

# THE CHOIR WITH NO NAME STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-24



# INTRODUCTION

We are developing this strategy in late 2020, as the coronavirus pandemic looms large, our choir members face huge challenges to their health and wellbeing, and our rehearsals are being planned with significant barriers and restrictions. It has become ever more apparent this year that our choirs provide so much more than just the opportunity to sing. When lockdown hit we did what people did all over the world; we reached out to each other; we checked that everyone was safe and had access to the essential things they needed. Over lockdown we have become digital skills instructors, food deliverers, healthy eating advisers and covid-guidelines interpreters, but most importantly we have been a family where a traditional family may not exist. We will continue to recognise and celebrate the power of our communities through this strategy, which will span the Covid and post-Covid years.

From now until 2024 we want to do lots more of what we're good at; building choir communities in new towns and cities through innovating and improving our delivery model, led by our choir members and in partnership with inspiring local homelessness and arts organisations. We want to support others to do it too, developing training and consultancy offers to ensure that as many people as possible can benefit from the uplifting and cathartic experience of singing together. We will pilot our new "community choir" model (delayed by covid), in which we will continue to recruit through homelessness services, but will also welcome choir members from across the full spectrum of the local population, building diverse and integrated communities that truly challenge perceptions of "the homeless" and celebrate all choir members as individuals and as equals. Through this strategy we will learn from these pilots, working towards a time when we can offer the resources and support for others to start a Choir with No Name and build a national movement of singing, dancing, laughing communities who support their members to overcome life's challenges.



We will continue choosing our repertoire from the vast genre we call “quirky, uplifting pop”. We are committed to continuing to rehearse throughout the year in our choir cities, and to performing regularly. Gigs are great fun, they often provide a catalyst for leaps in confidence and self-belief, and they challenge public perceptions of homelessness. We recognise though that through our chosen genre, and the need to work towards performances, we sometimes creates barriers to truly inclusive rehearsals. Over the course of this strategy we will seek to break down those barriers wherever possible. Through to 2024 and beyond we want our communities to become beacons of equality; inclusive and co-produced - where people with lived experience of homelessness sing and work alongside those without, to build cohesive communities and have the autonomy to run their choir effectively. Building on the success of our “This Is Me” campaign and single release in 2019, we also want to add our voice to national conversations and campaigns around the value of the arts in recovering from homelessness, and around the many benefits of group singing for health and wellbeing.



There is much to do, amid the biggest challenges our organisation has faced to date, including the insecurity of future funding and the physical barriers to being able to rehearse, perform and share meals together.

As ever, we will meet the challenges head-on, working hard to ensure that we will be here for as long as there are people who want to transform their lives through the joy and camaraderie that singing together provides.





## OUR VISION..

..is that all people going through tough times find a place to sing their hearts out, among friends.

## OUR MISSION..

..is to empower as many homeless and marginalised people as possible to showcase their talents, build personal resilience and positive, joyful singing communities.

## OUR VALUES...

**FAMILY**: Many of our choir members describe their choir as their family. We aim to look after each other, and we retain our family feel through all of our work, including with external stakeholders and supporters.

**FUN**: Belting out classic tunes and dancing together, sharing delicious food and jokes and finding somewhere to leave our troubles at the door is what we're all about. We want to empower our choir members to achieve serious change in their lives, but without taking ourselves too seriously!

**INCLUSION**: We are a warm and welcoming organisation and we want to be equally welcoming for everyone, regardless of background, characteristics or idiosyncrasies. We want everyone involved in the Choir with No Name to feel they belong in our community.

**INTEGRITY**: We will be fully transparent in all our work. We won't claim to have more impact than we do. We will work hard and strive for excellence and ensure that the wellbeing of our people is central to all our decisions.



# THROUGH 2021-2024 WE WILL EMPOWER OUR PEOPLE TO...

## 1) ..showcase their talents

- a) We will become a co-produced organisation, with people who have lived experience of homelessness working alongside others to deliver all aspects of our work, so that our services are inclusive, impactful and sustainable, and so that our members are able to develop confidence and skills
- b) We will continue to put on barnstorming gigs that exceed audience expectations, so that outmoded and stigmatising myths about homeless people are debunked
- c) We will commission research to fully explore the impact of our work within our communities, and with the results we will join wider policy conversations and campaigns, aiming to create impact beyond our organisation with our first-hand experience of the benefits of group singing for health and wellbeing and on recovery from homelessness.

### What do we mean by 'empower'? Who are 'our people'?

*Our people are our choir members past, present and future; our volunteers, staff, trustees, supporters, partners, homeless sector colleagues, funders and champions. We see empowerment as working towards autonomy and self-belief, recognising our personal strengths and resources and using them to benefit ourselves and others.*

*We want to move away from the traditional charity model where we dish out a service to the "needy", and instead work together to produce warm, fun, joyous gigs and a healthy, sustainable and resilient organisation.*



## 2) ..build personal resilience

- a) We will prioritise opportunities for people with lived experience of homelessness to participate alongside and on an equal footing with those without, so that communities can become more cohesive and choir members of all backgrounds can build more diverse social networks.
- b) We will work to support our choir members to access desired and necessary activities and services, through in-person volunteer and peer support and through improved digital inclusion, so that they feel part of society and able to address personal challenges effectively.
- c) We will provide our staff and volunteers with in-depth training and support, so they feel confident in their roles supporting choir members and can build confidence and skills.



### 3) .. build positive, joyful communities

a) We will continue to run week-in, week-out throughout the year, providing a reliable place to go that doesn't depend on the season and that lives and breathes our values, so that our choir members continue to reduce isolation and find a place to belong

b) We will start up new choirs, prioritising co-production and piloting mixed community choirs where people with lived experience of homelessness sing and volunteer alongside others as equals, to build community cohesion and challenge public perceptions of homeless people

c) We will support other individuals and organisations to start up choirs and singing projects for people facing tough times, through the delivery of consultancy and training, to ensure that our reach is as wide as possible and stretches beyond the homeless community

d) We will develop more short term community projects for groups of marginalised people both within and beyond the homeless community, enabling more people to have fun and increase their confidence through singing, and enabling us to achieve greater diversity and inclusion by working with sections of the community who may be under-represented at choir rehearsals.



### 4) .. and build organisational resilience

a) We will develop diverse and sustainable fundraising, including building on our potential for self-generated revenue, and building individual giving at a high and low level, in order to guarantee our existence for as long as is necessary

b) We will support our new choirs to be self-sufficient and generate their own funds, in order to create an easily replicable model that could see our accessible, welcoming choirs become available to many more people in the years following this strategy

c) We will ensure that our infrastructure is fit to support the changes we want to achieve

d) We will apply robust governance procedures to ensure we are fair, compliant and inclusive

e) We will work in partnership where possible, choosing inspiring partners who share our values and ideals, to learn from best practice and offer our own in return



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