

Holding Our Breath

The Impact of COVID on Grassroots Singing in Lancashire

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INTRODUCTION

Singing groups are a vital part of Lancashire’s cultural scene. They are a popular leisure activity and they have a real impact on community wellbeing. Across the county there is a rich tradition of grassroots vocal music making and well supported work with young people through initiatives like the Music Education Hubs.

But like everything, the pandemic has had a profound effect on choirs, not least on their ability to meet and rehearse, but also how they work and on their membership numbers. Some groups have struggled to maintain membership and momentum through the challenges of COVID. It has been a strange change from singing being something many take part in to benefit their health, to it being seen as a potential risk.

It is as if we have been holding our breath.

The background to this research was the outreach work with singing groups by Encounter Voices, as part of the Lancashire Encounter Festival. I had many conversations with Musical Directors, choir committee leaders, and singers where again and again the impact of COVID was mentioned – organisationally, musically, financially and not least emotionally. I wanted to delve deeper in to these experiences and get a clearer picture of where we are now. The aim with the survey “Holding Our Breath” and this report is to assess the impact and to look at how we can support and advocate for a safe, inclusive and thriving future for vocal music in Lancashire.

Time to exhale...

Loz Kaye – Director, Encounter Voices

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We ran the “Holding Our Breath” survey through June to August 2022, asking Lancashire community / non-professional / education choirs, choruses and singing groups to assess how COVID has impacted them.

Key Survey Findings:

- Of the majority of groups responding, just over three quarters, have between 11 and 40 members meeting regularly. The core size of choirs has been key in resilience.
- The most immediately obvious long lasting effect of the pandemic on community singing in Lancashire is on retention and recruitment of members for many groups. Over 80% of respondents said that some members had stopped taking part due to the pandemic.
- The overwhelming majority of singing groups responding, over 90%, were looking to recruit.
- The most concerning result of the survey is that nearly a third of groups were worried about their viability if they were not successful in recruiting new members.
- At the time of the survey, nearly half of groups said they had members who still feel unable to take part physically (eg shielding) but want to continue.
- While groups were not able to meet during the pandemic, many used digital tools to keep the group going during lockdowns. Over half used digital means to socialise together, and just under half used online tools to keep rehearsing.
- Disruption of community singing due to COVID has continued post July 2021. The majority of respondents reported having to cancel rehearsals from July 2021 onwards. Also events have been affected, a significant minority reported having to cancel events such as concerts since July 2021.
- At the time of the survey, three COVID mitigation measures were still being followed by over half of respondents; only 18% said they were not using any specific mitigation.



- Groups reported that financial stability was a concern due to the pandemic, and for some was also clearly a question of long term viability.

Key Recommendations:

- Create leadership to bring opportunities for community singing together by designating Lancashire as a “County of Song”, building on the “Lancashire Choir of the Year Competition”.
- Support recruitment for community singing groups through initiatives such as a “Recruitment Toolkit”, connecting the work in Music Education Hubs with adult singing groups, developing approaches to inclusion and diversity as a way to broaden appeal and the pool of potential participants.
- Establish a COVID mitigation support fund to benefit community singing groups in Lancashire. This should be both for ongoing and previous expenditure.
- Carry out a mapping exercise of the current community singing offer across the county to make opportunities visible, with a plan for updating.
- Create an ongoing active community singing outreach role, connecting community singing groups to networks and potential support, facilitating informal networking.
- Encourage cross county working for the three Music Education Hubs that cover the area (Blackpool MEH, Lancashire MEH and Bolton Music Service with its responsibility for Blackburn) to further develop singing strategies and performance opportunities.
- Provide support, advice and inspiration available for those wishing and needing to explore change in musical delivery to address the challenges of the pandemic.



2 CONTEXT

COVID and Community Singing in England

The period from March 2020 to July 2021 was a time of unprecedented upheaval for community singing in England, as in the country as a whole.

This is a short summary of a few key relevant events during this time:

16th March 2020: The Prime Minister says “Now is the time for everyone to stop non-essential contact and travel”. This prompts reviews of practice in arts organisations.

23rd March 2020: The PM announces the first lockdown in the UK. People are required to stay at home, gatherings of more than 2 in public are prohibited by law. Certain businesses and venues are closed, including theatres, community centres, libraries and youth centres. Clinically vulnerable people are instructed to minimise contact with others outside their household.

March 2020: Reports of singing specifically as a COVID “superspreader” activity circulate. For example, about a performance by the Amsterdam Mixed Choir - “... *there was a successful performance of Bach’s smaller passion with about a thousand audience members in the hall. But that one performance, five days before Covid-19 had to close concert halls, had disastrous consequences. Of the 130 choir members, 102 fell ill around and after this performance, some seriously.*”

May 2020: The Association of British Choral Directors publishes a research paper on the impact of the COVID 19 virus on choral activity in the UK. The conclusion begins: “*The weight of scientific evidence warrants no conclusion other than that at the present time choral singing in enclosed spaces must be considered a high-risk activity.*”

June 2020: Easing of restrictions through the month.

July 2020: Local lockdowns start coming in to force, Leicester being the first, with Lancashire following, for instance in Blackburn with Darwen.



14th September 2020: "Rule of six" announced, indoor and outdoor gatherings above six banned in England.

9th November 2020: Second national lockdown comes in to force in England.

6th January 2021: Third national lockdown in England.

8th March 2021: Easings of restrictions begin, including recreation in outdoor public spaces between two people, but stay at home order remains in place.

17th May 2021: Significant easings of restrictions. However, at the last minute the guidelines outline that amateur choirs in England can only gather in groups of six people indoors and 30 outdoors. This is at odds with other large-scale gatherings being allowed, and creates a sense of resentment which persists. The Association of British Choral Directors call the last-minute change "disappointing... unreasonable and unworkable".

17th July 2021: Most legal limits on social contact are removed in England, and the final closed sectors of the economy are reopened.



3 SURVEY RESULTS

3.1 The Remit of “Holding Our Breath”

We ran the “Holding Our Breath” survey through June to August 2022, asking Lancashire community / non-professional / education choirs, choruses and singing groups to assess how COVID has impacted them. It was emphasised it was not necessary to be a ‘formal’ choir, and that other vocal styles like rap and beatbox could be included.

The survey was designed with ten questions covering size of group, recruitment and retention, types of disruption due to COVID and which local authority area the group is based in.

There was also space for respondents to write more about their experiences, which the majority took up. These narrative responses are used to tell the story of the results below in verbatim ***bold italic*** quotes. They are not attributed to the individual group, mainly as many chose to be candid and passionate about challenges faced. What should be said is that for group leaders and members reading this report – it makes clear that challenges were faced by all.

3.2 Group Size and Type

A majority of groups responding, (**75.5%**) have between 11 and 40 members meeting regularly. Of these, 20% have 11-20 meeting, 33.3% 21-30, and 22.2% 31-40. Only a smaller minority (**13.3%**) have really large groups of 50 and above: 51-75 meeting 8.9%, 76-100 2.2%, 101+ 2.2%. This reflects quite a typical situation in community singing with groups settling at a large enough number to work musically, while still small enough to feel social.

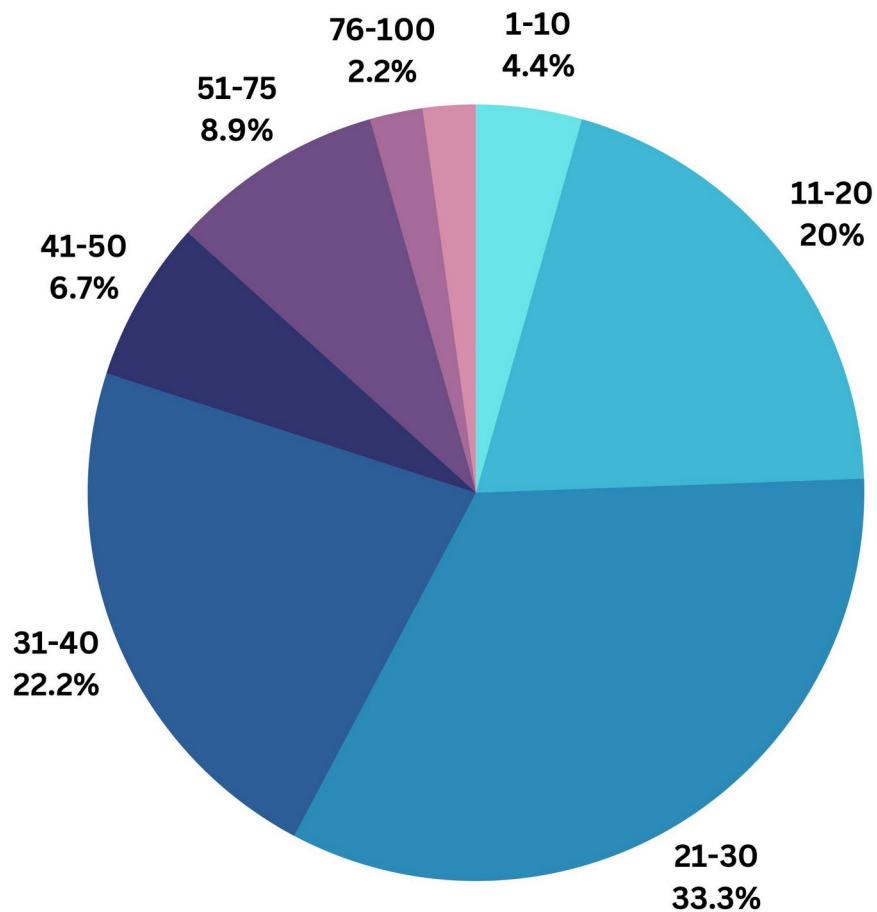
The issue of the core size of the group has become key through the pandemic in relation to the severity of impact. As one respondent put it:

“Across all my three choirs, numbers have settled between 30 and 40 but the really critical number is 40 both financially and psychologically.”



If numbers start to dwindle it can especially demotivate less confident singers who rely on others to help boost the sound of the group or hold on to harmony parts. This in turn can have a further knock on effect on loss of numbers.

How many people regularly meet in your group?



There is a breadth of music making represented in the responses, especially: rock, classical, musicals, gospel, pop, glee. There are some obvious absences too, with no groups focusing on vocal traditions reflecting Lancashire’s diversity. While most groups see their immediate location as their community, a number are for specific types of participants, for example: young people,



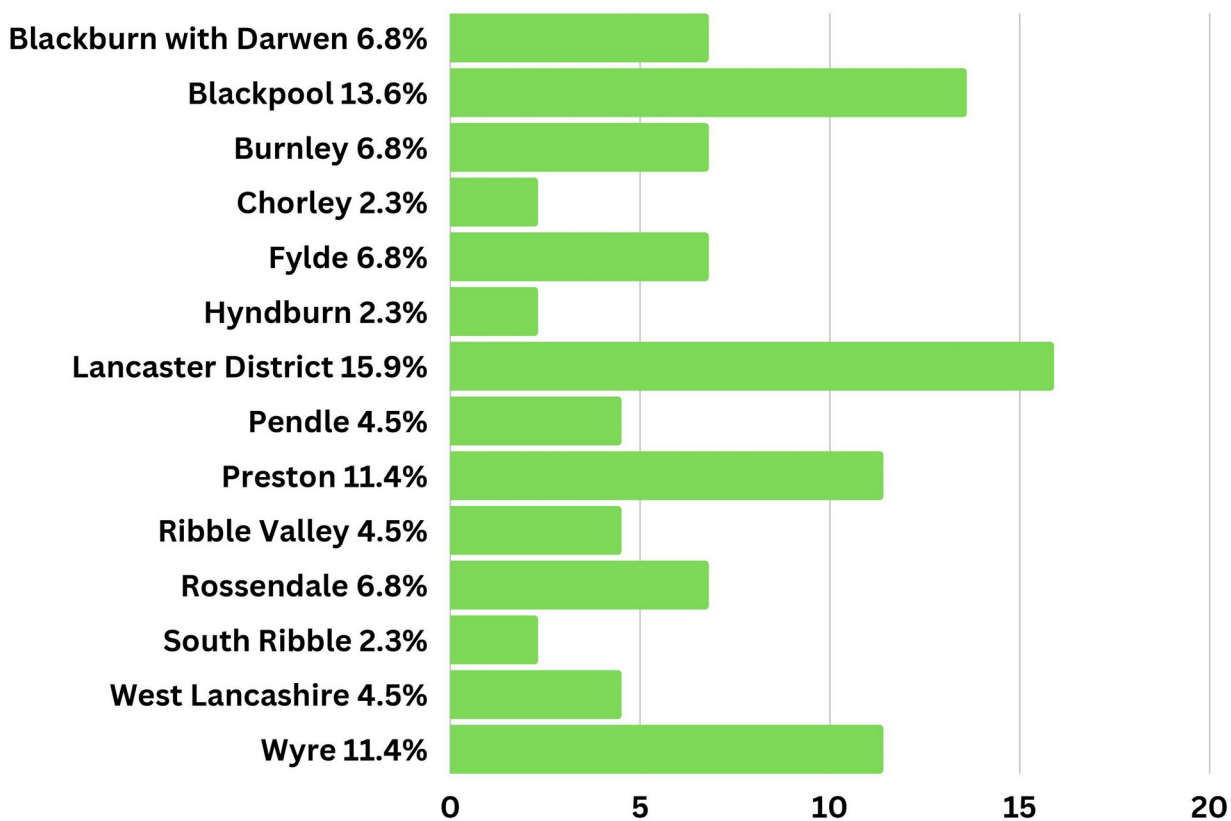
3 Survey Results

veterans, people with lung health conditions, older people.

The groups identify themselves / their activity in a number of ways, as : “singers”, “choir”, “people’s choir”, “community choir”, “chorus”, “choral society”, “male voice choir”, “ladies choir” even (perhaps most charming and self deprecating!) “warblers”. The language around amateur / community singing / participatory arts can be quite fraught, so it is interesting to see that many groups make choices about their names which are clearly invitations to inclusion and openness.

The survey responses covered all twelve Lancashire county local authority areas and both the Unitarity Authorities Blackpool, and Blackburn with Darwen. There is a representative geographic spread, with urban, rural and coastal groups. This was helped with the support of Arts Lancashire and the Lancashire Cultural Network. Particular focused outreach was needed to make sure there were responses from Rossendale, Pendle and West Lancashire.

Which Lancashire local authority area do you meet in?



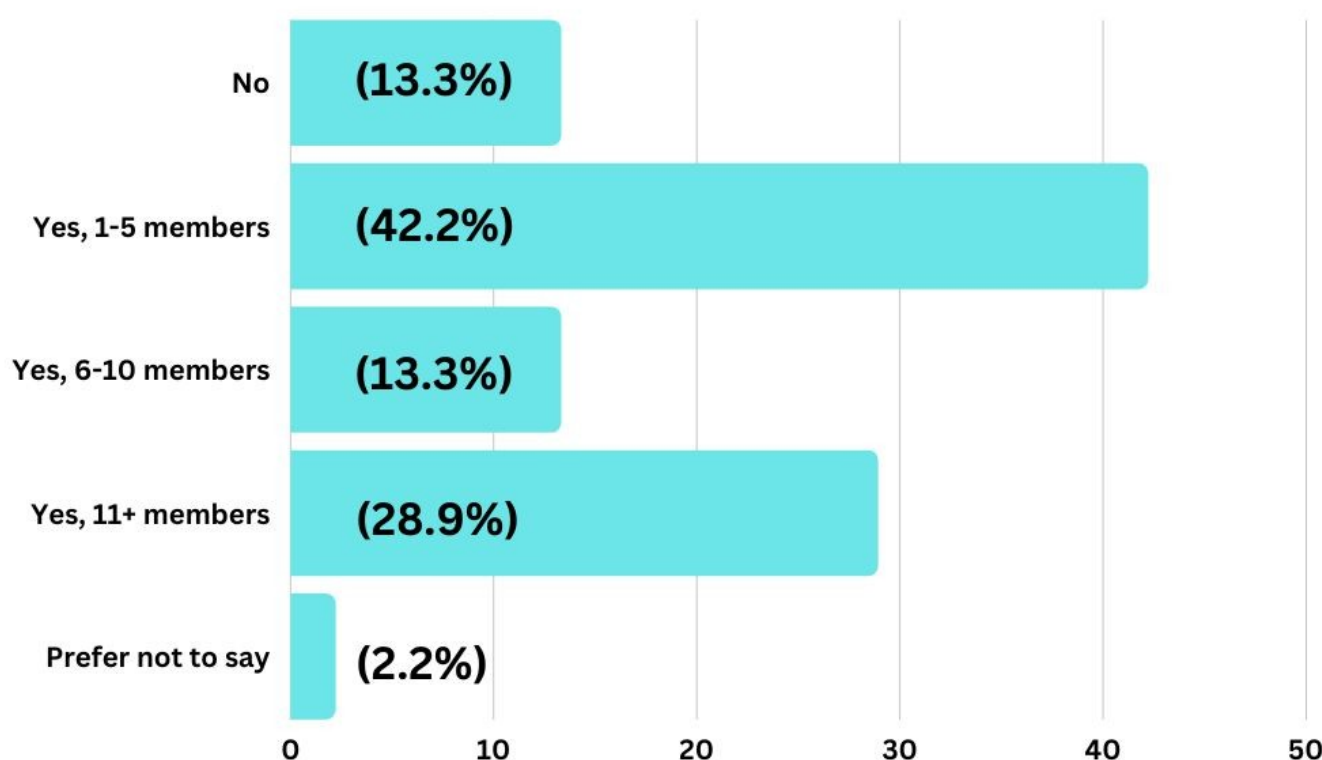
3.3 Retention and recruitment

The most immediately obvious long lasting effect of the pandemic on community singing in Lancashire is on retention and recruitment of members for many groups. Disruption of routine, ill health, the change in singing experience, loss of musical consistency have all taken their toll.

84.4% of respondents said that some members had stopped taking part due to the pandemic, with **28.9%** of them losing over 11 members. Thankfully, the most usual loss was 1-5 members at **42.2%**. But taken in the context of most groups being between 11-40 members, even for a few participants to stop coming, the effect can be significant. One respondent reported:

“It is not really viable but will persevere next term with an energetic recruitment drive and see if we can resurrect the group.”

Have some members stopped taking part due to the pandemic?



3 Survey Results

Even if the group is still relatively large, choirs that work with four part singing and classical music can be particularly weakened if one section of the chorus is affected. One group reported losses of tenors and basses making the choir **“vulnerable”**, another the soprano section being lost.

A specific retention issue that a number of choirs reported was that because they have an older demographic, COVID had a noticeable effect:

“Our numbers suffered greatly as we are mainly 2 groups of elderly folk...”

“Our problem is that we do not have younger members joining us to replace the inevitable loss through age and ill health.”

For some the emotional burden of the last years took its toll:

“Initially some people were overwhelmed when we re-started rehearsals and didn't come back.”

The overwhelming majority of singing groups responding were looking to recruit- **93.3%** in all. This would not have been surprising pre-pandemic, but impacts outlined in responses have added a new sense of urgency. The most concerning result of the survey is that **28.9%** of groups were worried about their viability should they be unsuccessful in recruiting new members.

Are you currently looking to recruit more members?

No, we are happy with the size of our group: 6.7%



Yes, it would be good, but we have enough to make music as we want: 64.4%



Yes, we are concerned about our viability: 28.9%



If nearly a third of choirs across the county are indeed under serious threat, this would be a major cultural loss, and the disappearance of opportunity for many.

COVID has also added barriers to recruitment that were continuing at the time of the survey. These barriers are both practical and emotional:

“Another major concern despite active promotion is no recruitment of new members over this choir 21/22 season. Again I feel partly due to very little concert work and possibly fear of singing with a group of people...”

While the survey asked about recruitment and retention of groups members, respondents also mentioned that the retention of Musical Directors is also an issue:

“Choirs are struggling to recruit and retain good Directors and especially accompanists...”

2020/21 has been hard on Musical Directors and ongoing difficulties with rehearsals can be very demotivating:

(our) “Original leader felt burned out and retired”

In particular, ongoing participation for people with ill-health and disabilities has been hit. Disability Arts groups have been clear that July 2021 was not any kind of “freedom day” for people they work with. At the time of the survey, nearly half- **46.7%** of groups said they had members who still feel unable to take part physically (eg shielding) but want to continue. Of course it is not just the health of members but their whole family or social group that’s relevant:

“Some members have now left because either they or a relative in their house is still shielding and they cannot commit. “

Lancashire has a number of singing groups with an explicit health focus and connection to social prescribing. These can play a vital role in offering appropriate opportunities to those with health concerns. But they also continue to face challenges:

“There are definitely some new referrals that haven’t made it along at all due to anxiety about Covid generally”

It is worth saying that the picture is not all bad, particularly for groups that have had a clear social and well-being purpose in response to the pandemic:

“Our group was formed after lockdown to encourage people to get out and meet new people and to sing and socialise safely. The group has grown hugely over the last year...”

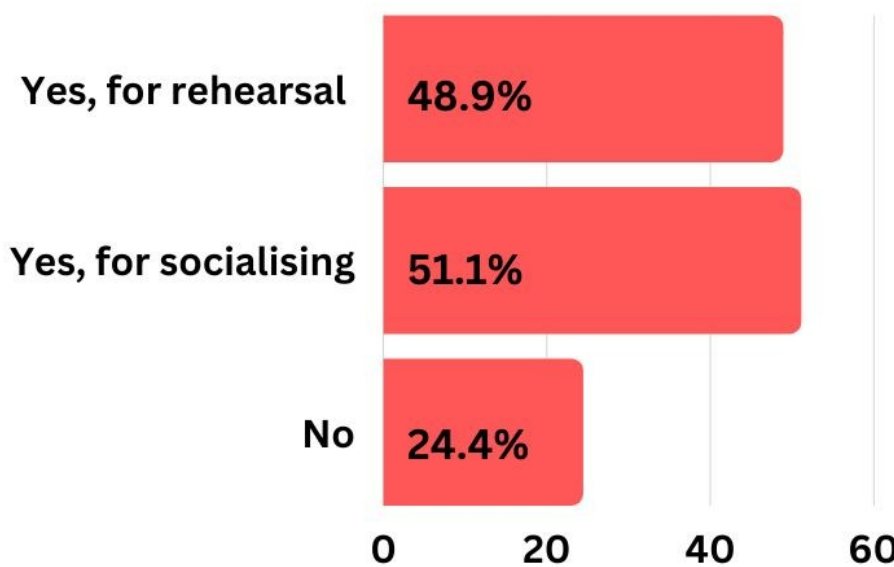
This does form the basis for some hope and action.



3.4 Technology

While groups were not able to meet during the pandemic, many used digital tools to keep the group going during lockdowns. There was a significant willingness to take advantage of technology, with fewer than a quarter saying they did not use any online tools. Over half used digital means to socialise together, and just under half used online tools to keep rehearsing.

Did you use online tools (eg Zoom) to keep the group going during lockdown? - as many as apply



Other individual responses were "we also had some coaching", "we created virtual videos", "email", "tutorials, going through parts", "we tried but not many joined".

The reported experiences of digital interaction vary widely, with the video conferencing tool Zoom often mentioned:

"We found that Zoom didn't work for us so never tried Zoom rehearsals."

"We offered regular Zoom sessions (mainly social) but less than 10% of our members could access."



“We were surprised how well Zoom sessions worked, with many attempts, to encourage people to sing at home and stay connected during lockdown.”

The varying responses do reflect the varying types of music making and group demographics. The difficulty of producing a musically satisfying and/or appropriate digital offer was a theme for Musical Directors, for example:

“We sing non accompanied in harmony and you can’t recreate that on zoom”

“I didn’t do online rehearsals because of difficulty with lag in audio.”

Clearly, tools like Zoom do not replicate the key physical and aural experience of group singing. But some found they were able to continue to develop musically usefully, even addressing methods of rehearsal that had not been possible before, for example:

“...teaching our choir in voice groups via zoom - something we never did live.”

The most positive aspect reported of digital engagement by groups was the ability to stay in touch, to maintain the sense the choir was still present and combat the isolation that so many felt in 2020/21:

“...the weekly connection was a lifeline.”

Groups who were able to use digital tools in this way found themselves on a surer footing coming back to physical rehearsals again.



Figure 1: Lancashire Encounter Choir. Photography: Michael Porter



3.5 COVID Disruption

The period of lockdown restrictions was very obviously a disruption for community singing between March 2020 and July 2021. But the disruption has continued from July 2021 while responsible caution has persisted and many have been ill due to COVID infection since.

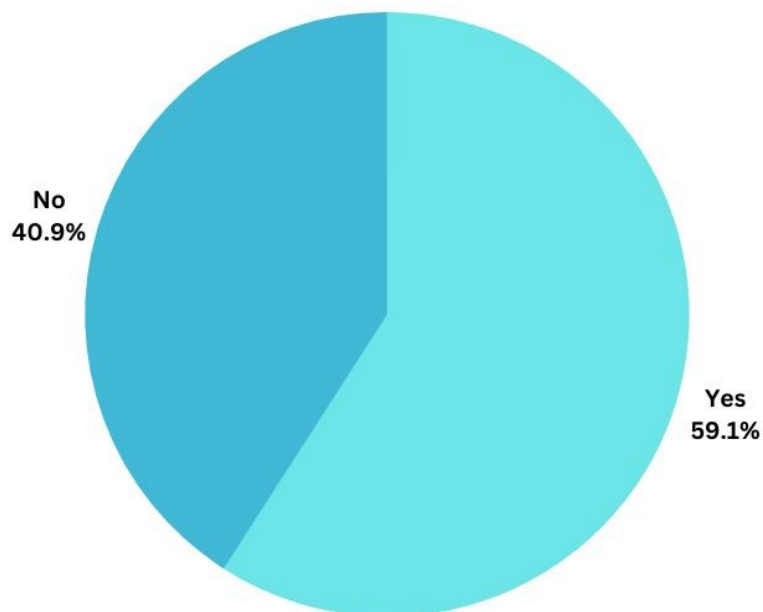
The majority of respondents (**59.1%**) reported having to cancel rehearsals from July 2021 onwards. Any rehearsal cancellation impacts preparation for events, loses momentum and can further worsen participant retention.

Even if rehearsals are not cancelled, ongoing illness can impact musical quality and experience:

“Rehearsals have been difficult because of absences.”

“We also find a lot of absenteeism spoils rehearsals”

Have you had to cancel rehearsals because of COVID at any point from July 2021 onwards?



Also events have been affected, a significant minority (**47.7%**) reported having to cancel events such as concerts since July 2021. This can have a heavy impact on choirs, from loss of income, loss of recruitment opportunities, loss of morale.

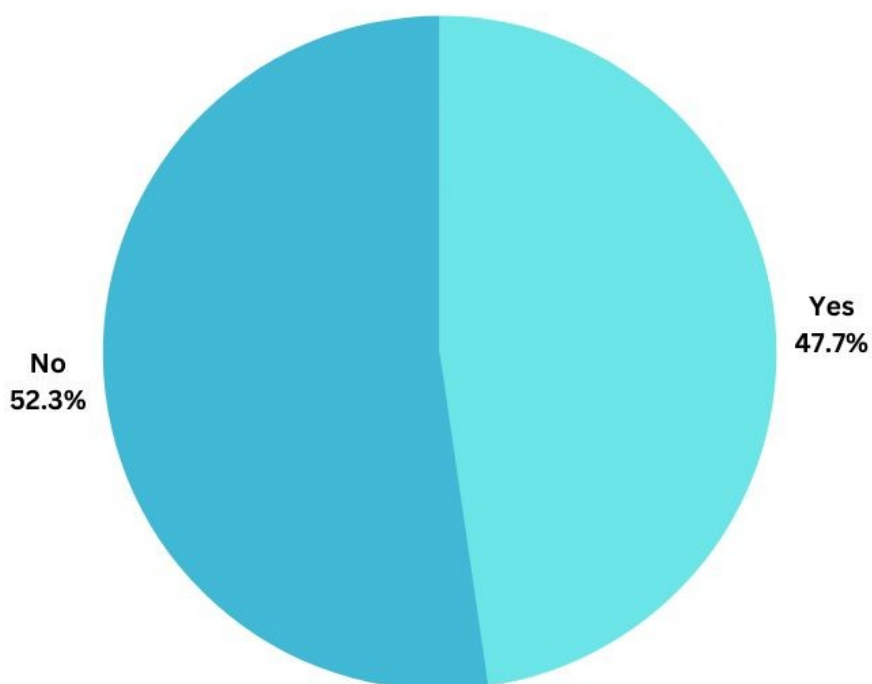
That events have been affected on this scale represents a major adverse environment for singing in the county, and Lancashire's cultural life.

Musically, the break of in person work in 2020/21 had noticeable vocal effects:

“We have had to work hard through increased focussed warm-ups to regain our voices after 2 years of no singing -this mainly with the sopranos.”

“The COVID situation has impacted people's general confidence about singing, and it's taken us longer to get ready to put on a performance post-pandemic.”

Have you had to cancel events (eg concert) because of COVID at any point from July 2021?



3 Survey Results

And more generally the gap has filtered through to retention and interest:

“...many have just got out of the habit” (of singing)

Some reported that the disruption has changed audience perception and the ability to put on viable events successfully:

“There is some reluctance amongst the public to attend big gatherings which affects the size of the audience we can attract.”

Less tangibly than lost rehearsals and performances, there is a sense for many of lost progression and concern for the future:

“The break caused a loss of continuity and momentum and we are gradually rebuilding our organisation to support our singing activities.”

“We fear a resurgence of COVID will disrupt our plans for the autumn / winter and this inhibits our ability to commit to more ambitious programmes.”

3.6 Ongoing COVID mitigation

Throughout the pandemic singing groups took their role in protecting the health of participants, and public health broadly, very seriously. This was even in the face of often poor and confused communication by government, and the changing guidance of lockdowns that impacted the North West. For small independent groups this meant taking on responsibilities that were quite unlike anything that they had experienced before. Some did have the support of umbrella organisations or an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation:

“We used the covid platform from Making Music to create a covid policy and a standard. We had a covid champion responsible for maintaining and changing the above in line with changes and government direction.”

Of course, external support was not the case for every group, who continued to navigate a complex changing situation. At the time of the survey, three COVID mitigation measures were still being followed by over half of respondents:

- Increased ventilation
- Provision of hand sanitiser
- Increased spacing between participants



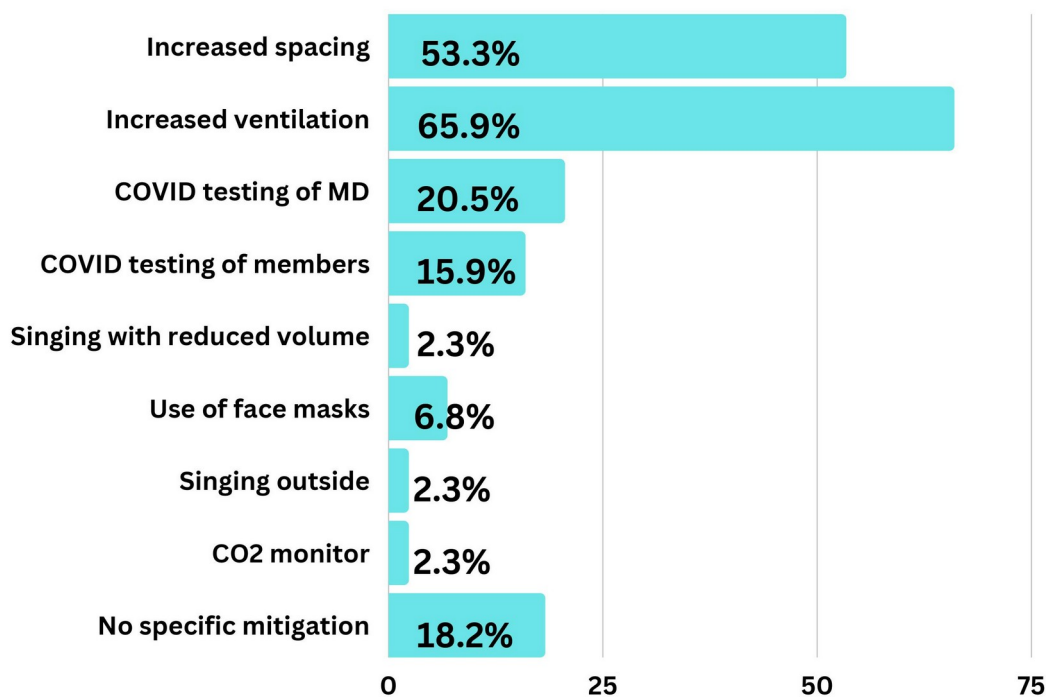
A significant minority reported the use of COVID testing, even post charging for tests being introduced. 20.5% reported regular testing of the Musical Director, 15.9% regularly testing participants.

Mitigations that have a really obvious negative impact on singing were only carried out by a few, 6.8% using face masks, 2.3% reporting singing with reduced volume. To a certain extent, most mitigations impact the experience for participants and music making:

“Greater spacing when we sing means it is harder to support each other when singing in harmony.”

Only 18.2% said they were not using any specific mitigation, over a year since the July 2021 removal of restrictions. While COVID has receded from the headlines, it remains an ongoing practical and musical issue for 81.8% of respondents.

Are you still using COVID mitigation? - groups chose as many as apply:



3.7 Financial Impact

The survey did not explicitly ask for data on the financial impacts of COVID, not least as it could have been seen to be unhelpfully intrusive. But finance was a recurring theme in the narrative responses, and for some was also clearly a question of long term viability.

Most choirs work with comparatively small budgets with some form of subscription model. Their independence and often low and predictable outgoings make singing groups quite resilient. But for groups unable to draw on the kind of COVID support larger cultural groups have had, the result of this unprecedented shock is clear:

“The pandemic has had a substantial impact on our finances because we’ve lost income from membership subscriptions and concert revenues...”

“We also struggled with finances. We continued paying our insurance but obviously had no income. It is taking a while to build up again.”

Added costs for groups are also implicit in the responses regarding ongoing COVID mitigation. The continued use of sanitiser, facemasks, testing and CO2 monitors by some require extra outlay, whether that is borne by the group or individually. Even if these measures aren’t currently used by groups, many will have historic expenditure which will have hit any reserves.

This has left groups having to make significant choices which can affect the accessibility of singing opportunities:

“... from a financial perspective it has had a major impact and subscriptions have had to be increased to cover the choir running costs.

Some have had funds they can draw on:

“Financially it has been tough but the choir had reserves for these type of things”

But clearly this will not be the case for all. Some respondents saw the outlook explicitly connected to the growing “cost of living” crisis:

“Even paying subs is more of a burden than ever and attending concerts / events is not now a priority for many.”



4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The survey results highlight a range of impacts on recruitment and retention, financial resilience, musical consistency and development, and emotional wellbeing for grassroots singing in Lancashire. For many groups, the need to react is pressing. The recommendations seek to address these impacts, and to create a supportive context to act to preserve the range of community singing offers in the county.

4.1 County of Song

The current breadth of community singing in Lancashire is a real strength. What is needed is leadership and to bring initiatives and opportunities together. This could be through a focus of designating Lancashire as a “County of Song”. It would build on the already existing Lancashire Choir of the Year Competition. The “County of Song” would be a hook for a public media and publicity campaign on the benefits of song and the opportunities in local areas.

As part of this initiative, there should be research in to how Choir of the Year could develop and potential replacements for activity like the Clitheroe Choir Festival that has been paused due to the pandemic. Local groups could be connected to a higher profile through the “County of Song” to aid in recruitment and publicising performances.



4.2 Recruitment Support

The impact on membership numbers is a key area to address, as connecting groups to new members will also help musical and financial concerns. The broader cultural scene in Lancashire could usefully help in this area.

Recommendations:

- The creation of a “Recruitment Toolkit”, with resources, ideas and signposting to relevant local support for singing groups.
- Connecting the work in Music Education Hubs to adult singing groups. A lack of younger participants was explicitly picked up on in the survey. Initiatives could include pairing of a younger choir with an appropriate local group. Post 18-25 progression in music should also emphasise ongoing connection to singing for health, well-being, and social reasons, not just setting out industry career routes.
- Groups should be able to access relevant marketing support, from leaflet and poster design and production to online presence building.
- Cultural networks should include singing group recruitment calls in their communications.
- Assistance should be given to groups to develop their own approaches to inclusion and diversity as a way to broaden appeal and the pool of potential participants.



4.3 COVID mitigation support fund

To address the direct financial impact of the pandemic, a COVID mitigation support fund should be established to benefit community singing groups in Lancashire. This would be to cover (some) specific direct costs associated with COVID mitigation such as provision of facemasks / sanitiser, testing for Musical Directors and/ or members, CO2 monitors or similar.

- This should be both for ongoing and previous expenditure. It is more unusual to fund historic costs, but this is to benefit groups who have not previously been able to access COVID support funding.
- The scope should be Lancashire wide (including the 2 unitary authorities), but with a priority for areas of low investment : Fylde, South Ribble and West Lancashire. That priority should include targeted outreach to the three authority areas to make groups aware of the opportunity.
- Groups with ongoing costs to facilitate access for people with health conditions and disabled people should also be a priority.
- The grant amounts should be small (£100-200) to be able to benefit as wide a number of groups as possible.
- The application process should be as 'light touch' as possible to allow for access.



4.4 Supporting Networks and Outreach for Community Singing

Increased connection of the independent community singing scene to broader cultural networks would help build its ability to access financial, musical and peer to peer emotional support. From the other side, Lancashire's arts world should be more active in involving, supporting and promoting existing grassroots singing.

Recommendations:

- There should be a mapping exercise of the current community singing offer across the county to make opportunities visible, with a plan for updating. This should make use of existing tools for ease of creation.
- There should be an ongoing active outreach role, that connects community singing groups to networks and potential support, and who can facilitate more informal networking, particularly for Musical Directors and choir committee leaders. This role could also signpost to performance opportunities, to help groups' profile and finances, as well as coordinating the implementation of this report's recommendations.
- Groups should be helped to make use of existing cultural networks, such as the Lancashire Cultural Network and regional groups.
- Local Authorities and other bodies developing and carrying out cultural strategies should connect community singing groups to the process for input.
- Festivals and other larger organisations, when including singing work in programming, should take an approach of planning how they can benefit existing groups and the Lancashire singing ecosystem.
- Encourage cross county working for the three Music Education Hubs that cover the area (Blackpool MEH, Lancashire MEH and Bolton Music Service with its responsibility for Blackburn) to further develop singing strategies and performance opportunities.
- Carry out specific targeted outreach to participants who have ill health and disabilities to assess ongoing barriers to taking part in singing should be carried out with disability arts groups.



4.5 Support for Innovation in Singing Practice

The challenges faced by groups included musical ones, and how changes in membership have affected traditional ways of working – such as the classical separation of choirs into Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass. There should be support, advice and inspiration available for those wishing and needing to explore change in musical delivery.

Recommendations:

- Establish an ongoing workshop programme exploring innovation in rehearsal techniques and ways to work with community singing groups, responding to needs set out by choirs and Musical Directors in Lancashire.
- Creating material from this workshop programme, both in terms of sharing practice and musical material.
- Sharing new practice in the use of technology in community singing, such as for rehearsal, streaming, creating videos, working with backing tracks and developing recording technique. This should be in partnership with tech specialists and Lancashire's digital industry.
- Give targeted support for singing initiatives that reflect the broader diversity of Lancashire's residents in their musical heritage and practice.



5 CONCLUSION

It's clear that this report highlights a lot of negative impacts and experiences, words like **“very challenging”** and **“nightmare”** recurred in the feedback from groups. It is important to underline that because the external shock has been so large, the threat to community singing in Lancashire is very real. And because the shock was external the recommendations do emphasise external help, however much one of the great strengths of singing groups in Lancashire is their independence.

Even so, what does shine through is a great resilience and passion for singing itself. That the experience of the pandemic was: **“Difficult, but we are a bit like a family, so survived.”**

The return to in person rehearsals has been: **“emotional and wonderful as we all sang together...”**.

The benefits of singing have been much discussed and researched, but the experience of the pandemic has made them much clearer, and the need for them keener: **“Being able to sing together again has... lifted us up and improved our mental well being.”**

Indeed these benefits have been driving renewed interest in group singing. One respondent who works with young people described this interest boosting recruitment and increased diversity:

“These new Young People come from a wider range of backgrounds and abilities which has made music making, back in the room, more tricky and of a different quality. But it has also made the social and personal benefits of being in the group much more pronounced to the participants.”

The experience of COVID will need new ways of working and approaches, that can leave the overall scene stronger.

A final recommendation might well be to make sure that we acknowledge what has taken place, not pretend that we are ‘back to normal’ and carrying on in the same place. We continue in a place of thoughtfulness, but also shared joy:

“When we first sang in 4 part harmony again, members were in tears because they'd missed it so much, it's a joy to be back together and performing again...”

We must do what we can as a singing scene and a wider cultural ecosystem in Lancashire to make sure that all who want to can continue to share in that joy of singing together.



ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

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About Encounter Voices



Encounter Voices celebrates the power and joy of Lancashire voices. We host performances, workshops and support grassroots singing in the county. Projects for 2022 include “Dorette: Singer, Dancer, Motion Capture” with musical theatre group leo & hyde, and promoting the community choir for “100 Stories High” by Imitating the Dog. Supported by Preston Council and Lancashire Encounter Festival.

About the Author

Loz Kaye:



Loz Kaye is a Musical Director, choir leader, composer, educator and consultant. He is currently Director of Encounter Voices, Musical Director of Liverpool Rainbow Chorus and Hope Mill Community Choir and Director of Sound at Separate Doors theatre company. He has taught widely including at GITIS Scandinavia in Denmark, LIPA and Salford University. He is passionate about inclusion in the arts, his work with LGBTQ+ choir Manchester Proud Chorus was recognised for this including a National Diversity Awards nomination. He has a long association with culture in Lancashire, having worked for Horse + Bamboo, More Music and the Lancashire 2025 City of Culture bid. He is currently a trustee of The Gregson Centre in Lancaster.