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*Helping people to live happier, healthier lives
through musical participation.*

'We have all known the long loneliness, and we have found that the answer is in community...'



These wise words from the American journalist and social activist, Dorothy Day, highlight the indisputable importance of fostering community connections. Sadly, an increasing number of people are experiencing social isolation and loneliness and it is becoming vitally important to ensure that we develop innovative ways to reach the most vulnerable members of our community, never more so than in the current difficult times. The Step Change grant programme, funded by Vital York and administered by the Two Ridings Community Foundation, has allowed us to

fund the part-time employment of a Community Involvement Officer, enabling us to raise more awareness of our groups, build stronger relationships with our beneficiaries and recruit a growing team of volunteers to support the delivery of our project. Thanks to this effective recruitment drive, our team has almost doubled in size over the last year and their dedication and commitment has been invaluable - providing refreshments, organising transport, supporting fundraisers, and now stepping up to support our beneficiaries in new and different ways during their period of isolation.





Given that our groups and choirs have had to be suspended, we are now focussing our resources on doing all that we can to support our Musical Connections family, so that no one feels as though they are alone. Our musicians and volunteers are in regular phone contact with members and on standby to deliver food and medication as needed. We will also be delivering weekly Facebook Live music sessions and will be creating DVDs to send to members who do not have

online access. In a further effort to connect with members who do not have internet, we are planning to say hello to them on local radio and television channels, Minster FM and York TV. Other ideas are still evolving, and we will report on their progress in the next newsletter.

Barstow Has Been Thriving, Thanks to Two Ridings!

Lovingly coined the 'fun-house' by our very own David Grabaskey, our group at Barstow House sheltered housing scheme have enjoyed a packed programme of events, activities and outings over the last year, generously supported by the Two Ridings Community Foundation's 'A Life Less Lonely' fund. Originally developed to combat feelings of isolation and disconnection amongst the residents, the weekly music group has fostered the development of some wonderful friendships across the wider community, ensuring that life has definitely been a little bit less lonely for everyone involved. We know that enforced isolation is going to hit this group particularly hard, and we will be doing all that we can to ensure that they feel an ongoing sense of connection with the wider Musical Connections family.



"It's an incredible thing for me to be doing – life is better"



I don't sing because I'm happy; I'm happy because I sing...'

It's becoming increasingly hard to remain happy during these unprecedented times, but William James' words are a wonderful reminder of the importance of singing. It is a fantastic way to pass the time at home, reduce feelings of stress and boost spirits. Whilst we are unable to sing together at the moment, we are hoping that our DVD and weekly online sessions will be able to deliver some of the benefits that our

beneficiaries tell us that they experience after attending their music group, particularly an improvement in mood and an increased positivity about life. Social distancing and self-isolation have recently become the new norm; however, that does not mean suffering in silence - even singing on your own produces feel-good hormones, increases alertness and heightens activity levels, helping us all to feel more positive, upbeat and optimistic.



Without the support of our funders, we would be unable to sustain these and many other wonderful outcomes for our beneficiaries and with that in mind, we would like to say a huge 'thank you' for the new grants which we have received from the following organisations:

The Shears Foundation

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation

The Charles Hayward Foundation

The Inman Charity

Micklegate Ward Committee

We are grateful to our funders for their understanding in these challenging circumstances, and for supporting us as we find different ways to support our beneficiaries.



**And a little bit of cheer
to finish... '...that was
surprisingly good!'**

Fiona may have to keep them in line with a whistle during rehearsals, but the Rolling Tones definitely know how to pull off a show-stopping performance! Now regulars

to the stage, they thoroughly enjoyed singing in their recent concert at the York Community Choir Festival. The audience were highly appreciative, cheering, applauding loudly and offering some rave reviews... the weeks of note-bashing were clearly all worth it!



Thank you for reading – we will keep in touch.