

# Sing to live Live to sing

# Harnessing the power of singing to improve community wellbeing

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## CASE STUDY



“It’s a very interesting activity because it’s not all about the music and singing... it’s also breathing, exercises and stretching, which helps to tone your body and prepare your voice for singing. It has improved my voice, my musicality and my other language skills. I have made new friends. We were part of the InTRANSIT Festival, which was a very good experience for us to develop our skills, to be more confident, to improve our singing more and to meet new people.”

Keep active

Healthy eating

## BACKGROUND

Victoria is a recent immigrant who joined her local *Sing to Live, Live to Sing* workshop after encouragement from a community champion at Chelsea Theatre. She’s since been trained as a community champion herself. Here is what she has to say about *Sing to Live, Live to Sing*...

Six weekly workshops



Irrespective of age, gender, nationality and wellbeing status, singing and participation in a choir can lead to improved social, emotional, physical and cognitive functioning (Livesey et al 2012\*). Involvement in the arts also fosters a sense of community and social cohesion.

Inspired by this, The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea’s Arts and Public Health teams collaborated on a pilot programme of six weekly *Singing for Health* workshops in deprived areas of the borough. The sessions were led by professional musicians and targeted residents affected by, or at risk of, deteriorating mental health and wellbeing and elderly residents at risk of social isolation.

## METHODS

Short health survey



We used the Warwick Wellbeing Score, EuroQol and basic socio-economic and general health issues to evaluate the programme’s impact on mental health and wellbeing. Follow-up feedback provided softer data on the benefits of the programme.

## RESULTS

Warwick wellbeing score increased

Twenty-four people filled in the baseline and follow-up questionnaire. There was a statistically significant average increase in the Warwick wellbeing score of eight points. Encouragingly, there was also a suggestion that people’s perception of social inclusion improved, with participants reporting an increase in people – including health professionals – they can confide in.

Participants reported a wider range of health and wellbeing benefits than anticipated. These included feeling calm and less stressed, making new friends, increased confidence, and alleviating symptoms of physical illnesses such as breathing for people with COPD or chronic pain.

Participants have felt an increased sense of community and pride, wanting to share their experiences with the public, through case studies and public performances. *Sing to Live* groups often perform at community events across the borough, and have been invited to perform at a Mayor of London event in October and at the V&A in December.

Making new friends

Alleviating symptoms of physical illnesses

Feeling calm and less stressed

Increased confidence



*Sing to Live, Live to Sing* brought together expertise from Arts, Public Health and grassroots community organisations and created a programme with measurable and achievable public health outcomes for residents.

The programme builds on existing assets including the community organisations that help recruit participants and contribute resources, time and space.

This engagement with trusted individuals and organisations has been key in reaching the less well and socially isolated. The pilot study did not immediately reach those who benefited most but word of mouth attracted people who were initially reluctant to attend.

Additionally a mapping exercise has enabled us to signpost participants to further singing opportunities, giving individuals the confidence to continue singing regularly in the community.

This pilot programme cost £10,000, and its findings helped secure an additional £120,000 of Public Health investment over the next two years.

## CONCLUSIONS

Engagement

Word of mouth

Opportunities



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For more information email [arts@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:arts@rbkc.gov.uk)  
Visit [www.rbkc.gov.uk/singtolive](http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/singtolive)

\* Livesey, L., Morrison, I., Clift, S., & Camic, P. (2012). Benefits of choral singing for social and mental wellbeing: Qualitative findings from a cross-national survey of choir members. *Journal of Public Mental Health*, 11(1), 10-26.