

A CHOIR IN EVERY CARE HOME

HOW TO RUN A GREAT CAMPAIGN

WORKING PAPER 7

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'A Choir in Every Care Home' is an initiative to explore how music and singing can feature regularly in care homes across the country. Funded and initiated by the **Baring Foundation**, it is a unique collaboration between 30 leading national organisations from adult social care, music and academic research. It is led by **Live Music Now**, **Sound Sense** and **Canterbury Christ Church University**.

The Baring Foundation



About *A choir in every care home*

This enquiry is an initiative of the *Baring Foundation* which since 2010 has focused its arts programme on older people, especially those in care homes. Following a roundtable discussion in October 2014 the Foundation decided as a first step to undertake a short-term investigation into singing in care homes which would:

- Collate the existing evidence for the benefits (for staff, family and friends, choir members as well as residents) of singing/choirs for older people/in care homes/links to the wider community.
- Map existing activity
- Explore different models of activity: benefits, challenges and ways forward
- Collate existing materials that support choirs in care homes and produce new materials where needed.
- Consider issues of quality of the artistic experience and art achieved, with special reference to dementia
- Describe what more can be done without extra resources and cost what more activity could be achieved with further resources.
- Launch and widely disseminate this work in a way that will encourage the greater use of choirs in care homes.

Following an open application process a consortium of three organisations, led by Live Music Now, was awarded funds to carry out the investigation.

Our working approach

The worlds of singing, arts and wellbeing, and care homes are all well understood by a wide range and large number of organisations working at both practical and policy levels. These organisations – nearly three dozen at the last count – not only know about the subject, the results of this enquiry matter deeply to them. No investigation could successfully research the issues – nor, crucially, be able to “disseminate the findings in ways that will encourage the greater use of choirs in care homes” – without genuine buy-in from these organisations.

Our working approach therefore invites these organisations to form not a steering group, but a *working* group that shares and learns from each other, that determines work that needs to be done – and that then is involved in carrying it out.

Compared with conventional practices of evidence-gathering and recommendation generating, our approach:

- involves the sector fully from the start – so they own the solutions
- makes full use of the knowledge, expertise and experiences in the sector – it is efficient
- creates a community of practice that is worthwhile in its own right – so leaves a legacy
- creates solutions already agreed by the sector – so are much more likely to be adopted.

About working papers

Our working papers distil the sharings and emerging learnings of both the working group and the consortium, to provoke further debate and discussion. They are subject to change as the initiative develops. Together, they form the evidence for our actions and recommendations for future work. A list of proposed working papers is on the outside back cover.

Cover image

The Sing Up Battle Bus



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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The ultimate outcome of the work of *A choir in every care home* is to have “encouraged the greater use of choirs in care homes.” Leaving aside the issue of what is a “choir” (see Working paper 2: Survey results: musicians in care homes; care homes with music), encouraging their greater use is a change-making activity; and, given there are some 18,000 care homes in England, a substantial piece of work in its own right.

This had been recognised from before the start of the programme; and the ACIECH lead consortium was clear in its funding bid that an important working group member would be Sing Up, the primary schools national singing programme. From 2007 to 2011 this programme had carried out a remarkably similar job, in “encouraging the greater use of singing in England’s 20,000 primary schools.”

A major contribution of Sing Up to ACIECH is, therefore, this exploration of what it means in practice to encourage change-making in some 20,000 individual establishments and their staff; and that is the focus of this working paper.

2 Background to Sing Up

- 2.1 The concept of a national singing programme in primary schools was born of the Music Manifesto, a government-backed investigation into the state of young people’s music education in and out of school. In the context of anxiety that singing was disappearing from primary school education the Music Manifesto’s major report, in 2006, recommended “group singing opportunities to be offered to every primary school child.” This recommendation was fully accepted by government which in the following year announced a National Singing Programme for primary schools in England and invited organisations to bid for funding.

- 2.2 The funding bids needed to be from consortia of organisations with combined appropriate experience, knowledge and skills, demonstrating how they would work together to implement a programme which would get all 20,000 English primary schools singing again.

The government specified that bids should include a public-facing campaign to raise awareness of the value and benefits of singing for children. This was seen as a vital component of the programme in order to persuade teachers, head teachers and parents (decision-makers and key influencers) to make room for singing in an already busy school day.

- 2.3 A consortium comprising Youth Music, Sage Gateshead Faber Music and Abbot Mead Vickers (AMV) compiled the winning bid and the programme – now called **Sing Up** – got under way in November 2007. Responsibilities for each strand of the programme were:

Youth Music Lead partner, responsible for distribution of government funds to other consortium partners and for devising and managing a grant-making programme to kick-start singing by funding delivery organisations with a track record of excellent work. Also responsible for managing the Sing Up website, termly print magazine and setting the brief for the campaign strand.

Sage Gateshead Training and CPD partner. Responsible for devising and managing a network of Area Leaders (30 around the country), partnerships with local authority Music Services and other delivery organisations, and a significant programme of training and CPD for teachers and vocal leaders.

Faber Music Music publishing partner. Responsible for the creation of a Song Bank of hundreds of specially arranged/composed songs and supporting resources. Negotiation of licenses with other music publishers.

AMV Campaign partner. Responsible for devising and managing the campaign – public-facing to drive awareness and interest and to schools and teachers to drive engagement and registration online.

- 2.4 Sing Up ran as a publicly funded programme for five years and over the course of that time successfully engaged 98% of English primary schools in singing activity. This was the highest ever level of engagement achieved by a non-mandatory initiative.

3 The scope of the campaign

- 3.1 At the heart of Sing Up's work was a well-managed campaign to help persuade teachers (and their head teachers) that singing was worthwhile. Crucially, the campaign was not just the PR and advertising exercise described in sections 4 and 5 – it would have been useless if it had not also been able to deliver tangible activities that would enable the change-making process. We needed to set out a direction of travel in relation to how we would get schools singing. This involved supporting generalist primary school teachers to lead singing as a regular and natural part of every school day.
- 3.2 To achieve that, we knew we would need to provide teachers with easy-to-use songs and resources, training to help them lead singing well. This was combined with giving funding to and shining a spotlight on the work of existing music education organisations who had a track record of delivering really good work in this area. In some cases, practitioners from these organisations also went into schools to demonstrate, support and kick-start great singing.

4 Building a campaign

A campaign is more than the slogan you might see on social media, or in a magazine. It is carefully built up through a number of steps, the most important of which are described in this section.

4.1 Planning

Normally the first step in a campaign would be to establish what the current position is to ascertain the distance to be travelled in order to achieve your goals. Another early task would be to source evidence to make the case for the benefit of the activity you are seeking to drive engagement with. In Sing Up's case much of this work had been already carried out by the Music Manifesto. So there were some foundations to build upon: it was already felt that a) singing was beneficial to children and b) not enough of it was happening.

4.2 Identifying barriers

So the major first task was to ascertain what the barriers to singing in schools were. Some fairly simple research was carried out with a small number of focus groups and telephone interviews to find out what the common themes were in relation to teachers' reluctance or inability to get their pupils singing. The common themes emerged very quickly and consistently across all conversations. They were:

- Not enough time to sing. There's so much I need to do in the school day and so many new government initiatives. I can't squeeze it in.
- I don't know where to start. I've never done any singing before and have no idea what I'm meant to do or what the educational benefit is.
- I'm terrified of singing in front of my pupils. They might laugh at me, I'm not a music specialist and can't really sing well.

And these translated into the following three barriers

- Expertise and confidence of teachers was low. Fear of singing.
- Lack of time – too many other priorities
- Lack of commitment to singing – why is it important for my pupils?

4.3 **Turning barriers into insights**

Very quickly we were able to ascertain that the main barriers were that teachers were time-poor and felt de-skilled by the prospect of leading singing without any previous experience or training. We also learnt that the benefits of singing needed to be communicated more widely and more convincingly.

We're fortunate in the education sector that the vast majority of teachers are in the profession because they have a deep personal commitment to doing the best they can for their students. We knew that if we could categorically demonstrate that regular singing would benefit the children – in relation to their development educationally and socially, and their well-being – and then make it easy to adopt new habits and behaviours in the classroom, we would be half-way home.

4.4 **Singing is believing**

There's something unique about the joy of group singing which we believed would inspire and enthuse teachers once they had given it a try. Through our other work elsewhere in music education, particularly within community music settings and with disadvantaged children and young people, it had been found that the widely acknowledge benefits of taking part in music activities only accrued if the quality of the musical experience was high. That's not necessarily to say that the quality of the musical/performance output needs to be high, but the quality of the experience – in this case, mainly down to the quality of the leadership – needs to be high for the benefits to begin to stack up.

4.5 **Creating solutions from insights**

Once we had understood these barriers we were able to combine them with our existing knowledge of what had worked well in other music education interventions and use these as insights to inform our communications campaign. The insight about teachers feeling de-skilled, combined with the knowledge about quality leadership also informed the training programme led by Sage Gateshead and the nature of the support activities delivered by the network of Area Leaders.

In other words, we had solutions to each barrier:

- Easy to use resources – no musical expertise necessary to provide a quality experience
- Face to face training for teachers to build confidence in their own singing
- Smuggling singing into the school day – not making it an additional activity
- Demonstrations of benefits – campaigning

4.5 **Developing key messages**

Based on the insights we had derived from the early research we devised an overall campaign message to engage teachers which communicated the value of singing in a learning context and was intended to demonstrate to teachers that singing, rather

than being an additional thing they had to find time for, would help them to do the job they needed to do anyway – help pupils learn. The message was:

“...have you noticed how easy it is to learn things when you sing them?”

One of the most powerful things about this campaign message was that it resonated as a *truth* – something that anyone could relate to and think “yes, in my experience that is true”. From there it was only a small step to take to demonstrate that singing could be a useful tool to support learning in school. Below is an example of the advertising we used.

I can see _____ now the
rain is gone.

I can see all _____ in
my way.

Gone are the _____ clouds
that had me blind.

It's gonna be a bright,
bright _____ day.

Have you noticed how easy it is to
learn things when you sing them?



It's an amazing thing, singing. It has amazing powers. The power to help with learning. The power to improve behaviour, improve health and improve confidence. Unfortunately, over the years singing has almost disappeared from some classrooms but a national campaign has now been launched to get primary school-aged children (and their teachers) singing. Sing Up provides a wealth of resources, from training to an online song-book and termly magazine, that will help increase opportunities for children to enjoy singing as part of their everyday lives; in school, at home and in the wider community. To find out more visit www.singup.org.

The use of the well-known song-lyrics demonstrated really clearly how when words are attached to a melody they are easier to remember than if they are just prose. We knew this would be recognised as a universal truth because of the way the brain is hard-wired to process music and retain information attached to it. This was one of the things which was documented in the academic research which had been referenced prior to the programme, but more than that – it is something that everyone just knows – it doesn't need to be proven, everyone knows from personal experience that it is true. We believe (and we have been told by our target audience) that's why the campaign message was so powerful.

4.6 **Making it easy to act**

Alongside convincing teachers that singing would help them to do their job – get their pupils learning well - the next campaign task was to make it easy for them to act upon that new belief.

We had looked at the government-sponsored healthy eating '5 a day' campaign and analysed what we felt was effective about it. From that we created a singing equivalent centred around fitting just five minutes of singing into classroom activity whenever possible. This idea made singing feel less like a major undertaking that required lots of changes to the existing teaching structures and instead instituted it as a daily teaching habit which should feel natural and more like 'something we just do'. This involved creating bite-sized resources which would naturally fall into this kind of routine and an advertising campaign which focused on the message:

"... a little bit of singing goes a long way."

We still use this message in our marketing now because it communicates clearly that for minimum time and effort the impact and benefits are disproportionately high.

Some of the benefits we list in relation to injecting small amounts of singing regularly into the school day are:

- Improvements to concentration and focus in the classroom
- Giving the teacher tools to change the mood in the classroom
- Using songs to transition from one activity to another eg tidying up, lining up for lunch, doing the register
- Using songs to embed positive behavioural habits and routines in the classroom
- Re-energising a flagging class – for example after lunch, or towards the end of the day
- Reinforcing neural connections leading to better learning and retention of information
- Fostering creativity and collaboration in the classroom
- Involvement of all children in one activity – singing is great for inclusion work and community building.

5 **Communications strategies**

Section 4 creates a campaign brief: what you need to say, why you need to say it, and you can help people to act on that. The next stage is the *communications strategy* – how you're going to say all that. AMV's strategy was:

5.1 **PR**

The campaign was to be PR-led: it was felt we would have the maximum impact for the least amount of spend via generating media coverage. Advertising would then

amplify our PR communications.

PR value for money calculations can be somewhat nebulous and you never know exactly what your money is going to buy for you (unlike with advertising where you know exactly what exposure you are buying). If you can't create a 'newsworthy' story, then the press won't cover it. That's where a PR company comes in, because they can create the newsworthy stories out of what you are doing. We had a good mix of coverage in national papers, breakfast TV, radio (some of which was paid-for placement which worked really well), education press and local press.

Local press shouldn't be underestimated because it is very easy to get coverage and does get traction. We always did lots of local press with any stories about local schools getting a Sing Up Award, or local projects being awarded funding. Over a period of time, this kind of drip-drip of local coverage does build up to be impactful, especially if combined with very targeted communications to your core target audience of decision-makers and key influencers.

5.2 Advertising

We had a mix of advertising in the following media:

- National press – targeting education supplements and titles widely read by teachers
- Local radio – a paid-for campaign celebrating singing in local schools; a simple 'jingle' ad featuring the URL to drive people to the website; placed interviews with our 'Ambassadors' some of whom were celebrities involved in campaigning for music education
- Cinema – a one-off campaign with an animation made by AMV creative about how singing promotes inclusion in school
- Sector press – education and music education press to bring the professional sector with us on our campaign.

5.3 Website

The singup.org website was the most important element of our campaign. It was the place that all our promotional work drove teachers and influencers to, it held all our songs and resources and supported us in our drive to improve the skills and knowledge of the teaching profession. Crucially, it also served as a place to foreground all the evidence and case studies demonstrating the positive outcomes of our work and of singing in schools, including well researched academic studies, including those from the Institute of Education who were working with Sing Up in this area.

5.4 Magazine

At the outset we decided that instead of creating a fixed, printed 'National Songbook', we would instead create an ever growing and changing online Song Bank.

We believed that we still needed some print materials though and decided on a termly magazine which would have a covermount CD including the latest songs and be full of articles and case studies which would inform, educate and inspire our core audience of primary school teachers. The magazine was intended to be a teaching resource which could be picked up, taken into class and used in teaching. It proved to be one of the most popular elements of the Sing Up programme.

The magazine also gave us an invaluable communications channel for us to make use of for our campaigning messages and enabled us to gradually turn its readers

into our advocates and champions – a large group of committed teachers who would advocate on our behalf for singing in schools.

5.5 Influencers

It had been our intention from the outset to create a distributed network of influencers who would do our advocacy for us. This was in large part the role of the network of 30 *area leaders* around the country – for them to act as advocates and to create more advocates around them as they went from school to school providing training, support and advice. See also section 6.2.

The other key factor to our success was that we deliberately set out to create a sense of Sing Up being *everyone's* campaign – a movement with a mission that everyone could have ownership of. This involved us also taking an early decision that we would not impose a particular pedagogy or prescribed educational solution, rather that we would provide flexible tools, resources and support to enable teachers and other education professionals to create their own solutions. This enabled these vital networks of professionals to read the needs of their own communities and craft solutions specific to them out of the resources and support we provided. If we had tried to impose a top-down, one-size-fits-all solution nationwide, we don't believe we would have brought as many people with us.

5.6 Singing schools

We wanted to create a nation of singing schools, so we needed to articulate what they would look like:

- A singing primary school is one where singing happens across the school day in a variety of contexts
- Singing as part of the culture, across the curriculum
- Singing to create an environment for learning, to calm pupils or energise them
- Singing to aid transition from one part of the day to the next
- Singing for every pupil, not just for those who choose to be in the choir

How we could encourage this to happen was fairly straightforward: Sing Up Awards. But *what* might such awards achieve from a campaigning perspective? They gave us a useful call to action to keep schools engaged after their first involvement with Sing Up. In calling on schools to pledge to achieve a Sing Up Award we were asking them to commit to deepening their engagement with singing and drive their commitment to singing through their whole staff team from the head teacher downwards.

From this starting point we created an awards structure with three levels that schools could work towards achieving. But we made sure that, even more important than achieving the award, was the emphasis we placed on the journey: the improvement a school made; the extent to which schools embedded singing more and more deeply into their culture and approach to learning.



6 Supporting activities

6.1 A campaign needs to be able to deliver on its promises. Sing Up had promised that singing was easy, valuable, and didn't take up too much time. The key for campaign was to find ways of using elements such as those described in sections 5.3 to 5.6 not only to deliver campaign messages, but to provide the solutions, as well.

6.2 So, for example:

- The website and magazine conveyed key messages. But they also housed and promoted the *song bank* which teachers badly needed.
- As well as helping teacher confidence, a training programme increased the supply of high-quality *vocal leaders* available.
- A grants programme to kick-start singing not only enhanced the supply of good-quality singing work across England – it delivered the campaign message that "singing is believing."

6.3 Perhaps the most important overlap between message and solution was the network, built from scratch, of 30 *area leaders* across England. These people arranged training days and carried out training – but crucially also formed a devolved network of experts and advocates on the ground, in local patches, helping Sing Up to turn the high level communications into a reality that schools could engage with at a profound level.

7 Learnings for ACIECH

7.1 Parallels with Sing Up

The scale of the task of establishing singing as an activity in every care home in England is comparable with that of the national singing programme for primary schools. There are currently around 17,000 state-funded primary schools in England, which together with middle schools, Special Educational Needs schools and schools in the independent sector catering for primary-aged children, brings the total number up to around 20,000.

Executing a campaign designed to elicit behaviour and attitude change – which is what Sing Up was aiming to achieve – on this kind of scale, requires a carefully nuanced approach incorporating wide dissemination of high level key messages combined with more detailed persuasion, support and guidance with individual establishments. Often the work with the individual establishments has to be done face-to-face, hence the need for a distributed network of influencers and advocates who understand the context and have the necessary practical expertise to roll their sleeves up and get involved in direct delivery of singing activity themselves.

7.2 The case for action

As was the case when Sing Up was first established, there is already a strong evidence base supporting the case for providing singing activities for older people in care homes. This has already begun to resonate with the general public and it would seem that there is a positive pre-disposition to appreciate and value the benefits of singing for older people. Evidence of health and well-being benefits are already permeating mainstream media and registering with public awareness.

Some light-touch research to gauge the extent to which the general public is already aware of these benefits and supports the idea of singing for older people might be a

good initial step to take. It would help inform campaign messaging – where with Sing Up the general public are the parents of our target group, for ACIECH the public are the children and grandchildren of the target group and presumably an influencer of decision makers and funders. The messages which resonate well and are convincing for a sample of the general public are also likely to be good messages to use for more targeted communications to the primary audiences who need to be influenced in order to achieve the overall vision.

As with Sing Up, seeing is believing, so use of video across communications channels will help to demonstrate the impact of the work. Ongoing research can be used to further evidence the value of singing as an intervention to improve the lives of people in care homes.

7.3 **Why now?**

Being able to articulate clearly why now is the time to take action will help to achieve early momentum and inspire engagement. Again, finding a message that resonates with people will help. In Sing Up's case we were able to remind people of the days of whole-school singing as part of school assemblies – something which most people would remember, even if not always fondly! – and make the case that singing was in danger of disappearing from schools as an unforeseen side effect of collective worship disappearing from non-faith schools.

In the case of older people there is almost certainly a compelling case to be made in connection with an aging population and increasing levels of dementia (singing is known to help with recovering memory) and other age-related conditions. The early research mentioned above will help to identify precisely what this message should be in order to resonate most clearly.

7.4 **Barriers and solutions**

Just as Sing Up built on the Music Manifesto research, ACIECH has all the research of its phase one activities which have identified barriers and solutions already. This will be invaluable in rolling the programme out on a larger scale. This knowledge will also help inform the development of the campaign messaging.

7.5 **A singing care home**

The phase one work has also generated draft lists of what a singing care home might look like (see eg working paper 7 Case studies). Being able to articulate these as part of the campaign will serve as a strong call to action and easily understood end-goal.

Keeping the statements broad enough so that all the target settings can relate to them and picture their own care home being a singing care home, while also being specific enough to drive precise actions is an important balance to get right. It is also important to express the statements in language which is appropriate to the sector. Avoid anything which may feel alienating or uncomfortable. In Sing Up's context we had to take care not to assume that generalist primary school teachers could read music or play instruments, which greatly affected the language we used and music education concepts that we referenced.

7.6 **It's not all about the money**

Sing Up is probably the biggest arts or education campaign that has been executed in recent decades. It was well funded, but the scale of the funding wasn't necessarily the most significant enabling factor in and of itself. The scale of *ambition* for the programme (which was certainly demonstrated by the level of funding committed to it) was probably more important than the funding itself. We consciously tried to emulate

very major campaigns that had gone before – the 5-a-day campaign, Jamie’s School Dinners, and Make Poverty History were the ones we referenced in campaign brief. The 5-a-day healthy schools campaign was something that we really wanted to match for success. Whereas that was a compulsory programme for schools, Sing Up was optional, so we sought to overcome that by making it easy and appealing for schools to get involved.

Having the scale of ambition and looking at other successful campaigns to copy the elements we felt were transferable was probably what made the difference to the campaign being a yell rather than a whisper. Starting off with that scale and determination from the very beginning, being deeply committed to what we were campaigning for, and having the evidence to back it up were the key factors that enabled us to run the campaign with conviction. Having the support of a devolved network of experts and advocates on the ground was what helped us to turn the high level communications into a reality that schools could engage with at a profound level.



Working papers planned

This list is subject to change as the initiative develops

1	Jul 15	Gathering 1: preliminary learnings and later observations
2	Dec 15	Survey results: musicians in care home; care homes with music
2a	Dec 15	Surveys: raw data
3	Dec 15	On quality and frameworks
4	Jan 16	Trends in the care home sector
5	Dec 15	Gathering 2: learnings and observations
6	Mar 16	Research review
7	Feb 16	How to run a great campaign
8	Mar 16	Case studies; analysis
8a	Apr 16	Case studies of singing
10	Apr 16	Summary of findings
11	May 16	Music and the Care Quality Commission
12	Jun 16	Gathering 2: learnings and observations
13	Jun 16	A Choir in Every Care home: phase 1 final report

This working paper

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Version control

V1 published [to come]

V0 unpublished draft for working group only

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