

# IMPACT REPORT 20/21



"THE CHOIR WITH NO NAME HAS FELT MORE LIKE A FAMILY TO ME THAN EVER AND HAS HELPED ME TO GET THROUGH AND NOT FEEL ALONE AND OVERWHELMED BY EVERYTHING THAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING."

# 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:

THAT ALL PEOPLE GOING THROUGH TOUGH TIMES FIND A PLACE TO SING THEIR HEARTS OUT, AMONG FRIENDS.

## OUR MISSION:

TO EMPOWER AS MANY HOMELESS AND MARGINALISED PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE TO SHOWCASE THEIR TALENTS, BUILD PERSONAL RESILIENCE AND POSITIVE, JOYFUL SINGING COMMUNITIES.

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

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.

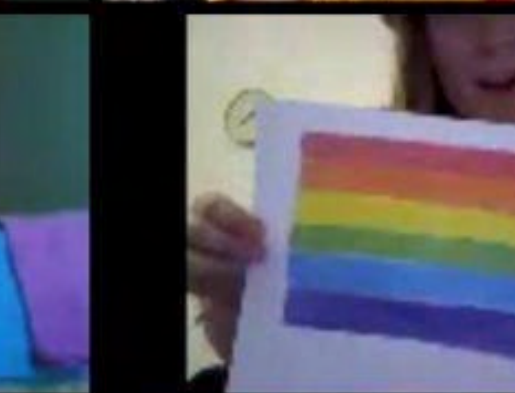
## INTEGRITY

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.

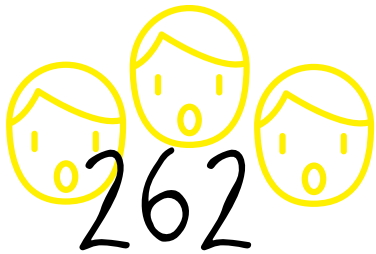
**THIS IMPACT REPORT COVERS THE PERIOD BETWEEN APRIL 2020 AND MARCH 2021.**

We were able to go ahead with some in-person activity during this year but the majority of our engagement was digital (rehearsals on Zoom) and offering support to members via phone.

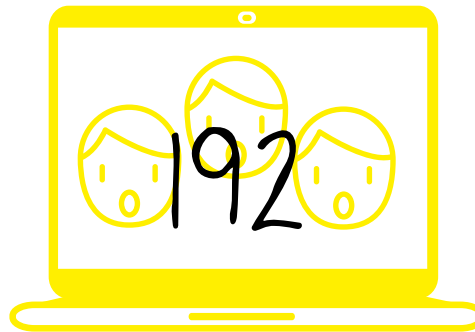




## 2020/21 IN NUMBERS...



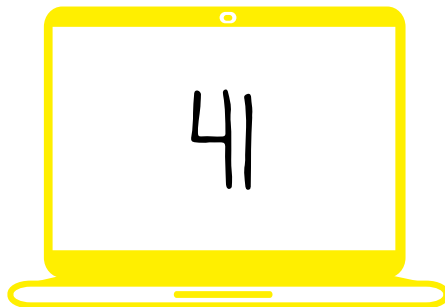
No. of choir members who joined us for online or in person rehearsals



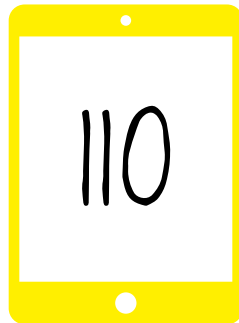
No. of rehearsals delivered across our 4 choirs.



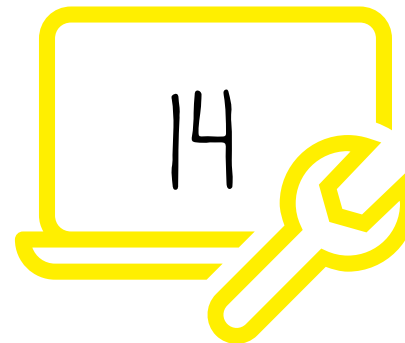
No. of members who received support via phone from our staff and volunteers



No. of online workshops delivered for people both with and without lived experience of homelessness



No. of members who have been supported through our digital inclusion programme



Number of digital champions we have enrolled through our digital inclusion programme



Number of amazing volunteers offering support and a friendly ear to members throughout lockdown

"CWNN HAVE BEEN VERY SUPPORTIVE INDEED AND I HAVE GAINED SO MUCH IN MANY WAYS, WE ALL HAVE. THEY'RE TOTALLY INCLUSIVE AND RESPECTFUL AND MINDFUL, SUCH A LOVELY FAMILY AND GROUP OF PEOPLE."

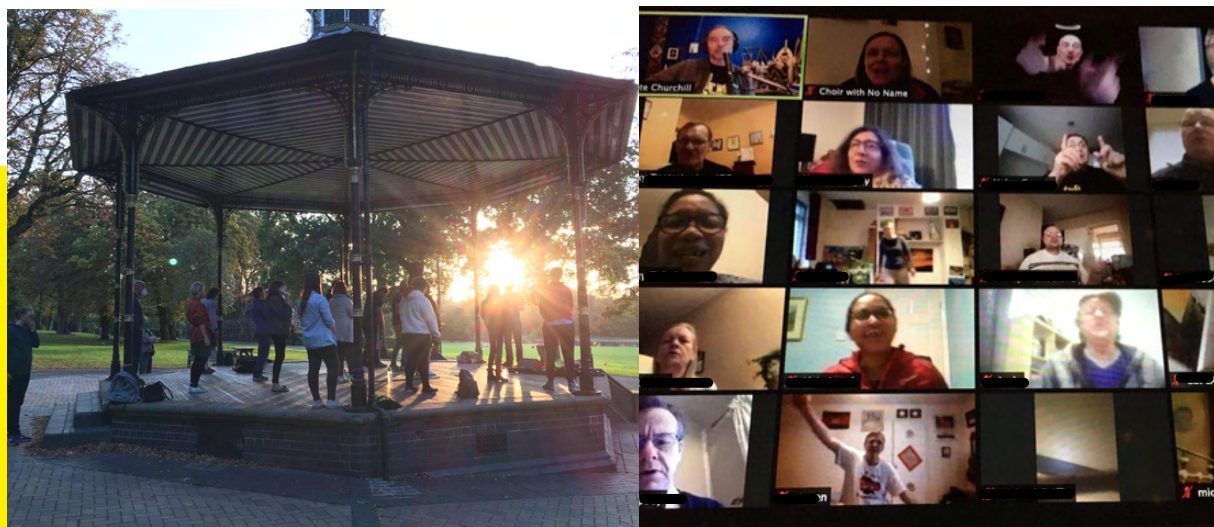


# LET'S STAY TOGETHER...

Pre-COVID-19, we ran weekly choir rehearsals for homeless and marginalised people in London, Liverpool, Birmingham and Brighton, followed by a hot meal. On average we would welcome 167 members to rehearsal each week across all choirs, where we would sing, eat together and receive pastoral support and signposting to services from our choir managers and volunteers. We performed regularly throughout the year at a wide range of venues from Glyndeborne to community festivals and local homeless services, and delivered community outreach singing projects in local homelessness settings and services for those at risk of homelessness, such as addiction recovery and mental health support services.

COVID-19 meant we had to dramatically (and quickly) change the way we worked. As of March 15th 2020 we paused all face-to-face activities - rehearsals, workshops and gigs - and were no longer able to support or sing with our members in person. Our choirs are a family for those who lack that vital support network, so losing that community and human connection was devastating, particularly at a time when choir members who were digitally excluded, living in insecure housing, with mental and physical health needs were particularly isolated and vulnerable.

Like all families at the beginning of lockdown, our priority was staying connected and keeping in touch. We immediately started delivering our weekly choir rehearsals online via Zoom. Our amazing choir directors had to learn fast and develop new techniques and technical skills to deliver engaging communal singing activities every week. This was no mean feat when they weren't in the same room as the choir members and weren't able to hear all members singing at once due to internet lag!



Once restrictions eased in summer 2020, we moved rehearsals into outdoor spaces and public parks, allowing even more members to reconnect and sing with us in person - a real highlight for those who had been living alone with minimal contact with others, or unable to access our Zoom sessions.

With the announcement of another lockdown, our rehearsals returned to Zoom in November 2020. The flexibility and creativity shown by our choir directors, volunteers and amazing choir members, as well as their capacity to adapt to the ever-changing situation over the last year, has been truly incredible.

"[REHEARSALS] HAVE GIVEN ME STRUCTURE AND STABILITY IN A TIME WHEN I AM SURROUNDED BY LOTS OF PERSONAL CRISIS. BEING ABLE TO SEE ALL THE LOVELY SINGING FACES HAS KEPT ME GOING. I AM NOT SAYING THIS GLIBLY WHEN I SAY ZOOM SESSIONS AND THE CHATS WITH VOLUNTEERS HAVE BEEN A LIFE SAVER."

## REACH OUT...

We always knew our choir members, staff and volunteers were amazing, but their work and activities during 2020-21 proved that they were more adaptable and resilient than we even realised. Our choir managers and volunteers rose to the challenge and filled the gaps left after many services closed their doors during lockdown. We redeployed our volunteer teams, who would usually be supporting members in the rehearsal room and cooking the hot meals, to start making regular befriending and support phone calls and texts to check in with members and make sure no one had to go through lockdown alone. We set up private choir Facebook groups for members to stay in touch with staff, volunteers and each other, and produced a regular postal newsletter full of quizzes, jokes and musical activities to entertain and connect with those members not online.



Our staff and volunteer teams have been amazing in their resourcefulness and readiness to go above and beyond to reach out and support our choir members. From organising relief food parcels; COVID-safe doorstep serenades for isolated members; supporting members experiencing domestic violence; liaising with social workers and hospital staff on discharge from hospital; and even delivering Christmas goodie bags and an 80th birthday cake to one of our older members, the list goes on!

"I CANNOT SING THE PRAISES OF CWNN HIGHLY ENOUGH FOR THE SUPPORT THEY HAVE PROVIDED IN LOCKDOWN. CWNN IS THE ONLY ORGANISATION TO OFFER ME SUPPORT WITH HOUSING AND THE WEEKLY CALLS FROM VOLUNTEERS WERE A BIG HELP...CWNN DIDN'T HAVE TO DO ANYTHING AT ALL, BUT THEY HAVE GONE THE EXTRA MILE."



## GET MYSELF CONNECTED...

Digital skills and internet access are vital for homeless and marginalised people to engage with the world, access services (universal credit, housing etc.), apply for work or complete education or training. However, up until March 2020, internet access hadn't been a necessity for our members to fully engage with our choirs. This all changed with the arrival of COVID-19. Early on in 2020-21 we realised we were only reaching 25% of our usual membership due to digital exclusion. It's been a huge issue among the homeless community for many years but the last year has highlighted the true severity of the impact of not having ready and affordable internet access. Many members no longer had access to free public Wi-Fi, didn't have enough data to stay connected to us and their friends, or didn't have the necessary digital skills to engage online.

To overcome the issue of digital exclusion among our membership we launched a Digital Inclusion project (funded by Comic Relief and National Lottery Community Fund). Through the project we supported 110 members to get online so that they could join the weekly choir rehearsals, providing 57 members with devices and 63 members with internet data.

We also launched a Digital Champions programme offering training to members be able to offer tech support to their choir peers and help them get online, as well as learning transferrable skills for work and life beyond the pandemic. We hosted three introductory group sessions to get input from members on what they hoped the programme would look like. To support anyone signing up as a Digital Champion we offered additional accredited training through UK Digital Champions Network. We also set up and hosted local meet ups for Digital Champions in each of the choirs, along with monthly meet ups across all the choirs. By the end of 2020-21, 16 members had signed up as Digital Champions, 5 of whom went on to complete accredited Digital Skills Training. All 4 choirs have launched the programme locally and are consulting members on what they would most like help with.

Digital skills and internet access have proven to be such a fundamental aspect of someone's ability to engage with, and have the opportunity to thrive within today's society, above and beyond our choir activities, so we have now embedded it in our new strategy as a core part of our work over the coming years



## ALL TOGETHER NOW

We were so pleased that so many members were tuning into Zoom rehearsals with their local choirs but we really wanted to find a way to bring people together from all over the country. Being able to connect online with people from far and wide had become so normal for us all, so it felt like an opportunity we really had to pursue. So in June we launched our monthly 'CWNN Connects' online singing sessions. These totally free Zoom singing sessions are open to absolutely everyone, members and non-members alike, and are led by our talented choir directors alongside our wonderful choir members.

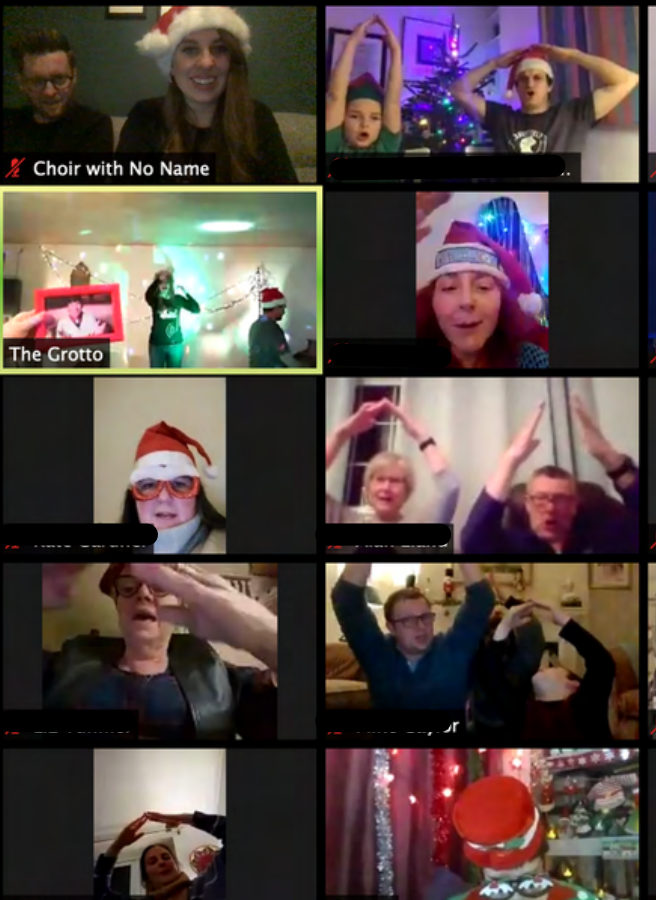
The interest in these singalong sessions continued to grow as we shared the word through our social media fan base. Members kept telling us how much they love the chance to share space with the public and members of other choirs. Over the year we have welcomed 139 members to these Tuesday afternoon sessions.

On the back of the success of these sessions and our Christmas singalong in December, we launched our first quarterly Connect evening session for supporters and the public. We had over 40 in attendance. We are excited to be continuing both the monthly Tuesday afternoon sessions and quarterly Tuesday evening sessions because we're loving singing with so many people from all over the country and further afield.

We piloted our first corporate online singing workshop with our partners, Octopus, in July 2020. It was a resounding success, so we marketed online Christmas workshops and choir video packages to corporates and were encouraged by the response. In 2020/21 we delivered 5 corporate workshops, 1 choir video montage and produced/hosted an online pantomime. The corporate workshop programme generated net income of £5740. In 2021/22 we will market our corporate online workshop package to new businesses as an initial 'ice breaker' as it's a great way for new orgs to get to know us and lay the foundations for an ongoing relationship.

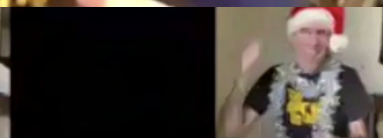
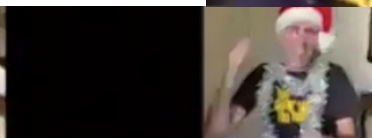
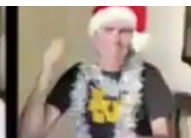
"THE VIRTUAL CHOIR SESSION HAS COMPLETELY TURNED MY DAY AROUND. HAVING NEVER DONE ANYTHING LIKE THAT IT BEFORE, IT FELT GREAT SINGING A SONG WITH UPLIFTING WORDS AND SEEING EVERYONE ELSE LOVING IT ALSO – ESPECIALLY DURING A TIME WHERE WE DON'T GET TO INTERACT WITH ONE ANOTHER AS FREQUENTLY AS WE WOULD DO IN AN OFFICE ENVIRONMENT" OCTOPUS EMPLOYEE.





**"THAT is how to do a Christmas event on Zoom!! THANK YOU @ChoirwithNoName. 343 people from across UK & Choir Directors in Liverpool, Brum, London & Brighton all singing & having a great laugh together. In awe of you folks #ChristmasSingalong #HowToDoCommunity"**

Virtual Christmas Singalong attendee via Twitter



Ring... out... those... bells!



# COVID-19 2020/21 TIMELINE

## mid-March 2020

The UK enters lockdown. Rehearsals move to Zoom

## June 2020

Our CWN Connects online workshops launch

## Jul-Aug 2020

Outdoor rehearsals start taking place in parks and public spaces in our four choir cities

## Dec 2020

We deliver our first ever virtual Big Christmas Singalong. Rehearsals return to Zoom

## April 2020

Volunteers redeployed to make support calls and connect with as many members as possible

## July 2020

We launch our Digital Inclusion drive to get members online and singing with us

## Oct 2020

We're excited to deliver a handful of in person indoor rehearsals before lockdown hits again in November

## Jan-Mar 2021

The country remains in lockdown, rehearsals continue on Zoom

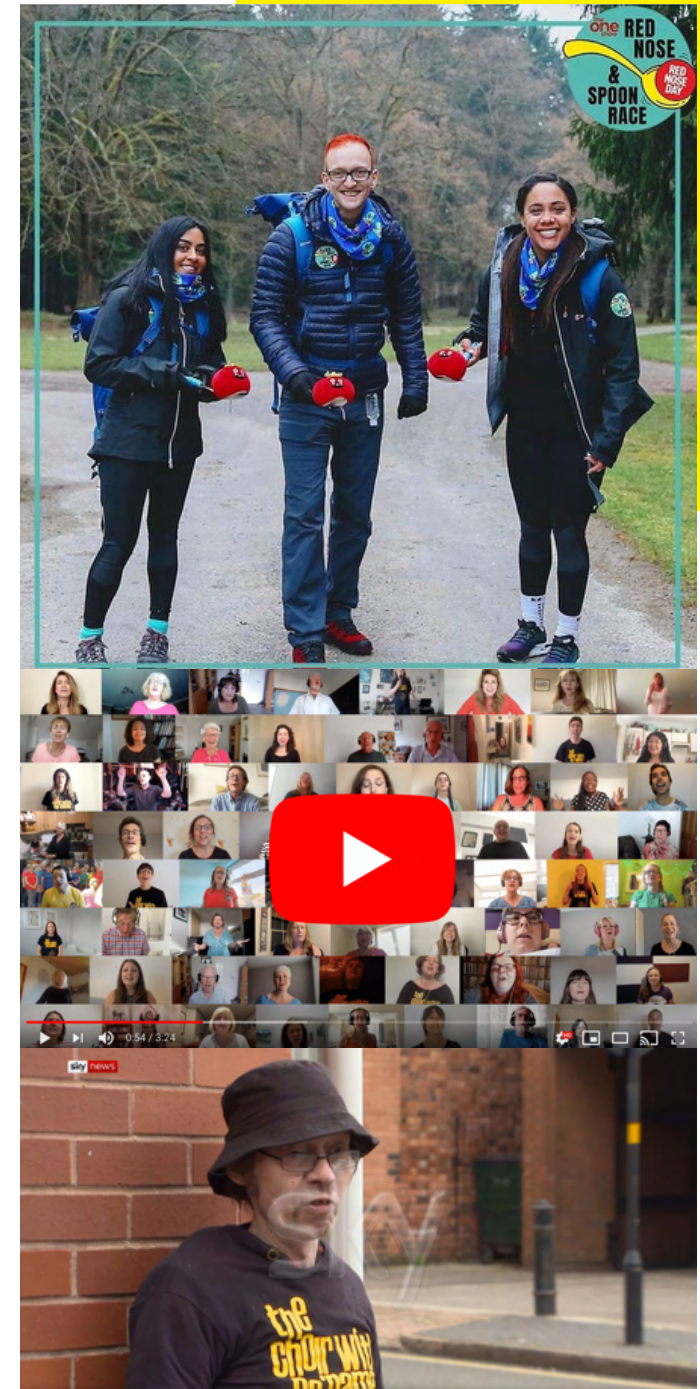
## READ ALL ABOUT IT...

We received some great press and media coverage this year helping to raise awareness of our choirs and their impact on people who've experienced homelessness, and reaching an audience of over 6.7 million people through local and national coverage.

Here are some of our highlights:

- One of our Birmingham Choir Members, Matthew, appeared on Sky News to talk about the negative impact of digital exclusion and being offline during lockdown.
- Our 'Ain't No Mountain High Enough' campaign saw 68 supporters and members sending in videos to be edited into our audience participation music video. We managed to bring together more than 100 voices, virtually. The video was our best performing social media activity, as all those involved were keen to share their efforts with their friends and family online. It was shared 70 times, making it our most shared piece of content this year!
- We ended the year with some lovely prime time TV coverage on BBC's The One Show, featuring our Birmingham choir member, Steve, who went through a rigorous selection process to be named one of the team members for the Comic Relief Red Nose Day challenge. In the week leading up to Red Nose Day, the challenge was featured every day, with a lovely short film featuring Steve talking about the impact of choir on his life, as well as clips of the choir at rehearsal. This was a brilliant bit of coverage for us, and another huge benefit of being supported by Comic Relief.

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





## MEET BIRMINGHAM CHOIR MEMBER, STEVE...

*If you're looking for a family that you've never had, choir is the place to be - that's what it's been for me. Living in Birmingham away from everybody, I had no family and the choir filled that part of my life.*

*At Choir everybody's welcoming and we like to look after each other. I enjoy feeling like I can offer some support and guidance to other members, because I've been where they are. Since being in the choir I've managed to get through a difficult part of my life and now I feel able to say to others 'this is what you can do, because this is what worked for me'. I feel I can offer that support not as a volunteer, or as a person in authority in the choir, more as just another choir member who's managed to turn his life around.*

*When I started coming to the choir, I was a resident at a treatment centre and now a year on, I work in that treatment centre helping people who have suffered addiction problems for the majority of their life. Since joining choir so much has changed for me. I've recently got engaged. I've found somebody who actually loves me for me and that's a wonderful thing. It's really nice to start living a 'normal' life. Since I've been part of the choir, my life has grown week by week, month by month.*

*At the Choir with No Name it's not about what you know, but who you know, really. You've got a direct person to speak to for all types of help with things like addiction, struggles with not having a family, sleeping rough or financial insecurity. And now, I can support the newer members into realising that it's ok and there's stuff we can do together.*

*My favourite moment so far with CWNN has got to be Christmas at the Cadogan hall, which was absolutely epic! I wore this blue Christmas snow man suit and had a solo - it was a beautiful moment.*





## 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. In 2020 we devised a COVID specific survey to monitor the impact of the pandemic, and our work in that time, on lives of our members. 75 members took part in our annual survey in November 2020 via phone and online, and they reported that as a result of being a part of CWNN...

80%

felt less isolated during the pandemic thanks to CWNN

83%

felt supported by CWNN during the pandemic

75%

felt CWNN had a positive impact on the way they experienced lockdown

54%

felt the pandemic had a positive effect on their relationships with CWNN staff and volunteers

44%

felt the pandemic had a positive effect on their relationships with other choir members

32%

were helped to access external support including to food, mental health and befriending services

76%

felt more confident accessing the internet thanks to CWNN

70%

members supported by our digital inclusion programme said they wouldn't have been online during the pandemic if it wasn't for CWNN's support

"THE GENEROSITY, THE SERVICE. IT MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE. IT REALLY DOES. JUST PICKING UP THE PHONE AND SAYING HELLO, IT MAKES SUCH A DIFFERENCE. SOMEONE SAYING YOU EXIST, YOU ARE HERE. FROM MY HEART, YOU'RE A BLESSING."

We also asked about the general impact of the pandemic on our members. They told us...

- 71% felt that the pandemic had a negative impact on their mental health
- 37% said they had a physical health condition that would make them more vulnerable to COVID-19
- 31% had struggled to find enough food because of the pandemic
- 36% reported being less able to meet their financial responsibilities because of the pandemic
- 16% had either lost their job, had their hours reduced or had been furloughed
- 10% experienced domestic violence during lockdown
- 15% said they had used alcohol/drugs more frequently, or less safely, during lockdown

We're extremely proud of the positive impact our work has had on the lives of our members during the most challenging time many of us have ever had to face. Our choirs proved themselves to be much more than a group of people singing – we are a family who reached out to support each other, and like many families, our choirs proved to be a lifeline for the most isolated members.

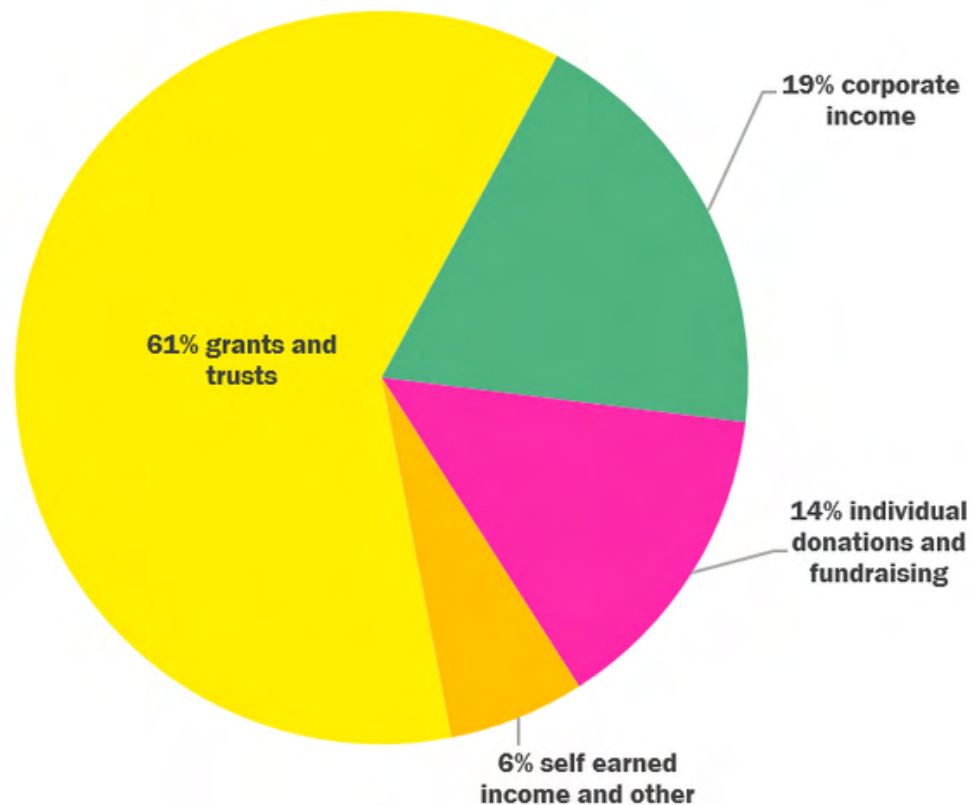
## LOOK TO THE FUTURE NOW...

Our priority actions for 2021-22 are to:

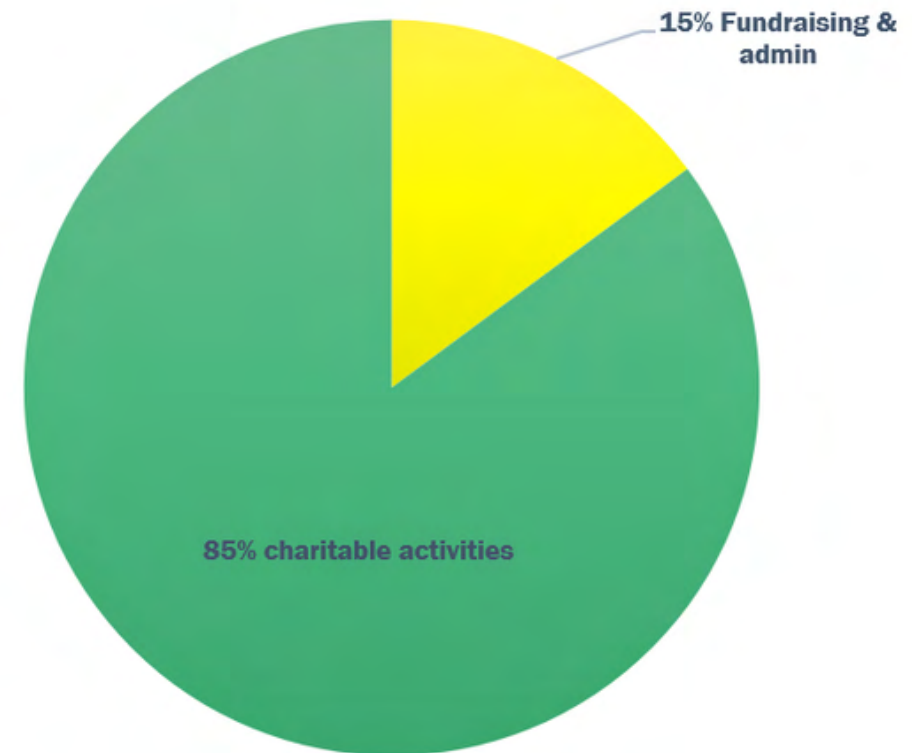
- Return to in-person rehearsals, with an engaging Zoom-in option also available.
- Increase our accessibility to new members and actively recruit new members once more.
- Continue to support our new Digital Champions team and prioritise digital inclusion.
- Secure new long term rehearsal venues in London and Liverpool.
- Secure a new London choir partner, as sadly our London choir partnership with Look Ahead Care & Support came to an end in early 2021.
- 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.
- 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 in consultation with our members, volunteer, staff and trustees.
- Devise and 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 2020/21:

**INCOME: £327,031**



**EXPENDITURE: £267,758**



For every £1 we spent on fundraising and administration, we raised £8 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:



John Ellerman  
Foundation



In partnership with  
THE NATIONAL LOTTERY  
COMMUNITY FUND



the  
**Tudor**trust

THE  
JULIA AND HANS RAUSING  
— TRUST —

Peter Stebbings Memorial Charity, Didymus Charity, LCVS, Rock Solid Trust, D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust, Newflex Ltd, Linklaters LLP,  
CAP partner/ EWMA 2020, Fusion 21 Ltd, Grocery Aid, Mainstay

A huge thanks also to our partners in London and Brighton for their support and hard work which has enabled us to continue to sing with and support our choir members long term. We were sorry to have to say goodbye to Look Ahead in early 2021 and extend a huge thanks to them for their support to help keep our London choir singing loud and proud over the past 3 years.



We are so very grateful for the support and generosity of the public, over the past year more than ever. So we want to extend an enormous Choir with No Name style THANK YOU to all who made donations, fundraised for us during lockdown, joined our fan club, came to our online christmas singalong, joined a CWN Connects session, signed up to our newsletter, shared our content on social media, 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

[WWW.CHOIRWITHNONAME.ORG](http://WWW.CHOIRWITHNONAME.ORG)

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