

Trustee from the legal profession Information for applicants



Charity No. 1136173
Company No. 06764584



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About the Choir with No Name

What we do

At the Choir with No Name (CWNN) we run choirs for homeless and marginalised people. We support our choir members to make friends and build the confidence and skills they need to get back on their feet. Whether they've been homeless, have a mental health problem or are otherwise struggling, we offer our members somewhere to feel safe, sing away their worries, have fun and begin to flourish.

We currently run four choirs; two in London, one in Birmingham and one in Liverpool, and we'll soon be launching in Brighton. Our choirs all work the same way: a weekly rehearsal followed by a free hot meal, cooked by our brilliant and committed teams of volunteers. Our staff and volunteers offer friendly, informal advice and support to our members, while maintaining an ethos where volunteers and members are on an equal footing, singing alongside each other as sopranos, altos, tenors and basses. We perform regularly (on average once a month!) in venues from the Royal Festival Hall, Birmingham Symphony Hall and Brighton Dome to local older people's services and hospital wards. We offer outreach in the form of singing workshops in hostels, day centres and other services for vulnerable adults (not just homeless services). We sing uplifting pop songs and our rehearsals and gigs are led by experienced choir directors and accomplished piano players, so that our members have a solid musical platform to stand on.

We have a small central team, comprising our Chief Executive (part-time), General Manager and Fundraising & Communications Manager. Our General Manager leads our choir teams (each choir has a choir manager and a choir director, as well as its team of volunteers). We are imminently trialling a new business model in which the choir manager post is delivered by a homeless sector or arts sector partner, helping us to cut costs and increase sustainability.

We aim for our choirs to become a vital part of their local community, offering meaningful and inclusive performance and workshop opportunities that bring people together and show off what our members can achieve.

Our history

Our first choir was founded in 2008 in King's Cross by Marie Benton, current Chief Executive, then a professional musician and at the time also a senior project worker at homeless accommodation provider St Mungo's. She ran the first choir with volunteers on a shoestring until 2011, when we received our first major grant (from the Henry Smith Charity), employed our second member of staff, and started up our second choir, in Birmingham. We have since added choirs in South London and Liverpool, and under current Chair Rachel Youngman have strengthened our governance to the point where we are a well-respected "big hitter" in the field of arts and homelessness. Joining the organisation at this point will be about making sure that the organisation's fantastic first decade turns into many decades more, and about bringing new energy and ideas to the mix.



Why we are needed

Homeless Link (the umbrella body for homelessness services in England) reports a 134% increase in rough sleeping numbers since 2010. At the same time, austerity measures and local government cuts are continuing to hit the homeless sector hard, meaning that there is dwindling resource to support those who are homeless or vulnerably housed. Increasingly, local authorities are only able to commission those services it sees as essential; e.g. accommodation and street outreach; the “extras” that empower a person to really rebuild their confidence and their life are down to organisations like ours to deliver.

The power of a positive space, with a meaningful and fun activity that members choose for themselves, can't be underestimated. Far from the traditional idea of key work, where people are forced to share the details of their history and problems, chatting naturally to our staff and volunteers puts our members in control of what they want to share and address. They can be whoever they choose to be. It means that we are hugely successful in addressing the issues most commonly experienced by our members (as cited in our annual member surveys); reducing social isolation, increasing self-confidence, improving mental health & wellbeing and increasing skills.

Impact

We worked with 795 homeless or marginalised people over the course of 2016/17

- 450 people attended singing workshops
- 346 people attended rehearsals (with an average of 224 regular choir members at any one time)

We delivered:

- 192 rehearsals
- 51 performances (to a total audience of around 15,000)
- Individual tailored support to 64 people through our Moving on Up project
- 15 outreach workshops
- 3 workshops for corporate clients
- Consultancy to 12 individuals or organisations wanting to begin a choir for vulnerable people

The outcomes:

- 98% of our members reported an increase in their confidence as a result of joining choir



- 96% of members reported making friends at choir
- 78% reported improved wellbeing
- 64% reported learning more than one new skill (e.g. teamwork, anger management)
- 92% reported being more motivated to try new things, and 82% accessed a new activity or service
- 60% of choir members took up or maintained new employment, volunteering or secure housing, and named their choir as having a direct impact on those changes
- 4 of the individuals or organisations to whom we gave consultancy have gone on to start choirs for vulnerable people

Ronnie's story

"I'd never sung in a choir before, so I had no expectations, but from the moment I walked in, everyone was so warm and welcoming it was a really great place to go and not be judged, where everyone looked you in the eye and actually treated you like a human. It felt great to just hang out with nice people and sing together. The crucial thing is that singing makes you feel good. No matter how bad your week's been, you go to choir, have a sing and you feel better. It gives you something to look forward to.

Last year things had got pretty desperate for me. I was sleeping rough in a sleeping bag given to me at a day centre. The Hackney Winter Night Shelter managed to get me indoors into church halls and eventually I moved into a notorious hostel, full of drugs and hardened criminals, barely fit for human habitation. I've had depression all my life, so I was at my lowest point at that time. If I'm honest, I didn't think I would make it through. It was the worst year of my life, but I made it and Choir with No Name was a large part of that.

At choir rehearsal one week Ian [staff member] and I talked about what I could do outside of choir. We started talking about music and I mentioned that I had written a few songs, but that depression had prevented me from finishing them. He asked if I wanted to come to one of his gigs [Ian is in a band outside of the Choir with No Name]. He restored my faith in humanity at that moment. All of a sudden someone was talking to me like a human, inviting me to do something outside of my current isolated existence at a grim hostel. I went along to a few gigs, and we finished writing my songs together. He also helped me to get on employment courses and training, which gave me the confidence and skills to actually move forwards with my life, rather than just existing. When I was at my worst, the thought of sticking with something for 12 weeks, like a training course, seemed impossible. When you're on the street, you can't look ahead 12 weeks, that's a lifetime away. You're just trying to survive each day.



In the space of a year I have gone from a desperate situation that I saw no way out of, to living in my own flat in Maida Vale, graduating from House of St Barnabas Employment Academy, a place on a level 2 web design course, counselling for my depression and a future ahead of me. I owe a lot of that to the Choir with No Name for giving me the confidence, belief and opportunity to do it, as well as the support and friendship from the people I have met there. My life has changed beyond recognition. Every day I wake up and pinch myself.

When you're homeless, so much of what you experience strips you of your dignity. The Choir with No Name gave me hope & optimism. It was my North Star in a constellation of helplessness. It gave me my dignity back."

Our 2015-2020 strategic plan

Our vision

That all people have a place they belong, where they can sing their hearts out.

Our mission

To enable as many homeless and marginalised people as possible to beat loneliness and build their confidence and skills through singing.

Our values

Family: For many of our choir members the support of family and friends is absent. At the Choir with No Name everyone is welcomed and made a fuss of, regardless of their background or life story. Our staff, volunteers and members support each other's endeavours, musical or otherwise. We also strive to retain our family feel with our supporters and friends.

Fun: We create a relaxed atmosphere where everyone is encouraged to enjoy themselves!

Integrity: We always put our members first and won't sacrifice their welfare for fame or fortune. We also strive for excellence in performance and expect the best from our singers, using top notch musicians to help deliver that vision.

Collaboration: We like to establish positive relationships and work in partnership with other arts and vulnerable adults organisations. Our members are able to contribute to the direction of their choir through meaningful consultation (including having a voice at trustees' meetings).

Strategic goals

1) We will grow wider

We have a careful plan for geographical growth, planning it carefully and at the right time to ensure our infrastructure can support it.



2) We will grow deeper

We will maximise opportunities to work with more people in our existing locations, and ensure that we build more in-depth support for our choir members into our operating model. We'll work in partnership with local arts and homelessness organisations wherever possible, ensuring that each choir is truly owned by its host city.

3) We will think BIG in terms of profile

We'll continue to support our members and reduce the stigma of homelessness by challenging perceptions and making our members' voices heard. We will reach new audiences and greater numbers of people.

4) We will make sure we can weather the storms

We will take steps to ensure our staff and volunteers are fully supported and that rehearsals would continue to be delivered each week, and our plans would not go awry if something untoward happened.

5) We will seek friends in new and high places (not neglecting old friends!)

We will continue to spread our fundraising across diverse income streams (trust, corporate, individual and self-generated) in order to mitigate risk.

For more detail see our Strategic Plan 2015-20.

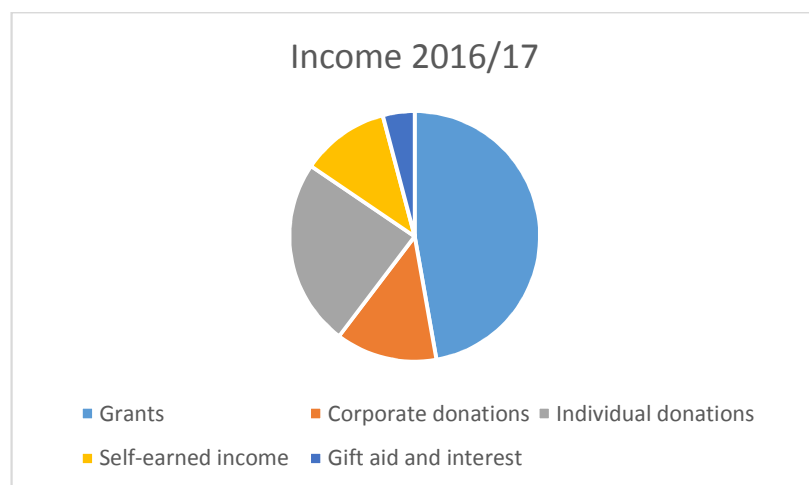
Our plans for 2018

1. 2018 is our 10th anniversary year. We will be celebrating with a brand new recording and a big gig that gets all our singers together; a fantastic time to get involved!
2. We will be starting up a new choir in Brighton in early 2018
3. After ten years in post, Founder and Chief Executive Marie Benton will be moving on in 2018. Our board will therefore be supporting a new Chief Executive, helping to ensure that the organisation becomes sustainable after the exit of its Founder and that our impact reaches its full potential
4. We will be merging our two London choirs into one flagship central London choir, with high profile partners
5. We are currently discussing the option of starting up a whole new type of choir in which members of the general community are as much a part of the choir as those recruited from the homeless sector. This model would be more easily replicable, as the earning members of the choir would pay subs to keep it running. If we decide to go ahead we could therefore see more rapid growth across the UK.

The Choir with No Name Finances 2016/17

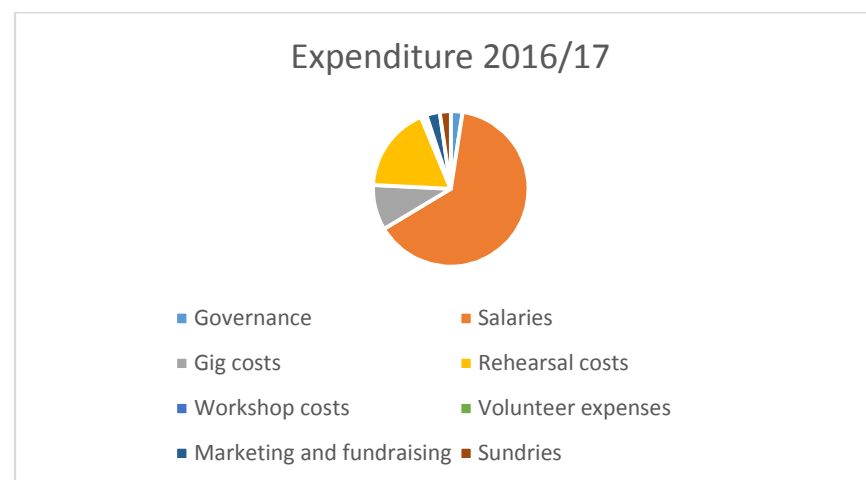
Income

Our income for the year was £279,612. (2015/16: £303,583).



Expenditure

Our expenditure was £310,643 (2015/16: £293,274).



This gave a net deficit for the year of £31,031 (2016: £10,309 surplus). This deficit was not unexpected; our strategy for 2015-20 identified 2016/17 as a year of consolidation for the Choir with No Name, with a need to focus on diversifying income, relying less on grants and increasing the proportion of our income from individuals. We achieved that aim, with grant income down by 10% and income from individuals up by 40%. The staff team's fundraising is now on track, and we begin the following year (2017/18) with 74% of our income for the year secure, and are forecasting a surplus that will redress the deficit of the previous year.

Our latest set of independently examined accounts (for 2015/16) are also available for download from the recruitment link on our website.



The current board

- **Rachel Youngman (Chair):** An experienced public and third sector Chief Executive, since joining us in 2011 Rachel has strengthened our governance, inspired and mentored our Chief Executive, established productive boundaries between the trustees' and staff's responsibilities, and as a result is leaving a happy and healthy organisation as her legacy.
- **Paul Staples (Treasurer):** Paul is a senior accountant with Grant Thornton UK LLP. He has been a loyal member of the Choir with No Name board since 2012. He provides the necessary fastidiousness and attention for detail to the team!
- **Alexia Murphy:** A new recruit, joining us in early 2017, Alexia is the Executive Director for Services at Depaul UK, a leading charity for homeless young people. She also served St Mungo's for ten years as their New Business Director.
- **Alan Jephcott:** Until recently when he retired, Alan was the Head of Client Involvement at Midland Heart, a large supported housing association in the Midlands.
- **Christopher Cox:** Chris is our expert on communications, holding various posts as the head of Digital Communications with third and public sector organisations, including Rethink and Mind.
- **Miriam Goodall:** As well as a keen singer herself, Miriam heads up Community Fundraising at Battersea Cats and Dogs Home. She was also behind Water Aid's highly successful *Sing for Water* campaign. Miriam is our newest trustee, joining us in July 2017.
- **Sarah Tunstall:** Sarah is our corporate sector representative; she is the Commercial Director at Digital Agency Fresh Egg.
- **Victoria Wood:** Vicky is a solicitor; a partner in the entertainment, music and media department of central London law firm Statham Gill Davies.



The Role

Title: Trustee of the Choir with No Name

Time commitment:

- At least 4 board meetings a year
- Occasional representation of the Choir with No Name with key internal and external stakeholders at events and meetings
- Ad-hoc phone and email contact with the Chief Executive as required

Remuneration: The role of trustee is not accompanied by any financial remuneration, though out of pocket expenses for travel may be claimed

Location: Board meetings are usually held in London in varying locations

Length of term: This is a three-year term with the possibility of re-appointment for a further three-year term

Reporting to: Chair of Board of Trustees

Responsibilities

1. Strategic leadership

- Ensure the Choir with No Name follows a clear vision, mission and strategic plan
- Regularly review major risks and opportunities ensuring that systems are in place to mitigate the risks and seize appropriate opportunities
- Ensure the sound financial health of the charity, with systems in place to ensure financial accountability

2. Governance and legal responsibilities

- Ensure that the charity complies with charity and company law, and with the requirements of the Charity Commission and Companies House as its regulators
- Ensure that the charity doesn't breach any of the requirements or rules set out in its governing document and that it remains true to its charitable purpose
- Ensure that the charity complies with the requirements of other legislation which governs the activities of the charity
- Provide legal guidance to staff and trustees on new initiatives (such as setting up new choirs in other cities or releasing recorded music)
- Appropriately develop the knowledge and capability of the board of trustees and staff team on legal issues



3. External relations

- Act as an ambassador for the Choir with No Name and spokesperson as appropriate
- Assist the staff and trustees to widen and diversify the Choir with No Name supporter base
- Represent the Choir with No Name at external functions, meetings and events as appropriate.

Person specification

Essential

- Legal experience and qualification, preferably in the charitable sector
- Broad knowledge and understanding of the charitable sector and the wider issues currently affecting it
- A strong affinity with the vision and values of The Choir with No Name
- Strategic thinking and experience of organisational strategy
- Experience and understanding of charity governance and working with or as part of a board of trustees
- Strong inter-personal, networking and relationship-building abilities

How to Apply

If you are interested in being considered for this role please submit a full CV with a covering letter explaining your interest in the organisation and how you believe you fulfil the role requirements to marie@choirwithnoname.org. Further steps towards recruitment will be discussed after an initial chat with our Chief Executive and/or Chair of Trustees.