SOCIAL PRESCRIBING to choirs and singing groups

a guide for Social Prescribers/Link Workers



connect your patients with great singing opportunities

1.WHY SINGING?

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 in a group has a growing evidence base which highlights the benefits for a range of health conditions. Singing can be particularly effective for improving mental health and wellbeing, and combatting loneliness and isolation. It can support lung health and be used to help the management of symptoms for conditions such as Dementia and Parkinson's. Attending group



rehearsals as a non-participant can also be beneficial, offering social connection and a feeling of belonging.

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 singing comes into its own.

You can read an overview of singing for health research at: https://www.singingforhealthnetwork.co.uk/research-overview

2. DIFFERENT TYPES OF SINGING GROUP AND HOW TO FIND THEM

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

Rock or Pop Choirs

Chamber Choirs

Folk Groups

Female- and Male-Voice Choirs

Gospel Choirs

Symphony Choruses

Health condition-specific singing groups (e.g. dementia-friendly choirs)

Choral Societies

Youth Choirs

Of course, different singing groups have differing levels of connectivity with health and social care systems, and the diagram below (created by <u>Emily Foulkes</u> at Music for Good) helps to explain where they fit in. Social Prescribing is likely to focus mainly on the third bubble – community choirs/singing groups and all other kinds of singing groups in the community.

Intensive clinical interventions

- Tackling acute and/or prolonged health conditions through singing
- Embedded in healthcare setting/structure
- Specialist, may be time-limited
- e.g. singing for chronic pain in a hospital

Formal part of NHS/Clinical Commissioning Group offer

NHS/CCG funded

Highly specialist delivery

Targeted Singing for Health groups

- Groups for specific health conditions
- Health or community setting
- More specialist than community choirs
- e.g. singing for lung health groups (with patients socially prescribed)

Referrals from GP and/or Social Prescribing

Mixed funding, which may include NHS/CCG/ Social Prescribing or be member self-funded

Skilled practitioner delivery and organisation

Singing groups in the community

- Groups committed to general well-being and inclusion
- Community setting
- Broader, open access, mainly non-specialist
- Ongoing

WIDER SINGING COMMUNITY

Referrals through Social Prescribing

Mixed funding, possible funding through Social Prescribing - more likely to be member self-funded

Social Prescribing Ready groups who are equipped and knowledgeable about which health conditions they can support and how



The Singing for Health Network and its 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. However, if you'd like to be proactive in finding singing groups in your area, listings of UK singing groups by type and location can be found through:

- Making Music's Find a Music Group: https://www.makingmusic.org.uk/resources/find-a-group-list
- Natural Voice Network: https://naturalvoice.net/choirs
- British Choirs on the Net: http://www.choirs.org.uk/

3. SOCIAL PRESCRIBING TO A SINGING GROUP

<u>Sing for Pleasure</u> have created the following suggested process. Whilst not exhaustive or applicable to every situation, it provides a useful guide to support planning:

Example timeline for Social Prescribing to a choir*

GP (or other Link Worker Check-in/s Conversation Choir Follow-up First choir 6 months agency) meeting/s with observation conversation into choir rehearsal Appointment . Discusses Choir Buddy potential /taster visit membership • Choir Rep checks in • Link Worker (or continues to look with Conductor potential activities choir delegate) may or As per 7 after as • Refers Patient to • Link Worker (or Identifies choir as and Choir Buddy to may not attend Link Worker for delegate) may or appropriate a possible activity Phone or F2F. agree next steps Choir Buddy condition suitable may not attend • Choir Rep checks ideally involving • Follow-up welcomes and Suggests in with Choir for SP • Choir Buddy Link Worker conversation from looks after conversation with **Buddy** and welcomes and Choir Rep/Buddy with Link Worker Choir Rep talks choir • Conductor meets reports to Link Worker as looks after about choir - social. • Contacts Choir and openly • Patient either and/or Patient to musical, practical Rep (or suggests welcomes if required sings or observes agree next steps issues to check fit appropriate patient contacts Monitoring & Conductor meets and discusses

Patient's condition (NB if choir is directly) evaluation as if appropriate unsuitable, may required recommend other as appropriate Suggests options) Agree practical & observation/taster financial visit considerations and • OR Choir Rep expectations reviews patient profile **PATIENT JOURNEY**

* 'Choir' = any type of singing group

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

4. GETTING THE RIGHT FIT

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







QUESTIONS	NOTES
How will you broach the subject with	
the patient? Sometimes people can get	
scared off by singing, and may need	
reassurance that everyone has a voice.	
Can you gently introduce the idea as	
part of a wider conversation? An option	
could be that they just go along as an	
observer, or volunteer helper.	
Who will cover any costs? Can you	
access funding to support your patient?	
Are there any specific needs or	
safeguarding issues for your patient	
which will need to be accommodated?	
Does the patient wish for the 'Social	
Prescription' to be made known to other	
members of the group, or kept secret?	
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?	
What if it doesn't work out? It's	
important that an unsuccessful	
experience doesn't put off the patient	
from singing. Singing is a universal, life-	
affirming right of all people, and there	
should be many other opportunities to	
experience singing in an area. So don't	
rule out exploring other options.	





QUESTIONS	NOTES
What singing experiences have you	
had?	
Why do you enjoy singing?	
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How confident would you feel to sing	
with other people?	
Did you know that choir singing is	
proven to be really good for health and	
wellbeing? [share evidence above if	
necessary]	
Lots of choirs are open to anyone,	
regardless of ability, and some don't	
need you to be able to read music	
What sort of singing group might you	
be interested in? [share types of choir	
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?	





QUESTIONS	NOTES
What is the group's name?	
When and where does the group meet?	
What sort of music does the group sing?	
Is there a need to be able to read music, or is the music learned aurally?	
Is the group auditioned, or is there a particular level of skill required?	
Is attending and simply (or initially) listening or helping at rehearsals an option?	
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. insurance, safeguarding policy, first aid (including mental health first aid), data protection, DBS checks, risk assessments, working with vulnerable citizens?	



QUESTIONS YOU COULD ASK A POTENTIAL SINGING GROUP contd.

QUESTIONS	NOTES
Are there taster opportunities before committing?	
Is there a cost to singing with the group?	
Does the group feel comfortable about being able to accommodate the patient's condition?	
How will the group ensure that the patient feels welcome? Will there be a buddy, for example?	
How many referrals could the group accommodate?	

Created by the Singing for Health Network in partnership with













and the **Singing Network UK**

Produced by Baz Chapman.

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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

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