

# 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
- Folk Groups
- Rock or Pop Choirs
- Chamber Choirs
- Symphony Choruses
- Female- and Male-Voice Choirs
- Gospel Choirs
- Choral Societies
- Youth Choirs
- Health condition-specific singing groups (e.g. dementia-friendly choirs)



Of course, different singing groups have differing levels of connectivity with health and social care systems, and the diagram below (created by [Emily Foulkes](#) 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.



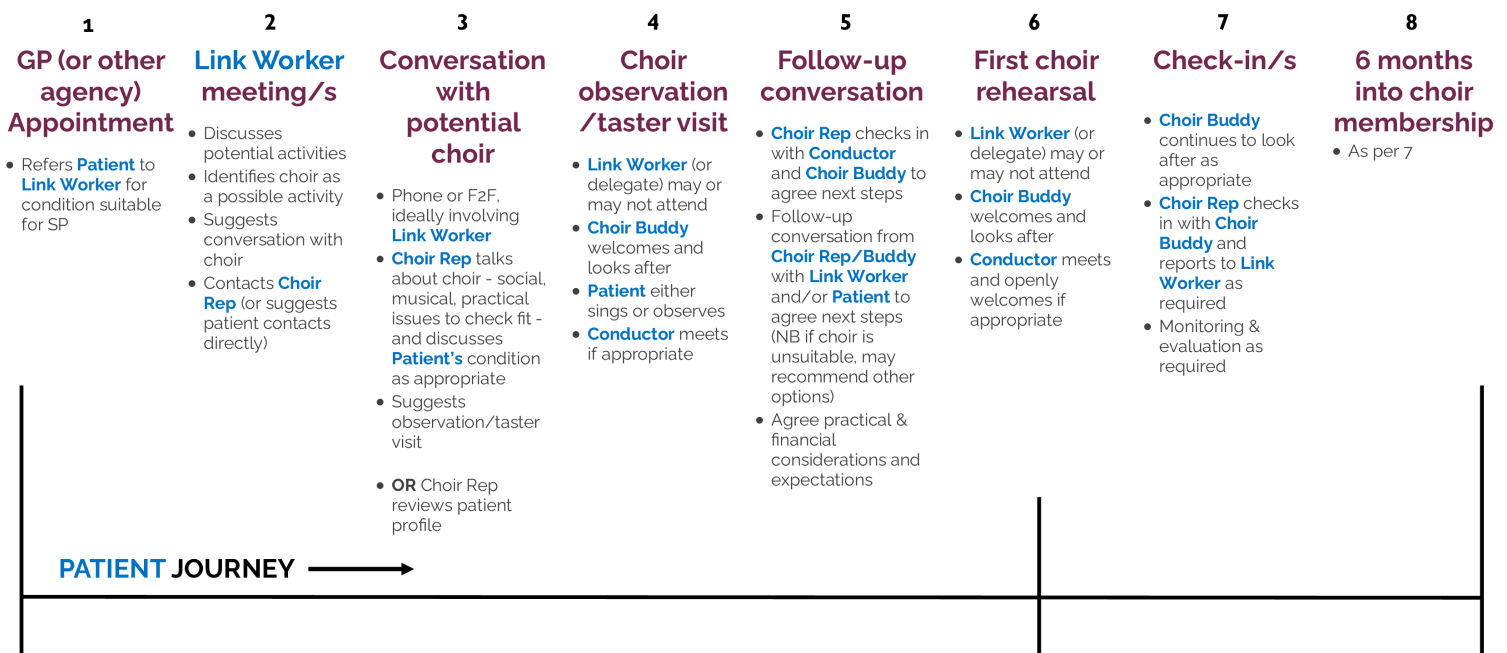
The Singing for Health Network and its partners are working to raise awareness of Social Prescribing for music groups, so that these groups can make their own approaches to Link Workers in their area. However, if you'd like to be proactive in finding singing groups in your area, listings of UK singing 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

[Sing for Pleasure](#) 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\*



\* '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 TO CONSIDER YOURSELF FIRST



QUESTIONS	NOTES
<p>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.</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 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.</p>	



# QUESTIONS YOU COULD ASK A PATIENT ABOUT SINGING



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



## QUESTIONS YOU COULD ASK A POTENTIAL SINGING GROUP



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.*

*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)

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)

