

Sing Up Vocal Force 2007-2011

Programme Evaluation

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INTRODUCTION

Sing Up 2007-2011 was the Music Manifesto National Singing Programme, led by Youth Music, with AMV-BBDO, Faber Music and The Sage Gateshead, supported by Government. It aimed to raise the status of singing and increase opportunities for school children throughout the country to enjoy singing as part of their everyday lives, and to support all primary schools to become ‘singing schools’.

Sing Up Vocal Force was one element of the Sing Up programme that focussed on providing singing leadership training to adults working in any capacity with primary school age children – this often included teachers, teaching assistants, school staff, parents, carers and professional musicians. Vocal Force was based on the innovative Vocal Union programme, devised by The Sage Gateshead, before becoming part of Sing Up in 2008.

Sing Up Vocal Force has specialised in developing 60 bespoke projects across England - from the Isles of Scilly to Berwick-upon-Tweed. Each project was devised to provide a deep and lasting impact on the skills, confidence and repertoire of at least 50 adults working with primary school age children. Individual projects were developed to provide relevant and flexible training models reflecting the needs of the diverse partners and participants involved. This has enabled over 6,600 participants to receive singing leadership training and engage with the wider Sing Up campaign. Importantly, Vocal Force has been able to respond to, and support Sing Up in developing projects that have addressed identified ‘gaps’ or ‘hard to reach’ places and help effect sustainable change for those involved.

Sing Up Vocal Force has been a strategic element of the Workforce Development (WFD) strand of Sing Up – the Music Manifesto National Singing Programme.

The WFD strand provided three types of support for those in a position to lead and encourage singing with primary school age children within schools and the wider community in England:

1. **Area Leaders** across the country provided *access* to information, guidance and support, and professional training opportunities in their own geographical area. The Area Leaders worked alongside their strategic partners to map primary school age singing and plan the appropriate training.
2. The **Sing Up Training Programme** provided *choice* through centrally-held, high quality Continuing Professional Development and training opportunities for schools and organisations.
3. **Sing Up Vocal Force** provided a *strategic* approach through 60 targeted, in-depth programmes.

The majority of Vocal Force projects were geographically based: for example, around an existing cluster of primary schools, a larger part of a local authority area, or a major town or city. Each was led by a singing leader with excellent practice working with children and also training adults as trainers. These projects were focussed on improving an individual’s general skills, repertoire and confidence when leading singing with primary school age children. There were also a number of ‘thematic’ projects that were led by an experienced singing trainer and an expert specialist from another sector – such as ‘Sign Up’ which

focused on signed song for hearing and hearing impaired children and brought together experts in British Sign Language and experienced singing leaders; or 'Children in Mental Health Settings' which brought together clinicians in the mental health sector with singing leaders who both participated in training, learning and delivery together.

Each project was developed thanks to suggestions, observations and requests made by a wide range of organisations, groups and individuals involved in Sing Up. For instance, some projects were created in areas that Sing Up Area Leaders felt needed a more sustained project either to help introduce and encourage singing where schools hadn't engaged much with singing previously; or alternatively to build on existing good practice in other schools, and extend and embed the reach of singing in these settings. Some Vocal Force projects were created to focus on working in Special Education Needs schools, whilst also providing training to existing singing leaders and Music Service staff. This was to ensure sustainable improvement in their skills, repertoire and confidence for working in the SEN context. In this way Vocal Force projects aimed to support and coordinate with other Sing Up activity and to fulfil a role as a strategic tool to help meet identified needs.

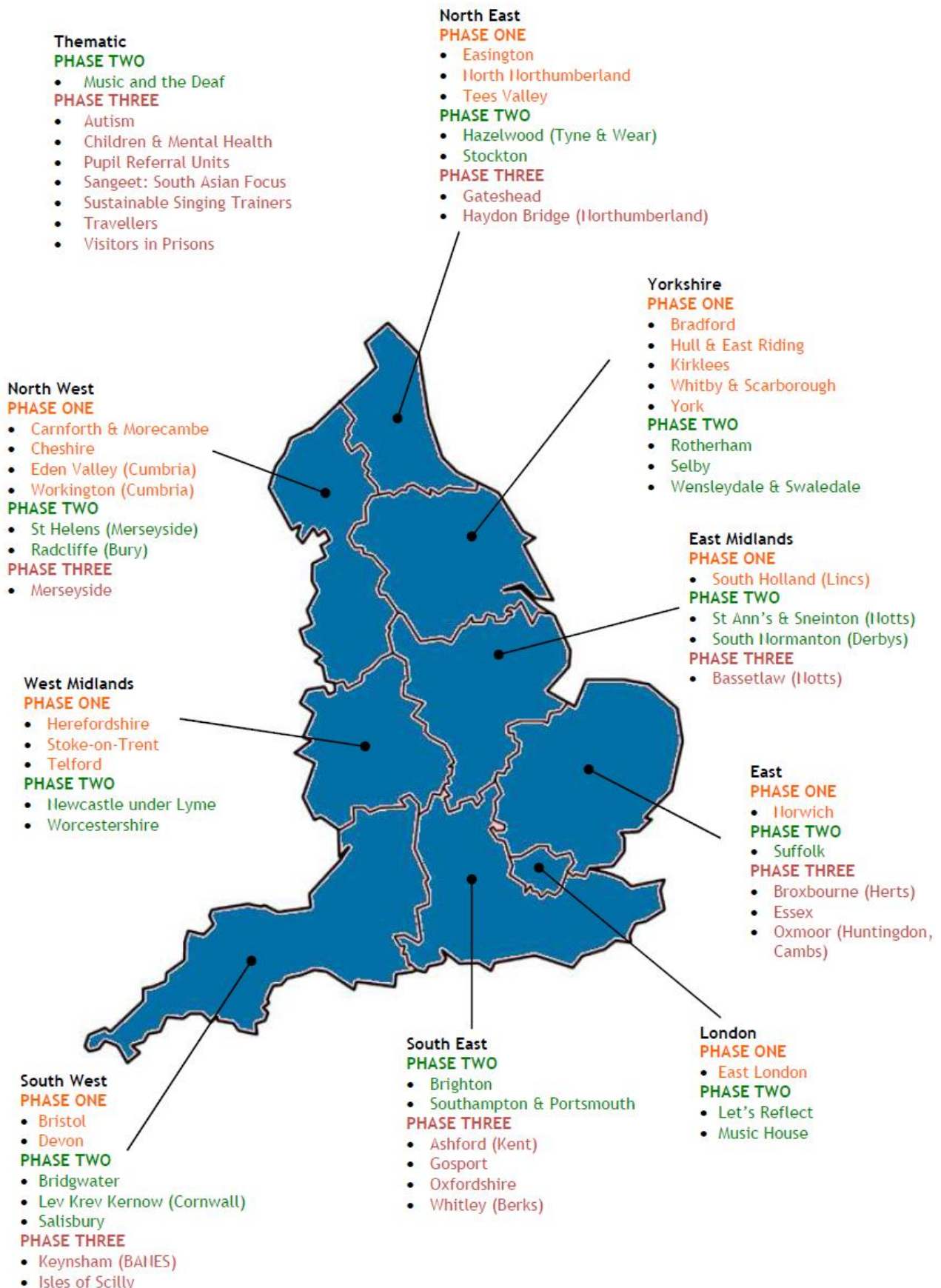
The thematic projects emerged through listening to the feedback from participants, trainers and project managers. For instance, the Sing Up Funded Programmes had worked with Sound Minds on developing a resource of songs and activities suitable for staff to use in Child and Adolescent Mental Health settings (CAMHS). When this project finished, Vocal Force then created a workforce development project with Sound Minds in order to bring together experienced singers wanting to learn more about CAMHS settings, and CAMHS staff interested in using singing more – all focussed on using the new resources. Another themed project, Vocal Force Sangeet, was created after many projects and trainers fed back that they needed more South Asian repertoire to engage children in some areas of the country and didn't know where to get it from. Vocal Force devised a project that brought together experienced trainers in primary school settings and experienced South Asian musicians and singers in order to devise a resource of songs from South Asia that is relevant and useful for all primary age children.

Throughout all the projects the common aims remained the same – raising the singing skills, confidence and repertoire of individuals, and helping effect sustainable change in singing leadership for those involved.

Method

This report offers an analysis and synthesis of the evidence collected by the Sing Up Vocal Force team from ongoing support and conversations with Project Advisors and the Programme Manager, fortnightly reports, Project Review meetings, Area Programme Plans, End of Project reports, participant feedback, Sing Up registers and participant forms.

PROGRAMME MAP



PROGRAMME AIMS

Each Vocal Force project has had the main Sing Up WFD aims at its core:

- Impacting on the singing of primary school age children through providing inclusive, learner-centred training for adults working with primary school age children.
- Encouraging and exemplifying healthy, musical singing within primary education and developing a broad repertoire base using singing in the context of the whole curriculum.
- Encouraging schools to become singing communities, drawing from the principles developed through models of excellent practice and linking with the wider Sing Up campaign.

In addition, Vocal Force projects have had more detailed aims to include:

- Achieving a sustainable, lasting impact on the skills, repertoire and confidence of at least 50 adults who could lead singing with primary age children.
- Working with these participants over a sustained period varying between 10-24 months, to embed learning by giving time for practicing new skills and reflecting on them.
- Creating and providing opportunities for networks and peer-support groups to develop.
- Where possible, bringing together different sectors within one project, e.g., community musicians and classroom teachers sharing knowledge and skills.
- Exploring and developing new partnerships in project management and delivery.
- Encouraging reflective practice for all involved including participants, deliverers of training and project managers.

Finally, there were further aims for each project, based on the local needs of the area, and those of the participants and organisations involved. These additional aims were identified in the research and planning discussions prior to the project being set up. As such, these local aims provided the individual character and colour to each Vocal Force project.

For example, in Bristol one of the local aims was to use the project to address the particular lack of focus of Key Stage 1 singing in their area. In East London they wanted schools in the area to share a common repertoire. In Gosport they were keen to use the project to support the area to become a centre for excellence in singing leadership and promote community through singing.

Many of these aims feature in the plans of several projects, e.g., improving Key Stage 1 singing, developing a 'Big Sing' event or creating regular networking singing meetings. Whereas other projects have had more unique aims; for example, in Broxbourne, the project aims for their Early Years singing leading work were linked to the local authority vision for community inclusion in activity surrounding the Olympic canoeing plans in the district.

The national 'thematic' Vocal Force projects each had a headline, unique aim that had been developed in response to feedback from the wider Sing Up programme. This feedback had identified strategic gaps and opportunities, and the Vocal Force model was able to be adapted to help provide a solution. For example, the Music & the Deaf project responded to the increase in demand for singing and signing leaders to help develop British Sign Language signed song for hearing and hearing impaired children. Therefore the aims of the project were to bring together experienced singers and experienced signers from across the country, train them to a higher standard together so that they could deliver more of this work together, and support each other as a group in the future.

It is well known that sometimes the best laid plans just don't work out the way that everyone expected, and there have been many experiences – both rewarding and

challenging – in the lives of Vocal Force projects that have necessitated a review and rethink of the original aims and subsequent plans and activities. To some extent this was to be expected in the roll out of a project with an 18-24 month duration, involving the setting up of new partnerships for both delivery and management in many cases. Also, the emphasis on reflective practice within the projects, not only for participants, but perhaps more importantly for the deliverers and lead organisations, resulted in new insights or opportunities being identified in the course project delivery. In addition, each project also experienced the parallel impact of the wider Sing Up campaign including the Song Bank, Magazine as well as Sing Up Area Leader training and activities which also changed the ecosystem in which projects were happening.

In this environment, it was appropriate and positive for Vocal Force to be flexible and offer reviews of project aims regularly and for discussions about changes to aims, personnel, participants and delivery methods to ensure projects were able to achieve what was necessary for their local area and the Sing Up programme together. For example:

- In Bradford the success of the regular singing workshops held in the first year had developed and enthused several individuals to such an extent that the project needed to respond by ditching the original plans for the second year, and devising a different set of training opportunities to meet their individual needs. Moreover, they altered the structure of the activity so as to take on elements of organisation and help develop activity that would be able to continue once the Vocal Force project (and funding) had ended.
- In Oxfordshire the initial research had indicated that various schools were keen to work in partnership together and coordinate training events. As a reflection of this, the initial aims included building a network of these schools and supporting their partnership together. In reality, this wasn't something that they were able to coordinate, and the project aims altered to reflect the bespoke work that the Facilitator was able to devise with individual schools, including some limited training that brought participants together.
- In Ashford the aims in the second year of the project were extended to include schools outside the original catchment area for the project in order to increase participation and networking potential.
- In Cornwall many of the initial aims had been met in year 1, so an additional aim of compiling resources (including repertoire, lesson plans and classroom activities) was added in year 2 to provide a focus for all participants to work together to achieve.

Many Vocal Force projects have reported that one of the strengths of the programme has been its responsiveness to the local need, and its flexibility in reassessing the aims and direction of the project subject to evidence and feedback from participants and deliverers on what would work best for them.

The aims agreed for each project were drawn together into an Area Programme Plan (APP) which provided details on the target audiences, partners involved, activities planned, timelines and budget breakdowns. The APP was then signed off by the Vocal Force Programme Manager, and subsequently formed the contractual Partnership Agreement between Sing Up and the Lead Organisation or individual responsible for the delivery of the project.

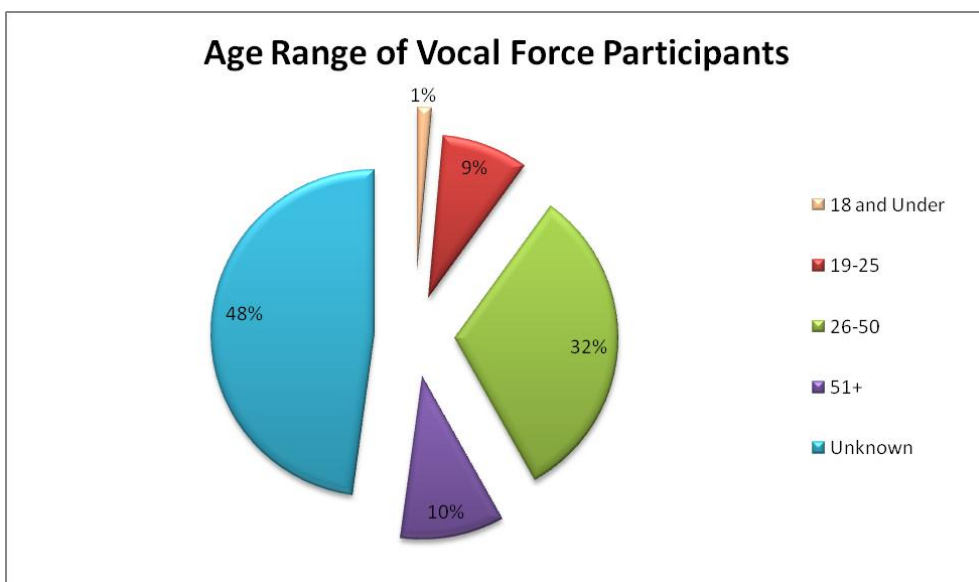
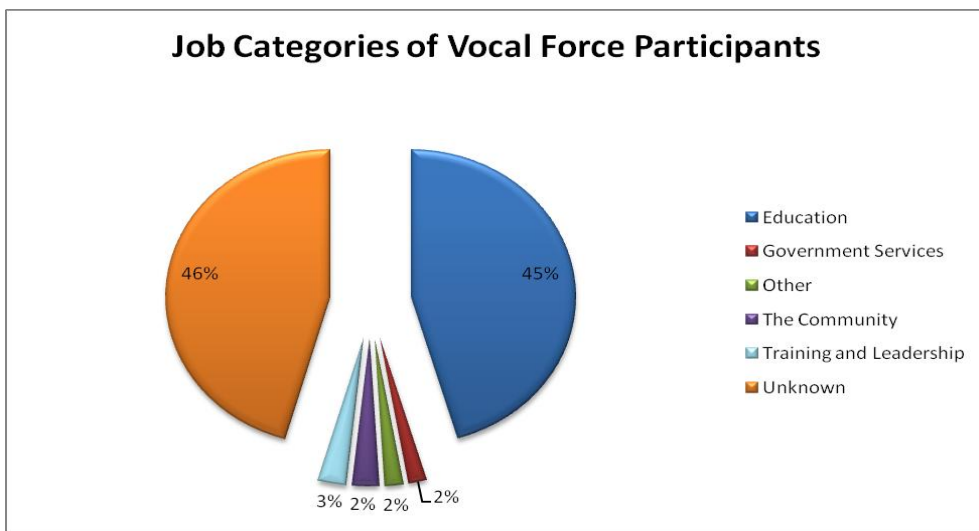
PARTICIPANTS AND PERSONNEL

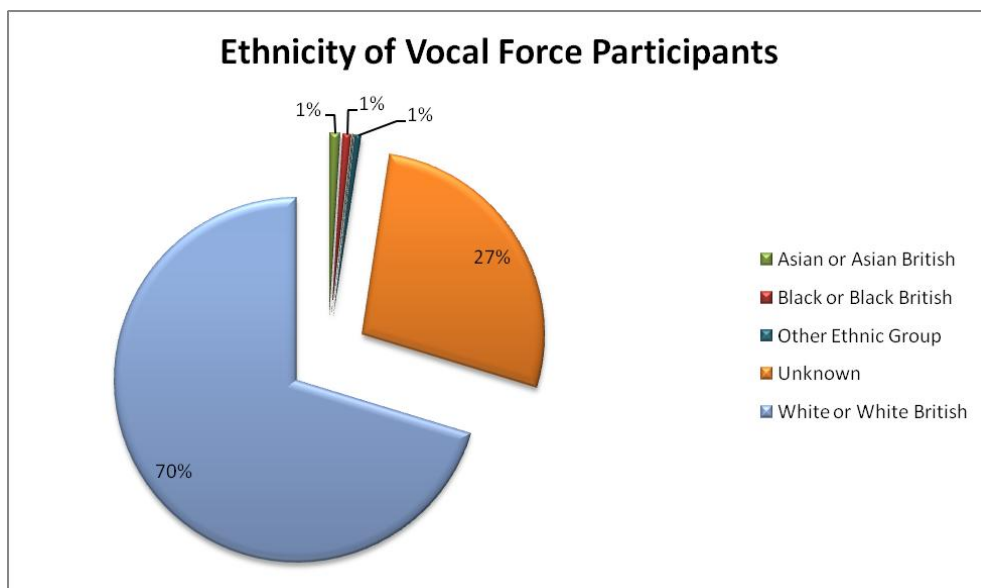
Participants

The Vocal Force programme provided training for over 6,400 participants across the 60 individual projects. Some projects have worked with hundreds of people. Others have worked with much smaller numbers. All the projects have aimed to provide significant impact on the skills, confidence and repertoire of all participants.

The first time that an individual attended a Sing Up training event, they were asked to complete a New Participant Form. Every time anyone attended any Sing Up training event, they were asked to complete a Register. All these forms and registers were returned from each project to the Workforce Development team at The Sage Gateshead and entered on the Sing Up database. The data collected provides us with lots of detail about the individual participants including their engagement with Vocal Force and also other aspects of Sing Up. For example, the data will show if they attended other training events organised by Area Leaders, and if the schools they represent have taken part in the Sing Up Awards.

The following graphs demonstrate the various demographics of participants that took part in the Vocal Force programme from 2007-2011.





The breakdown of these statistics for each individual Vocal Force project is available in *Appendix One*.

Deliverers

The initial template that each Vocal Force project used as a catalyst to planning its activities suggested that the delivery of singing leadership training should involve a team made up of a Facilitator and Co-Facilitator.

- Facilitator:** The criteria for this post was that the individual had excellent practice in delivering singing with primary age children and also in working with adults and training trainers. It was expected that this person would be able to model best practice in leading singing in schools; work with school staff and other adults in 1:1s, in class and INSET sessions; run regular singing workshops and events; and support the development of a Co-Facilitator.
- Co-Facilitator:** This post was intended to provide opportunities for someone who was aspiring to be a Facilitator but either needed a little more experience, or needed to fill in

some gaps in their skills base. They would work closely with the Facilitator, initially shadowing them and learning from their method of working, and, by the end of the project, be in a position to take on Facilitator tasks confidently.

In some projects (such as East London and Gateshead) this model worked exactly as described above. In others the model was tweaked to effect sustainable change. For example:

- In Carnforth & Morecambe they adapted the Facilitator model to provide a Creative Leader who trained a small team of Co-Facilitators who then delivered training in schools. Following their Vocal Force experience, some of these Co-Facilitators have gone on to lead their own projects, and one eventually became a Sing Up Area Leader.
- In Herefordshire the decision was made to appoint three Facilitators and no Co-Facilitators. This allowed the project to reach more schools across this rural area and work more intensively with them.
- In the Isles of Scilly the role of Facilitator was not given to one individual, instead a series of national experts (e.g., Lin Marsh, Em Whitfield-Brookes and Paul Whittaker) visited the islands and delivered workshops and sessions to groups of aspiring singing leaders and young leaders from the school and community.
- In Norwich the project had a mix of a regular Facilitator and guest Facilitators working with a small team of singing leaders who created their own events and several have gone on to lead other vocal training projects, including Vocal Force Suffolk.
- In Whitby & Scarborough there was one project Facilitator, and separate Co-Facilitators for each of the Whitby and Scarborough regions.
- In Brighton they had several Facilitators delivering training on their particular area of expertise, and then a more structured 'mentoring' arrangement in the second year that provided some of the Co-Facilitator needs.

In the national 'thematic' projects the roles were still present:

- In the Pupil Referral Unit project there were two Facilitators appointed with excellent practice in Pupil Referral Unit singing work and excellent practice in training trainers. They worked with a group of participants who were either experienced singing leaders or experienced staff from Pupil Referral Unit environments and who were committed to improving their skills, confidence and repertoire in the singing in Pupil Referral Unit.
- In the Visitors in Prisons project there were Facilitators who delivered singing training with prison staff including Writers in Residence, who in turn planned to use their new skills in improving the experience of children visiting relatives and prisoners. This was achieved by working with staff on Family Visit Days and with prisoners to help use song to normalise relations for the children.

Facilitators and Co-Facilitators were drawn from both the formal and informal music sectors, with Music Services, Community Music Organisations, freelance music professionals, Music Coordinators and other adults and school staff represented in both roles throughout the Vocal Force programme.

Quite often those in the Facilitator role had not had the opportunity to act as mentor and support to a colleague in the role of Co-Facilitator – at least, not formally. Initially some individuals were more nervous about this aspect of the role, and in some cases they weren't sure about what they could offer. However, in the regular reports and the half yearly review meetings, many Facilitators commented on how rewarding the work was proving, and also that they had gained further insight about their own delivery and practice through adopting this role with a colleague.

The feedback from Co-Facilitators has demonstrated that the opportunity to work with a more experienced colleague, over a sustained period of time, has had immense, positive impact on the development of their skills, confidence and repertoire. For example:

- “I started being a confident enough singer, but with little training and no repertoire. Sing Up has given me thousands of songs (well, hundreds) and the opportunity to meet and network with other leaders. There has been a great sharing of knowledge and technique. ... Being part of this project has changed my life for the better.” Alison Coates, Co-Facilitator, Vocal Force North Northumberland
- “The training came at the perfect time for me in terms of my professional development as a singing workshop facilitator.... As a result of the training I hope to offer support to a local infant and junior school to create a singing community, with 2 other project participants.” Co-Facilitator, Vocal Force Norwich

Whenever opportunities for personal reflection and professional development are explored there are also challenges and frictions as part of that process. A common place for tension, reported by two or three projects, was at the stage of cross-over within the relationship between the Facilitator and Co-Facilitator - when the trainee starts taking over some elements of the work. Negotiating the dynamic between the individuals at that stage, and quite how and when feedback from the Facilitator on the Co-Facilitator’s performance is delivered is an area worthy of further scrutiny and guidelines or support in any future programme. Projects approached and ultimately resolved these in different ways, often with the support and advice provided by their project advisor. By the end of the programme some projects were using a more formal Learning Agreement that we had developed from the Reflect LAB programme run at The Sage Gateshead, and this was useful in providing a more formal framework for these relationships.

Other challenges of the projects highlighted by many Facilitators and Co-Facilitators were the wider non-musical skills they realised they needed to develop, including partnership building, marketing (including digital developments and social networking), time management and project management. In response to this, and feedback from similar people throughout the wider Sing Up programme, Sing Up devised the ‘Sustainable Singers Training’ (SST) project which aimed to provide people with some of these broader skills. The overall aim was to ensure that these individuals had access to training that could help them continue to affect sustainable change after the end of the Sing Up 2007-2011 programme. Vocal Force contributed financially to the SST project and many of the Facilitators and Co-Facilitators benefitted from the training it provided.

To some extent everybody involved in Vocal Force participated in training. All Facilitators and the majority of Co-Facilitators were also provided with opportunities for professional development through compulsory attendance at the annual Sing Up National Gatherings, and access to free places on many Sing Up Training Programme workshops, residential training weekends and other events.

Providing the opportunity for this training to established trainers was deemed critically important to ensure that their own high level of skills, confidence and repertoire were also stretched and widened. Deliverers were given the opportunity to learn from other excellent trainers and national leaders, and to establish new networks with colleagues from across England. Training was focussed on improving quality singing to primary school children and the staff who work with them.

A full list of the Vocal Force Facilitators and Co-Facilitators is available in *Appendix Two*.

Lead Organisation or Individual

The criteria for each Vocal Force project required there to be a Lead Organisation or Individual who was contracted as the responsible partner for overseeing the project delivery including the key financial and administrative tasks. For example:

- Overseeing the Area Programme Plan.
- Coordinating and liaising with project partners.
- Taking responsibility for budget planning and spending.
- Coordinating and returning fortnightly reports, registers and participant forms.
- Organising programmes and events.
- Recruiting participants in collaboration with other partners of project.

These roles were taken on by a range of different types of partners. For example:

- **Music Services:** Kirklees, Rotherham, Merseyside, Cambridgeshire.
- **Community Music Organisations:** Wren Music (Devon); More Music (Carnforth & Morecambe, St.Helen's); Music Pool (Herefordshire); Cumpas (Lev Krev Kernow – Cornwall).
- **Festivals:** Salisbury International Festival (Salisbury); Swaledale Festival (Wensleydale & Swaledale); Oxford Folk Festival (Oxfordshire).
- **Individuals:** Chris Bartram (Selby); Jilly Jarman (Eden Valley).

Sing Up Area Leaders were also closely involved with the development of the Vocal Force programme, and many of them were involved as Lead Organisations. For example:

- Let's Reflect: Sound Connections, Area Leader (London);
- Gosport & Fareham: Hampshire Music Service, Area Leader;
- Southampton & Portsmouth: Portsmouth Music Service, Area Leader.

The decision about who would be the Lead Organisation or Individual was often reached as part of the initial discussions with partners involved in each project. The staff in the organisation or the individual would then become the key contact between the project and the Sing Up staff.

In the final End of Project evaluations from each Lead Organisation and Individual many state that the experience of running the Vocal Force project has had an impact on how their organisation works and will work in the future. For example:

- **South Normanton:** "Opus has now got a wealth of resources that can be used or adapted for use in future projects. I feel that the organisational skills, the knowledge base and the confidence that I have gained during this project is already starting to feed into current projects with Opus, and will continue to do so in the future."
- **Gosport & Fareham:** "We [Hampshire Music Service] very much like the model of a prolonged length of training to provide in-depth work to a community of schools/groups. We would like to take this model and look at the possibility of adapting it to work in school clusters, possibly including secondary schools for a series of sessions or even a term."
- **St Helen's:** "We [More Music] attempted, through the move into phase 2, to give people the chance to move on to leading, and managing their own part of the project. We have learned that it takes people longer than anticipated to move from vocal leader to project manager, and that more support was needed for this. We would be interested to include project management training in any similar project in the future."

The End of Project evaluations also highlight some challenges and frustrations experienced by Lead Organisations and Individuals. Some of these issues were Sing Up wide concerns – such as technical problems that sometimes beset the Sing Up website, and wanting to develop more work in secondary schools (which Sing Up funding couldn't support from 2007-2011). Some of the issues were more operational; for example, finding the requirement of fortnightly reporting to be burdensome and too bureaucratic. Another frustration was the constant filling in and returning of forms and registers required to feed into the Sing Up Database.

A challenge expressed by many projects was the sheer amount of time that the planning and preparation for each project took. Sometimes this was work for which there was no budget available to support those involved. Sometimes this type of work meant taking people out of their comfort zone and required development of new skills and ways of working. In particular, understanding the timeframes required to fit in to schools' timetables and schedules, and managing to coordinate activity across a range of schools represented a huge learning curve for many projects.

For some people in organisations Vocal Force work was introduced as an additional workload on top of existing routine commitments without any additional resources. This put pressure on staff that were committed and enthused – but essentially – over committed. There were examples where organisations had too many initiatives to juggle with – and in one case, Essex, the project never got off the ground due to the capacity of the Music Service to manage all the different initiatives and projects that had been offered to them.

A full list of the Vocal Force Lead Organisations and Individuals is available in *Appendix Three*.

Sing Up Staff

The Vocal Force programme was supported by a team working as part of the Workforce Development Strand based at The Sage Gateshead.

The roles of the team were:

- Programme Manager: with overall responsibility for all 60 projects, programme budget, delivery, quality and staff.
- Project Advisors: helping set up each project, aiding partnership building, linking the project with the wider programme, visiting delivery, reviewing and monitoring.
- Project Manager: assisting with advising projects, reviewing, monitoring and evaluation.
- Coordinator: operational management including supporting financial record keeping, overseeing contracting and grant payments, updating the operational guide for new projects (Vocal Force Handbook), supporting Project Manager, Advisors and Programme Manager.
- Administrator: supporting all the team in the office, data chasing (reports, registers and forms), first point of contact for all the projects and arranging all travel.

In addition to this, the Vocal Force team worked closely with other Workforce Development colleagues, and other elements of the Sing Up Programme. In particular, Vocal Force worked with the 'Beyond The Mainstream' strand of work developing joint projects and sharing staff at events and meetings.

A full list of the Sing Up Vocal Force Staff is available in *Appendix Four*.

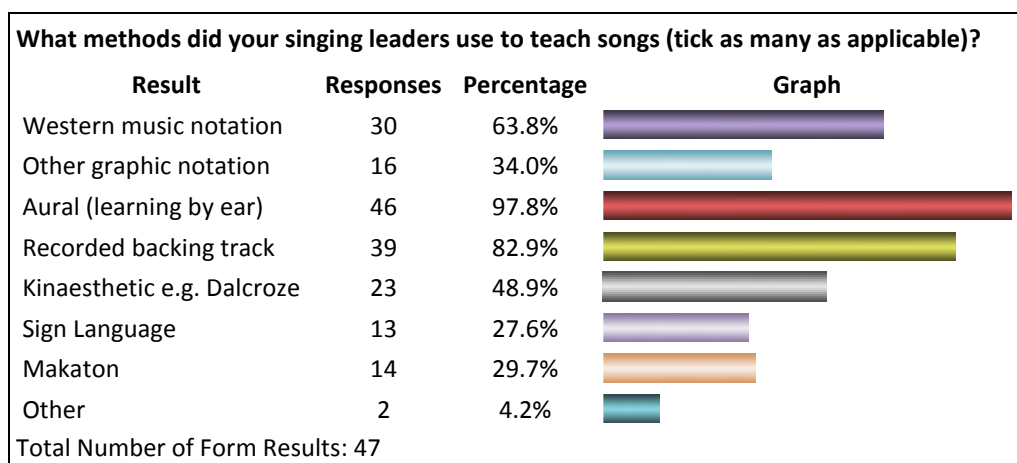
Project Delivery

Methods

A mixture of different methods was used across the country to deliver Vocal Force projects. These included:

- 1:1s between participants and Facilitators
- Advocating Sing Up Awards
- Apprentice Schemes and Mentoring
- Big Sings and Celebration Events
- Cluster activities
- INSET training session to whole school staff
- Learning Agreements and contracts with individuals and schools
- Modelling best practice to schools through direct delivery
- Residential Training Weekends
- Singing Squads/Circles/Networks: regular singing workshops (either weekly, fortnightly, monthly, half-termly or termly!)
- Staff Choirs
- Taster Sessions (often at the beginning of projects as a recruitment tool)
- Training Days
- Twilight Sessions

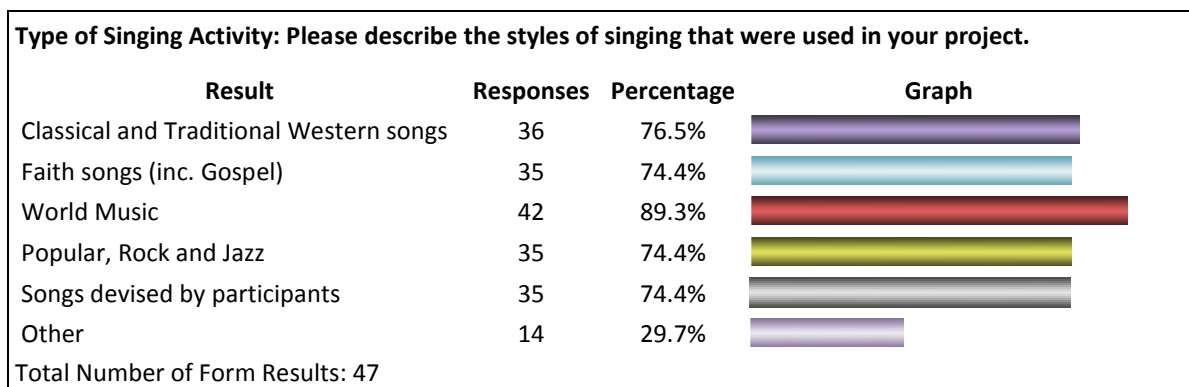
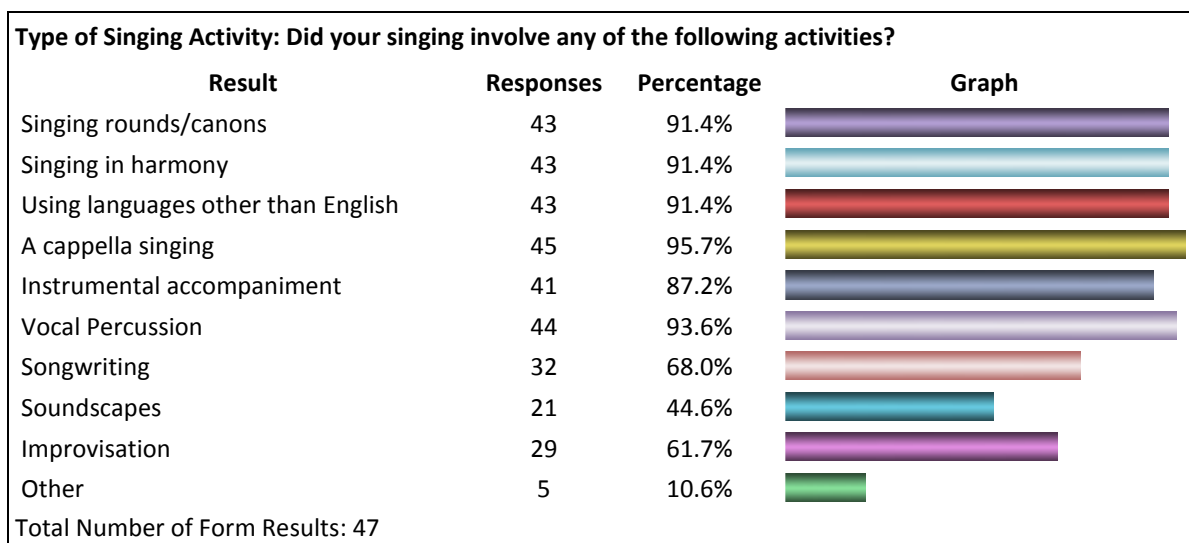
In their End of Project reports, projects were asked to provide information on some of the detailed methods they used within sessions. The results are displayed below:



Material

The Sing Up programme provided a breadth of resources for projects to use and pass on to participants. The Song Bank, Sing Up website and Magazine were key sources of material that were used repeatedly by every Vocal Force project.

In the End of Project report every project provided information on the different type of repertoire and material they used. The following graph(s) demonstrates this:



There were a number of Vocal Force projects that developed their own resource books as part of their activity. There is the possibility that downloadable versions of these resources will be available on the Sing Up website in the future. Where budget allowed, copies of these resources have been provided to Sing Up Area Leaders, all Music Services in England, as well as all of the partners and organisations who have worked with Vocal Force.

Some of the additional resources developed through Vocal Force include:

- **Songs from my Childhood** - developed by Vocal Force South Holland and including songs from the variety of communities represented in local primary schools, and collected from long-standing residents and new arrivals from all parts of the world.
- **Sitting in the Classroom?** – this is a resource for staff working in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) schools and also for singing leaders interested in this type of work. It contains songs and creative activities as well as sections on looking after the voice and advice on running sessions in PRUs. This pack is accompanied by a video and a CD for use in conjunction with the booklet. This was in partnership with the Beyond the Mainstream strand of Sing Up.

- **Sign Up** – provides lyrics and scores to songs on the Sing Up Song Bank accompanied by a CD and a DVD of the songs being signed in British Sign Language led by Paul Whittaker, Artistic Director of Music and the Deaf, and featuring other participants of the Vocal Force Sign Up project.
- **Songs from South Asia for Primary School Children** - this pack represents the work researched and developed by the participants in Vocal Force Sangeet and includes over 15 songs with lesson plans and teaching notes for primary school children.
- **Crackers Maracas** - this flexible and adaptable song and activity resource is aimed at teachers, support staff, parents and carers of children and young people on the autism spectrum. Although it is mainly aimed at Foundation, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, many of the activities can be used with older children. This resource was developed from the Vocal Force Autism project.
- **Wild Hills, Marbles and Worms** – developed from the Vocal Force Haydon Bridge project this is a collection of local traditional and other contemporary songs that schools found useful and inspiring in this Northumberland project.
- **Lev Krev Kernow** – developed two songs books of Cornish songs, including songs in the Cornish language that work well in primary school settings.

Budget

The average Vocal Force budget totalled £21,500 investment. This was front loaded – with over £14,000 being available in the first year, and a reduced amount of over £7,000 in the second year. The reason for this income schedule, which was outlined and discussed with partners at the outset, was to encourage projects to start thinking about how they would sustain the project in a third year and into the future with no promise of external funding.

There were variations in this budget allocation, and the national ‘thematic’ Vocal Force projects often cost considerably more, although other parts of Sing Up were also able to support these initiatives with additional funding.

Impact

“I think Sing Up has had the kind of impact which one would depict in a cartoon as a light bulb being switched on.” Ruth McCartney, Facilitator, Vocal Force York

One of the key characteristics of the Vocal Force programme was the emphasis on ensuring the activities achieved a lasting impact for the participants, organisations and individuals involved. The sections below contain anecdotal examples and quotes drawn from the ongoing support and conversations with Project Advisors and the Programme Manager, fortnightly reports, project meetings and End of Project reports detailing some of the impact that the Sing Up Vocal Force programme has achieved.

Health & Wellbeing

“For myself, my knowledge of vocal health has increased, and along with that, the skills and techniques to warm up properly through games and exercises...”

Sarah Matthews, Co-Facilitator, Vocal Force South Normanton

- **Pupil Referral Units:** “Behaviours after sessions are that the children appear calmer and happier. They teach other kids the songs and sing through the next lesson. It has definitely had a positive effect; we haven’t had one child kicking off in the Sing Up sessions.” Lisa Bradley, Cedar House School
- **East London:** “There’s something that changes into a softer, warmer energy in people when they’ve all come together and had a good sing.” Jane Wheeler, Facilitator
- **Bridgwater:** The Special Educational Needs schools involved in the project noted a difference once the training had been rolled out to all the staff, they felt the children in the school were singing more as part of all their lessons and this had had an effect on language, confidence and physical coordination.
- **South Normanton:** This project included a partnership with the Healthy Schools Initiative that was active in the area. As a result, information about the benefits of singing was included in the Healthy Schools Newsletter across Derbyshire informing people of the Sing Up programme and the healthy side effects of singing.
- **Merseyside:** Facilitator Vicky Harris used the Pyramid Pack effectively with Learning Mentors working within mainstream settings. They lead withdrawal groups for children with various emotional and behavioural needs and were really enthusiastic about using the songs and approaches in the pack. They had been ‘crying out’ for some training of this nature to refresh their practice.
- Many projects commented on the benefits of learning far more about **Vocal Health** from sessions at the Sing Up National Gatherings or articles in the Sing Up Magazine, and the positive impact this had been for themselves, and also for passing on to participants in projects.

Impact on Schools

“At least one Scarborough school has engaged extra staff (vocal specialist) to deliver music sessions across the school as a result of their involvement in the project” Rebecca Gross, Co-Facilitator, Vocal Force Whitby & Scarborough

Many projects reported how increased singing with the children had an impact on **concentration and behaviour**. For example:

- **South Holland:** teachers all commented on how much singing added to the focus, enjoyment and inclusion in the classroom.

- **Selby:** There were several reports of individual children concentrating better and improving in their attitudes, which the teachers thought was definitely connected to their taking part in singing activities.
- **Tees Valley:** “Teachers commented on how much the children’s concentration has improved. This was particularly apparent with the boys. Boys who are normally very shy and unwilling to say much in class have been the ones volunteering to do solos. Likewise, the really loud disruptive ones have calmed down in the choir rehearsals and seem to focus and concentrate much better with the structure of choir practice.” Emily Smith, Facilitator
- **Let’s Reflect:** “The participants who came to regular sessions visibly grew in confidence – through repertoire and advice on delivery.... I was not expecting so much of the real buzz, that was growing in the schools, of many of the participants. They would come back and tell us stories about how successful songs we had learned in singing squads worked at school... Singing in classrooms and in whole school events helps boost the levels of confidence, motivation, achievement, concentration etc and the feedback from the teachers who were expanding the amount of singing in their schools agreed.” Gitika Partington, Facilitator
- **Stockton:** “Seven schools have participated in singing and vocal leadership training. One EBD school was challenging at first, with disengaged, restless children who didn’t listen. They became more interested as the project progressed and could sit better and follow instructions and they were singing! They performed in concert at Christmas where some even sang solo – a massive indicator of growing sense of achievement, pride, concentration, enjoyment, motivation, confidence, self esteem and even literacy as they struggled at first with song sheets but improved.... Singing has been raised in profile in the schools; heads have been impressed with the way teachers involved have really gotten on board...” Judy Hooton, Stockton Achievement Partnership (Lead Organisation)

Feedback from participants in many projects suggested that the **culture of singing in schools** had been positively affected by their involvement in Vocal Force. For example:

- **Bridgewater:** “Our school has completely changed its whole approach to singing – some teachers were very reluctant, but after the whole school singing staff meeting we are organising a Our Schools Got Talent and our most reluctant teacher is performing with a group of students.” “It has changed my teaching – now we sing all the time”
- **Easington:** “When a project in a school was over, children and teachers alike expressed a DESIRE for it to continue. I think that’s really important; they could see the benefits, there was joy in what they were doing, they were left inspired and provided with the resource to keep singing” Liz Corney, Facilitator
- **South Normanton:** The delivery team were particularly pleased to hear about the impact on non-teaching staff who began to be involved in more singing on the playground... “Singing is becoming more of a way of life at their school.”
- **Haydon Bridge:** “The first session in Allendale First School the head sat at the back and marked her books as I led with the class. After 10 minutes or so I managed to get her to come and join in. She is now organising whole school singing assemblies and leading lots of singing within the school. She also made sure that all the staff accessed the project.... The majority of the schools are now much more “singing schools”. Lots had a visiting music teacher who they all left ‘music’ to. Now all of the staff use music and singing throughout the school day and feel comfortable and confident about doing so.” Kat Davidson, Facilitator
- **Bury:** Staff members were pleased to see the evident development of the children’s singing between their visit as well as increased confidence from teaching staff. Staff began by using the sessions as an opportunity to mark work or were only half listening, but by the end were leading partner songs and joining in. Unexpected children came

out to lead little groups. In Radcliffe Primary, one Reception class developed immensely from being scared of songs, yet by third session they were hugely engaged.

- **Broxbourne:** We have used music to effect better communication in schools, with practitioners and in the wider community. In schools, routines and instructions can be done without raised or stressed voices - children respond well to songs for 'tidy up' or 'line up'.

Several projects identified that training models for staff that culminated in a **Big Sing** or a celebratory performance with children and staff, helped to achieve greater engagement and involvement in many Vocal Force activities:

- Bradford found that the Big Sings had a great impact by getting schools to sign up to a programme of training for staff and for introducing new repertoire into schools. Schools fed back that children were very focussed on learning the songs for the occasion. The Music Service now organise a 'MegaSing' as an annual event. One school in Keighley now hosts its own Big Sing with every class in the school involved.
- North Northumberland found that the preparation for a singing event really increased staff confidence at Tweedmouth Middle School.

In Gateshead the final **Celebration Event** was for school staff only. Each school was given the opportunity to develop a song that they would then perform to all the other participating schools in Hall Two at The Sage Gateshead. 140 staff from Gateshead primary schools attended.

- "What surprised me particularly was the sense of joy, followed by the sense of achievement. We had no idea that the staff involved would appreciate it so much. This came from the valuable personal performance experience that is usually overlooked or created for children only. This is going to be the springboard and lasting inspiration for them to develop their singing leading in the future. The atmosphere was so mutually supportive." Shelly Ambury, Facilitator
- Feedback from the schools included the following:
 - "We've bonded as a school and had fun."
 - "I've discovered how free it feels when you sing. I've learnt to bring the enjoyment of singing into the classroom."

A reoccurring observation from projects was the significant impact that came from having the **Head Teacher and Senior Management Team engagement** with the project. A variety of different scenarios and impacts were noted, from Head Teachers who were considered the music specialist in their school and were reticent, at first, to 'let go of their baby' but really embraced the project over time, to Heads who did not engage with Vocal Force until the very end and when the project had 'proved' itself with measurable results.

- **Suffolk:** Head teachers' support has been essential to the success of this project in schools. Where heads have bought in to Sing Up it has really affected staff involvement and enthusiasm. In some cases staff involvement and enthusiasm has spread to the Head rather than the other way round.
- **St Ann's & Sneinton:** Once buy-in of senior management team was assured then a sea-change could take place with regard to the singing culture. After a series of sessions leading up to a Key Stage 2 Christmas concert at a school previously described as "challenging", both the Head and the Deputy Head described to the Facilitator the noticeable difference in the confidence and participation of children compared to previous years when they had no support. Seeing this impact, the Deputy Head then became keen to discuss curriculum support for the Spring Terms which has included assisting the school in developing their own 'Eco Song' for their Eco Award application. This example shows how a relatively short input has overcome staff scepticism and brought longer term results.

- **St Helen's:** One Head teacher was a core teacher involved in Phase 1; she is a confident musician but hadn't led much singing independently, she has gone on to lead singing activities in school assemblies as a result of Vocal Force.
- **Wensleydale & Swaledale:** One Head Teacher was extremely nervous when she came to her first singing squad session and was obviously very uncomfortable when the group began to sing. She was absolutely determined to take part in the project and push herself. Over the year she attended every singing squad session and without a doubt her school was one of the most polished and ready for The Big Sing. I was so impressed with how much she had achieved both herself and with encouraging regular singing in her school.

Other comments on the impact of the Vocal Force projects include:

- **Suffolk:** "I think it has made schools think more about singing being part of the whole curriculum rather than just something they do in music lessons. They have also begun to see it as a way of getting parents involved in school life." Bridget Cousins
- **Devon:** Intervention through singing has now sparked demand for more repertoire for SEN environments in Devon
- **Easington:** Visiting the schools repeatedly has helped build relationships and provided Facilitators the opportunity to witness the development of staff and their involvement with the children.

Learning across the Curriculum

"For those who attended regularly, Vocal Force and the Singing Squads has totally changed their daily practice in schools and has transformed their approach to delivery in many areas of the curriculum" Sue McLaughlin, Co-Facilitator, Vocal Force Whitby & Scarborough

- **Wensleydale & Swaledale:** Following the project the schools are using singing to aid teaching in all areas of the curriculum. Feedback from teachers about the choirs and Singing Squads was that it was something they looked forward to each week, providing something totally different and fun in their normal working day, helped them to relax and focus and inspired new ideas for teaching and ways to incorporate it into other areas of the curriculum.
- **York:** The Facilitator was inspired by the involvement in the project to include more curriculum based material in future workshops which teachers can use immediately, not just material for teaching 'music skills'. The confidence from singing many other songs, which teachers use readily to remember curriculum facts, makes the musical skills easier to acquire at a later stage.
- **Bradford:** The Music Service reported that schools are now able to recognise the importance of singing across the curriculum and how valuable this can be.
- **Short Stay Schools:** One class is now using two songs they have about birds before they go outside to try and do their bird count.
- **Cornwall:** The project aided teaching of the Cornish language and singing is now being used for dancing, singing schools, song writing, music medals, rhythm games and singing in French.
- **Selby:** "One teacher, who had been so quiet and shy led the most beautiful R.E. session around Jewish faith songs – it stunned us all..." Chris Bartram, Facilitator

Impact on Organisations

“Opus has now got a wealth of resources that can be used or adapted for use in future projects. I feel that the organisational skills, the knowledge base and the confidence that I have gained during this project, is already starting to feed into current projects with Opus, and will continue to do so in the future.” Sarah Matthews, Vocal Force South Normanton

- **Education Bradford:** “This has a tremendous impact for our organisation. Before Vocal Force and Sing Up we were not involved with anywhere near as many schools... It has helped to raise the profile of our Music Service in that we can now share our experiences with other authorities and show how things have worked for us.” Vocal Force Bradford
- **More Music:** The experience of running two Vocal Force projects (Carnforth & Morecambe and St Helen’s) has helped to regenerate More Music training days and weekends.
- **Music Unlimited:** “For some time I have been looking for a training model that would allow me to pass on the sum of my years of experience without losing contact with children. This project has provided an excellent model of how I might do this.” Vocal Force Merseyside
- **Kirklees Council:** Vocal Force Kirklees has been fundamental to new structure devised and at the heart of the Kirklees Vocal Strategy, and embedded in their Local Area Music Plan.
- **City Music Service (Stoke):** Vocal Force Stoke encouraged the Music Service to further develop and impart knowledge of singing resources notably at Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- **Hertfordshire Music Service:** Vocal Force Broxbourne enabled a whole new dimension of Early Years work to be developed and established new partnerships with Children’s Centres across the borough. It helped create a new market for Music Service activities in the future.
- **Rhythmix:** The Vocal Force Brighton project allowed the organisation to pilot several new methods of working, training and planning. There were plenty of highlights, but also some challenges, as would be expected with something new. They commissioned an independent evaluation of the project from Dr Alison Daubney which provides a very thorough analysis of the project and details the learning for the organisation that they can take into future projects and partnerships.

Musical Development

“In Gorsefield Primary, Mr Morris began the process by saying he couldn’t sing. However, the week when Toni [Facilitator] left him to lead the Mexican Counting Song, they did it! She was delighted that he had worked on it independently. The children had progressed and he had a real sense of achievement.” Susan Bisatt, Facilitator, Vocal Force Bury

- **Children in Mental Health Settings:** “Young people rose to the challenges – grew in confidence, became louder, started expressing their individuality, and began to control and regulate their action in response to your instructions and to the music. There were special and memorable moments for all of them” Feedback from a CAMHS Clinician to a project training session
- **Eden Valley:** Following the project there was a noticeable improvement in the quality of vocal leadership and singing from the individual school choirs.
- **Stoke:** Through Singing School and City Songbirds Initiatives there are now greater numbers coming in to the City Youth Training Choir. The quality of singing with the newcomers is noticeably better.

- **Tees Valley:** The Vocal Force project broadened the styles and genres that children and staff are used to hearing and taking part in – e.g. The Operatunists at Middlesbrough Town Hall.
- **Whitby & Scarborough:** Following the project, the Music Service in Scarborough noted a considerable improvement in confidence in conducting/directing at Newby Primary School, Scarborough with a corresponding improvement in children’s attainment.
- **Music and the Deaf:** The training weekends provided time for good discussions about what makes a song good for signing with practical examples and exercises which deepening the understanding of all participants about interpretation and communication of music with hearing impaired children and communities.
- **Instrumental teachers** attended sessions in several Vocal Force projects (Ashford, York, Kirklees, Whitby & Scarborough). The feedback from the instrumentalists often stated that they had been inspired to use singing, or use it more, in their instrumental teaching – both in 1:1 situations, and in whole class teaching.

Partnership

“The project had an extremely positive outcome. More choirs, more sense of what song can do, more songs. More sense that we can achieve more by linking up than operating separately.” Paul Wilson, Facilitator, Vocal Force Devon

The Vocal Force programme has actively encouraged new partnerships at many different levels:

- those devising and organising the project;
- those delivering the project;
- and those participating in the project.

Devising and Organising

- **Bury:** Schools have become more engaged in wider singing activity which is benefiting both the Sing Up programme in Bury and Bury Music Service who now have a much better understanding of why those schools have been hard to reach and how to engage them in future activity and partnership work.
- **South Holland:** A new range of partnerships have been created by the project, involving the Ayscoughfee Hall Museum, English Heritage, the local authority, radio stations and community development teams. The project was nominated for English Heritage Renaissance “Inspiration” Award due to its work with the museum and local community.
- **Selby and Wensleydale & Swaledale:** both projects have developed partnerships with the North Yorkshire Singing Strategy Group and now feed into the research and strategy for the region.
- **Merseyside:** “This project has enabled a real collaboration between the three music services (Liverpool, Knowsley and Sefton) which would not have happened otherwise. As a result links between the three music services have strengthened significantly and will have an impact on future plans. These links will have a particular significance in terms of the current uncertainty surrounding the funding and structure of music services in general. The celebration event has helped to promote the good work of the three services throughout their respective schools and council bodies.” End of Project report.
- **Whitby & Scarborough:** “This was refreshing, inspiring and enjoyable for all concerned and remains one of the high points in my career.” Paul de Villeneuve, Head of Instrumental Music, Whitby Music Centre.
- “I think Vocal Force...has been quietly and steadily changing the face of singing leading in the land. I think its commitment to being bespoke for each area and addressing each area’s needs, and its ability to meet those needs through connecting with facilitators of

the highest quality – these elements make it unique. It has been essential USEFUL.” Em Whitfield-Brookes, Facilitator and Vocal Force Advisor.

Delivery

- **Workington:** “The project allowed the Music Service, the local authority and Third Sector organisations to come together around a common purpose of singing in primary schools. It helped all the partners see how a more strategic approach to singing provision could inform, more generally, the delivery of music provision.” Dave Camlin
- **Let’s Reflect:** This project was delivered through a partnership with Sound Connections, a community music organisation in London providing project management, and The Sage Gateshead delivering the Reflect LAB Co-Mentoring scheme. The partnership was challenged at times with common partnership concerns surrounding communication, clarity of priorities and pressure of timescales. However, both organisations learnt plenty from the experience which was a brand new venture for both parties. Reflect LAB is now exploring improvements in devising co-mentoring programmes which have additional components (in this case – singing leadership training).
- **Worcestershire:** The project was the first ‘excuse’ to bring together two parts of the same local authority to work together - the Music Service and the Arts Service. Feedback from the project showed that the joint working had been informative and beneficial for both departments.
- **Haydon Bridge:** “I feel that the partnership between Northumberland Music Service, Sing Up and The Sage Gateshead has strengthened off the back of this.” Kat Davidson, Facilitator.

Participation

- **Eden Valley:** This project found that it was really important for teachers and community musicians to work together as equal partners/learners and that “this has really helped with subsequent projects and the way they have been delivered.” Jilly Jarman, Facilitator.
- **Stoke:** Through internal council partnerships, this project was able to reach participants who had not previously accessed singing or music training. As a result, the project had an impact on staff from the Youth Service, Youth Offenders Team and Prison Service. However, it is unlikely that these services will be able to access training in the future without the additional funding to enable it to happen.
- **Let’s Reflect:** All the classroom teachers were paired with a community musician, and they worked as ‘co-mentors’ over several months attending reflection and training sessions, and working with each other. The impact of these relationships was very intense and positive with many individuals exploring new ways of working or expressing creativity and using singing with children and families. A short film detailing the experiences of several of the participants has been made and will be available to watch on the Sing Up website.
- The thematic projects relied heavily on the willingness and eagerness of participants to develop partnerships with each other in order to share skills and expertise, create new repertoire, provide feedback and support, and devise future ideas for projects and advocacy for their specialism. In particular:
 - **Children in Mental Health Settings:** “I feel we have developed a cohort who will take this work further over the years and who now feel confident they have the skills and understanding to do so....I feel very positive that we had quite big emotional and behavioural challenges with the work....We were able to do very thorough reflection and feedback on these issues and the trainees did, I fell, move to a deep level of reflective practice.” Phil Mullen, Facilitator.
 - **Pupil Referral Units:** “We have offered a way of working to the participants that they wouldn’t have considered before, both for the Pupil Referral Unit

- staff and for the singing leaders. We have also offered an invaluable space for information sharing between participants.” Beth Allen, Facilitator.
- **Music & the Deaf:** “Some excellent partnerships have been formed over these three weekends, as well as strong friendships. We’ve started something special and no one wishes to see the momentum be lost. There’s still a lot to do but we’ve made a good start.” Paul Whittaker, Facilitator
 - **Sangeet: Songs of South Asia:** “I am extremely proud of the opportunities we have created together to make new, lasting connections together and to explore and develop new ideas and approaches to this music. The pack is a beautiful culmination of this and I think it's a very special thing.” Beccy Owen, Facilitator

Speech, Language and Communication

“The rhythmic pattern of lyrics is a great way of building language skills.”

Debby Kirby, Facilitator, Vocal Force Keynsham

- **Broxbourne:** “Managers of [Children’s] centres see the music training as a way of helping particularly their youngest and most inexperienced practitioners (who are in many ways the outcome of the same social system as the children they care for) to communicate more effectively, to develop their own language and social skills and to see music as a way to combat stressful and confrontational situations in their settings. In one centre a leader told us that a number of children are collected from their settings by grandmothers, many of whom are Italian and Turkish. They were making an effort to welcome them in at the end of sessions, to hear the singing and suggest that they sing with the children too. This has the dual purpose of helping the children to learn something from their family culture (when singing in that language) and for the grandmothers (who tend not to use English as much as the younger generations) to learn some new English. Finally, we have worked with the Early Years Consultants who have been delivering a parallel funded project - ‘@Every Child a Talker’ (ECAT) and, by identifying elements in common, we have come up with a traded option for Children’s Centres which will combine Music and Language and will form the basis for the legacy of both projects.” Deena Day, Facilitator
- **Keynsham:** Vocal Force has enabled Community Music practitioner Debby Kirby to develop a course for Early Years teachers, providing them with the tools and resources to deliver high-quality singing provision focusing on boosting speech and language. She notes that repetition of words and phrases gives children the chance to get a ‘feel’ for the sound of the words and that “anything you set to music is easier to remember.”
- **Haydon Bridge:** “There was a child at one school who didn’t join in, was prone to causing disruption and never seemed interested in what we were doing. After one session she joined in with The Cornwall Banana song... she ran into the circle, sang and joined in all of the actions. She now joins in regularly which her teachers say has had a vast impact on her speech and language development.” Kat Davidson, Facilitator.
- **St Ann’s & Sneinton:** “I believe that this project has changed some teachers’ perceptions with regards to singing as something that could be used for cross curricular activity. It has built language skills such as with the Spanish singing workshop that Rikki Martinez recently delivered at Nottingham Academy Primary and his follow up INSET. It was great to hear the large packed school hall at the Academy reverberating to ‘Como te llama’.” Martin Curtis, Project Manager.
- **Oxmoor:** Numeracy and literacy have been in evidence through learning rhythm and beat, bars, time signatures and phrasing.
- **Children in Mental Health Settings:** “Several projects were only dealing with children who had concentration issues and were disengaged from learning. Most of the children involved made great strides in learning, picking up and remembering songs, actions and Makaton connected knowledge around geography. They also developed

creative writing skills, in some cases, strongly so. Most significant was their ability to work in a concentrated way in a peer group, something rarely achieved previously by many of these children.” Phil Mullen, Facilitator

- **Bridgewater:** The special schools especially noted a difference once the training had been rolled out to all the staff. They felt the children in the school were singing more as part of all their lessons and that this had had an effect on language, confidence and physical coordination.

Transition

“As a result of the Vocal Force project there is now a Transition Choir run by Martyn Soulsby of North Lakes (a Sing Up Platinum School). It has done a concert involving two secondary schools and 10 primary schools with a mixed school band.” Jilly Jarman, Facilitator, Vocal Force Eden Valley

- **Kirklees:** An unexpected outcome of the Vocal Force project was the effect on secondary schools who wanted to adopt and adapt elements of the model for secondary colleagues. This led to the first Secondary Music Showcase for Secondary and Middle Schools in Kirklees in June 2010.
- **Selby:** The development of the Brayton High School Young Leaders project as part of Vocal Force has enabled transition links between it and the feeder primaries in that area, and the work is going to be supported by the Head now that Vocal Force has ended.
- **Wensleydale & Swaledale:** Developed strong links between Bedlale and Wensleydale Secondary Schools and their feeder primaries and was successful in developing a Sing Up Community project following on from the Vocal Force project.

Youth Leadership

“When we started to learn ‘wiggle your fingers’, the group were clearly enjoying the song, but the really amazing thing is what happened in the next session. One of the children approached me, wiggling fingers at the ready, and then led the whole group by choosing the action that we did next. For this child to be able to take a leadership role was a real breakthrough!” Participant on Sing Up Autism Training

- **Brighton:** “We ran a 12 week programme which was completed by nine young people who came from diverse backgrounds; 4 went on to do Silver Arts Awards and five went on to shadow Rhythmix tutors on our Brighton & Hove programme and one is now signed up as a Rhythmix tutor. Evidence showed us that they were able to identify their skills levels at the beginning of the programme and could see an overall improvement by the end. One participant stated “It was an opportunity for me to learn and feel more confident about different working environments.”” Jo White, Project Manager.
- **Gateshead:** After leading his first session, one young leader fed back “that was mint I feel brilliant now!”
- **Newcastle-Under-Lyme:** “The Young Singing Leaders gained in self confidence, leadership skills and communication skills – presumably ticking most of the boxes for citizenship skills, as well as developing their own vocal confidence.” Leonora Davies, Vocal Force Advisor
- **Selby:** At Brayton High School, the Head of Music is now independently running the Young Leader’s Programme, developed as part of the Vocal Force project. Primary schools book the Young Leaders to go in to their schools on a regular basis to lead warm ups and songs. Brayton Young Leaders saw rise in confidence, self esteem,

achievement and pride and it was reported that several Young Leaders had better concentration and were motivated generally after the project.

- **South Holland:** “On one of the school sessions we did a Polish song and two of the Polish children helped us to teach the song to their classmates. They really enjoyed it and said they felt proud of themselves.” Liz Lenten, Facilitator
- **Wensleydale & Swaledale:** “We worked with 70 Young Leaders... and developed strong links between them and their feeder primaries... their confidence has grown hugely; quite shy and sometimes immature, over time they became mature and really rose to the challenge of working with primary children. By the end they were able to stand in front of a group of children and lead a warm-up, game or song, with absolute professionalism and focus.” Emily Smith, Facilitator

Progression Routes

“I have learnt I can lead successful sessions and engage children in a positive way – that I am capable.” Project Participant, Children in Mental Health Settings Vocal Force

The Vocal Force programme has enabled people of very different levels of ability and confidence of singing to develop their skills further - from self-diagnosed ‘non-singers’ through to experienced vocal leaders.

- **South Normanton:** “I have also developed in confidence in singing and delivering songs in a workshop situation – to the point that I am comfortable calling myself a singer now, where I was not previously.” Sarah Matthews, Co-Facilitator.
- **St Helen’s:** Over the course of the project, Charlie Adams, a vocal tutor from the first year of activity moved on to become a Vocal Animateur for St Helen’s Music Service and consequently became the Lead Vocal Tutor for second year of the project.
- **St Helen’s:** One Head teacher was a core teacher involved in the first year of activity. She is a confident musician but hadn’t led much singing independently. She has gone on to lead singing activities in school assemblies as a result of Vocal Force.
- **Bridgwater:** “I am leaving my part time teaching job at the end of term to become a full time music leader” Participant feedback.
- **Let’s Reflect:** As a result of the Vocal Force Singing Squads, one participant now runs an adult community choir in her area for 60 adults and runs session for schools.
- **Bradford:** “A young Teaching Assistant who attended Singing Squads and had only previously been a member of a choir is now working in a school, leading a school choir, has become a vocal apprentice, leads singing session at Singing Squads and jointly leads a community choir with me.” Helen Richmond, Facilitator.
- **Easington:** A highlight for me personally has been working with Sarah Kharko, my co-facilitator and seeing her confidence grow... she has really gained a lot from the project and it's been great watching her develop her practice from the work. Her intention now is to work in schools and is now on a teacher training course with her practical work experience in Newbottle Primary, which is great for them as they are pleased to have her singing leading expertise to draw on and there is a relationship with the school that Vocal Force has helped to build.” Liz Corney, Easington.

Sustainability

“Being part of Vocal Force/Sing Up has been tremendous and it has left a legacy which has been embedded and will have a lasting impact on singing in Kirklees schools to the benefit of 1000s of children.” Barbara Lawson, School Improvement Officer, Kirklees Council

- **Bradford:** The Gifted and Talented project in Ilkley came about as a direct result of the Singing Squads and Big Sings and a wish to continue and expand. The local authority provided the funding given to five schools in Wharfe Valley. In addition, the original

Singing Squads continued with Vocal Force apprentices leading them. The Big Sing model has been adopted and expanded too.

- **Bridgewater:** The schools that took place are organising a choirs festival for their newly formed school choirs.
- **Broxbourne:** The project enabled a whole new dimension of Early Years work to be developed and established new partnerships with Children's Centres across the borough. It helped create a new market for Music Service activities in the future.
- **Carnforth & Morecambe:** More Music has identified the need for including project management skills in future training for community musicians. They have also been inspired to regenerate their in-house training days and weekends as a result of working on Vocal Force.
- **Children in Mental Health Settings:** "Our colleagues in two Wandsworth CAMHS teams are fully supportive of the benefits of using our approach with their clients. We are currently talking to them about how best to do this; as following restructuring of their service, they feel it might be easiest to achieve this if we work with some of their partner agencies rather than directly through the CAMHS service. Merton CAMHS are highly supportive of our work, describing it as 'pioneering'. We are developing a proposal to continue the work longer term." Dave Cuthbert, Sound Minds.
- **Devon:** Singing Networks have been established in North and South Devon with regular meetings throughout the year.
- **East London:** Newham Young People's Chorus is still strong. Cluster rehearsals across the borough for performances have continued to be strong and sustainable.
- **Eden Valley:** Teachers have made a massive change to the quality and amount of singing activity happening, and this is noticeable by the improvement in the standard of children's singing.
- **Gosport & Fareham:** "We have been delighted at the impact of the project on the NQTs within the group. As a direct result of their involvement they are now feeling much more confident and capable of leading singing within their schools and have spoken with the Senior Leadership Team in order to arrange a School Choir being set up, and even a Choir for all the Staff!" Claire Dodds & Kim Shawyer, Facilitators
- **Kirklees:** They now have a tradition of offering Continuing Professional Development over a number of months culminating in a high profile event or sharing performance. Also, the Teachers Choir developed in the project has taken part in the Sing Up Kirklees events over past three years.
- **Let's Reflect:** "It was very rewarding to see the pennies beginning to drop about reflective practice in the Development Day and enthusiasm of the participant to develop ways of sustaining their experience in the Final Sharing event was compelling." Gitika Partington, Facilitator.
- **Music & the Deaf:** The participants from this project are now able to help meet the increase in demand for signing work with hearing and hearing impaired choirs and children. As a result of this project, trainer Nicola Sims was then asked to do a further staff training session for Hampshire Music Service; Laurie Gethin gained knowledge and ideas to enable her to organise an event to bring together groups in Bristol to discuss how to create a local network; and a national network of experienced singers and signers has been developed with a passion and commitment to working together to see a National Signed Choir event in 2011.
- **Newcastle-Under-Lyme:** The community choir funded through the project (ages 8-80) were keen to continue and found their own funding to enable them to do this. Two new choirs have been established by opening lines of communication between schools, high schools, pupils, teachers, Head Teachers and the Music Service.
- **Sangeet:** "I am extremely proud of the opportunities we have created together to make new, lasting connections together and to explore and develop new ideas and

approaches to this music. The pack is a beautiful culmination of this and I think it's a very special thing." Beccy Owen, Facilitator

- **Selby:** "Sustainability has been a key issue in our second year and our final gathering focussed on this. With the support of North Yorkshire County Council, I am confident that the following main initiatives will be sustained: (1) A termly meeting of teachers and others, coming together to share and develop practice and materials, and to plan singing events and projects. (2) The Young Leader initiative at Brayton High School. In addition I will be presenting a session with the Young Leaders to Head Teachers of Secondary schools in the region to promote the idea of them developing Young Leader projects in their schools. (3) A yearly Big Sing of some sort for Key Stage 2 children, either at Selby Cathedral, or a school with a large performance space. (4) A yearly little Big Sing for Key Stage 1. (5) Groups of two or three schools coming together to share songs and do concerts. Also, as a result of Young Leader work, several students now attend the Selby Music Centre to sing in the choirs." Chris Bartram, Facilitator.
- **South Holland:** The project continues as 'Sing South Holland' and has secured local authority funding to continue adult and family community group singing and visits to schools for two years following the Vocal Force project. The council have realised that arts projects can cross over with social projects to great effect! 'Sing South Holland' also performed with the London Mozart Players at the launch of Spalding International Festival.
- **South Normanton:** "Running this Vocal Force project has opened our eyes to what can be achieved with sustained input in one particular area, and the benefits that come with that. We have seen improved networking, increased confidence in participants and the Co-Facilitators....The previous Co-Facilitators should now become Facilitators in future projects.... Opus is currently involved in musical work in Derby Children's Hospital, humanising the hospital environment and working with the children through music to make their stay in hospital a little more pleasant." Sarah Matthew, Project Manager and Co-Facilitator.
- **Stoke:** Vocal Force has helped establish the Music Service as a resource for Vocal Continuing Professional Development.
- **Suffolk:** "It feels that this project has really taken off and the work should naturally carry on; a singing network has been created through the teachers of the participating schools which would be a real shame not to capitalise on and keep going.... I hope that the singing network of teachers created through the twilights and performance opportunities continues. I feel confident that it will because of the way the people involved have embraced it and I would happily support it in any way I can." Bridget Cousins, Project Manager and Facilitator.
- **Telford:** The legacy of the initial project has been taken on by Telford & Wrekin Music who now run the monthly network singing meetings and annual Telford Big Sing at AFC Telford football ground. They have also been running more Continuing Professional Development singing sessions for school teachers and maintaining a high take up.
- **Visitors in Prisons:** Two of the participants at HMP Full Sutton have decided to bid for funding for future vocal projects in the prison. This is a real bonus as these kind of projects have often been suggested by their manager; but until Vocal Force happened, there was no-one in the prison who would have been able to lead them.
- **Wensleydale & Swaledale:** "The story and song sessions that we developed with the library service were such a hit that the library service found some funding to carry them on.... We have been awarded funding through Continyou and Sing Up to develop a singing cluster in the Dales. We will be working with five secondary schools and their feeder primaries. One of the singing leaders, Wendy, that we helped to train has got regular work in two of the primary schools as their music/singing teacher.... Most of the schools have now set up choirs, they are making sure they have a whole school singing session at least once a month." Emily Smith, Project Manager and Facilitator.

- **Whitby & Scarborough:** A group of teachers now meet on a regular basis at Whetcroft School in Scarborough. This group grew out of the Vocal Force sessions and acts as an outreach group for the North Yorkshire County Council Music Co-ordinators group.
- **Workington** “Each school takes part in an annual non competitive singing event. Some schools are hosting Young Vocal Leaders and being very active in supporting them effectively. Schools regularly engage SoundWave to provide a range of diverse musical activities – not just singing, but Gamelan and djembe drumming too. All of these changes can be tracked to the Vocal Force programme – the careful building of relationships over time, the provision of opportunities and the challenges that we shared together over the course of the programme.” Sarah Wall, Project Manager and Facilitator
- **York:** Singing Squads are continuing with support from York City Council.

Learning Points

Programme Aims and Planning

1. The central Vocal Force aims of achieving a deep, lasting impact on the skills, confidence and repertoire of at least 50 adults over a sustained period of training provided a very clear premise for starting discussions with partners.
2. The opportunity for partners to include their own local aims, in parallel to the central Vocal Force premise, brought added value for all concerned.
3. The ability for projects to create models of delivery and activity that reflected the needs and priorities of their local area helped bring partners together and provide local ownership of the broader Sing Up aims too.
4. Creating their own models provided people with opportunities to try new ways of working and delivering training, supported by advice from Sing Up staff and other Sing Up projects.
5. The responsiveness and flexibility of the Vocal Force programme to adapt to new opportunities and practicalities experienced by projects was valued highly and encouraged projects to maintain communication and dialogue with the Sing Up Vocal Force staff.
6. Sing Up demanded regular reporting and communication from projects – which many found ‘over the top’. However, Sing Up Vocal Force staff found the regularity of contact enabled the Advisors and Programme Manager to offer timely advice and support when issues were raised, and quickly highlight any problems with delivery and activity. In turn, this allowed the Vocal Force programme to be responsive and flexible when appropriate.
7. Projects felt it was beneficial to be part of a high profile programme, and benefited from the marketing and communication of the whole Sing Up Programme, and used the website, Song Bank and other resources extensively.
8. There was sometimes confusion in areas due to the extent of the Sing Up activity (e.g., Area Leaders, Funded Programmes, Cathedral Outreach activities, Sing Up Training Programme and many other Sing Up related activity). It was felt this sometimes had an impact on school involvement as some felt overloaded with information and different initiatives.
9. Many projects underestimated the time and detail that Sing Up required in the research, planning and partnership building phase prior to approval of the Area Programme Plan. However, the time spent at this point in project creation often resulted in strong and efficient projects that achieved their objectives and established good relationships between partners, participants and deliverers.
10. Not all schools have the capacity to do project management effectively. Schools require a lot of prior notice in order to get staff released from classes or organise training sessions. Many projects found it difficult to set up schemes within original timescales due to difficulties with school timetables and also communications between school staff. A lot of local knowledge and contact was needed within projects in order to achieve much of the training.

Cross Sector Working

11. There have also been challenges in encouraging cross-sector working - bringing together colleagues from the informal and formal music sector, community music organisations and music services, musicians from different cultural settings and communities. However, the Vocal Force programme has many positive examples of the impact that cross-sector working has achieved – especially through the thematic projects. How can the work that has been started be developed further? And how can future cross-sector and thematic work continue to take place?
12. How can we build on the work that has been achieved in the thematic projects – what can be learnt? E.g., furthering the work, increasing delivery, bringing more PRUs, CAMH services and Autism schools into the programme, extending to Arabic song or repeating and continuing learning networks around South Asian song.

Training for Delivery Teams and Sing Up Staff

13. Many of the deliverers involved in the project were challenged by the extent of project management required from them to make the project work. In particular, the effort and time needed to timetable activity with schools, plan budget work and deal with IT issues. Although extra support and training was provided through Sing Up Vocal Force where possible this is likely to be a recurrent issue in any future activity. How can this be built into project plans in future?
14. The extensive partnership building involved in the Vocal Force projects benefited greatly from training invested in Sing Up Vocal Force staff in facilitation tools and structured conversations.
15. Attendance at the National Sing Up Gatherings was compulsory for all Facilitators and the majority of Co-Facilitators. These events included relevant training sessions, networking opportunities and strategic updates for all Sing Up Personnel. They also provided opportunities for the project staff and Sing Up Vocal Force office staff to meet. The impact that these events had on individuals – many of whom often feel isolated in their work, and rarely get a chance to attend training sessions as a participants - was documented in many reports and feedback forms. Many of those who have been involved in Vocal Force would value similar events in the future.

Who took part?

16. Although they are a small percentage of the primary school workforce – have we included male teachers effectively? And how would we do this in a secondary setting?
17. Have we included teachers from ethnic minorities effectively?
18. Projects that have successfully engaged Head Teachers and School Leadership Teams have benefited and felt a positive impact through time made available for training and more opportunities made for singing in school. Further work on understanding how to engage the Heads and leadership teams could greatly benefit future programmes.

Project Delivery

19. The Vocal Force programme included mentoring between individuals. Further support to those involved in mentoring would have been useful and, although some ideas were developed towards the end of the programme, it would be good to do more research on methods that already exist. How can we build this support into any future project plans?
20. Rural areas have a unique set of challenges including partnership building, miles between schools, adverse effects of bad weather and challenges of working small schools, including arranging cover for their staff to attend training. Vocal Force provided extra funding for travel costs in some areas. How can rural areas benefit equitably in future work? Are there other techniques or technologies that would assist rural involvement? What other initiatives and partners are there that we could work with?
21. Residential training events featured in several projects and yielded overwhelming feedback that they were superb opportunities for participants to bond and develop better communication and understandings. Much partnership work has been created following residential training sessions, and should play a crucial role in similar projects in the future.
22. The importance of having a performance for children, staff and schools to work towards was stated in the majority of projects. 'Big Sings' were repeated in many projects, and many areas have continued with the model after the initial Vocal Force project had ended.
23. Many Music Services have stated that the opportunity for projects to work with schools and participants repeatedly over several months and terms has helped them really appreciate the impact of their work, and they have been able to witness the development and increase in skills and confidence of the participants. How can long-term work be encouraged and assisted in future projects?

Resources

24. There seems to be a never-ending demand for resources – from every project, every training session, every performance or event, and every Gathering! Vocal Force centrally developed several resources as a result of specific projects after discussions within Sing Up. However, it would be useful to have a wider Sing Up discussion on how to strategically develop and produce resources whilst still responding to local and thematic feedback.

Impact

25. In hindsight, it would have been useful to find a more rigorous way of collecting baseline data from all participants at the beginning and end of their Vocal Force journey. This would have provided great data for each project to help further evidence the impact of the delivery and activities.

Frances Watt
Sing Up Vocal Force Programme Manager
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