

TALKING IN TUNE

ANNUAL REPORT

2017-2018



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A message from the Chair of Talking in Tune



It's my pleasure to welcome you to the 2017–2018 Talking in Tune Annual Report.

As you read through it, you will, I hope, be struck by the sheer amount of activity that takes place for the benefit of many sections of the community, whether on a weekly basis through our groups, every six months, when we run our workshops, or our wonderful annual Christmas busk! All this activity is only possible because of two things: our generous sponsors and benefactors, and the work of our group leaders and all our volunteers. I should like to say a sincere 'thank-you' to you all.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frances Sword". The script is cursive and fluid.

Frances Sword

1. Our Mission

The mission of Talking in Tune is to make singing and music-making accessible to all members of the community and to weave community singing into the cultural fabric of Cambridge. Our work is based on the knowledge that singing together enhances individual wellbeing and is an effective way to develop and sustain social connection.

We aim to do this by:

- Organising singing workshops and events that are inclusive, accessible and welcoming to people of all ages and abilities. The workshops aim to develop the musical skills and confidence of participants and to develop confidence in creative self-expression.
- Organising performances and workshops led by musicians and singing leaders from different cultures which are educational, fun and nurture a sense of respect for cultural differences. These events are largely self-funding.
- Creating events and performances which are inclusive, participative, community-building and create an enhanced sense of community, often involving the sharing of food as well as song. These events are largely organised by volunteers and the proceeds go to charity.
- Supporting the work of community musicians who are working in similar ways. As a charitable trust, we can support grant applications for projects that fall within our remit.
- Promoting and engaging with local events that contribute towards our goal of an inclusive, creative music-making community.
- Training and mentoring singing leaders.

Talking in Tune gained charitable trust status in 2004 and developed out of the singing work of Rowena Whitehead and Sue Parlby.

2. The Year in Brief

- The Memory Notes, our weekly singing group for people with dementia and their carers, which started up in September 2014, has gone from strength to strength.
- Our 'Singing for Breathing' group for people living with lung disease is growing and developing well.
- We have organised two open workshops, led by visiting voice teachers. Income from the workshops has supported the work of Talking in Tune.

This year we have received funding from the Black Fen Folk Club, the Cambridgeshire Community Foundation, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group, the Girton Carol Singers, the Girton Town Charity, the Small World Dance Club, the Strangward Trust, and two funding groups who prefer to remain anonymous, as well as individual donations. We organised our own fundraising events and we encourage donations via the web-based Local Giving scheme. Local Giving continues to be a useful route for raising funds from individuals. Over the year we had regular monthly contributions from nine donors, raising £120 on average each month. In addition Local Giving held a one-off 'Match Your Tenner' Campaign which we promoted through the Talking in Tune mailing list, and which raised £875.

3. Funded Projects

The Memory Notes

Background

In 2014 Talking in Tune created a new singing community for people affected by dementia. Our aim for The Memory Notes was more ambitious than simply setting up a singing group; we wanted to create a welcoming supportive community bound together by singing, offering beneficial, joyful, shared experiences for people with dementia and, just as importantly, for those who care for them.

The Memory Notes was launched in Histon in September of that year. Numbers grew quickly from a small initial participant base, and after six months we moved to St Andrew's Centre in Histon.

The group meets on Wednesday mornings nearly every week of the year. We try to avoid gaps in our programming, because regularity is particularly important to the well-being of this group. The rhythm of these regular sessions and the commitment of our loyal volunteers creates the potential for lasting relationships to develop. Each volunteer gives particular attention to the same people each week and so trust and friendships build. Because of these close relationships, the volunteers can notice any changes or difficulties which everyone can then try to address. As the carers get to know each other, they share advice, information and support. Several of the participants regularly stay and have lunch in the centre cafe after the session and so the sense of being part of a community develops further.

To ensure that the experience for each participant is the best that we can make it, we have decided to cap membership at 20 families.



We place great emphasis on encouraging participants to talk to each other, to share their stories and skills. Each week, before the singing begins, participants gather and settle over coffee and cake and this is when the volunteers encourage people to talk about their lives and experiences. Dementia can affect anyone; we have a room full of creative people with interesting life stories and we work to draw on this treasure trove and to enable the participants with dementia to take centre stage in the sessions' activities.

We often make up songs and lyrics and encourage people to chip in with ideas, contributions of which are always validated. Wheelchair users are wheeled to the centre of the circle towards the end of each session, when we dance, so they really participate in the experience and are never left on the sidelines. Our singing is often based around a theme; we use instruments, props, actions and dance to create the richest experience we can devise. The singing circle is not static; we strive to involve the participants in a multi-layered musical experience that draws on their lives both past and present.



The group has developed a great sense of trust, communal ownership and warmth, which is fostered in many ways. We take great care in decorating the room. We want the space to be light, welcoming, bright and warm. Tables with cloths and decorations are set up for coffee time and the singing circle always has a centrepiece of flowers. These details are important; they create a positive, uplifting mood. We encourage more able participants to help with serving teas and clearing up at the end of sessions as this gives more sense of shared ownership. People are encouraged to bring family and friends and grandchildren often sing with us. Occasionally we invite children from the playgroup in the centre to come and sing with us for half an hour.

The quality of this work and the depth of care are only possible because of the talent and dedication of the leaders and volunteers. The Memory Notes is led by Rowena Whitehead and co-ordinated by Sylvia Dannreuther. The same volunteers are with us now as were when the group began in 2014 and are involved in every aspect of each session. They prepare the room, welcome and settle participants, provide refreshments, engage, support and encourage conversations between participants and between carers. These relationships feed everything from session planning through to feedback and evaluation. Neil Harris joined us a volunteer last year and has experience of leading singing workshops for people with dementia, so we now have an extra back-up leader if need be.



Memory Notes Volunteers

Sylvia as Coordinator is the first point of contact for enquiries and liaises closely with families and participants. If someone misses more than a couple of weeks, the carers are contacted, and if a participant is ill, Sylvia keeps in touch with the carers; feedback shows that people really value this care and support, which enhances their sense of belonging to a caring group.

At the end of every session the volunteers and leaders discuss and analyse everything that's happened and this feedback is a constant guide to the development and growth of every aspect of the group. We evaluate the effect of our work on a regular basis through interviews with participants and carers.

This year

This year, we have had 49 sessions, with an average attendance of 14 people with dementia, 13 carers and 7 volunteers per session, an average of 34 people per session. We have welcomed 8 new families to the group and said goodbye to a similar number. Sadly four of our members have died over the last year. Inevitably, there is sadness when a group member has died or become too frail to attend and this presents a challenge to everybody as we adapt to the loss. Our volunteer meetings at the end of sessions provide an opportunity to support each other in this.

At the end of the year (April 2018), there were 18 families on the register. We have space for 20 families, so are recruiting again.

On 13 December we had a very jolly Christmas party session, and 51 people came for lunch. It was wonderful to welcome previous Memory Notes members. Celebrations we have marked during the year include Burns Night, St Patrick's Day, Easter, the coming of spring, and some women gaining the vote.

New video

At the start of the year, film-maker Paul Christie filmed Bryan, one of participants, talking about the group. Bryan was unwell when the memory Notes video was made last year and we had hoped that he would feature in it. Bryan is one of strongest advocates and it is recommended viewing if you need cheering up! The link to the interview is below:

<https://vimeo.com/238921810>

The Memory Notes video made by Toby Peters in 2016 is on our website:
<https://youtu.be/V17IRyCH2nU>

We hope to make more short films of interviews with participants as time goes by, as part of our evaluation process.

Recent quotes from our participants:

'It's the place where we feel most accepted' (Jackie, a carer)

'I can't get enough of it, it's bliss! It's like coming home every time I come through that door' (Bryan, participant)

'Thank you for making us feel so welcome. This is such a warm and friendly group' (first time visitor)

From Alison's (a carer) Christmas card to us:

'Memory Notes on a Wednesday morning is a highlight in our week's schedule. You all have the gift of making everyone feel special and yet normal, whether it be the "cared for" or the "carer". This in itself creates a wonderful and relaxing happy atmosphere, as well as minimising the sense of isolation one can only too easily feel in these circumstances ...'

'Thank you so much for a lovely Christmas gathering yesterday. It was a really fun singing session and yummy lunch. Great to see old friends again too, – makes us realize what good friends we've made through the group. It's so important to us all! Thank you so much for all your hard work. Love, Chris and Joan'

'It is such a privilege to be part of Memory Notes. I love coming every week' (Cathy, a volunteer)

'Thanks for all you do. This is the best day of the week for granny and mum and it really makes a difference' (Patrick, J's grandson, a trainee doctor)

'What a strong bond you have in this group. It's meant so much to mum and dad' (Margaret, a visiting daughter)



Ripple Effects of the Memory Notes

1. Sing to Remember singing group

Memory Notes leaders and volunteers supported Neil Harris to set up and lead 'Sing to Remember', a new singing group for people with dementia in Sawston. Rowena is mentoring Neil and four of our volunteers also work with the Sawston group, which shares our approach and ethos.

2. Singing in residential homes

During the year, we have led two singing sessions at Alex Wood House in Cambridge, supported by our volunteers. These sessions, funded by Alex Wood House, highlighted for us the importance of the involvement of the care home staff in supporting the singing. We have been invited to lead other sessions in care homes, but are not currently in a position to do more. However, we are currently exploring the possibility of running a pilot scheme at Alex Wood House to train carers who work there to sing with residents.

In March, two of the care staff from Brownsfield Care Home in Chesterton attended a singing session and we gave them song sheets to take away. They have reported that they have since been singing with their residents. We are keen to support this development by inviting care workers from other homes to come and see what we do.

3. Memory Notes in the community

As Rowena and the volunteers at Memory Notes are involved in music activities in the wider community, we have been able to encourage participants to attend other community events and to ensure they get a warm welcome. Participants have attended ReSound Choir concerts (ReSound is a choir led by Rowena), Histon Community Events, The Great Get Together in Cambridge in June in memory of Jo Cox and various concerts and events put on by other local choirs.

Some of the carers who formerly brought a family member to the Memory Notes have continued singing with Rowena in other community singing groups.

Future Plans

We aim to continue the group and support others who wish to do similar work.

Gill October, the daughter of one of our long-term singers, Mollie, who died in the spring and was a resident at Alex Wood House has generously offered a donation of £1500 to Talking in Tune to help develop our work further. Together with the manager of Alex Wood House and the manager of Dementia Services, Rowena is developing a pilot training and support programme for staff at AWH who are interested in leading singing with residents. The programme will run initially from September 2018 for six months; our hope is that at the end of this period, the staff at AWH will be leading singing sessions there. We hope to involve volunteers from the Memory Notes too.

We will evaluate this pilot project and may then apply for more funding to develop this training to support work in other settings.

Singing for Breathing

Background

The British Lung Foundation (BLF) estimate that one in five people will suffer from a chronic lung disease. Singing is known to be helpful for those living with a lung disease, in particular COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease). The BLF have devised a programme of breath and voice exercises designed to help people with chronic lung disease.

Membership and Recruitment

During the year the group continued to flourish. At the end of the year there were 19 members regularly attending, and new members continue to join. A total of more than 50 people have benefited from the group since it started in 2016. Kay has made regular visits to local Pulmonary Rehabilitation courses (there are two service providers in Cambridge) visiting the 'What Next?' classes, where she runs a short taster session and gives out information about the Singing for Breathing group. Members are often recruited this way, and some also join on the recommendation of current participants. Increasingly, people also find out about the group through an internet search. The local respiratory nurses and physios have continued to be very helpful in sending people to the group. Awareness of the benefits of Singing for Breathing among health professionals continues to rise.

Two of our members sadly died in the summer of 2017. Some others have been unable to attend for a variety of reasons. One moved away to Wales where the air is cleaner. Other reasons for leaving were transport issues, and looking after grandchildren. One lady had a prolonged absence after a serious lung reduction operation. She was determined to return and is now attending regularly again. Over the winter months two members suffered broken ankles. When members are ill we keep in touch by means of get well cards and, where appropriate, phone calls. There is also a group email system.

Session Content

Sessions begin with tea and chat. We are grateful to our small team of volunteers who help make sure everything is in place so the sessions can run smoothly. After a guided relaxation we move on to up to half an hour of body, breath and voice exercises, followed by about half an hour of singing. During the year we have learned a wide variety of songs, including popular songs, folk songs and songs from a number of world music traditions.



Irish Session

Benefits

Members report that they are breathing better, they feel better generally and are able to do more. The theory is that, over time, regular repetition of healthy breathing techniques conditions the body to breathe that way automatically more of the time. Members report that this does in fact happen. Members also value the relaxation techniques, which, once learned, can be very helpful if an exacerbation (flare-up of breathing problems) occurs at home.

Additionally, members report that the sessions lift their mood. They look forward to the group as a high point of the week, and it gives them something to work towards. Many of the members practise the exercises and sing at home, which increases the beneficial effects.

The members also say that it is a relief to be part of a group where other members understand their difficulties, but where their condition is not the sole focus. Rather, they can focus on learning new skills and singing together.

Evaluation and Research

We have continued to send baseline forms for new members and 12 weekly evaluation forms for all members to the British Lung Foundation to assist with their research into the benefits of singing for lung health.

Open Sessions

In the last year we held three special 'party' sessions, which were open to visitors and guests: in August, a 'Film Premiere'; in December, a Christmas party; and in March, an 'Irish Session'. These sessions gave the group a chance to showcase the songs they had been learning, without the stress of a more formal performance. The room was set up café style, with chairs placed around the tables. Printed programmes included the words to the songs, so that guests could also join in. Buffet style refreshments were provided. Guest musicians were invited, and we also happily discovered that some of our members played instruments such as the ukulele, violin and keyboard.

Members and guests alike have very much enjoyed these open sessions, and we plan to continue to hold 2 or 3 of these per year.

Film and Website

We were approached by film-maker Paul Christie, who had heard about our group and thought it would be a good subject for a short documentary film. Filming took place over a number of weeks, and was completed in time for a film premiere on 17 August. Kay met with Paul a number of times during filming to look over the film and discuss the editing process. The finished film includes interviews with Kay, respiratory physiotherapist Louise Goswell, and several of the group members. It has been very well received and widely shared. It was recently shown on a British Lung Foundation Singing for Breathing training weekend in Denmark.



Film Premiere

As part of the film project, Paul also created an excellent new website for the group, which, as well as the documentary, includes longer versions of the interviews and some that were not included in the film.

We decided to dedicate the film to our very first member, Peter Kendrick, who is featured in the film and who sadly died in June. Peter loved singing and was an excellent ambassador for the group. As well as being our first member, he had not missed a session since the group started, up until his heart attack in May. We were very pleased that five members of his family were able to come to the premiere.

The film, 'Giving it our all', is available to view on our website www.singingforbreathing.wordpress.com. The website also contains useful information about the group, and more short videos in the 'members' stories' section.

Cover for Kay

We have been pleased to recruit an experienced local singing teacher, Penny Lutoslawska, to cover for Kay when she is unable to take the group because of illness or holidays. This has been an important step forward for the group and means Kay can take proper breaks. Penny has a lot of relevant experience. She has received training from Kay and has also attended a BLF training weekend designed for singing teachers who are already teaching singing for health, and who wish to specialise in Singing for Breathing work.

The future

We hope that awareness of the group and the benefits of Singing for Breathing will continue to grow, through regular promotional visits to Pulmonary Rehab and other groups, continued advertising in GP surgeries and hospitals, and through our film and website. In this way we will continue to recruit new members who will benefit from Singing for Breathing. We also hope that, through our web presence, we will inspire other singing leaders to start Singing for Breathing groups in other areas, so that more people living with COPD, IPF, chronic asthma and other lung diseases will be able to experience the benefits.

This year, we received some funding for our work from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group. We are very grateful to them, and to all our funders for their continued support, without which none of this would be possible.

4. Other Talking in Tune Events

The Talking in Tune Annual Winter Busk

This took place outside the Guildhall in Cambridge when almost 70 people, our largest number yet, turned up to sing seasonal songs, and raise funds for Wintercomfort, the Cambridge charity supporting homeless people.



Sing for Water

In June, we were very sorry to hear of the death of Lorraine Mitchell who sang with Good Vibrations and Women of Note and was an active supporter of Talking in Tune for many years. She organised the Cambridge participation in the annual London Sing for Water to raise money for Water Aid for several years and will be greatly missed.

On 6 July Rowena organised a singing practice for 14 singers participating in Sing for Water

5. Workshops

We regularly invite highly skilled and experienced workshop leaders and teachers to run community singing workshop days of a high quality. These enable local people to experience a variety of music and singing styles from different vocal traditions. The surplus generated by these workshops contributes to the other activities of Talking in Tune

This year, we ran two workshops:



On the afternoon of 14 October 2017, around 50 people, led by Bruce Knight, got together and learned and sang songs from a wide range of vocal traditions – from Sanskrit to Neil Young, from contemplative to energetic. It was lovely to see some new faces this time, and to see how much we could achieve under Bruce's guidance in such a short period of time.

The B Naturals, a four-man a cappella group, visited us to lead a workshop on 25 February 2018. Around 60 of us learned 'Money, Money, Money', 'Celebration', and 'Heard it Through the Grapevine', all arranged by the B Naturals, who rounded off the afternoon by singing us a few of their songs. Having a teacher for each part is a particular pleasure!



6. Future Plans

1. We will consolidate the work of the Memory Notes and offer training and support to people who wish to set up similar groups.
2. We will continue to support the work and encourage the development of Singing for Breathing.
3. We will continue to create events, workshops and performances which are inclusive, participative and community-building.
4. We will continue to organise accessible, high-quality singing workshops and performances. Some of these will be fundraising events for *Talking in Tune* projects.
5. We will look for alternative sources of funding for our work and continue to encourage local people to support our work via Local Giving.
6. We will continue to support volunteers who want to develop singing workshops and activities and to support the work of local singing leaders.
7. We will continue to liaise with other organisations in the city to support the development of more music making and singing in the community.

8. Grateful Thanks to:

- The *Talking in Tune* Committee for all their hard work and support in keeping *Talking in Tune* organised.
- Rowena Whitehead, leader of The Memory Notes, Sylvia Dannreuther, Coordinator.
- Kay Barrett, leader of Singing for Breathing.
- The volunteers with The Memory Notes: Andrew Bradford, Elaine Brown, Chris Burgess, Rowena Ching, Christine Garner, Kate Grillet, Cathy Hadridge, Neil Harris, Sharron Mahoney, Nikki Searle, Jo Thulbourn, Val Worcester.
- The Volunteers with Singing for Breathing: Laura Cherry, Alexis Deighton-Malntyre, Catherine Hankard, Peter Scourfield, Rowena Ching and Kate Meaby.
- All the volunteers who give cheerful and practical support to enable the *Talking in Tune* events happen – over 60 people, so thank you everyone!
- Sylvia Dannreuther and Sue Durham for their work in organising Talking in Tune workshops, and the volunteers who help on the days.
- Our funders:
 - Black Fen Folk Club
 - Cambridgeshire Community Foundation
 - Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group
 - The Girton Carol Singers
 - The Girton Town Charity
 - The Small World Dancing Club
 - The Strangward Trust
 - Two other funding groups who wish to remain anonymous
 - Friends and supporters who have given financial aid

9. Talking in Tune Committee 2017–18

Frances Sword (Chair)
Roger Giddings (Treasurer)
Sue Durham (Secretary)
Anne Chippindale
Sue McLean
Rowena Whitehead, Musical Director (non-voting member)