



# IMPACT REPORT 2020



*"I am so happy, proud and honoured to be part of such a beautiful organisation and such a wonderful family of singers!"*

London choir member

# LETTER FROM OUR CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

I write this in the context of the continuing global pandemic. Associated public health measures are placing significant limitations on our core activities of singing, socialising and eating together in groups, and on opportunities for fundraising, like gigs and mass-participation sporting events. The period covered by this report (ending as they do at the end of March 2020, just two weeks into the UK-wide lockdown) feels in many ways like a lifetime ago.

The Choir with No Name had a successful year by any measure. The period saw an increase in attendance at rehearsals, a whole host of joyous performances in all our choir cities, the release of our single “This is Me” (with particular thanks to Arts Council England, Ocorian Trustees and Kobalt Music), which 190 of our members had so much fun making, and the provision of support to our two “CWNN family” choirs in Wrexham and London. We continued to benefit greatly from our partnerships with Look Ahead Care and Support and Brighton Housing Trust.

In financial terms we enjoyed the generous support of trusts and built on our fantastic corporate relationships (thanks, Octopus Giving, for outperforming on our partnership!). This allowed us to generate a surplus to see us through periods of stormy weather. That stormy weather has now come.

We had exciting plans for the launch of new choirs, including pilots of our community choir model, but we decided to pause these plans to focus our energies on adapting our offering to support our choir members while in-person group singing was not possible, including taking action to address the very pressing issue of digital exclusion among our membership.

Looking forward, we are actively working on an exciting new strategy to take the charity forward for the next few years and we look forward to sharing this with stakeholders soon.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt thanks to our choir managers and choir directors, our central team and all who have partnered with us, volunteered for us, donated to us, supported us and sang with us over the last year - and of course to all our members for putting their trust in us and for committing to choir with such energy. You are all amazing!

*Tom Church*

Tom Church  
Chair of Trustees



# ABOUT US...

Here at the Choir with No Name we run choirs and singing projects for homeless and marginalised people in London, Birmingham, Liverpool and Brighton. Since 2008, when we started up our first choir, we have offered a joyous activity that is about so much more than just singing – our choirs offer a family where a traditional one may not exist, providing support and a sense of belonging that is vital for someone to move away from homelessness, long-term.

## OUR VISION:

ALL PEOPLE HAVE A PLACE THEY BELONG, WHERE THEY  
CAN SING THEIR HEARTS OUT

## OUR MISSION:

TO ENABLE AS MANY HOMELESS & MARGINALISED  
PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE TO BEAT LONELINESS AND BUILD  
CONFIDENCE AND SKILLS THROUGH SINGING.

Through our vital choir communities, we support our choir members to build genuine, lifelong friendships, learn new life skills, improve mental health, confidence & wellbeing, and ultimately get back on their feet. Whether they've experienced homelessness, or are otherwise facing tough times, we provide a safe and welcoming environment in which individuals can build the resilience, confidence and skills that will put them in a stronger position to tackle life's challenges, such as securing housing, enrolling in addiction recovery services or finding a job. Engaging in meaningful, communal activities can be the catalyst for someone making the first steps towards long term, affirmative change in their lives.

We challenge the convention that arts participation comes at the end of someone's recovery journey, and endeavour to work with our friends in the arts and homelessness sector to demonstrate the importance of creativity within homelessness support, as well as increasing broader artistic opportunities for our members.

We currently run choirs in Birmingham, Liverpool, London (in partnership with Look Ahead Care & Support) and Brighton (in partnership with Brighton Housing Trust), with plans to launch new choirs and singing projects across the UK in the coming years.

# OUR VALUES

## **FAMILY**

For many of our choir members, the support of family and friends is absent. At the Choir with No Name everyone is welcome and made a fuss of, regardless of their background, circumstances or life story. Our staff, volunteers and members support each other's endeavours, musical or otherwise. We also strive to retain our family feel with our supporters and friends

## **FUN**

We create a relaxed atmosphere where members are encouraged to enjoy themselves. As an organisation, we don't take ourselves too seriously!

## **INTEGRITY**

We always put our members first and won't sacrifice their welfare for fame or fortune. We also strive for excellence in performance and expect the best from our singers, using top notch musicians to help us deliver that vision.

## **COLLABORATION**

We like to establish positive relationships and work in partnership with other arts and vulnerable adults' organisations. Our members contribute to the direction of each choir through meaningful consultation (including having a voice at trustees' meetings).

This report covers the year from April 2019 to March 2020. In March 2020 we dramatically changed the way we work in response to Covid-19, and will produce a separate report covering that work.

# 2019/20 IN NUMBERS...

748

Total no. of homeless & marginalised people we worked with in 2019/20

501

No. of people we welcomed to rehearsals at our 4 choirs in 4 cities

299

No. of new members welcomed to our choirs

19

No. of workshops and community projects we have delivered

247

No. of people reached through our workshops and community projects

47

No. of gigs performed by our choirs across the UK

15,700

Total audience members for our gigs

6

No. of individuals & organisations who received our advice and consultation on how to start a choir for vulnerable people

75

No. of amazing volunteers supporting our members at rehearsals and gigs

"Everyone is super friendly & welcoming that it comforts me, whatever my mood. I find it helpful emotionally, stabilising me whenever I am down"

Brighton choir member



# WE ARE FAMILY...

In 2019/20, our choirs continued to offer a safe and welcoming space to some of the most isolated members of the community in our four choir cities. Our rehearsals are welcoming, inclusive and for anyone who feels they would benefit from joining a supportive group of peers with shared experience, where they can leave their troubles at the door, sing and have fun. Having a place to belong is a basic human need, and that is exactly what our choirs provide – a groups of good friends who will look out for each other, supporting everyone's endeavours, musical or otherwise.

Our rehearsals continued to work to the successful formula of a cuppa and a catch up followed by an hour and half singing our hearts out with our brilliant choir directors and then a well-earned hot dinner afterwards, cooked by our teams of amazing volunteers. Having this regular, positive year-round activity can be the bedrock on which our choir members can rebuild their lives. For many, choir is where they may feel more comfortable talking about their challenges and seeking help than in a more formal support service setting. Our attendance numbers and consistently positive feedback from members about the impact of choir on their lives prove the value of our work.



Our choir directors continue to bring the musical magic to rehearsals, gigs and workshops, working with members to achieve musical excellence as well as nurture their development, both musical and personal. They are the creative foundation around which each choir is built, and are key to establishing the individual character of each choir. They also showcase our choir members' talents through life-affirming, uplifting performances at a wide variety of venues across the country and deliver uplifting and inclusive workshops at services for people at risk of homelessness.

Each choir is run by a choir manager, who looks after the logistics of arranging rehearsals, gigs and workshops, as well as recruiting and managing volunteers and offering pastoral support, signposting and referrals to members. They are the engine that keeps each choir running, week in week out, all year round. Our London and Brighton choir managers are employed by our choir partners, Look Ahead and Brighton Housing Trust.

We have 75 volunteers, who produce delicious, healthy hot meals at each rehearsal, as well as supporting members musically and offering a friendly ear at rehearsal and gigs. Our choirs wouldn't exist if it weren't for the energy and compassion of our volunteers, and we are hugely grateful to them for their commitment and all-round hard work.

# MOVING ON UP...

Alongside the singing, we offer members the opportunity to learn new skills for life and work. 30 choir members took part in formal volunteering roles this year. Roles include member representatives (“reps”), ambassadors and rehearsal support roles. 75% of our member reps reported increased confidence as a result of the role, and 100% of them learned at least 1 new skill, with 65% seeing the role as a useful step towards volunteering or work. Our member reps meet twice a year with trustees to share the membership’s concerns and ideas. This has led to a renewed focus on equality and diversity for the organisation, which will be developed into an equality, diversity and inclusion policy and work plan from 2021.

We enrolled 14 new members into our ambassador programme. This initiative provides choir members with the opportunity to develop further skills and confidence, including providing peer support for new choir members and representing the organisation publicly. Ambassadors shared their stories on stage at gigs, attended outreach workshops to support participants, welcomed guests and new members to rehearsals and took part in media interviews for the likes of Sports Relief, Liverpool Echo and BBC South East news.



# COME TOGETHER...

Our London and Brighton partnership choirs continue to run successfully and sustainably. Thanks to our partners, Look Ahead and Brighton Housing Trust, we are able to share the cost of running the choirs as well as offer choir members more direct referrals to their support services. In 2019-20 we made 18 direct referrals to services across both choirs, with 39 London choir members and 31 Brighton members receiving signposting. That equates to 40% of London members and 50% of Brighton members receiving additional pastoral support from our partnership choir managers. We offered consultancy to six organisations and individuals who wanted to start up their own choir for vulnerable groups, including supporting the brand new launch of a choir for homeless and marginalised people in Chester with Forfutures, who we were very happy to welcome on stage to sing with our Liverpool choir at their summer gig in 2019. We continued to offer in depth support and expertise to our two ‘CWNN Family choirs’, in Wrexham with CAIS, and London with Scotscafe. These family choirs are a great way for us to share our expertise and reach more homeless and marginalised people through singing, without the financial and administrative burden of running the projects ourselves.

In 2019/20 we researched and developed our Community Choir model - a new, more financially sustainable choir model we have received funding to pilot through the generous support of The Funding Network and arts benefactor Mary Allen. Although we developed significant plans and were exploring the best locations for two pilot choirs, sadly this project was delayed by COVID-19. We also secured funding to launch a choir in Cardiff in partnership with Welsh homelessness charity The Wallich in early 2020. This choir’s launch has also been delayed due to COVID-19.



# SING WHEN YOU'RE WINNING...

Performing is a real highlight for all of us at the Choir with No Name. We love singing our hearts out in front of appreciative audiences in beautiful and inspirational venues across the country. We also love to perform for local support services, to give something back to our communities. Our Birmingham choir were thrilled to be named Best Community Project at the Birmingham Music Awards 2019.

Inclusion is at the heart of all our gigs, and encouraging audience participation is a huge part of our live experience. We want our gig goers leaving with a spring in their step, a smile on their face and a changed attitude to homelessness. Gigs also give members something to focus on and work towards; a chance to experience (and conquer!) the nerves of live performance; an opportunity perhaps to sing a solo and feel pride in their achievements.

In 2019-20 we were delighted to perform 48 gigs at some amazing venues and brilliant events, including TEDx London's Beyond Borders at the Royal Festival Hall, Bearwood Street Festival in Birmingham, The Great Get Together in Chester (part of the Jo Cox Foundation legacy events) and at the prestigious Glyndebourne Opera House as part of the Homelink Anniversary Gala. We also hosted our own concerts, with our Brighton choir celebrating their 1st birthday with a wonderful gig packed full of our Brighton friends at All Saints Church in Hove, and of course everyone's annual highlight, our Big Christmas Singalongs – 2019 being the first time we have hosted Christmas gigs in all four choir cities. We are hugely grateful to everyone who came along to sing with us!



*"@ChoirwithNoName you were beyond sensational tonight. Not only a brilliant gig but a glimpse of the world we should be living in. Togetherness, acceptance, affirmation, creativity, celebration, belief and love"*

Big Christmas Singalong 2019 audience member (via Twitter)



## REACH OUT...

We deliver outreach singing workshops for people at risk of homelessness and other vulnerable groups, in order to offer an opportunity to experience the benefits and joy of singing together, as well as a soft introduction to our choirs. In 2019/20 we changed our approach to outreach work, following feedback from participants in 2018/19, and this year focused on delivering longer-term workshop programmes (culminating in a performance where possible), rather than one-off sessions. While this meant that we delivered fewer projects to fewer participants (from 611 in 2018/19 to 248 in 2019/20), involvement was more in-depth and we believe held longer-term impact.

Feedback from participants has been very positive. One example of this more in-depth approach being more successful was a project in Liverpool working with women recovering from the trauma of domestic violence. Some of the women expressed not feeling confident enough to join the main Liverpool choir as they felt it was a step too far to mix in a large group with men. Through a sustained series of workshops, and through getting to know three female choir members as well as the choir director and manager, those women both staged their own performance and then felt able to join us at rehearsal afterwards. We will be exploring ways in which we measure and report further the impact of our workshop programmes as we develop our strategy from 2021 onwards.



*"The opportunity to share a new experience for many is so powerful and important to ensuring the most marginalised feel included. The inclusiveness of the way the sessions are run meant that many who do not normally engage could"* William Morris, Director at House of Bread Stafford

## READ ALL ABOUT IT...

We received some great press and media coverage this year helping to raise awareness of our choirs and their impact on members, reaching an audience of over 10.8 million people through local and national coverage.

Highlights included regional BBC TV and radio news coverage of our 2019 Christmas gigs (with a total reach of 2.5 million), a BBC Radio 3 interview with CWNN Birmingham members and our choir manager Sally for Comic Relief, and an excellent video report about our Liverpool choir on Liverpool Echo online.

**You can find details of our press coverage on our website:**  
**[www.choirwithnname.org/press](http://www.choirwithnname.org/press)**

# THIS IS ME

Almost a year in the making and involving 190 choir members, we released our single and video, "This is Me" on 10th October 2019, World Homeless Day. Thanks to Arts Council England and Ocorian Trustees funding, as well as a partnership with Kobalt Music, we were thrilled to be able to work with our choir members to produce something inspirational and upbeat. Each choir performed the single in the week of release - from street performances to singing at the Kobalt HQ in London. The accompanying #thisismeinthree campaign challenged the idea that "the homeless" are a homogenous mass of people separate from mainstream society, but instead our choir members are individuals who may be facing tough times, but who have vibrant stories to tell. We encouraged people to choose three words that define them, in the belief that where you live does not define you as a human being. We were thrilled to receive social media support from big hitters such as Stephen Fry, Davina McCall and Dermot O'Leary and some lovely #thisismeinthree submissions.

The video itself has received over 25,000 views and counting, and the campaign had a total audience reach of approximately 7.2 million.

We were delighted to see how much fun our members had in the recording studios too - something we can all feel proud of and remember for years to come.

You can watch the video and learn about the campaign at [www.thisisme.org.uk](http://www.thisisme.org.uk)



T H I S I S M E



*"As ever with CWNN it was a "pinch me I'm dreaming" moment - I could never have imagined being part of something like this - an incredible experience for which I feel very grateful"*

Mina, Birmingham choir member



# OUR IMPACT

Every year we ask our members to share with us what the choir means to them and the impact it makes on their lives, both inside and outside of choir, and we are really proud of the results. In August 2019, 154 members took part in our annual survey, and as a result of being a part of CWNN:

94%

of members said they made friends

90%

of members reported increased confidence

86%

of members were motivated to try new things

81%

of members felt their mental health and wellbeing improved

84%

of members learned at least 1 new skill (apart from singing)

77%

of members took up new activities or services outside of choir

82%

of members said they had achieved at least one positive change, incl. in housing, employment and volunteering



30 members took on formal volunteering roles, including member representatives, ambassadors and rehearsal support roles. These roles exist to give members a chance to grow in confidence and learn new skills for life and work. According to our member reps:

- **75% felt their confidence increased as a result of the role**
- **100% felt they developed at least one new skill**
- **65% felt that their volunteer role was a useful step towards volunteering or work**

Our choirs welcome anyone who feels they need a place to belong and our members' experiences are complex and varied:

- **75% have experienced homelessness**
- **59% were rough sleeping or vulnerably housed when they joined choir**
- **22% have experienced addiction**
- **65% reported mental health challenges**
- **29% had a learning disability or difficulty**
- **27% had a physical disability**
- **45% of members reported experiencing two or more of the above issues**

We're extremely proud of these results that prove the value of our work and demonstrates that we are continuing to be a catalyst for positive change in the lives of our members. We know that there is still work to be done, and our work with member volunteering roles has renewed focus on equality and diversity for the organisation, which will be developed into an equality, diversity and inclusion policy and wider focus on co-production in place from 2021.

## LOOK TO THE FUTURE NOW...

Our priority actions for 2020-21 are to:

- Continue to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, including prioritising our members' digital inclusion, ensuring that our most isolated and vulnerable choir members are able to remain active members of our community.
- Explore opportunities for further growth in other locations across the UK – if COVID-19 allows we will launch two new pilot community choirs that recruit members from both homelessness services and the wider community, and also start up in Cardiff in partnership with The Wallich.
- Begin to develop a training programme that uses the considerable skill and expertise of our team of choir directors to support other choir leaders working with vulnerable groups.
- Launch our new strategy for 2021-24.
- Devise and begin to deliver an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy and work plan, in consultation with our choir members, ensuring that we are an inclusive organisation at every level of operation.

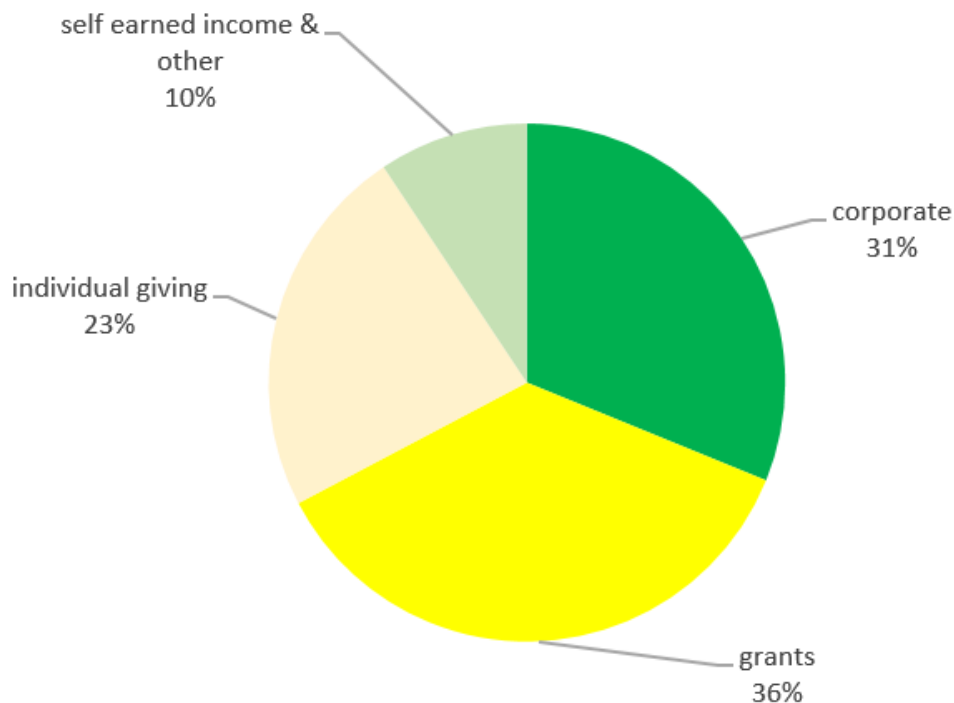


# FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2019/20

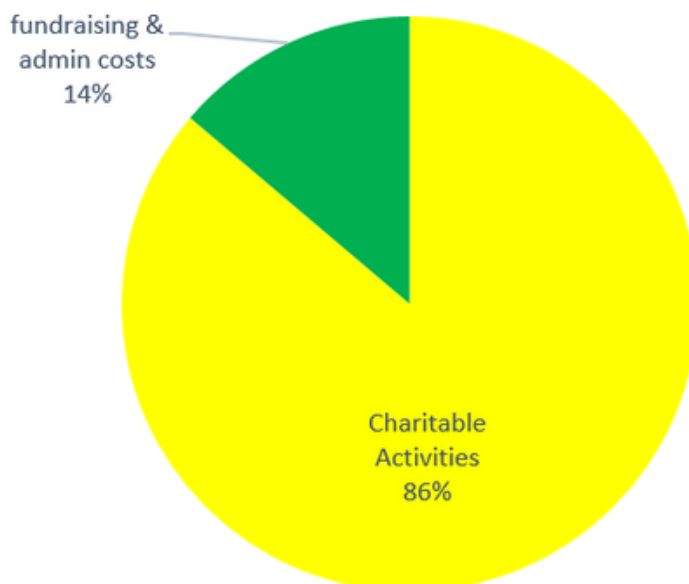
Income: £366,111

Expenditure: £286,892

Income Breakdown 2019/20



Expenditure Breakdown 2019/20



For every £1 we spent on fundraising and administration,  
we raised £9.25 for the charity

Full accounts for The Choir with No Name are available on the Charity Commission website.

# SUPPORTERS

We are proud and humbled to have received support from some amazing trusts, foundations and businesses throughout the year, without whom we could not continue our work:



ASDA Small Heath, Engine UK LLP, John Lewis Music Society, KPMG LLP, Lakeland, Linklaters LLP, Lyndales Solicitors, Mainstay, Norton Rose Fulbright Charitable Foundation, Penguin Random House, Pico Players, DWF Charitable Foundation, Torus Ltd, TSB Bermondsey, Well Rooted Wholefoods, William Adlington Cadbury Trust, Zurich Community Trust.

A huge thanks also to our partners in London and Brighton for their continued support and hard work which has enabled us to continue to sing with and support the most vulnerable people long term



We are very grateful for the support and generosity of the public, so an enormous Choir with No Name style THANK YOU to all who made donations, ran, walked, cycled and even shaved their heads to fundraise for us, joined our fan club, came to a gig, signed up to our newsletter, shared our content on social media, downloaded our single, told their friends about us and spread the word about our choirs and the work we do. We couldn't do this without you.



The Choir with No Name is registered Charity no. 1136173.  
Company number 06764584

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