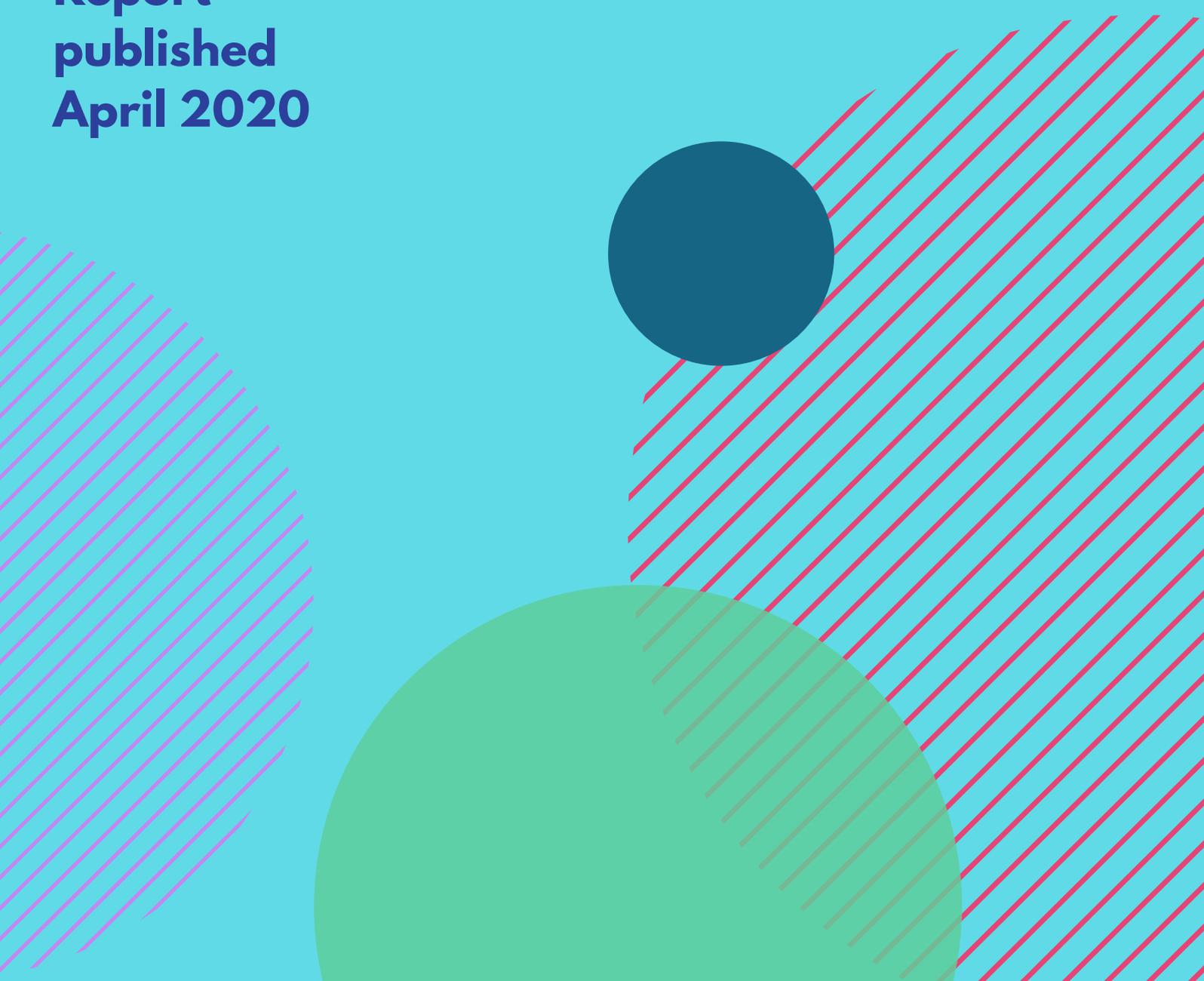


# SING INSIDE



## HMP HUNTERCOMBE DECEMBER 2019

Report  
published  
April 2020



# ABOUT THE PROJECT

**Sing Inside delivers group singing workshops in prisons, connecting volunteers drawn from the local community with nearby prisons. Our workshops use musical learning to build confidence, break down social stigma and create and strengthen communities.**

**Sing Inside facilitates humanising engagement between people. We believe group singing has a unique power to build trust and understanding of one another, challenge stereotypes and build social skills.**

**We work with several local committees across England who recruit volunteers from their area and run visits in prisons close by. Sing Inside established a branch in Oxford since late 2018, when a group of volunteers first visited HMP Woodhill. Since then, the committee has expanded to visit HMP Bullingdon, HMP Long Lartin and HMP Huntercombe.**

## **This project aimed to:**

- **Increase residents' self-confidence**
- **Develop singing and musical skills**
- **Encourage leadership qualities in volunteers**
- **Break down social barriers and build teamwork skills**
- **Create a positive, uplifting musical community**

**The four-day workshop was a project run in collaboration with the Faculty of Music at Oxford University, as a placement opportunity for second-year music students studying the Music in the Community module. We are incredibly grateful to the university for funding this project.**

# WHAT DID IT INVOLVE?

9  
December



12  
December

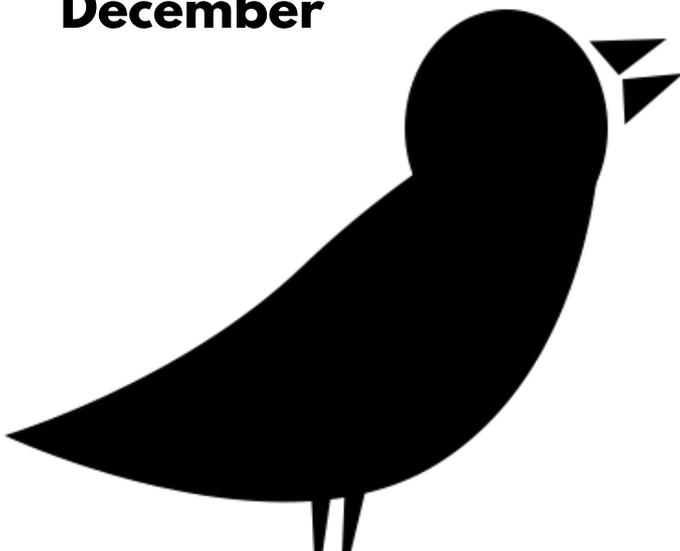
60 minute  
performance

9  
volunteers

18 prison  
residents

20 hours  
workshop  
time

4  
days



The group of volunteers and residents rehearsed together in the chapel at HMP Huntercombe, in preparation for a final performance which 60 prison residents plus staff attended. Sing Inside is grateful to all the staff at HMP Huntercombe for their work facilitating the project.

# DAY 1

**Sing Inside works to break down social barriers through musical collaboration. A key part of that process social interaction, and making time to get to know one another.**

**Both the residents and volunteers were very nervous on the first day. Volunteer leaders worked through simple rounds, games and group exercises to build confidence and trust, before starting to learn some repertoire.**

**The session finished with a brainstorm session on how to end Jingle Bell Rock. By this point, residents were contributing ideas freely and volunteers making plans to pull them together.**

**"I feel great, it's been so magical and fabulous, I could do it over and over again."**

**Resident, HMP  
Huntercombe**

# DAY 2

Having overcome initial nervousness and knowing each other better, the full group progressed onto work on singing in harmony.

Volunteers anticipated that striking a balance to engage individuals of all levels of musical ability would be challenging. The leaders worked with smaller groups, cementing melodies for those less confident about singing in harmony and building additional parts for those with more experience.

"The week was super great. Working together as a group was a really positive experience. I feel a lot more confidence in singing and opening up in general. The week has brought a smile to my face I'll be keeping for months."

Resident, HMP  
Huntercombe

One of the residents who felt less confident singing offered to bring some original poetry, and volunteered to write a rap for the final concert. The rest of the group decided to compose some backing vocals to accompany the rap and include the whole team.

# DAY 3

During the final workshop sessions volunteer leaders introduced some higher level vocal techniques, working on supporting higher notes by controlling the breath. This helped the singers to grasp harmonies in more challenging registers.

The group split into smaller sections and learnt their parts separately. This helped develop their confidence in their musicality and ability to sing in harmony, and the group mastered White Christmas in 3 parts, and Stand by Me in 4 parts.



"The four days we spent at Huntercombe will, undoubtedly, stick with me for the rest of my life."



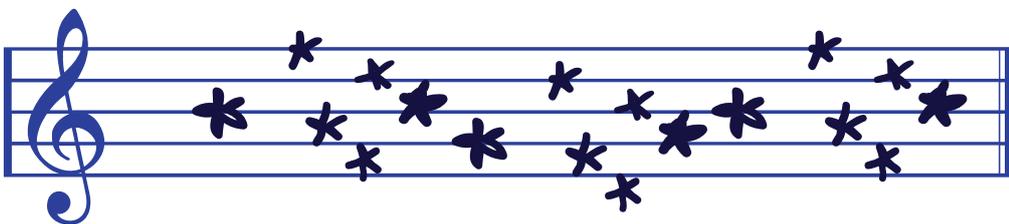
Sing Inside volunteer



## DAY 4: CONCERT DAY

The group spent the morning improving sung chorus parts to a rap written by a resident on the project and rehearsing together.

60 prison residents attended the performance, plus staff. For many residents, performing to their peers sparked intense nervousness. It was particularly inspiring to see them overcome this fear, and find confidence in performing as part of a team.



Sing Inside measures its impact through feedback forms. Participants self-select their confidence in singing before and after the workshop. We track the progress of participants through this data.

## WHAT WENT WELL?

### BEFORE THE PROJECT

**3 out of 18**  
residents felt  
'nervous'

**7 out of 18**  
residents felt  
'okay', and 0  
selected  
'confident'

**2 out of 18**  
residents felt  
'very confident'

### AFTER THE PROJECT

**0 out of 18**  
residents felt  
'nervous'

**9 out of 18**  
residents felt  
'confident', and  
0 selected 'okay'

**4 out of 18**  
residents felt  
'very confident'

**14 out of 18**  
valued 'learning  
musical and  
singing skills'



**12 out of 18**  
valued 'meeting  
new people'

**12 out of 18**  
valued 'trying  
something  
different'

**7 out of 18**  
valued 'time  
away from my  
wing or cell'

**We also ask  
participants to select  
what they valued about  
the project. We identify  
categories based on  
frequently used terms in  
qualitative feedback.**

**10 out of 18**  
valued 'feeling  
more positive and  
improving my  
mood'

# OBSERVATIONS

Huntercombe is a foreign national prison, and English is not the first language of many of the residents. This project was particularly rich due to the blend of languages and musical styles influencing the final product.

We saw social groups based on language break down over the week through conversation and music. Growing confidence encouraged people to share music from their cultures. Participants shared their homes and histories through music and storytelling, sharing food and skills.

The personal progress of every single individual we spent time singing and talking with was staggering. The progression from understandable trepidation on the first day to an hour-long concert including residents' own poetry and song with a standing ovation from a 60-strong audience of residents and prison staff speaks volumes for the power that singing and attention can have. We saw residents grasp the opportunity for creativity, emotional openness, and interaction with both residents and volunteers that they otherwise would not have. I have no doubt in saying that everyone involved is all the better for it.

Sing Inside volunteer





**A true example of how music, singing and communication can bring people together. The improvement over the course of the residency both musically and socially was incredible. From nervous unison singing to confident four-part harmony, the group responded so well to the conversations and songs that we learnt together.**

**Taking part in the HMP Huntercombe course was a real eye-opener. While the prison itself was obviously an unfamiliar environment, I could never have predicted how quickly a musical community would form within its walls! The camaraderie between residents and volunteers at the final concert made me certain that we had achieved our mission to make a difference for those in Huntercombe. But I also know this was equalled by the huge impact Huntercombe had on myself and the rest of the volunteer musicians, who now appreciate how hard it is to overestimate the value of community music.**



## **VOLUNTEERS' EXPERIENCE**

# SUMMARY

**This project successfully measured the increase in self-confidence of residents. 0 residents felt nervous at the end of the project and the number of residents feeling 'very confident' doubled. Qualitative feedback also shows that participants 'felt good' after the project, and that the sessions were uplifting.**

**We also achieved our goal of encouraging leadership qualities in volunteers: every volunteer led at least one session or song, and between them created clear timetables for each day to ensure clarity around who was leading the wider group at any given time.**

**Qualitative feedback from both volunteers and residents indicates that the team worked well together, and felt part of an uplifting musical community.**

**Overall, residents and volunteers overcame nerves and challenged pre-judgements to build a confident, accomplished performance as part of a team.**

# WHAT NEXT?

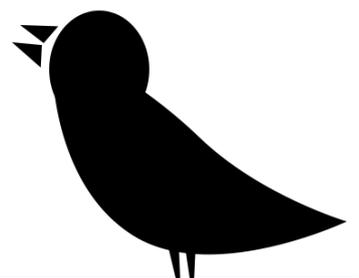
**This is the first report we have published demonstrating our impact - but we know we have work to do to keep improving.**

**We will continue offering placements as part of the Music in the Community module via the University of Oxford Music Faculty, alongside our single-day sessions in prisons across England.**



**Finally, we are developing our impact measurement tools all the time and are crucially exploring how we measure breaking down stigma, stereotype and social barriers. We welcome feedback and suggestions.**

**We are currently developing more nuanced ways of measuring progress in individuals, as well as metrics around musical leadership to track improvement in volunteers.**





**If you have any questions or suggestions arising from this report, please contact Maisie on [maisie@singinside.org](mailto:maisie@singinside.org).**

