



**INTERGENERATIONAL
MUSIC MAKING**

Intergenerational Music Making Singing from the Heart - Withington Report

EVALUATION




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INTRODUCTION

“Singing from the Heart” is a project funded by NW Hearts and delivered by Intergenerational Music Making. Designed as a creative health intervention, the programme explores the role of music and breathwork in improving cardiovascular health, emotional wellbeing, and social connection. Four 6-week intergenerational music projects were planned across Greater Manchester, each targeting communities affected by heart disease.

Project Aims

The project seeks to:

- Improve cardiovascular health through singing and guided breathing techniques**
- Enhance emotional and social wellbeing for people living with or at risk of heart disease**
- Foster intergenerational connection and mutual support within families and communities**
- Offer tailored creative training and resources for carers, integrating music into daily care**
- Promote the use of music therapy as a holistic tool in cardiac rehabilitation and care**

Our Approach

Each session was co-designed with participants and facilitated by a multidisciplinary team including music therapists, musicians, creatives, physiotherapists, and heart health specialists. The sessions incorporated singing, songwriting, movement, and creative exercises, with a strong focus on co-creation and participant-led activity. Sessions lasted 1.5 hours and were built around group needs and preferences.

Grounded in music therapy principles, the programme aimed to create supportive, expressive spaces where participants could build confidence, share experiences, and connect through music. In addition to supporting individuals with heart disease, the project offered training and skill-building for carers, encouraging the use of music as a practical and emotional tool within caregiving relationships.





INTRODUCTION

About the Withington Programme

The first of the four programmes was delivered as an 8-week pilot at Withington Methodist Church, working with a community group directly affected by heart disease. This programme was run in partnership with Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU), who contributed to both evaluation and health education aspects of the project.

MMU provided:

- Peak flow testing to assess respiratory function at the beginning and end of the programme
- A team of five MSc Nutrition students, who attended sessions in the final weeks to facilitate discussions around healthy eating and lifestyle choices
- A tailored nutrition resource pack—including personalised recipes, meal plans, and leaflets—based on participant input and interests

This collaboration provided a rich, multi-dimensional experience for participants, combining creative expression, breathwork, and lifestyle education to promote long-term health and wellbeing.





Evaluation

Dates of Delivery

21/01/25
28/01/25
04/02/25
11/02/25
18/02/25
11/03/25
18/03/25
25/03/25

Partners

Withington Methodist Church
Withington Assist
Manchester Metropolitan University

Overview of Project

“Singing from the Heart” is a project funded by NW Hearts and delivered by Intergenerational Music Making. Designed as a creative health intervention, the programme explores the role of music and breathwork in improving cardiovascular health, emotional wellbeing, and social connection.

Methodology & Results

Methodology:

- Quotes and feedback
- Video & pictures
- Written Feedback Forms
- Peak Flow Tests

Average Attendance:
27 participants

Peak Flow Sample Size:
15 participants

Results:

10 out of 15 participants improved their peak flow—this is a strong indicator of increased lung capacity and/or better airflow.





FACILITATOR FEEDBACK

Session 1 – 21/01/25

Attendance: 28

The first session was somewhat chaotic, as participants were unfamiliar with the structure and the peak flow testing took time away from the singing activity. Despite the shortened session, there was a sense of curiosity and openness from the group, and we were able to establish a positive foundation to build upon in future weeks.

Session 2 – 28/01/25

Attendance: 25

Participants were still settling into the routine, as many attend a prior exercise class and need time for drinks, the toilet, and socialising before joining us. Several people shared that they “hadn’t been sure what to expect” in Week 1 but had “really enjoyed it.”

We were joined by 4–5 new participants who came specifically for the singing, showing early word-of-mouth interest. A particularly valuable moment came in a post-session conversation with a semi-professional singer from the group. I invited her to lead a warm-up exercise for us in the following session.

Session 3 – 04/02/25

Attendance: 29

This session was a turning point. The group responded very positively, and several participants commented on the music choices:

“You’ve got our era spot on.”

There is a strong sense of community as many participants already know each other from the exercise class. This natural bond has contributed to a warm, fun atmosphere filled with laughter and camaraderie.

We introduced our first full song, What a Wonderful World. While some participants struggled with the timing and phrasing, I reassured everyone that the group is not a choir and there is no “wrong” way to engage:

“We are here to enjoy singing, not to perfect it.”





FACILITATOR FEEDBACK

Session 4 – 11/02/25

Attendance: 26

Our continued work on What a Wonderful World paid off this week, with a noticeable improvement in group confidence and musicality. Participants were energised by this progress:

“You can really feel the buzz in the room.”

The returning semi-professional singer led us through operatic scales, which brought joy and laughter as participants attempted the challenging vocal exercises. Her presence created a lovely moment of shared celebration and skill-sharing:

“People really enjoyed hearing her sing.”

A Manchester University volunteer also joined us, and although her arrival was unexpected, she was warmly welcomed by participants.

Session 5 – 18/02/25

Attendance: 25

This was a strong session musically, with participants recognising and acknowledging their own progress:

“I can really hear us getting better.”

One participant expressed concern about the upcoming break and emphasised how important the sessions had become:

“Please make sure you come back— I really love these sessions. It’s doing me a world of good.”

The mood in the group is now consistently positive, with growing confidence in singing, stronger vocal quality, and a deepening sense of connection.





FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

"Very enjoyable. Could do with the sessions to continue. Fabulous."

"Very enjoyable sessions. Lots of fun and made friends too!"

"It gives me life, it makes me feel alive."

"I like the heart group, it's good fun."

"Enjoyed the sessions and music with new company."

"The music is brilliant, I enjoyed it."

"I really enjoyed it, it made me feel happy and brought back happy memories."

"I know the group would love for this to continue, it's hard to please some of all of them, but they really enjoyed these sessions. We even had new members."





FEEDBACK FROM STUDENTS

Importance of joining generations:

"I feel like this was a very enriching experience, we got to understand the perspective of elderly generation, by hearing about their experiences in life. This activity played a great role in bridging the gap between generations." Musfirah Shariff

Passing of this knowledge:

"It was a precious opportunity for dietetic students to interact and share essential nutrition knowledge with the heart group in a wider community, empowering them to make informed dietary choices." Natalie Kwong

The impact we expect to see:

"Our work has been impactful, in terms of sharing heart healthy recipes with the audience, as they seemed excited to use them at home." Musfirah Shariff

"Through this campaign, we hope to make a meaningful impact not only on the Singing from the Heart group but also on the wider community, particularly those at higher risk of developing heart disease or looking to improving their heart health. While there is already a strong awareness of the effects of fats and salt on heart health, there is far less focus on the benefits of fibre, and how easy, affordable, and delicious it can be to include more of it in our diets! By practical resources and tasty, heart-friendly recipes, we aim to raise awareness and inspire long-term, positive changes in heart health through nutritional changes." Marta Retuerto Felipe

Highlight of our experience of the project:

"Our experience working with the Singing from the Heart group has been truly inspiring! Through engaging with the group, we gained valuable insights into their ideas, needs, and current knowledge, which helped us shape the Eating for a Healthy Heart campaign to reflect what matters most to them and their journey. We found it very valuable speaking with members individually - allowing us to better understand their personal experiences and what they hoped to gain from the campaign in order to create more tailored resources. And of course, one of the highlights was singing with them during the sessions—it brought so much joy and energy to the experience!" Marta Retuerto Felipe





FEEDBACK FROM STUDENTS

"Appreciated to have a valuable chance to deliver education to older generation, they are nice, and it inspired me to improve presentation skill in the future." Jonathan Lap Fung Lam

We've also created a dedicated website featuring all of the resources we've developed, along with a social media campaign that shares additional tips and information. It would be wonderful if you could include a mention of these in the press release so that readers can easily access and benefit from the materials. You can also access our social media through the website.

<https://healthydietforhear.wixsite.com/eating4ahealthyheart>

Thank you again for this opportunity—we really appreciate your support!
Best wishes,

Marta & the team





EVALUATION - PEAK FLOW ANALYSIS & RESULTS

The goal was to improve cardiovascular health through singing and breathing techniques:

- Better lung capacity and control
- Strengthened diaphragm and respiratory muscles
- Improved oxygen uptake and circulation
- Reduced stress

Peak flow tests were taken during week 1 & 8 of the project.

Quantitative Outcomes (Peak Flow Data)

Sample size: 15 participants

Outcome	Result
Average Peak Flow – Week 1	355.7 L/min
Average Peak Flow – Week 8	379.3 L/min
Average Group Improvement	+23.6 L/min (7% increase)
Participants Improved	10 out of 15 (67%)
No Change	1 participant
Decline in Score	2 participants

Findings:

10 out of 15 participants improved their peak flow—this is a strong indicator of increased lung capacity and/or better airflow.

Average Peak Flow Improvement

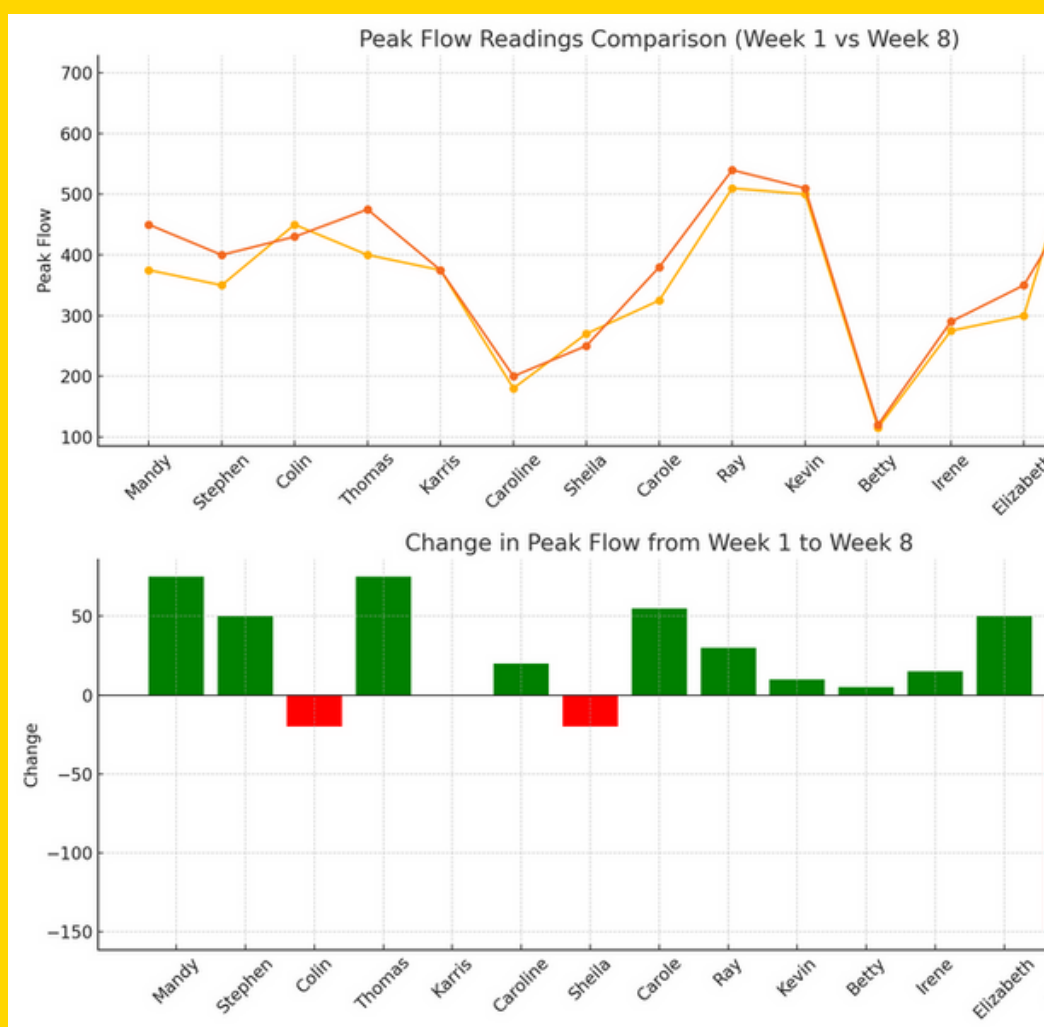
- The group's average peak flow rose from 356 to 379, a 7% improvement



EVALUATION - PEAK FLOW ANALYSIS & RESULTS

Consistent gains in most participants suggest improvements in:

- Respiratory efficiency and lung capacity
- Breath awareness and control through singing
- Confidence and engagement in physical wellness
- The singing environment likely contributed to reduced anxiety and improved posture and breathing patterns, all of which support cardiovascular health.





EVALUATION - PEAK FLOW ANALYSIS & RESULTS

Conclusion:

The Singing from the Heart pilot at Withington Methodist Church demonstrated promising early outcomes in using singing and breathwork to support cardiovascular health. Across the 8-week programme, average peak flow measurements among participants increased by approximately 7%, reflecting a modest yet encouraging physiological response to the intervention.

While this percentage is not statistically significant, it is important to note that even short-term improvements in pulmonary function can signal enhanced respiratory engagement and increased awareness of breath control, both of which are essential in supporting cardiovascular health, particularly among older adults.

These findings align with research such as Bonilha et al. (2009), which highlights that singing training can improve respiratory muscle strength and pulmonary function in individuals with COPD, supporting the hypothesis that structured vocal exercises may offer similar benefits in broader cardiovascular contexts. The study observed measurable gains in respiratory outcomes after a sustained programme of singing, reinforcing the value of long-term engagement.

Given the short duration of this initial pilot, it is likely that a longer-term intervention would produce more substantial improvements and offer more robust data for analysis. Participant feedback also strongly supports this; individuals consistently reported enhanced wellbeing, enjoyment, and a desire for continuity.

To properly assess the full impact of this intergenerational approach on cardiovascular health, we recommend the extension of Singing from the Heart to include:

- Longer delivery periods (e.g., 12–16 weeks)
- Larger participant cohorts
- More frequent and varied health measures, including follow-up data
- Ongoing partnerships with academic institutions to strengthen evidence collection



IMAGES

