

soundabout inclusive choir



West Midlands Choir Member Information Pack

Welcome to the West Midlands Soundabout Inclusive Choirs network! We're so pleased to have you joining our musical community without barriers. Please read through this information pack in full and send us an email to let us know that you are happy with all the guidelines.

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About the Soundabout Inclusive Choirs

Soundabout Inclusive Choirs are musical communities without barriers, welcoming people of all ages and abilities. Their delivery approach was created by the charity Soundabout whose specialism is in using music to unlock the potential of people with severe and profound learning disabilities.

The aims of the choirs are to have fun and connect with others through music whilst also developing confidence, musical skills, social skills, leadership skills and enhancing general well-being.

The choirs are run in partnership with the Leicester Music Hub, the Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Peterborough Music Hub, and Wiltshire Music Connect, thanks to funding from the Arts Council.

The BBC News at Ten featured the Oxford Choir in May 2020. You can see the coverage [here](#), followed by an appearance on BBC Songs of Praise, which you can view [here](#).

To see some videos of the choir performing during lockdown click [here](#):

- Wash Your Hands: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sKfF1QHPCz4>
- Reach: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XFyvbK5Xae4>
- Amazing Grace (with The King's Singers): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2AdcUbjPr2A>

How does the West Midlands Choir work?

The West Midlands Choir is currently run virtually, which has enabled it to be accessed by people for whom travel, support and personal care considerations can limit face to face opportunities. Rehearsals take place fortnightly.

As of September 2021, we will, in addition to the fortnightly West Midlands Choir virtual sessions have face-to-face sessions running in five WM hub areas every four weeks (or alternate sessions). Those areas are:

- Birmingham – in partnership with Services For Education
- Coventry – in partnership with Coventry Music
- Sandwell – in partnership with SIPS Music & Arts
- Solihull – in partnership with Solihull Music Service & Hub
- Worcestershire – in partnership with Severn Arts

What to expect from virtual rehearsals

As of January 2020 the Soundabout Inclusive Choirs are operating entirely virtually via Zoom. In due course, once it is safe to do so we will move to also meet face to face, and will send an update to the handbook when these rehearsals take place.

What will happen before the rehearsal

- You will be sent a registration and consent form to fill in. Please aim to get this back before your first rehearsal time so we can add you to the mailing list. If you have any trouble filling it in online and would like us to post it to you instead please email us at choir@soundabout.org.uk or call 01235 797474 to let us know.
- You will then receive an email from choir@soundabout.org.uk the Friday before each rehearsal with a Zoom link to enable you to join the rehearsal. You can join via phone, ipad or laptop/PC. As there are lots of faces to see, the bigger the screen the better!
- If you haven't used Zoom before, here's a video which explains what to do: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362193-Joining-a-meeting>, Please call us if you have any difficulties getting online.

What you will experience during the rehearsal

- You will clearly hear and see our choir directors who will be leading the rehearsal and will be able to sing/drum/shake/vocalise/make music back along with them



- You will see a gallery of faces of all the people participating in the session, and there will be times when everyone will individually be heard one by one e.g. during the Hello and Goodbye song. The way we will do this will be by muting and unmuting your microphones - and we ask for your help with doing this as well.
- You won't be able to hear everyone making music together at the same time however - there is no technology available yet that can reduce what is called the latency delay and varied connectivity or any feedback loop caused by your microphone hearing its own speaker and re-amplifying itself. We use backing tracks that we add our voices to to make it feel like we are all singing together.
- The way that we work is everyone is part of the choir - even those who are there in order to support someone's participation. If this is you, please stay, sing and get involved!
- The chat function will be disabled, so please email to communicate your thoughts with us using the 'reactions' function on Zoom, hand gestures, or by unmuting. We also welcome your emails to choir@soundabout.org.uk with thoughts, ideas or feedback, either before or after the sessions.
- One of the ways we are able to hear ourselves singing together is by adding our choir members' voices to the backing tracks that we sing against. We will send out the backing tracks so that you can practise at home, and you are always invited to record your voices or instruments so that we can add them to the song, and make it feel more like it would do if we were singing together in person.

What to have with you

- If you have any instruments, shakers, tambourines 🥁 🥁 it would be great if you have them to hand.
- We always start with a Hello Song and invite everyone to take their turn singing or playing it (only if you want to) - we will teach it to you on the day.
- Please have bags of patience - it is a different experience singing via Zoom but we do hope it will be one that you enjoy.

Our Choir Code of Conduct

Keeping all our choir members safe and modelling good practice is a responsibility we take seriously. To ensure that we keep all of our choir members safe we would ask for you to read and confirm that you're happy to abide by the Soundabout Inclusive Choir code of conduct.

- We don't share the Zoom link with anyone outside of the choir group. If you know someone who might like to join the choir please ask them to email

choir@soundabout.org.uk to sign up. This means that we know everyone who has joined us as they have filled in a registration and consent form.

- If we are responsible for another choir member due to their age or support needs we stay nearby throughout the session, ideally in the same room or where they can be seen.
- We ensure that our Zoom user names can be easily recognised by the choir team. (If you need any help with working out how to do this, [click here](#) for a step-by-step guide.) We don't use emails as user names.
- If we are feeling a need to be private we can keep our cameras switched off.
- We are always dressed appropriately to be seen publicly for choir sessions. For example, if we are wearing nightwear, we keep our cameras switched off.
- Everyone's musical contribution is wanted and welcome, and we are always supportive of each other.
- We don't take screengrabs of the choir zoom group without asking permission.
- We use the email soundabout.org.uk to get in touch with the choir team (See further information below about how to send films for video projects).
- We understand that the choir leaders will let us know if they are planning to film or photograph a session so we can turn our cameras off if we have not given consent to be filmed, or are feeling shy!

Everyone's privacy is valued and respected which includes all choir members, volunteers and leaders. If anyone feels that their privacy has not been respected please contact the choir leadership team via choir@soundabout.org.uk or our designated safeguarding lead Philippa Higginbottom via PhilippaHigginbottom@soundabout.org.uk.

Guidelines for Recording and Sending Films for Video Projects

Due the fact we are now working virtually, the main way that we are able to perform 'together' is by filming ourselves or the people we support performing at home, and cutting them into music videos to share with our friends, family and the wider world. It is not mandatory to be part of these videos but everyone is welcome to.

1. Unless we have asked you otherwise, please wear your Soundabout T-shirt if you have one. If you don't have one and would like to buy one, you can do so from this link: <https://www.soundabout.org.uk/shop/soundabout-branded-t-shirt/>
2. Listen or download the NEW backing track which you will have been sent a link to. If possible please listen to the track on headphones while you film yourself singing/playing/signing/making music along with it, or have it playing very quietly if you can't tolerate headphones
3. Find a different device to film on and if possible, please ask someone else to film you, rather than doing it as a selfie. (This is because the selfie camera is less good quality than the one on the other side of your phone. If not, a selfie is fine.)

4. Make sure that the camera/camera-phone is set to film landscape (wide, by turning the phone on its side) rather than portrait (long and thin).
5. Sing, play, sign or dance all the way through, or whatever parts you feel comfortable with.
6. Please make sure there is minimal background noise in whatever space you are in - try and film inside in a quiet room (as removing a lorry going by or a dog bark in the edit is tricky).
7. Please upload the finished video by clicking on this link: <https://www.dropbox.com/request/SsNIVuwKlAC6o0M6jej>. If you struggle with dropbox you can send it via WeTransfer to choir@soundabout.org.uk or WhatsApp to 07970 002142.

Your agreement

I can confirm I have read the Member Information Pack and agree to abide by the code of conduct. (You can also indicate your agreement in an email if this is easier).

Signed _____

Date _____

Also signing on behalf of _____