



# Keeping Singing in tune with COVID-19 restrictions

Research shows that there are risks associated with transfer of Covid-19 through build up of aerosol droplets during group singing activity in indoor spaces. However we know that singing plays an important role in care settings, so this document sets out some tools to help you make informed choices and decisions about whether and how to sing.

We know that people working in care are making enormous efforts to keep people safe and that you are experts in this respect. You will take each situation as you find it, with that as a primary consideration, and make well informed judgements as to what is safe and manageable and how to do that. We are aware that you will have carefully considered protocols in place around this.

Here, we combine points to consider when deciding whether and how to lead singing and music activities; to inform planning and risk assessing in advance. We have created this from Government Covid Guidance documents, research and safe practice considerations and resources that can help keep singing and music going.

Please take the below steps to mitigate some of the risk surrounding singing. It is worth noting that they cannot, in themselves, remove all risk.



# Why sing?



**It's not about how well you can do it. It's about having a go, joining in and having fun.**

There are lots of reasons to sing and these apply to people who work in care as well as those they support, across the whole community of settings:

- It makes us feel good, enhancing emotional and psychological wellbeing, reducing depression and anxiety.<sup>1234</sup>
- It can support physical and mental health and cognitive abilities.<sup>5</sup>
- It can support communication to connect and unite us with our community.<sup>6</sup>
- Singing can create and support bonding and connection, with our community within settings.<sup>7</sup>
- It can aid and support everyday tasks and personal care, supporting the quality of care and making care homes happier places in which to live and work.<sup>89</sup>
- It's free and we can all do it!

Singing can help people meet, manage and recover from the impacts of the pandemic, supporting us all to thrive not just survive.

## references

- ① [The use of a music therapy choir to reduce depression and improve quality of life in older adults](#)
- ② [Creative health: the arts for health and wellbeing](#)
- ③ [Using humour to promote psychological wellbeing in residential homes for older people](#)
- ④ [A choir in every care home](#)
- ⑤ [Cognitive, emotional, and social benefits of regular musical activities in early dementia](#)
- ⑥ [The impact of music therapy on language functioning in dementia](#)
- ⑦ [Music and social bonding: “self-other” merging and neurohormonal mechanisms](#)
- ⑧ [A choir in every care home](#)
- ⑨ [Live music in care: the report](#)

## Considerations for risk management



Here we set out some measures to consider putting into place as part of your robust person-centred risk assessments, to help mitigate the risks.<sup>10</sup>

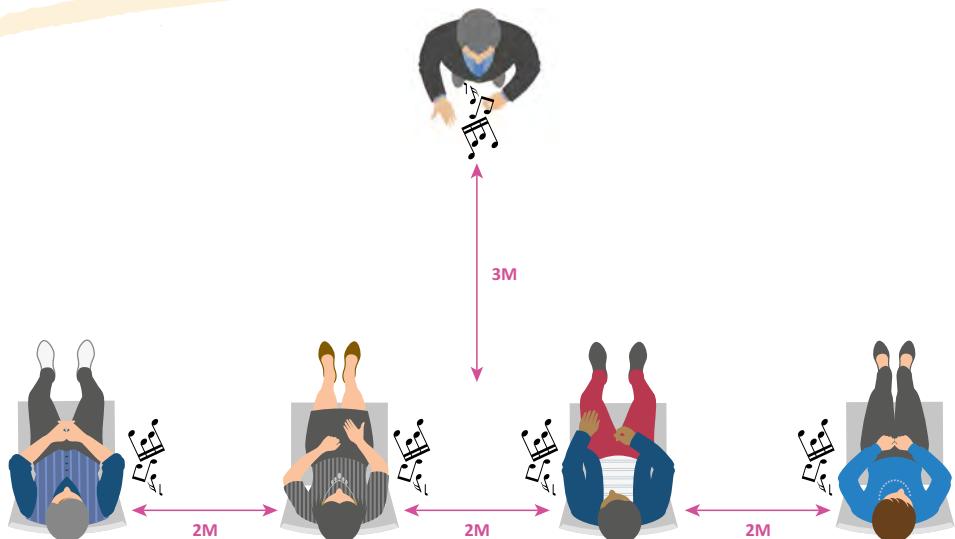
- Avoid encouraging loud singing. Research suggests higher volume speaking and singing increase risk as droplets travel further and the aerosol produced can stay suspended in the air for longer.<sup>11</sup> (We appreciate this may be very difficult especially with people living with dementia).
- Anyone leading singing and therefore singing more loudly, should have at least a 3-metre distance between them and participants.
- If working with a group, use as large a space as possible. Make sure it is well ventilated, with a 2-metre distance between anyone taking part. Set up the room in advance to help with distancing.<sup>12</sup>
- Use safe ways of sharing lyrics such as a screen to project or a flip chart, rather than handing out song sheets / books.
- Whenever possible, position participants two metres apart and back-to-back or side-to-side when singing (rather than face-to-face).
- You could also consider Perspex screens between residents and the wearing of visors.
- Keep group singing activities short. Research suggests that risks increase the longer group activities continue.<sup>13</sup>
- Wearing masks helps prevent droplets and aerosols when singing.<sup>14</sup>

## references

- ⑩ [Droplets and aerosols generated by singing and the risk of Coronavirus disease 2019 for choirs](#)
- ⑪ [BBC News](#)
- ⑫ [What we know about singing and COVID-19](#)
- ⑬ [How the coronavirus is spread through the air](#)
- ⑭ [Singing in times of COVID-19: more space to the front than to the side](#)

- If people in the setting are living in bubbles, work only within those bubbles - both staff and residents.
- Consider singing in smaller groups or as 1:1 engagement for residents in their rooms.
- Choose as quiet a space as possible, to minimise distractions, make it easier to hear and be heard without needing to raise voices, and accommodate using devices such as iPads.
- Consider singing virtually with others, e.g. over Zoom. There are issues around time lag/delay, but some people find they feel more confident to sing in this way as opposed to in person.
- If using instruments, such as hand-held percussion, have a protocol for their safe management including:
  - Build in time for staff teams to sanitise instruments before and after sessions.
  - Only use instruments which can be easily sanitised e.g. easy to clean percussion instruments, such as plastic egg shakers and claves.
  - No sharing of instruments or equipment during the session.
  - Use a designated storage system for instruments; box them up after cleaning and consider only using within a single bubble.

We appreciate that not all the points set out above will necessarily be possible in your setting and contexts, and that you will need to adapt and apply them to suit your setting. You could create a checklist of the protocols that you are following, making it available at each planned session.



## Signposting to national guidelines



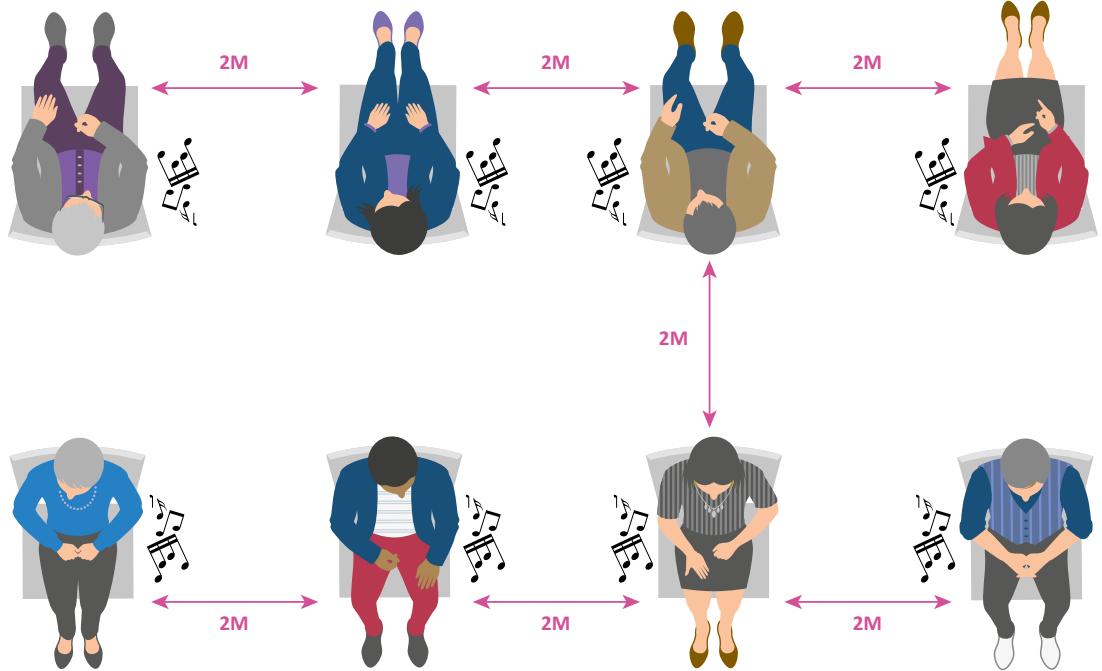
We advise checking the updated government guidance as advice is subject to frequent change.

- Local public health - Government performing arts and choirs guidance <sup>15</sup>
- National Government Covid and PHE guidance <sup>16</sup>
- Adult Social Care sector care provider guidelines <sup>17 18</sup>

Please also check your local and regional authority guidelines

## references

- <sup>15</sup> [Working safely during coronavirus: Performing Arts](#)
- <sup>16</sup> [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- <sup>17</sup> [Guidance overview](#)
- <sup>18</sup> [Quick links: COVID-19](#)



## How to do it



Some simple resources to help you sing and keep the music going:

- [Music for Dementia Musical Map](#)
- [How to sing video tutorials from Live Music Now](#)
- [Playlist for Life](#)
- [LMNonline free pre-recorded or live streamed concerts](#)
- [M4D Radio](#)
- [BBC Music Memories website](#)
- [Chiltern Music Therapy Digital Singing Packs for care settings](#)