



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

a guide for social prescribers/link workers



*connect your patients with great musical opportunities*

# 1. WHY MUSIC?

***Singing is one of the most positive forms of human activity, supporting physical, mental, emotional and social health, as well as individual development in the same areas. Successful singing is important because it builds self-confidence, promotes self-esteem, always engages the emotions, promotes social inclusion, supports social skill development, and enables people of different ages and abilities to come together successfully to create something special in the arts.***

*Based on scientific evidence compiled by Professor Graham Welch for Sing Up.*

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. Arts and Health is described as a 'movement' and one which can support the notion that there are 'limits of medical models of health and care, particularly in areas such as chronic illness'. (Daykin 2020, p.3). This is where active participation in music comes into its own.



You can read an overview of musical activity for health research at:

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

# 2. DIFFERENT TYPES OF SINGING GROUPS

The Big Choral Census of 2017 estimated 40,000 choirs and over 2 million people singing regularly in the UK, which makes singing one of the nation's favourite pastimes, with a myriad of different types of group and genres of music covered. These include:

- Barbershop groups (male, female, mixed voice)
- Community Choirs & Singing Groups
- Folk Groups
- Rock or Pop Choirs
- Chamber Choirs
- School Choirs
- Church Choirs
- Symphony Choruses
- Female- and Male-Voice Choirs
- Gospel Choirs
- Choral Societies
- Youth Choirs
- Health condition-specific singing groups (e.g. dementia-friendly choirs)

## 2. DIFFERENT TYPES OF INSTRUMENTAL GROUPS

In 2008, DCMS (Department for Culture Media and Sport) and ACE (Arts Council England) published [Our Creative Talent](#) which estimated 12,000 (adult) music groups in England (the Big Choral Census included school, youth and church choirs, and covered the whole UK; for the whole UK, adult music groups of all kinds would number around 13,440).

Instrumental groups could be...



- Handbell ringers
- Brass bands
- Folk groups
- Ukulele groups
- Amateur orchestras
- Drumming circles
- Samba bands
- Swing bands
- Wind bands
- Marching bands
- Flute Choirs
- Jazz groups
- Chamber orchestras
- Saxophone ensembles
- Steel bands
- Accordion orchestras
- Community bands

## 3. HOW TO FIND SINGING OR INSTRUMENTAL GROUPS

For **instrumental AND singing groups**, search Making Music's Find-a-Group tool: <https://www.makingmusic.org.uk/resources/find-a-group-list>

For **choirs** you might also search:

- Natural Voice Network: <https://naturalvoice.net/choirs>
- British Choirs on the Net: <http://www.choirs.org.uk/>

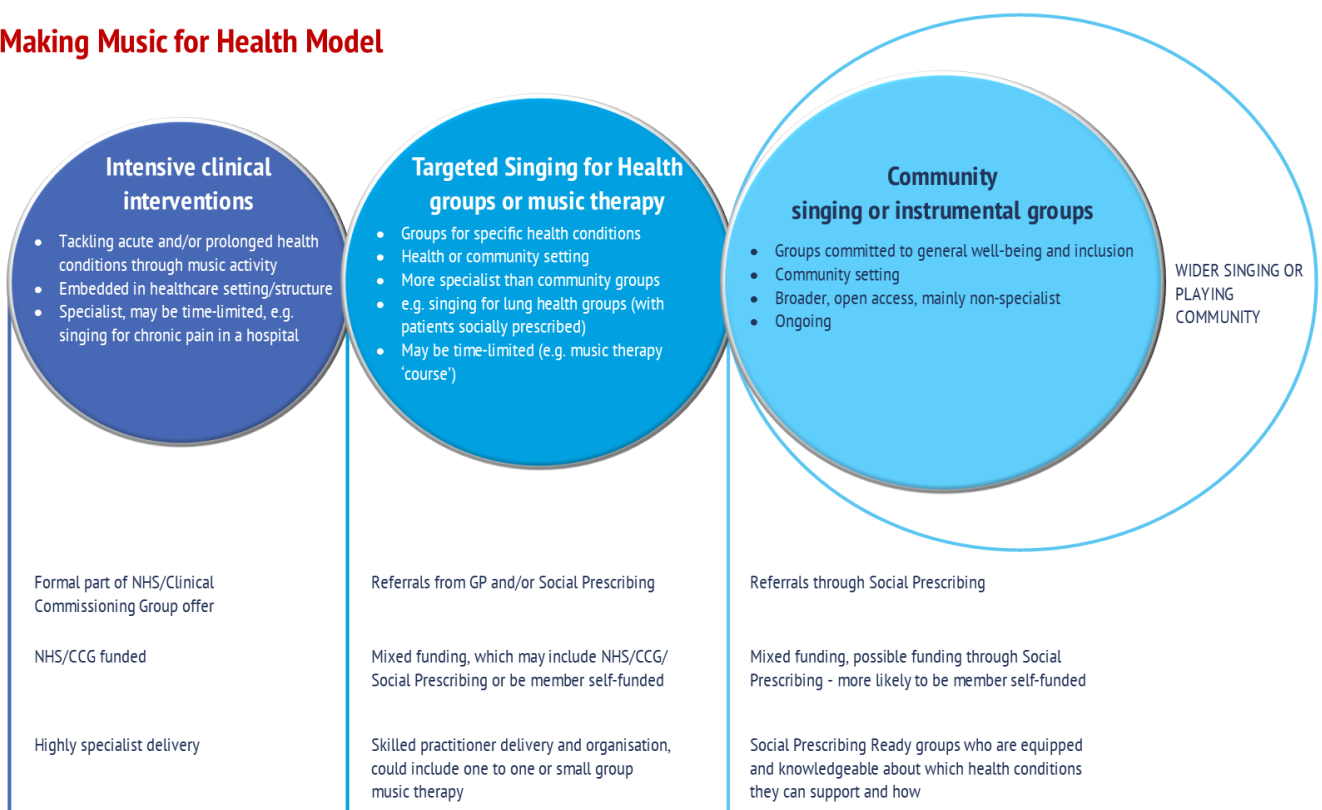
For **instrumental groups** you might also search:

- Brass Bands England: <https://www.bbe.org.uk/find-a-band>
- Amateur Orchestras UK: <https://amateurorchestras.org.uk/>
- Ukulele Social: <https://ukulele.social/LocalGroups>
- Windband Directory: <https://www.windbanddirectory.co.uk/>
- Handbell Ringers of Great Britain: <https://handbells.org.uk/find-team>



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



The Singing for Health Network, Making Music, and their partners are working to raise awareness of Social Prescribing for music groups, so that these groups can make their own approaches to Link Workers in their area. If there are ways in which you can make yourself visible to such groups in your area, that would help them (and perhaps other community groups!).

And if you'd like to be proactive in finding music groups in your area, listings of UK music groups by type and location can be found through the links on the previous page.

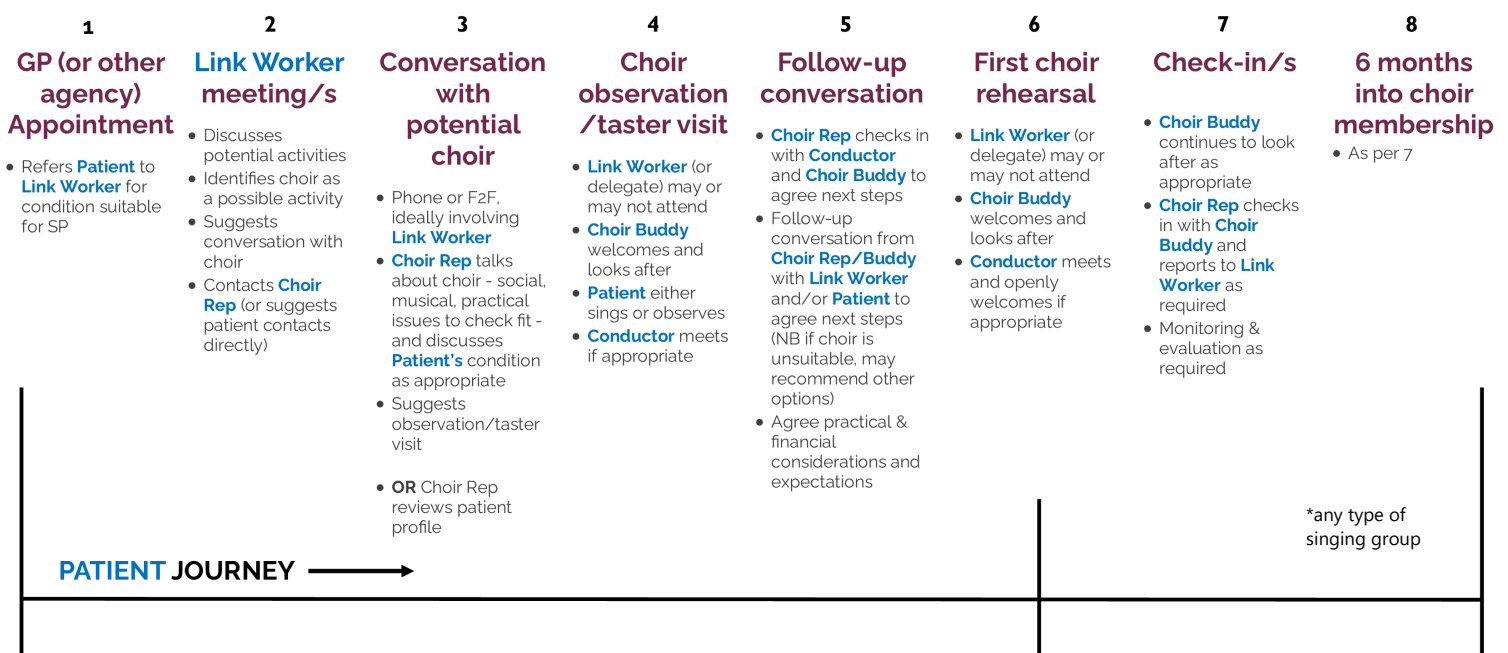
Other helpful resources are local authority websites, especially if they feature 'What's On', and community group listings; local papers; and local community or church halls. Patients will also be a goldmine of local information!



## 4. SOCIAL PRESCRIBING TO A MUSIC GROUP

The suggested process below is based on the one created by [Sing for Pleasure](#) for choirs originally. Whilst not exhaustive or applicable to every situation, it provides a useful guide to support planning:

### Example timeline for Social Prescribing to a choir\*



We strongly recommend that Link Workers connect with the music group before referring patients (see tables below). We also think it's really important that the 3-way conversation between Link Worker, Group Rep and Patient continues throughout the process, to ensure that the patient continues to receive the support they need.

## 5. GETTING THE RIGHT FIT

Feel free to use the tables on the following pages to help get the right fit of patient to music group. You might like to use the results of the patient questions to build up a profile which you could share with a music group. And you could ask a music group to provide a profile you can share with the patient.





# QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER YOURSELF FIRST



QUESTIONS	NOTES
<p>How will you broach the subject with the patient? Sometimes people can get scared off by singing or playing, and may need reassurance that everyone has a voice/ everyone can make music. Can you gently introduce the idea as part of a wider conversation?</p>	
<p>Who will cover any costs? Can you access funding to support your patient?</p>	
<p>Are there any specific needs or safeguarding issues for your patient which will need to be accommodated?</p>	
<p>Does the patient wish for the 'Social Prescription' to be made known to other members of the group, or kept secret?</p>	
<p>How will the patient access the group? On their own, or will you or another colleague accompany them? How will you/the group plan for a good arrival for the patient?</p>	
<p>What if it doesn't work out? It's important that an unsuccessful experience doesn't put off the patient from making music. Music is a universal, life-affirming right of all people, and there should be many other opportunities to get actively engaged with music in an area. So don't rule out exploring other options.</p>	

## QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT WANT TO ASK THE GROUP



QUESTIONS	NOTES
The group's name, a contact name, email address & telephone number	
When and where does the group meet?	
What kind of music does the group sing or play?	
If an instrumental group, do they 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 group have appropriate safeguarding in place, e.g. insurance, safeguarding policy incl. working with vulnerable adults, first aid, data protection, DBS checks, risk assessment	
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 they have a 'group profile' for the patient to learn about the group before arriving?	
How many referrals could the group accommodate?	

## QUESTIONS TO ASK THE GROUP – continued



QUESTIONS	NOTES
<p>Who is their 'Group Representative' and main contact for you?</p> <p>What are their contact details?</p>	
<p>Will they be able to respond reasonably swiftly and during your working hours?</p> <p>Are they able to make at least one initial daytime meeting with you?</p>	
<p>Do they have a 'Buddy' for the patient, to look after them at least initially?</p>	
<p>Is there a cost to singing or playing with the group?</p>	
<p>What experience, if any, does the group have of accommodating a range of conditions?</p>	
<p>Do the leadership and members of the group feel comfortable accommodating a range of conditions?</p>	
<p>How will the group ensure that the patient feels welcome? Will there be a buddy, for example?</p>	
<p>Do they have a 'group profile' for the patient to learn about the group before arriving?</p>	
<p>How many referrals could the group accommodate?</p>	





# QUESTIONS YOU COULD ASK A PATIENT ABOUT MAKING MUSIC

See next page for a suggested patient profile

QUESTIONS	NOTES
What singing or playing experiences have you had?	
Why do you enjoy singing or playing?	
How confident would you feel to sing or play with other people?	
<p>Did you know that making music is proven to be really good for health and wellbeing? [share evidence above if necessary]</p> <p>Lots of music groups are open to anyone, regardless of ability, and some don't need you to be able to read music</p>	
What sort of music group might you be interested in? [share types of groups listed above, or a list of local groups if you have them]	
Would you be interested in a taster session? If so, can we share your responses and any other relevant information with a potential group so they can understand what you might need in order to get the most from it?	

# PATIENT PROFILE TEMPLATE



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 patient (if appropriate) (important if no face to face meeting takes place before the first taster session or rehearsal)	

# QUESTIONS A GROUP MIGHT ASK YOU



QUESTIONS	NOTES
What kind of health conditions might the patients you refer to them have?	
Can you share information about the patient's condition and what to expect of their behaviour or needs? (e.g. needs a break/can't stand long/access to bathroom)	
Can you point them to general information or training about certain conditions, where necessary? E.g. Parkinson's or Dementia	
<p>What policies or processes do they need to have in place?</p> <p>Should they have a designated safeguarding person?</p>	
Can you finance or part-finance this person's place in the group? Or do they need to talk to the patient about this?	
What do you expect from them in terms of monitoring or reporting ? (They are likely a group run by volunteers, perhaps with a day job — so their time and expertise will be limited)	
What if it doesn't work out—what should they do, is there a process to follow?	
Are there any data protection issues you need them to address or a certain way to handle the patient's information?	

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  
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for Social  
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**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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