe examples of best practice
3. To define individual components that will inform the reflective guide for participation



## Creative Play Settings

In order to develop the reflective guide, researchers visited Starcatchers creative play sessions to learn from experienced artists, babies, and their significant adults.

Researchers visited three Starcatchers creative play projects across the Central Belt, East, and North of Scotland. Visits took place during June and July 2023. A total of seven visits were made: three visits to Expecting Something, two visits to Moray Babies, and two visits to Play & Explore. Visits lasted 1-2 hours, depending on the length of the creative play session.

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[3] See Appendix One for a summary of Phase One

## Research Methods

**Participant observation:** Researchers used participant observation as the main method of data collection in Phase Two. This meant that we observed what was going on in each session, joined in at times, and had informal chats with children and adults. We were each visiting a different project, so for consistency, we created a shared observation guide (Appendix Two). Each researcher wrote up their notes as soon as possible after each visit and uploaded them to a secure online drive. We then used a thematic approach to analyse the data, looking for commonalities and differences in each set of notes. Two artist ‘playdays’ were held during Phase Two, where we shared our findings with Starcatchers artists for their thoughts and feedback on the developing themes.

By spending time in the settings, we were able to see for ourselves some of the ways that babies and young children’s voices were expressed and heard in the participatory arts projects. Participant observation allows for informal, everyday experiences to be understood through rich description and analysis, encompassing the many ways that babies communicate. Because the data was generated through researcher fieldnotes, we do not pretend to represent the perspectives of babies objectively or to speak for them. Instead, we offer our own observations and learning.

**Video footage:** We explored the idea of using video footage to document the sessions and had ethical approval to do so. However, for various reasons including not wanting to disrupt the flow and relationships at the settings, only one visit was filmed, with only two of the families present giving permission for footage of their baby to be used in the project. The film was therefore not included in our analysis.

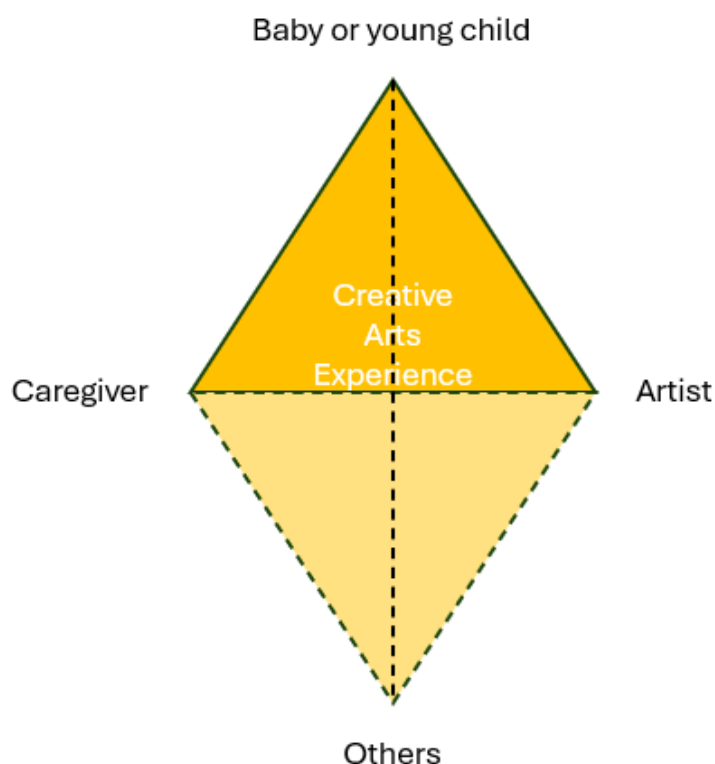
For a full discussion of ethical considerations, see Appendix Three.



# The Kite Model: Social Construction of Participation

One thing that sets this age group apart from others is that babies and young children are accompanied by a caregiver(s) to help them access and participate in a creative arts experience. As such, the significant adults in their lives become an integral part both of their participation experience and of their 'voice' at this stage.

We offer our 'Kite' model to help consider all the 'in the moment' reciprocal interactions between those involved when working with babies and young children to enable them to participate fully.



# Findings: The Voice of the Baby in Participatory Arts Experiences

In this section we present the main themes from Phase Two of the research, which form the headings of the reflective guide. Together, they analyse ways that artists made space for babies' and young children's right to express their views, and for those views to be given due weight, in the context of participatory arts experiences. We have given pseudonyms to anyone mentioned by name in the fieldnotes or discussion with artists.

## Curating the Space: Creating Permission for Play and Creativity

**This theme relates to how the nature of the space itself, and the materials/experiences curated within it, create opportunities for babies' voices to be heard and respected.**

The importance of space was highlighted across the data generated by both Phase 1 and Phase 2. Perhaps the largest theme to have developed from the data of Phase 2, 'curating the space' incorporated a variety of different facets: from the physical space available to the artist, to the features of that space, to the carefully selected resources that were placed within it. Because the spaces were so carefully curated to facilitate play and creativity, the physical environment often acted as the main driver of babies' voice as they moved around the space (or indicated non-verbally that they wanted to be moved). The spaces 'flipped' the usual hierarchies between adults and young children, so that babies themselves were the main deciders about what they would engage with, and how. We described the sessions as 'rich' and

'abundant' in our fieldnotes, noting the obvious attention to things that would work well together. For example, in one project, the artists set up a tea party theme:

*"The artists had a trolley with them that had a variety of props and tea-making equipment. The theme of the day was a tea party so a variety of plastic/tin cups and saucers were available to the babies along with knitted cakes, pastries and donuts! There was a cake stand placed in the centre of the circle outside of the tent. A Bluetooth speaker allowed for some relaxing music to be playing in the latter half of the session. Actual cake and tea were also made available to participants as the session progressed"*

As this example illustrates, artists worked with a variety of materials, textures, and media—including sound—to curate a creative space. Notably, two out of the three projects took place in 'borrowed spaces' which made the experiences



transient. The third project took place in a dedicated community art space, but still had to be set up and put away after every session.

The transitory nature of the arts sessions made the curation even more important. Our field notes also reflect the ‘feel’ of the spaces:

*“I felt very at ease in the space, it felt very safe and welcoming”*

*“I’m yet to see the artists tell the children that they can’t do something“*

## Building Sensitive, Informed Relationships to Support Participation Rights

**This theme relates to participation rights being made real in a web of affectionate, warm relationships with babies, their caregivers, and the local area, in which tensions sometimes play a role.**

The artists were clear that in order to create participatory spaces for babies and young children, their role was to manage expectations about how to be in the space and create an ethos of respect for the young children. Building long-term relationships and engaging long-term with the community of babies and families was essential to doing so for these projects. For example, in keeping with the relaxed and unhurried feel of the space, we also noticed an affection between the artists, babies and families. In more than one project, families were greeted with a drink (a coffee, a mocktail) upon arriving. We wondered how often families were ‘hosted’ in this way:

**“[Mum] seems quite grateful to be offered a**

***“Although the artists mentioned being behind in getting it prepped, that feeling did not seem to be passed on to the families who arrived”***

We all noticed an unhurried, relaxed feeling to the sessions, and a feeling of permission—a ‘yes space’--for babies to explore and create. This is discussed more in ‘Making Time for Young Children to Be Heard’.

**coffee and not like this is something which is offered to her very often.”**

Crucially, the hosting did not feel like a warmup to a more formal intervention or service. In fact, the artists were clear that they did not want the spaces to be ‘teachery’--they do not tell families what to do or control what the sessions are for, other than creative play. Perhaps for this reason, there seemed to be genuinely warm relationships between the artists, babies and families, and many seemed to know each other well.

***“One artist tells me about Harris, she tells me he’s very interested in throwing things and references the trajectory schema and how that must be very interesting to him at the moment. She says that while he can be a bit of a ‘wrecking ball’ in the space, he is very gentle with the other children.***

*This depth of understanding towards him comes from him attending these sessions for a long time, and she seems to have genuine affection for him, and an understanding of his development.”*

Artists also knew the geographical areas they worked in very well, reflecting their long-term relationships with the community and their knowledge of how that might affect babies’ participation in the creative process:

*“[Artist] commented that [the surrounding area] is so flat and concrete everywhere, that she wonders if that affects children’s balance (i.e. they rarely walk on anything uneven) but also creates curiosity in them wanting to climb and walk on different“*

*surfaces. For example, one child walked across the bamboo tracks several times in a row quite purposefully (no shoes on) and seemed to be absorbing the sensation on his feet”*

There were times when artists did have to negotiate sensitive issues and tensions with families: examples they gave were, different parenting styles causing friction when certain parents attended sessions, negative talk about children, and sometimes issues with parents sitting on mobile phones. There were not clear answers to these tensions and artists agreed that *“this was the tricky bit and communicating [and co-creating] the values of the session could be controversial”*.

## Respecting and The Complex Communication of Babies

**This theme relates to tuning in, interpreting, and validating babies’ verbal and non-verbal communication of their views, feelings, ideas and wishes.**

By validating babies’ and young children’s complex communication, artists demonstrated respect for the capabilities of even very young infants to make choices, respond to offerings within the space in their own way, and show the influence that those choices had. Throughout our visits to the settings, and in artist interviews during Phase One, it was clear that participatory arts with young children required a sensitive recognition and ‘tuning in’ to the various ways that babies communicated. Often this involved a complex blend of verbal and non-verbal communication:

*“Exaggerated facial expressions, gasping, mock surprise, are very common in the interactions between the artists and David (about a year old), showing they think things are interesting, using ‘Ooh wow’ facial expressions. The artists do also use verbal language with David, they ask him what he’s doing and if he likes what he’s playing with, they also use a calming and affectionate cadence and big smiles when talking to him. Him knowing all the words doesn’t seem like the priority, maybe it’s more of a communication of an emotion or an atmosphere”*

Another way that artists tuned into babies’ communication was by noticing their interests and offering little gifts, opportunities or ‘hooks’ that validated

children's voices. For example, during one session, Abbie (around a year old) was fixated on a purple ukelele and had it with her for the entire session.

***“She was so interested in manipulating it, pulling the strings, banging on it, messing around with holding it, mouthing it, purposefully dropping it (it makes a great noise). [Artist] sat near her for a while doing quiet little things like quietly singing songs, gently tapping in rhythm when Abbie tapped on the ukulele, made a little person out of a leaf and made it sing a song...I got a sense of this as an enhancement or almost a parallel play that could offer something to Abbie but not taking over.”***

This level of attunement and creation of a two-way offering between baby and artist takes a great deal of concentration. It also requires patience and delicate pacing of the interaction to leave a lot of time for moments to unfold.

Artists were also skilled at reading babies' communication and pulling back so that babies stayed in the lead. For example, a beatboxer led one session and demonstrated great sensitivity in how he balanced when to lead and when to be a 'supporting character':

***“The artist is beatboxing using a microphone and simultaneously mixing sound with an iPad. All this is playing over a big speaker about two feet away from me. But he is almost totally drowned out by the children who are banging on a bodhran-style drum and playing with pre-recorded sound buttons. I noticed how flexible he was, not the star of the show or dominating the space, not demanding children's focus to be***

***on him. He pivoted to beatboxing into the sound buttons which was a big hit with the babies!”***

The babies' expression of their interest in the sound buttons was respected in this instant and authentic feedback. Later, Ahmed (around 2 years old) became transfixed by the music and was staring at the artist quite intently and sitting right next to him. Noticing this, the artist offered Ahmed the iPad, which he tapped with intense focus for quite a long time, mixing sounds and looking up and down at the artist throughout.

We could imagine an alternative scenario, where children were expected to engage with the beatboxing in only one set way, for example by doing their own beatboxing into a microphone. As these examples illustrate, the recognition and respect for young children's various ways of communicating created rich opportunities for them to exercise agency, creativity, and have their voices heard and validated.

# Making Time for Young Children to Be Heard

**This theme relates to various facets of time that supported babies' meaningful participation in artistic experiences.**

We observed the notion of time having influence in a variety of different ways. The first was around child development and the differences within, and between, babies from one visit to the next. The observations for Moray Babies happened 5 weeks apart and there was a marked difference in development of one child in particular. This was a reminder that a lot of change can happen within 5 weeks in the life of a baby and the timescales and rapid developmental changes for very young children requires the artist to constantly (re)consider their evolving capacities. This might be in relation to whether a baby can move position independently and how long that takes them, or how long a gap or silence is needed to allow a baby to respond to a prompt or offering.

A second way in which time played a role was in the timing and pacing of the sessions themselves, which offered babies the opportunity to warm up, explore different people, build relationships with others and act on them in their own time:

***“The older children seem to be more actively interested in playing with each other, though this takes time and only develops towards the end of the session. They seem to be more focused on their caregivers at the start.”***

Another aspect of time that became important was the longer-term consideration of babies' ideas and interests to influence future sessions. For example, one artist mentioned a baby being really interested in trains and planning a future session accordingly.

This long-term influence was linked to the sensitive relationships artists had built with children and their families. During the Artist Playday, artists raised the question of how notions of 'time' might be different for an artist providing a series of workshops over a prolonged period of time to that of an artist providing an immersive one-off production. It was suggested that the same principles could apply, albeit over a shorter timeframe, but this was an open question for reflection.

# Navigating Identity in Participation Rights

**This theme relates to some potential tensions in the relationships that surrounded participatory practices, including identity of the space, the intrusion of gender stereotypes, formation of ingroups/outgroups, and artistic identity.**

Spaces dedicated to babies' and young children's participation rights and creative practice are rare, as identified in Phase One of the project. As discussed in previous themes, artists went to great lengths to listen and tune in to babies' complex communication and voice, curate the space for rich explorations, and build sensitive relationships with babies and their caregivers. These efforts supported the evolving capacities of young babies and toddlers to exercise their right to be heard. However, even these carefully tended artistic spaces do not exist in a vacuum; children exercise their rights in a web of relationships with people, places, spaces, policies, and power relations which affect how those rights are lived and experienced. The artists navigated various aspects of identities within the arts experience leading to some interesting tensions and ambiguities that create opportunities for reflection.

One aspect of identity was around the identity of the space itself, as one specifically for infants but inclusive of others. This was illustrated by the presence of older children in the space after the schools broke up for the summer.

***“One artist commented ‘it feels like a family barbecue!’”***

***“Even though the artists were not keen to change the group to always have the older children there, they still kept their welcoming and positive outlook about the older children and seemed to know them well already.”***

Having older children there was in keeping with the relationships that artists had been building with caregivers and the community, and many of the older children joined in with the babies and toddlers, whether helping with serving food or engaging in play. However, the older children also challenged the artists around maintaining the integrity of the space for babies, as the artistic experience planned was not geared toward children 8-9 years old. The space was flexible, but that identity was important.

Another aspect of identity that arose was around gender stereotyping. Children are entitled to all the rights in the UNCRC, without discrimination of any kind (Article 2). Gender stereotypes and other discriminatory attitudes can hinder the right to be heard[4]. However, stereotypes are deep-rooted and common in Scottish society, like many others. One such stereotype made its way into the artistic space:

***“There were tutus available for the adults to dress babies in. There was a very interesting comment from one adult when she put the tutu on her baby—she said ‘It’s a good job your dad isn’t here—he’d have said ‘get it off!’ This perhaps suggests that the artists provide a safe space for male babies to wear what might be considered ‘female’ clothes.”***

Although the artists provided a safe space for babies and caregivers to ‘play’ with gender in this way, the stereotype was still brought in by the significant adult’s comment. We found this to be an important provocation for how artists and other practitioners might ensure babies and toddlers’ right to express their views about their play, in the face of entrenched and limiting stereotypes. Notably, during our seven observations, we did not see any dads or male caregivers attend the sessions and we wondered how the challenge of gender norms could extend to the significant adults as well.

Artistic identity was also a site where flexibility was important to facilitate the participation rights of babies. For example, we noticed artists often taking part in caregiving routines, in fluid ways:

***“There is a strong theme here of artists participating in care responsibilities for the children present, this takes a few forms. Artists have snacks which they give out to the children, and they provide wet wipes for the children to clean their hands with when they ask. [Artists] goes over to Ciara when she trips and starts crying, and Harris tells [Artist] when he needs to go to the toilet—she tells his mum, who takes him.”***

As this illustrates, artists were not rigid about their own role in the space. The flexibility and caring role of the artist seemed to link directly to their ways of tuning into babies’ communication and fostering sensitive relationships. However, artistic identity was still very important: in Phase One, artists described their cross-disciplinary expertise and how this helped them facilitate creativity with very young children. The various facets of artistic identity in a participatory space seemed to co-exist rather than contradict each other.

Finally, we noticed potential for ingroups/outgroups to be created in the space, particularly around language:

***“There were two families there today where I think the children and mums have English as an additional language—not their mother tongue. I wondered about how folks communicate and whether translators would ever be provided, but wondered, would that make the space feel more formal and service-like? Would those mums actually want a translator in the mix?”***

The arts offer great potential for children to understand, translate and contribute to the cultural life of their families, communities and society. Cultural life broadens children’s horizons, learning from multiple cultural traditions and contributing to non-discrimination and appreciation of diversity[5]. Artists were curious about what might happen if a translator was introduced into the space (another strand in the web of relationships) and wondered about different ways to welcome families into the ethos of the space, including through visuals.

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[5] UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013

# Conclusions and Next Steps

The five themes discussed in this summary research report relate directly to the five areas outlined in the Reflective Guide. These areas can be seen as stand-alone concepts for consideration, but it is also important to see them as being intrinsically related to one another. For example, the theme of ‘Making Time for Young Children to be Heard’ is highly relevant to ‘Building Sensitive, Informed Relationships, and ‘Navigating Identity in Participation Rights’ is obviously tied in with decisions around ‘Curating the Space’. This reflects the inter-related nature of the themes, but also the inter-relation of children’s rights themselves, which are indivisible and interdependent.

This research focuses on babies and young children from birth-three, and there is a considerable gap there around an arts-based approach to the right to be heard. However, the Reflective Guide can certainly apply more widely. It is important to acknowledge this and encourage widespread sharing of the guide, without losing the specificity of very early childhood, which is so often ignored and neglected when it comes to participation rights.

Future work could test the Reflective Guide with artists working in early years, but also in the early years sector more broadly, such as early years practitioners and leaders. It could also consider ways in which it might be effective with pre- and non-verbal children who are older than 3, for example those with additional support needs. Future work could also explore the thornier issues that arose from Phase Two in more depth—for example, questions around gender stereotypes, language and translation, and negotiations around the ethos of the space. It would also be useful to explore how the principles translate to shorter performance-based arts with young children.

Whilst we feel this research offers tangible outcomes as well as new and exciting avenues for exploration in the field, we recognise its limitations in scope. We present the Reflective Guide as a dynamic model that may well evolve in response to how it is used in practice, the developing situation around the incorporation of the UNCRC into domestic law, and the emergence of further research literature that focuses on arts-based contexts. In the meantime, our hope is that this body of work contributes to a much-needed discussion and enhanced evidence base around participatory rights for babies and young children.



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# Appendix One: Summary of Phase One

## Phase One of this research demonstrated the following key themes:

- Rights-based approaches are sorely needed in the arts. Under half of the arts organisations (six out of 15) surveyed in Phase One have rights-based approaches that feature in their policies for working with children. Only three of 15 organisations offered training in rights-based approaches to the artists that work for them.
- Local/national contexts, particularly policy contexts and cultural attitudes toward young children, affect the way that young children's participation rights are 'made real'. This demonstrates the importance of situating the current research firmly in a Scottish context, particularly given the pending incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law.
- The richness of young children's own peer groups and social experiences with others is a key area for exploration in terms of participation rights.
- The majority of research studies on young children's participation rights were situated in early childhood education and care settings, demonstrating a gap in understanding around how young children's participation rights are being experienced in other contexts, including participatory arts.
- Artists working with young children tended to have more than one art form through which they operate. This cross-disciplinary practice (between 2 or more art forms) could be seen as facets of the 'specialism' required for working with early years participants, in a way that it is perhaps not seen as valuable (or desirable) for professional artistic work with other age groups.
- Participatory artistic experiences for infants are uniquely set apart from artistic experiences designed for other age groups by the fact that infants are always accompanied by, and reliant on, their significant adult(s). This creates a relational model for communication involving the artist, child, and significant adult and, additionally, other children and significant adults who may be part of the experience. The interplay between all these relationships appears integral to the child's participation and their voice.
- Rather than a shared formal model of working in rights-based ways with young children, artists described a common and intuitive understanding of how this happens in a meaningful way.
- This intuition involved offering choice, creating a space that belonged to children, sensitive interpretation of 'voice' through interaction and reciprocity, seeing infants as equals in relation to artistic participation, challenging deficit perceptions of young children, flipping power hierarchies in favour of young children, and making connections with children, their significant adult, while also fostering connection between the child and their significant adult.

# Appendix Two: Observation Guide

## Indicative Observation Guide: The Voice of the Child: Phase II

Site location: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start time: \_\_ \_\_ End time: \_\_ \_\_

Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

### Pre-session Description:

Rich description of the physical setup of the space	
Number of artists/names (to be replaced with pseudonyms)	
Number of children/names (to be replaced with pseudonyms) and ages	
Number of adult caregivers/names (to be replaced by pseudonyms)	
Research questions answered and consent forms signed?	

1. Narrative field notes, focusing on rich descriptions of interactions between:

- The child
- The artist
- Significant adult (parent / caregiver)
- Other children
- Artistic materials and physical environment

2. Checking in: which kind of interactions have we captured in our observations, and which do we need more of?

3. Reflexive comments, including thoughts on the process of data collection, role of the observer, how the data might sit with the Lundy model (Space / Voice / Audience / Influence):

## Appendix Three: Ethical Considerations

Ethics: Phase Two of the project received ethical approval from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Ethics Committee in June 2023. The research involved standard ethical considerations including voluntary participation and right to withdraw; full compliance with GDPR policy (RCS and Starcatchers); and the right to anonymity and confidentiality. Particular consideration was given to the following areas:

Rights of the participants in accessing Starcatchers events: As researchers, we were acutely aware that we were entering a space that belongs to the artists and families attending the sessions. Families' right to participate in the sessions was of paramount importance and the research activity was designed to avoid disruption to the running of the sessions.

Assent from very young participants: At the core of this research was the premise that the views and voice of the pre-/non-verbal child are respected. As such, the researchers were sensitive to the responses of children to our presence within the sessions. We looked for signs that children were content and comfortable with the researcher (and any equipment) in the room and that, having had a chance to explore and interact with researchers should they so wish, the child was not distracted or unsettled by their presence. If we sensed that our presence was causing discomfort, appropriate action was taken, for example, ceasing interaction with a child, moving away or changing position.

Informed consent from artists and adult participants: Our initial design included formal participant information sheets and consent forms for adults. However, upon attending the sessions, it became clear quickly that these would disrupt the running of the sessions, for various reasons. Therefore, after a discussion with Starcatchers, we revised our ethics application to the Royal Conservatoire and were granted approval to use oral consent from parents in relation to observation data. Written consent was still obtained from participants in the one session that was filmed.

Anonymity and confidentiality: All names in this report have been changed and identifying descriptions/details from fieldnotes have been minimised to avoid identification of particular children, artists, and significant adults. Specific projects/location of projects are not named in the data extracts provided in the report, for confidentiality. Researchers had a procedure in place should any safeguarding concerns arise in the course of the research.

## Appendix Four: Timeline and research roles in Phase Two

2023	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct
Research Design								
Starcatchers Play Day								
Ethics application process								
Research visits								
Analysis								
Output								
Rachel								
Cara								
Claire								