**Sing Up Flagships and Sing Up Communties Evaluation Overview**

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Sing Up funded 29 Flagship and Communities programmes to firmly establish high quality singing both inside and outside the classroom and school day through sustainable singing programmes in primary schools. This was complemented by CPD and training for specialist & non-specialist teachers, as well as for community musicians wanting to share their skills and lead singing in schools.

The programmes embodied an inclusive, positive, partnership-working ethos, and achieved much to affect the landscape of primary aged singing in England. The programmes were evaluated by Sing Up independent evaluator Margaret Griffiths. 5 out of the 9 Flagships and 12 out of the 20 Communities were awarded outstanding in quality of provision, reach, range and sustainability of outcomes for schools, children, and newly developed singing leaders and young singing leaders.

Wider focuses for some of these programmes included using singing to enrich the curriculum, SEN and children beyond the mainstream, and transition through early years up to secondary. This resulted in work with clusters of feeder primaries together with their secondary schools, as well as work with early years settings, community groups and clubs.

What makes an outstanding programme?

Where programmes were described as outstanding, most of the following distinctive characteristics applied:

• There was a clear understanding of the national aims and priorities of Sing Up programmes

• The contract with Sing Up was clear and realistic, given resources and timescales

• A team of vocal leaders was recruited, developed, trained and supported to work together in specific ways which delivered the programme to the highest standards

• Vocal leaders had a clear understanding of what was required of them

• Leaders supported the team in achieving consistency, while valuing and encouraging their individual distinctive contributions

• High standards were expected from all involved – and individual practitioners were supported in reaching these

• Negotiations and arrangements with schools and centres were secure both in discussions and in documentation

• Headteachers and heads of centres were well briefed on the purposes of the programmes and on the expectations of their staff and young people

• Programme leaders used initiative and skill in new ways of working, or in reaching new groups of young people

• The programmes were always seen as the stimulus to longer term working

• Networks were built from the beginning to establish ways of sustaining as much of the work as possible when the funding cycle ends

• Leaders had detailed knowledge of the work of individuals and teams; and they continued to learn and to build on this

• There was regular visiting by leaders with feedback to develop range, reach and quality of the programme

• Regular review and feedback were significant features – and enabled the leader to ‘feed forward’ into developments and improvements

• Administration was secure and supportive, as well as ensuring that the programme is going according to plan

• Communications were good and appropriate use was made of personal contact, websites and technologies

• As well as using nationally available websites and resources, the leader and vocal team made their own programme distinctive, often using local history or topical themes to give the programmes their broadest catchment and appeal

• Events and performances – beginning on a small scale and building to large scale and prestigious venues - were an important part of the programmes

• Leaders constantly reviewed and refined programmes in order to give the best series of experiences and opportunities to schools, centres and to their staff team

• Leaders were not afraid to take on new challenges – but they were careful to monitor any risks

• Leaders ensured that the programmes were properly managed so that any negative experiences or activities were avoided, cancelled or reviewed

• Leaders demonstrated the two sets of broad ranging skills required in both managing and leading programmes

What are the barriers to becoming an outstanding organisation?

In all cases when programmes were described as ‘good’, much hard work took place and many of the barriers were beyond the control of the leader/organisation in the given timescales and with the available resources.

These were the most common barriers stopping a programme from moving from good to outstanding.

* where there were substantial changes either in the leadership or in the practitioner team
* where it took time to establish clear and strong target groups and activity could not begin in the original timescales
* where communication with schools and centres was too late for the receiving partners to organise the activities and groups successfully
* where relationships with schools/centres were not secure – and therefore school/centre staff were unsure about what was expected of them. As a result, nothing happened, or activities had a slow, halting start
* where more discussion needed to take place between the leader and the centres, in order to maximise the time available and to target the most appropriate groups
* where it understandably proved difficult to employ and retain freelance professional practitioners on short contracts
* where there was an enormous amount of pressure on some leaders often in cases when they were working for the equivalent of less than three days each week.
* Where there were particular challenges where leaders were free-lance, or worked for organisations that do not routinely contact schools directly. These arrangements were complex and time-consuming

Sing Up Flagships

Each programme was distinct and planned for regional or national impact. The Flagships were all well established organisations and they came out of the evaluations extremely well. Margaret Griffiths made two visits to each Flagship, with enough time between for the organisation to address issues, or to have more support from the London Sing Up team. This was one of the most important aspects of the evaluation. She felt throughout that the London team and evaluator have distinctive, but complementary roles, which were clear and well understood by the organisations themselves. Some of the visiting was intensive across short periods but this was worthwhile in order to evaluate how progress is made and high standards achieved. The following examples are illustrative of high quality work. The examples below show the range as well as the reach and impact of their work – as well as its legacy.

1 Voices Foundation

With strong leadership, Voices Foundation worked closely with colleagues in local authorities. This worked very well – and in several areas of the country there has been leadership, impact and a real legacy. The CPD events have been of a very high standard. The practitioners themselves have taken an eclectic view of the Sing Up Flagship work and have included the best of their skills, repertoire, and overall expertise in involving all children in high quality experiences. The local and national groups of Voices Foundation have ‘grown’ through the Flagship programme and the local practitioners have worked extremely hard to interpret and translate Voices Foundation materials – which can be rather rigid – into a scheme moving towards becoming a set of experiences.

The hard work of the Voices Foundation staff and the colleagues in local authorities, made this programme successful.

*“Joined the course as an instrumentalist - left it as a vocalist! Inspirational.”* Teacher (Sing Up Flagship: The Voices Foundation)

2 Music and the Deaf

With a realistic programme and timescale, this programme provided outstanding work in Essex and in Bedfordshire. In Essex a secondary school was hosting the programme for its own unit for 16 hearing impaired young people. This involved hearing and hearing impaired pupils working together as vocal leaders. This also involved those pupils in primary schools with hearing impairment – and one of their friends – in vocal workshops and joint activities. This was not only a programme of the highest quality – it was also very emotional and moving for the adults and family members involved. Young people who had considerable challenges at school were seen to thrive when they presented and led vocal activities. Several had composed songs themselves.

In Bedfordshire the Music and the Deaf training involved a network of primary music leaders, as well as teachers of the deaf, using British Sign Language (BSL). They then worked in pairs in mainstream and special schools to enable ‘singing and signing’ to be a strand of the local authority’s development work. The expectation – and preparation was to enable many more mainstream pupils to use BSL and to become young vocal leaders.

*“Paul has been into school working with the students, initially showing them ways in which they can interpret songs into BSL. He has since boosted the young people’s confidence and recently they have started teaching songs they know in both song and sign to children in local feeder Primary schools. The students involved continue to show hard work and enthusiasm, but most importantly they show commitment.”* Teacher, Great Baddow High School (Sing Up Flagship: Music and the Deaf)

3. City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO)

There are 5 youth choirs affiliated to the CBSO chorus and orchestra. One of the choirs is open access and another is boys only. In addition, 12 primary schools were involved in workshops and performances of a set of songs composed by Rebecca Lawrence whose husband David is an outstanding vocal leader for CBSO. The collection of 11 songs ‘Past and Present’ were settings of familiar history topics – all linked with the age group within the relevant Key Stage and the national curriculum for history. So Tutankhamen; Chop and Change (Henry VIII) and a very moving song about being a wartime refugee; together with 8 others, gave a range of styles, moods and historical links. The school workshops, led by David and Julian Wilkins, with superb pianists, were all of the highest quality, loved by all the young people and adults in schools. The CD with the songbook was also of excellent quality using a very good vocal model and backing band, commissioned by Rebecca. There was some work with Year 7 pupils in secondary schools – either in disadvantaged areas or where vocal work was a challenge. The first thing Julian and his pianist did was to give a superb performance of Schubert’s ‘Trout’ lied – announcing it as a song about fishing – and teaching it in English to a double class of boys afterwards. They loved it!

*“Very few children abstain from singing now. Children actively tell the teachers that they love singing. The results from our involvement in the CBSO Key Stage 2 project have been among the best ever in our school. Children were very proud of having performed at Symphony Hall.”* St Hubert’s Primary, Head Teacher, Mrs Clare McNally (Sing Up Flagship: City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra)

4. Ex Cathedra

Dealing with the challenges of planning the full programme in the timescale, outstanding work took place in Hertfordshire on the singing playgrounds and also training young vocal leaders of primary age. Their repertoire included Polish repertoire – as one of their vocal leaders has a Polish family. Their CPD workshops were excellent – giving a whole range of teaching strategies, repertoire and hands on experience to some very shy teachers.

With funding from another source, they worked in children’s hospitals in Birmingham – with some outstanding success among the patients and families. The doctors’ remarked on the benefits this had to the whole family of very ill children – many terminally ill - and more investment was planned from one of the hospitals.

*“Children who have poor literacy and maths skills are excelling in their role as song leader, giving them more confidence in their abilities.”* Teacher, Ickleford Primary School, Hertfordshire (Sing Up Flagship: Ex Cathedra – Singing Playgrounds Programme)

5. North West Partnership

With a core of schools and practitioners in Manchester, this programme was extensive and ambitious in terms of CPD and also workshops in schools. The materials were mainly produced by Manchester music service, with the addition of well selected works from the Song Bank. They were superb and well used by vocal leaders in schools. In particular, there was a good focus on enabling boys in primary schools to enjoy participating – and in challenging schools male vocal leaders use the playground for action songs etc. Class teachers gradually took over parts of the sessions and were very well supported in additional CPD sessions. There was impact and legacy, as well as large performing events. The Halle venue at the Bridgewater Hall gave an important experience for the many children who performed there and were made welcome. There were links with other Halle events, through workshops and the Youth Choir. This programme was closely linked with the Halle education section and an integrated offering based on vocal work was made available to schools over an extended period.

*“Much improvement in attitude towards singing this term – singing assemblies have been more positive and thus the profile of singing is being raised in the school.”* Ringway Primary School, Manchester (Sing Up Flagship: North West Partnership; Halle & Manchester Music Service)

6. Pegasus Opera

There were some innovative and strong features which showed the potential for outstanding partnership working between the company and schools. The programme enabled young people to construct, perform and access the distinctive components of opera. The final performance was, though, much stronger than the process which led up to it.

This was an ambitious programme – a commissioned opera with the composer largely based in USA. The score and parts arrived in sections and considerable feedback was given about the organisation as well as the quality after the first evaluation visit. The programme manager worked hard and more time was given to the coordinator to act as the director for work in the schools. Pegasus seemed to have overestimated the capacity of schools to work between the workshop visits. So the process was not as rich as it could have been. However, the late stages and the performance were very successful.

*“I believe my children learnt the importance of listening to others whilst singing. During the early stages of the sessions the children were concentrating on singing the loudest as they thought that this is the best way to sing. However they soon recognised that they needed to ensure they sung as a collective. This is what I feel the children learnt the most.”* Headteacher from participating school, London (Flagship: Pegasus Opera Company)

7. Association of British Choral Directors (ABCD)

This programme took place over four geographic areas and was well led and managed at a national level. Special Schools were engaged in the Lancashire programme and resulted in the first SEN School in the country achieving a Sing Up Award. This school is now a Platinum School. Activity included whole classes and whole Key Stage groups. The CPD strand of the programme was outstanding in quality and content and included school-based mentoring sessions with continuity between visits. Materials and resources were well matched to the ages and stages of children’s vocal development.

More clarity could have been given about whether the programme was designed to encourage primary teachers to conduct choirs or whether it is to help them develop their skills in leading singing with young voices, or a mixture of the two. There was the opportunity for local networking and co-working - this would have developed both materials and skills for participants with the added support of the local programme leader. More time needed to have been allocated for this. There was huge potential for the programme to be integrated into a well-structured and developmental opportunity for high quality work with strong and lasting impact.

*“The experiences and resources I have gained from the CPD have fuelled my enthusiasm and boosted my confidence considerably. Consequently, I feel I am now a more effective singing leader as I am able to speak from a point of knowledge.”* Teacher (Sing Up Flagship: Association of British Choral Directors)

8. Battersea Arts Centre (BAC)

This was an ambitious and complex programme for the time available with a focus on beatboxing. The qualities of the project managers were strong and they worked hard to ensure the progression of the programme after some staffing changes. The work covered early years to young music leader workshops with opportunities for schools to take part in artist residencies and teacher exchanges as well as joint development and planning days. The Beatbox Alphabet, a distinctive piece of software, was developed during the programme as a resource to make beatboxing more accessible to schools. There was particular success with a group of young music leaders as part of the Beatboxing Academy which provided a clear pathway towards accreditation, performance, and becoming artists.

*“We are always amazed at how much BAC artists can achieve over such a short period of time. Our curriculum would not be what it is without BAC.”* Head Teacher Lyn Phillips, Falconbrook School (Sing Up Flagship: Battersea Arts Centre)

9. The WOMAD Foundation

This programme was on a much shorter timescale than the usual two years. In the six month timescale, the partners worked extremely hard, the work developed well and there were many strengths. With more time, there was potential to make much more of the international partnerships built up between schools. The programme was complex and managed with expertise by WOMAD with the support of a significant local partnership. The work of Siyaye was outstanding in terms of repertoire, relationships with schools, pupils and staff and the impact of workshops and performances. Children taught Siyaye songs in return which they took back with them to Zimbabwe. This relationship has become a large part of the legacy of this programme. The materials, documentation and CDs were well produced and supportive to ongoing work. Schools undertook their own tasks in between workshops and so the programme was integrated into the schools’ work with the whole school benefitting with the exchange of stories and songs not just those children involved in the workshops.

*“I didn’t care that everyone was looking at us in the playground because I was enjoying myself. People joined in even though they weren’t part of the project. They learnt how to do quite quickly when we explained so they joined in.”* Helena, a pupil at Box Primary School (Sing Up Flagship: WOMAD)

Sing Up Communities

This is an overview of Margaret Griffiths’ evaluations of the 20 individual Communities programmes. It is based on the four key indicators which programmes used as a framework. She again visited each programme twice with space between visits for issues to be addressed and for more support from the London team.

1. Did the individual programmes meet and promote the aims of the national Sing Up Communities programme?

There was a clear understanding of the aims of Sing Up Communities. These were usually well expressed in helpful guidance documents to staff and practitioners involved. However, it needed to be made clear to schools where Sing Up is meant to enhance and develop their music provision, both in and beyond curriculum time. In programmes which have a short funding life-cycle, there is always the risk that recipients view the activities as short-term, rather than being something which can be adopted longer term and embedded in the curriculum and in the school’s and communities’ provision beyond the curriculum.

The extent to which parents/carers knew about the national programme, and the excitement of being part of it, was unclear. It would have been helpful to include parents/carers as observers in some of the high quality in-school and beyond-school sessions from time to time. They seemed to be invited to see the events and the outcomes, but the process was equally as valuable too. There is nothing more convincing than seeing and hearing the success of an exciting vocal session. They observe for themselves how the children are really involved and where the music leaders and school/centre staff enjoy working together on worthwhile and educationally valuable activities. Since the music is so portable and memorable, they can sing it with their families and friends. This makes sure that it is not seen as a project (short term) nor that it is exclusively for school-based young people. If we believe that singing is open to all, then by ensuring a wide-encompassing welcome to those who work with children as well as their families, we can catch the aims of Sing Up – and ensure that there is a legacy after the central funding ends.

The use of the website and resources was variable. Managers realised that staff needed to be selective in order to use and disseminate the most relevant support materials. The magazines, accompanied by CDs, seemed to be the most popular and accessible until recently, but would represent only a small part of the resources available if they continued to be used exclusively. Further work is underway in most cases, to ensure effective and convenient selection and downloading of the full range of materials and resources so that they can be exploited to the full.

In some cases, the practitioners were not sufficiently proactive in schools, even arriving for sessions and leaving without any further discussions or links with staff. Sometimes, too, communications have been at short notice, or verbal, when most primary schools and centres need written details of arrangements.

2. Did the programme meet the quantitative targets in terms of range and reach?

For some of the Sing Up Communities there were challenges in the range and reach of the programme and of being realistic of the targets which could be achieved. Understandably, targets were set before the programmes began, but the better ones reviewed and adjusted this aspect regularly in the light of what had been learned, so that it remained manageable.

In some cases, it was difficult to agree the schools/centres and programme. In other cases, it took longer than anticipated to find practitioners and to ensure they had the appropriate preparation for sustainable work. In other places, schools which originally agreed to take part had to withdraw for a range of reasons.

Successful programmes took stock and made decisions which enabled the programme to be successful and sustainable, rather than to be spread too thinly and risk too superficial a legacy. If the programme was to expand and reach its targets, then it was better to consider several options above a core number of schools/centres.

3. Did the programme meet the aims in terms of quality?

Of the 20 programmes, 12 were agreed to have achieved outstanding overall work by the end of the funding cycle. Here is an example of some of those programmes:

* Sing Up Bolton: An opera was commissioned to be written and performed by primary school pupils in four schools, targeted by the School Improvement Team and the Music Service working together. The composer was a freelance professional who worked extremely hard and very well with all the schools and adults involved. The opera, Bluebeards Last Wife, was an outstanding success with chorus and principles from primary schools and a band from secondary schools.

“The pupils responded with enthusiasm after initial shyness…. They were responsive to the songs and actions and began to sing the songs by themselves while playing in the role play.” Early Years member of staff at Alexandra Children’s Nursery, Bolton (Sing Up Bolton: Music Service)

* Sing Up Bedfordshire: Funding was used for cluster working and linked into the Music and the Deaf Flagship programme that provided CPD. Through this partnership, Bedfordshire Music Service established a network of vocal leaders/ BSL signers amongst adults and young people so that hearing and hearing impaired children could work together. Leadership was a central strand with Take the Lead for adults developing a team of confident vocal leaders. Through the existing Sing Quest programme, children were also involved in the delivery of singing all the way through from lower school to middle school. The project facilitated a community led approach to vocal opportunities bringing depth and diversity to the programme as a whole.

*“The year 6 class had not done any singing as a group before and were quite a fractious class. As the project went on, I was able to hand over the warm ups for the children to lead, and they were able to sing ‘Dona Nobis’ in three parts at the concert. Their focus on the conductor was so strong, and their teacher said “To get such results from this class is stunning. They are known to be a tricky lot, but we’ve managed a truly wonderful thing.”* Penny Manser, Animateur (Sing Up Bedfordshire: Bedfordshire Music)

* Sing Up Lindsey: The success was establishing high quality provision in rural primary schools, using two practitioners. They created website and supportive materials, linking carefully with the curriculum. The other highlight was an event with young adults with mental learning difficulties in a further education college who were working towards performances with primary and secondary pupils. Young adults who could not read or write sang their hearts out in songs they loved. There were some very good voices particularly among the young men.

*“Children who you would not imagine would participate now join in as a matter of course”*Mrs Evan, Head teacher, Faldingworth Primary school (Sing Up Lindsey: SoundLincs)

* Sing Up Devon: The highlights were the work with very small rural primary schools and also vocal leaders among the pupils who led activities in the playgrounds. Then this was put together as area events. There was noticeable enthusiasm from both boys and girls. The work was strongly led by the music service.

“The main focus for the second year was to get the whole school singing. In January all the staff and teaching assistants attended a day with Maurice Walsh on the Manchester Singing school materials. This proved to be a good resource for the less confident teachers to get children singing and provided inspiration for renaissance of singing throughout the school.” Debbie Cruwys, Music Subject Leader, The Castle Primary School (Sing Up Devon: Devon Music Service)

* Sing Up East Kent: The programme leader arranged a weekend training course for young vocal leaders among the older guides in East Kent units. This was held at the national scouting HQ. There were three workshops – in North Indian, Bulgarian and Gospel singing. The guiders also had to invent their own songs and rounds over the weekend. They were also aiming at a collection of 100 songs to celebrate the Girl Guide centenary year. This was an outstanding success – and made a strong link for us with the uniformed organisations.

*“I feel more confident to sing in public and I feel I am ready to teach other Brownies and Guides.  I have learnt how to sing in two different languages, something I never thought I could do!”* Beth, Girl Guide, Young Leader (Sing Up East Kent: Music for Change)

Several programmes moved from good to outstanding between the evaluation visits, taking on board the recommendations and also the agreed standards from joint observations with the evaluator. The target was that these short programmes with specific aims; target populations; and with directed funding should achieve at least ‘good’ in the overall judgement of their whole programme.

At the other extreme, several programmes had some way to go to achieve the quality targets, but there are a number of reasons and there was the commitment and professional energy to work hard to improve and develop the work. In some cases, there was insufficient time to put improvements in place. In particular this applied to some discontinuity in practitioner availability or recruitment. Changes of staffing had a significant effect on these short programmes.

We shared and applied appropriate criteria when we jointly observed sessions and discuss them:

• the children enjoy singing as a valuable and worthwhile activity

• the repertoire is matched to their age, stage, interests and capacities

• practitioners model singing well and are enthusiastic leaders

• music leaders know how to improve children’s singing

• good attention is paid to the technical aspects of posture, diction, breathing, pitching, tone etc. in enjoyable ways

• good attention is paid to musical aspects of phrasing, dynamics, mood and meaning while the activity keeps its energy and enjoyment

• ensemble skills are developed as young people listen carefully to their own and each other’s contributions, in terms of volume, balance, blend, etc. and they show increased interest in working towards ‘sharings’ and performances

• singing incorporates a wide range of vocal activities from a wide range of sources

• sessions are well prepared with energy, focus and momentum

• there are activities for classes/groups to use between visits by music leaders

• songs can express a range of moods which are reflective and thoughtful – sometimes sad – the repertoire is not merely to occupy or entertain our young people – and they soon realise this.

• teachers in schools and centres are not pressurised into becoming music leaders unless they show commitment, enthusiasm and expertise

• resources and support materials are matched to the needs and aspirations of schools and centres.

• children are encouraged to lead the activities in and between sessions

• there are high expectations of all children and the adults who work with them

• good attention is paid to health, safety and the ECM outcomes

• the Sing Up programme is planned so that there will be a tangible legacy for the school/centre/group

4. Is the programme sustainable, replicable and of regional/national significance?

Understandably, this was variable. In order for programmes to be sustainable, managers needed to identify very clearly who was likely to, as well as capable of, sustain them. In many cases this was enthusiastic staff in schools/centres. A second group would be the free-lance practitioners who can be employed by schools from schools’ own future budgets. Both groups needed a different level of support so that they have both the strategies and the confidence to sustain the work when the main funded programme has ended. It is now time to identify those colleagues who will develop the work – and to ensure they have a supportive network which will be available when the funding is finished.

The strategies for sustaining the programme are not complex or necessarily difficult. For example, a repertoire of songs and vocal activities linked with primary year groups, as well as easy access to using them, will help.

There is much positive professional energy and momentum already – and yet more can be generated as the programmes influence future activity.