



# **SOCIAL PRESCRIBING** **to music groups in the community**

a guide for leaders and committees of music groups



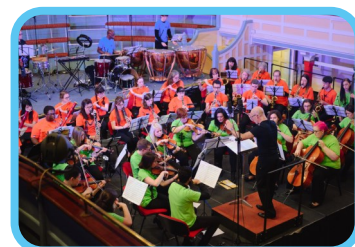
*connect Social Prescribing patients with great musical opportunities*

# 1. WHAT IS SOCIAL PRESCRIBING?

Part of the NHS Personalised Care programme, Social Prescribing is a way for GPs and local agencies to refer people to a 'Link Worker'. Link Workers give people time, focusing on 'what matters to me' and taking a holistic approach to people's health and wellbeing. They connect people to community groups and statutory services for practical and emotional support. Social Prescribing works for a wide range of people, including those:

- with one or more long-term conditions
- who need support with their mental health
- who are lonely or isolated
- who have complex social needs which affect their wellbeing

The types of community groups that Link Workers might prescribe to depend on the area, but could include creative activities such as art, dance and singing, and physical activities such as walking, football, gardening and fishing. Social prescriptions might also be to services such as debt counselling, housing and other practical support agencies.



***Evidence suggests that a fifth of patients consult with a GP for what is deemed more of a social problem (Torjesen, 2016) and that less than 10% of what affects health and wellbeing comes from access to healthcare (Hughes-Cromwick et al, 2014). Social Prescribing seeks to link people with activities and services which are of interest to them and may help to alleviate their symptoms. Link Workers, [usually] housed within GP surgeries, are allocated patients and undergo a process of finding out what people are interested in and match services with those interests and particular health needs.***

[www.socialprescribingnetwork.com](http://www.socialprescribingnetwork.com)

## 2. WHY MUSIC?

Singing or playing with others in a group has a growing evidence base which highlights the benefits for a range of health conditions. It can be particularly effective for improving mental health and wellbeing, and combatting loneliness and isolation. It can support lung health (especially singing) and be used to help the management of symptoms for conditions such as Dementia and Parkinson's. Find out more:

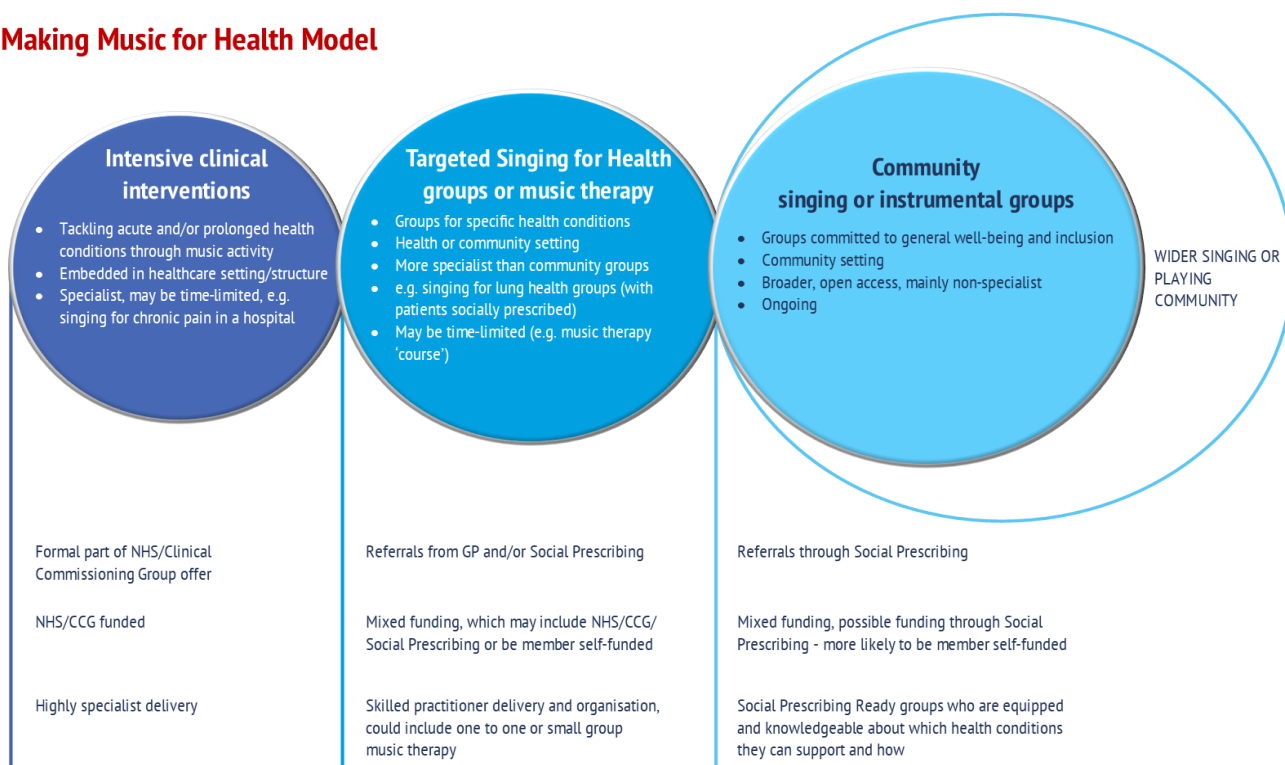
[www.singingforhealthnetwork.co.uk/research-overview](http://www.singingforhealthnetwork.co.uk/research-overview) and [Making Music's evidence bank](#)

From the healthcare system's point-of-view, expected outcomes from socially prescribed music-making might include a sense of increased personal wellbeing, systemic benefits over time such as reduced demand on primary and secondary healthcare, and other specific personal benefits such as weight loss or reduction of medication.



Of course, different music groups have differing levels of connectivity with health and social care systems, and the diagram below (based on the [Singing for Health Model](#) created by [Emily Foulkes](#) from *Music for Good*) helps to explain where they fit in. Social Prescribing is likely to focus mainly on the third bubble – all kinds of singing or instrumental groups in the community.

### Making Music for Health Model



## 3. WHAT IS THE BENEFIT TO MY MUSIC GROUP?

By engaging with Social Prescribing, your group has the opportunity to contribute to wellbeing and health in your community, and become part of a growing network of groups supporting some of those in our society who are most in need. It's also a way to:

- Increase your group's membership
- Identify new funding opportunities, e.g. through the health or care sectors
- Learn more about inclusion and how to remove barriers for people wanting to join your group; this could also benefit your existing members, some of whom may also already have medical or mental wellbeing needs or challenges.

## 4. WHAT DO WE NEED TO HAVE IN PLACE? WHAT'S THE PROCESS?



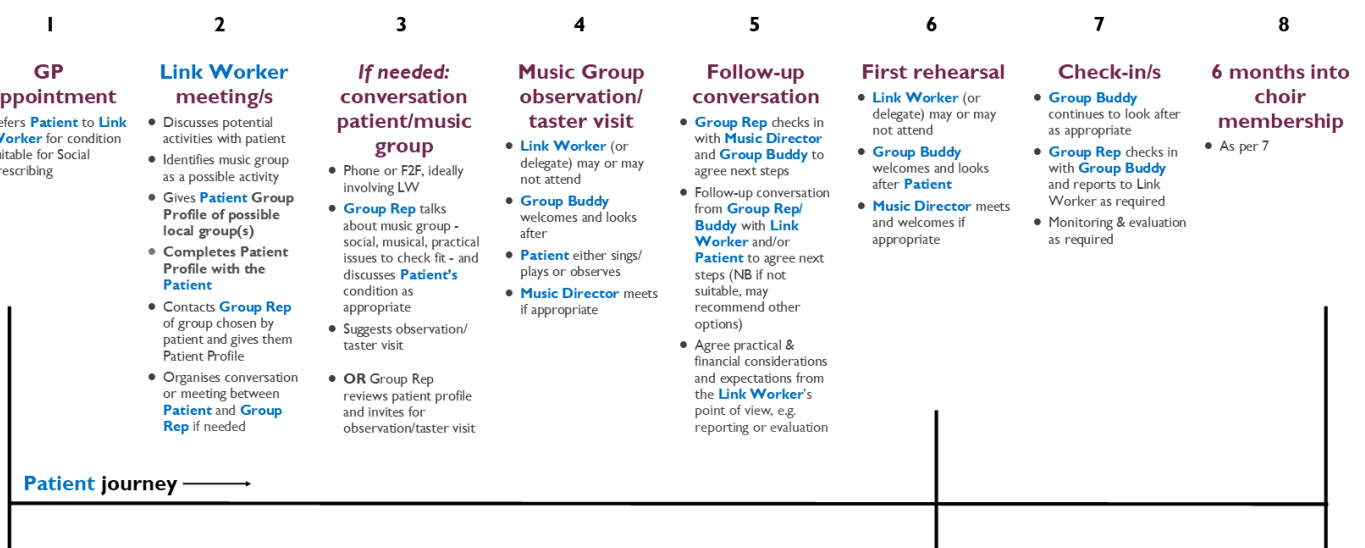
Most important is a process for establishing and managing the relationships, both with the Link Worker/s and the patient/s, and ensuring the process is efficient and safe. This might involve identifying a **representative** to make links with Link Workers, and a **buddy** or buddies to look after those who have been prescribed to your group.

Consider the **types of health condition** your group might or might not be able to accommodate, and what the impact of that might be. The group's leader/s (e.g. committee and music director) need to be part of this conversation. You should also ensure the members of your group are comfortable with this idea. If you're unsure what kind of patients may be referred, ask your link worker when you meet them.

You'll need: a safeguarding policy which includes vulnerable adults and associated procedures; a designated safeguarding person in the choir; and appropriate insurance ([Making Music](#) has templates, training, and a group insurance policy to cover this.)

See also the separate document: Questions for your Link Worker

[Sing for Pleasure](#) have created an example process for welcoming Social Prescribing referrals, on which the timeline below is based. Whilst not exhaustive or applicable to every situation, it provides a useful guide:





## 5. HOW DO I FIND MY LOCAL LINK WORKER/S?

Link Workers are employed by lots of different organisations across England and unfortunately there isn't a directory of all services, which makes it slightly more challenging to find Link Workers in your area. NHS advise the best thing to do is find out from your local GP surgery/s whether there is a Social Prescribing scheme locally (try their website first); if they aren't connected with any, you could see if there's any information online about Social Prescribing in your local authority, or try contacting your local council or voluntary services organisation. A bit of online searching should point you in the right direction, and it's worth persevering, as Link Workers will mostly be very receptive to hearing about suitable opportunities.

In some areas, groups of Link Workers have created local area directories, so they can share opportunities between themselves and with their patients. When you make contact with a Link Worker it's worth discussing whether your group could/should be included.

You might consider inviting a Link Worker to see your group in person, or if you've discovered a number of Link Workers in your area, you could organise a special taster session for them, and get them singing or playing!



## 6. WHAT MIGHT A LINK WORKER NEED TO KNOW?



Feel free to use the table on the following pages to help get the right fit. Unless your link worker has their own template, you should share this with them, so they have your information on file.

Find out if you can meet them in their workplace or if they will come and meet your group at one of your rehearsals, so they can get a feel for the group atmosphere and how you operate. Ask for feedback and whether they think you may be suitable for some patients.

Most Social Prescribers will be looking to measure progress or outcomes, so for instance wellbeing improvements against the [ONS4 scale](#), or the more detailed [Wakefield Social Prescribing Tool](#) (see separate templates). Have a look at these before you meet your link worker, ask what they are looking for and how they plan to measure outcomes. Make sure they know you are a volunteer-run group with limited time-capacity!



# USEFUL INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR MUSIC GROUP

(Also available as a separate document you can edit)



QUESTIONS	NOTES
Your group's name, a contact name, email address & telephone number	
When and where does the group meet?	
What sort of music does the group sing or play?	
If an instrumental group, do you have instruments to lend to participants?	
Is there a need to be able to read music, or can the music be learned aurally?	
Is the group auditioned, or is there a particular level of skill required?	
Are there limitations on the type of person that can join? E.g. age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity	
Does the singing group have appropriate safeguarding* in place, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insurance**</li> <li>• safeguarding policy incl. working with vulnerable adults</li> <li>• first aid (incl. mental health 1st aid)</li> <li>• data protection</li> <li>• DBS checks</li> <li>• risk assessment</li> </ul>	

\*See [Making Music's resources](#) are available to help

\*\*See [Making Music Insurance](#)



## USEFUL INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR MUSIC GROUP cont'd

QUESTIONS	NOTES
Are there taster opportunities before committing?	
Is there a cost to singing or playing with the group?	
What experience, if any, does the group have of accommodating a range of conditions?	
Do the leadership and members of the group feel comfortable accommodating a range of conditions? *	
How will the group ensure that the patient feels welcome? Will there be a buddy, for example? Do you have a 'group profile' for the patient to learn about the group before arriving? **	
How many referrals could the group accommodate?	

\* see questions on the next page for the group to consider before going ahead and accepting referrals

\*\* see 'Group profile template' later in this resource

## 7. WHAT MIGHT YOUR GROUP NEED TO KNOW BEFORE ACCEPTING A REFERRAL?

- What is the patient's condition?
  - ⇒ What does it mean in terms of their behaviour or ability (e.g. Parkinson's)?
  - ⇒ Can they point you to information and/or training about this condition?
  - ⇒ Can they complete a 'patient profile' (see below) with them for you?
- What does the link worker expect in terms of progress for the patient?
  - ⇒ Will they be monitoring this or not?
  - ⇒ If they are, how will they measure outcomes?
  - ⇒ What do they expect from you?
- Why does the link worker believe your group is a good fit? Their answer will reveal if they understand correctly how your group works!
- If you require a certain level of skill or ability to read music, ask if they have considered this with the patient as part of the referral process
- Is there any funding for the patient's place in your group or is the patient expected to fund their place themselves or is the group expected to offer a partial or total concession?



## 8. WHAT MIGHT YOUR GROUP NEED TO KNOW FROM THE PATIENT BEFORE A FIRST MEETING?

Feel free to use or adapt the 'referred person profile' on the following page, available as a separate editable word document.

## 9. WHAT MIGHT THE PATIENT LIKE TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR GROUP BEFORE A FIRST MEETING?

Feel free to use or adapt the 'group profile' in the following pages, also available as a word document.



# REFERRED PERSON PROFILE TEMPLATE

(Also available as a separate document you can edit)



QUESTIONS	NOTES
My full name and how I like to be called	
How I like to be contacted (email, telephone, Whatsapp) (give details)	
Some interests I have include (e.g. football, films, gardening)	
Music/songs I enjoy	
My experience of singing or playing in a group so far	
The first time I come to the group it would really help me if... (e.g. I could arrive 10 mins early, someone comes to meet me, I can have a cup of tea)	
I prefer it if only essential people/ everyone in the group knows about my condition/that I have been referred to the group by my link worker	
Some of my strengths are.... (e.g. open to trying new things, good singer)	
Some things I find difficult are... (e.g. standing for a long time)	
Some ways you can help or support me... (e.g. offer me the option to sit)	
Completed and consent to share granted (date)	
Photo of referred person (if possible)	

# GROUP PROFILE TEMPLATE

(Also available as a separate document you can edit)



QUESTIONS	NOTES
The name of our group	
The name of buddy and how to contact them (email, telephone, Whatsapp)	
Photo of buddy	
Info about the people in the group: how many, how old, men/women, what we do in life (students, retired, working etc.)	
Photo of group	
The kind of music we sing or play (not just 'jazz', give specific examples of recent or typical pieces)	
What does the group do? E.g. meet weekly for rehearsals, perform 3 times a year, have social events, do workshops	
Where we meet (address, map, public transport, parking, bike locking)	
What we provide (e.g. music stands, chair, tea/coffee, hand sanitiser)	
What we expect of you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Audition/no audition</li><li>• Complete beginner/experienced/minimum music grade</li><li>• Able/not able to read music</li><li>• Expect/don't expect you to learn at home (support? e.g. recordings)</li><li>• Expect/don't expect you to know what voice you are/where you fit in the band</li></ul>	



# GROUP PROFILE TEMPLATE

## cont' d



<p>More practical stuff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rehearsal venue (with link to map)</li> <li>• Transport options (incl. car share)</li> <li>• Time to arrive, start and finish</li> <li>• Is there a break</li> <li>• We meet every week/month/when are holidays</li> <li>• Who to tell if you can/can't come</li> <li>• We do/don't provide music/lyrics (cost)</li> <li>• Subscription cost to the group and concessions?</li> <li>• Uniform?</li> <li>• We don't/do provide instruments</li> <li>• What actually happens in the session: e.g. warm up, then work on pieces etc.</li> </ul>	
<p>Social media and website details</p>	
<p>The first time you come, please bring...</p>	
<p>Other practical info: toilet accessible/not, level access/not, ventilation/heating, lighting, acoustics, kitchen, water, safety of personal items, parking, bike locking</p>	
<p>Safeguarding person name and contact details, to speak to at any time in confidence about any issues or barriers</p>	

The logo for 'making music' features the words in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font on a red rectangular background.

SUPPORTING AND  
CHAMPIONING  
LEISURE-TIME MUSIC

**Making Music is the UK association for leisure-time music, with 3,800+ music groups in membership with 220,000 hobby musicians, providing practical support, connecting groups and acting as the voice of the sector**

[www.makingmusic.org.uk](http://www.makingmusic.org.uk)

The logo for 'Singing for Health Network' features a stylized heart shape composed of musical notes and a treble clef, with the text 'SINGING for HEALTH NETWORK' below it.

**The UK Singing for Health Network is a membership network for researchers, practitioners and healthcare workers. It aims to bridge research and practice and support the Singing for Health Movement**

[www.singingforhealthnetwork.co.uk](http://www.singingforhealthnetwork.co.uk)

**This guide was created by Making Music and the Singing for Health Network in partnership with**



National  
Academy  
for Social  
Prescribing



**and the [Singing Network UK](http://www.singingforhealthnetwork.co.uk)**

Produced by Baz Chapman and Barbara Eifler.

With thanks to all the many contributors who have advised on the creation of this resource.

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N.B. This is an evolving resource which will be updated periodically. If you have any suggested additions or amendments, or would simply like to tell us about your experiences of Social Prescribing and singing, please write to us at [singingforhealthnetwork@gmail.com](mailto:singingforhealthnetwork@gmail.com) or [info@makingmusic.org.uk](mailto:info@makingmusic.org.uk)

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