



# Comfort Of Voices

## Evaluation Report

*Evaluating how the Scottish community singing sector can best support itself and what it needs to thrive*

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## Introduction

The aim of 'Comfort Of Voices' was to gather leaders of the Scottish community singing sector together to discuss and share ideas around how the sector can best support itself and to discover what additional input is required for it to face a bright future. It was funded by the National Lottery through Creative Scotland.

The programme was curated by a diverse, specialist steering group, responding to the concerns and needs identified by Scotland's community singing sector, gathered through two pre-conference online surveys and programme submissions. The event's four themes brought together leaders from across the community singing sector to share best practice and research, offer provocations for discussion, listen to and gauge needs and concerns. The conference enabled community singing leaders to sing together; network and connect with others working in similar contexts; discuss rebuilding the sector after Covid19; share skills and song repertoire; all without financial barrier, in an accessible hybrid digital format. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected throughout and after the conference in addition to pre-conference surveys.

*"Truly one of the best conferences I've ever attended. The mix of sessions, the ground covered, the way of capturing intent and momentum, together with the sheer joy and mastery of song-sharing, all showing how vibrant Scotland's singing sector is, how valuable our singing leaders are, and how exciting our future is."*

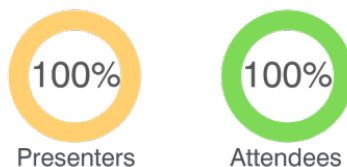
- Attendee, Comfort Of Voices

### Major findings include:

- Community singing leaders are concerned about their own health and self-care.
- They are experiencing long term adverse effects on their careers as a result of both Covid19 and the cost-of-living crisis and are reviewing their long-term work choices.
- They are struggling to finance their careers. Multiple concerns were voiced around lack of formalised fee structure, no formal support network, centralised place to access repertoire or other essential resources.
- Scarcity of training, mentoring and professional development was also raised; they think they need more training, but that Scotland does not offer enough relevant opportunities, and they experience capacity or financial barriers to accessing training.
- They expressed empathy and worry about their community singing groups, often doing unpaid preparation work, taking a lower fee to fit small community singing group budgets, or taking on extra responsibilities which drain their personal energy and resources.
- Many said they feel isolated in their work, both geographically and within the sector.

### The post-conference survey asked:

Do you endorse the idea of a national community singing sector support plan?

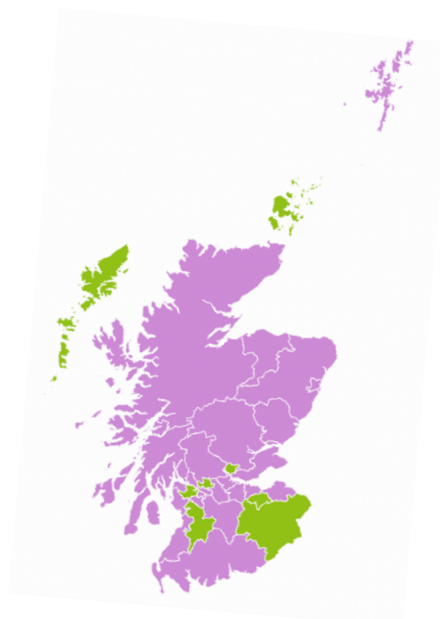


### Next steps:

Following this evaluation, the steering group met to construct a Scottish Community Singing Sector Support Plan based on the concerns and needs evidenced by the sector. Delivering a national support plan will require generous time capacity, strong strategic collaborations and partnerships at grassroots, local and national levels, and sustained funding support at national scale to achieve significant long-term development and progression.

## Pre-conference

Music inclusion charity **Love Music** conducted a Scotland-wide survey to determine the need for a conference for community singing and song leaders, and to ask the sector what content the event should cover. There were **51** responses across Scotland, with 49 responders identifying as a choir leader or director. 28 volunteered to present or have a role in the weekend. The pink areas on the map show the areas where responses were collected from, the green areas show where there were no responses.



Survey questions prompted responders to reflect on their **needs**, **hopes** and **challenges** in the community singing sector as a whole, both as a leader and on behalf of the singing groups they lead. Surveys found that there was exclusively positive support for a community singing leader conference to be held. The information collated during the initial survey formed the basis of a successful application to the Creative Scotland open fund to support the event.

A **steering group** was formed of some of Scotland's most highly regarded singing and choir practitioners with complementary specialisms across a wide range of community, social and health care settings. They worked alongside the production team at Love Music to form an event plan based on the requests identified in the survey responses.

**Stephen Deazley**: Artistic Director, Love Music  
**Penny Stone**: Singing for Health & Wellbeing specialist

**Ali Burns**: Natural Voice Network specialist  
**Katy Lavinia Cooper**: Head of Marketing & Trainer, Sing For Pleasure

**Alison Reeves**: Scottish Programme Manager, Making Music

**Mary Ann Kennedy**: Gaelic singer, composer & broadcaster **Andrew McTaggart**: Director, Ayr Choral Union

Pre-conference survey responses found the following **themes for sector sustainability**, which were used to inform conference design:

Covid19 Recovery	Marketing & Recruitment	Funding or Financial Assistance	Resources / Pedagogy	Legal	Technology
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sector-wide ongoing strategies for Covid19</li> <li>Supporting individual risk of the singer and leader</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choir members recruitment strategy</li> <li>Marketing strategy including audience development / engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial strategies for sustainability of community singing groups</li> <li>Fundraising</li> <li>Soloist / guest fee structures (outside of MU)</li> <li>Leader fees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Differentiation / cultural sensitivity / accessibility in choir content programming</li> <li>Vocal health resources</li> <li>Programming inspiration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legal and operational resource and instruction specifically for community singing repertoire and recordings</li> <li>Risk management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technology to rehearse</li> <li>Technology to record</li> <li>Technology to develop resources for community singing groups</li> <li>Upskilling</li> </ul>
Self Reflection / Self Care	Mental Health	Togetherness	Training	Collaboration	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capacity and affordability for evaluation</li> <li>Reflection and self-care for leaders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mental health strategies and approaches for choir participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Solidarity in the sector</li> <li>Team work, collaboration</li> <li>Networking</li> <li>Togetherness and shared vision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training opportunities across all areas of community singing leading</li> <li>Access to training in Scotland</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaboration within the community singing sector</li> <li>Collaboration within communities and further afield</li> </ul>	

The **top five requests** for conference activities were:

- To sing together
- Opportunities to network and connect with others
- To discuss rebuilding after covid
- Skill sharing
- Song sharing

The steering group circulated the opportunity to take part in the event to choir leaders across Scotland, asking leaders to submit their proposals to deliver a session (11 submissions), take part in a discussion (21) or lead a song (14). From the submissions, the steering group were able to identify the skills and experience of the leaders who wanted to take part and crafted a balanced programme from these which reflected the needs identified in the initial survey. See **Appendix 1** for the full conference programme with session descriptions.

*"I have been feeling so alone over these last two years. Even though I have attended a lot of events online, it's just not the same as singing and sharing together in person. I need to feel the fire again. I feel like my little spark is dying and I know from previous experience, the only way to reignite that flame is by collaborating with like-minded people."* - Attendee, Comfort Of Voices

## Comfort Of Voices gathering

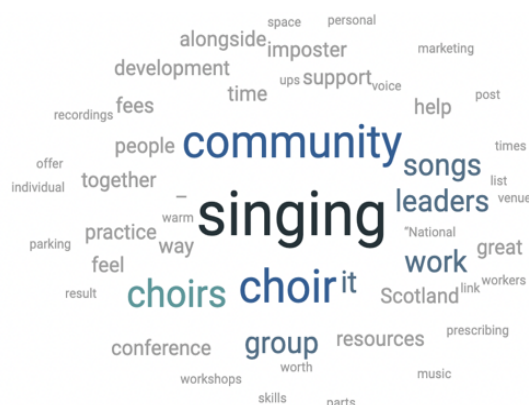
The conference, hosted by Love Music's Stephen Deazley, took place on 24 & 25 September 2022 in Glasgow and broadcast online. An external, neutral facilitator was appointed as a 'listening ear' to analyse, distil and reflect the needs of the community singing sector as disclosed by its community singing leaders.

## Data collection & basis of evaluation

*These numbers represent data collected at the event, and post-conference*

	Attended in person	Attended online	Filled in post-event survey
Presenters	16	0	14
Participants	33	22	24
Steering group (also presenting)	8	0	n/a
TOTAL	57	22	38
<b>OVERALL 79 ATTENDEES</b>			

*Word cloud created automatically in the Slido app from survey responses*



The following section breaks down the findings for each event session at the conference. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected through 'quick polls' via the Slido app, through presented material, discussions and reflections from presenters and attendees in the room, and attendees online.

Quick poll questions and options were linked both to the conference programme, and to the emerging themes for sector sustainability that arose from the pre-conference survey. The Slido polls were created before the event and so don't tally exactly with the content of each session, as these were discursive and responded to immediate feedback given from participants at the time. Due to the nature of the conference, not everyone attended every session, or filled in every poll. Slido calculated that 521 votes were cast across the 18 polls conducted, and our attendee data shows 79 people attended the conference either online or in person; however, the average number of people taking part in the polls across the weekend was 34.

Each pie-chart below shows the most important answer to each participant at the time of the event - participants were only able to select one answer for each question posed.

## SESSION 1: WHERE ARE WE NOW? - The first session posed the following provocations:

- Can we build and sustain a healthy career as a choir and song leader?
- What are the challenges?
- How do we create and deliver ongoing professional development opportunities across our very diverse sector?

### Can we build and sustain a healthy career as a choir and song leader?

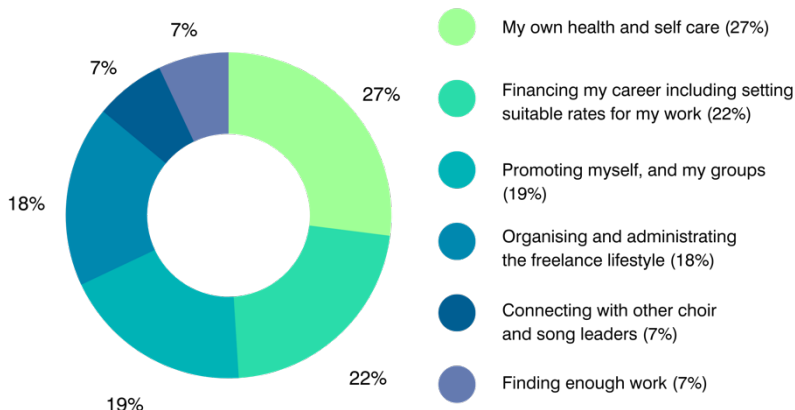
A discussion led to a united picture of what a 'healthy community singing leader' would look like in 2022.

The discussion points led to 8 categories:

- Financial stability (freelancing)
- Opportunity to train and learn
- Clear boundaries and expectations
- Able to celebrate own successes without comparing to others
- Part of a support network, feels valued
- Their work is valuable to communities and they can see the benefits and progression
- Part of a bigger movement
- Health, wellness and happiness



### What are your current challenges as a choir or song leader?



Most people selected concern about their health and self care: clear boundaries and expectations not being set, leading to taking on unnecessary or extra responsibility; some said they felt burnt out. Mental health was raised, with the lack of defined success in the job or recognition of personal value; competition and comparison to others poorly affecting self esteem or creating 'imposter syndrome'.

Some are struggling to finance their freelance careers. Comments included that personal circumstance subsidises their work, and that different rates of pay were agreed dependent on the kindness or wealth of their choirs.

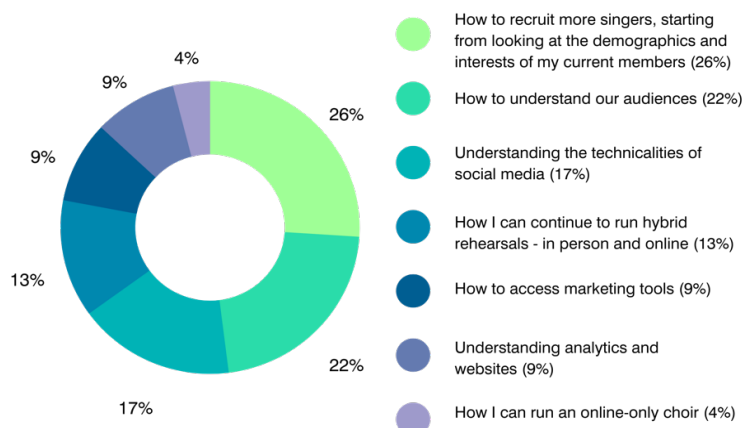
There was also concern about promoting themselves and their groups, particularly with regards to how much time that takes and individual skills in marketing required for both member recruitment and concerts.

Discussion on connecting with other choir leaders centred around a lack of opportunities to meet, support, share, or geographical isolation. There was concern that community singing groups would 'die a death' if they stopped their work leading them, and that access to leaders to deputise in emergencies was reliant on personal connection.





## What help in marketing and recruitment do you think you need the most?



Leading on from concerns about promotion, a further poll found that most want help in singer recruitment and how to understand their audiences.

*"It's a very lonely business being a leader and not having the support of others near you."*

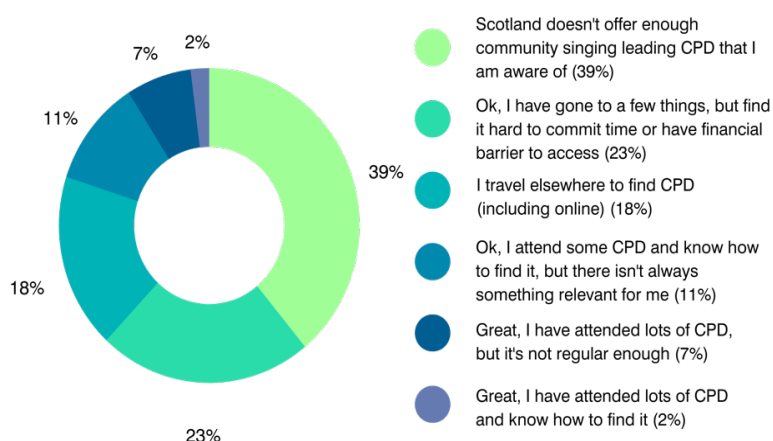
- Attendee, Comfort Of Voices

## How do we create and deliver ongoing professional development opportunities across our very diverse sector?

Discussion began looking at the breadth of community singing leader specialisms represented at the conference, from chamber choirs to choral societies to community opera, natural voice and singing for lung health specialists, pop crossover, folk, trad, jazz and beyond. Concerns were raised about the differences in pedagogy in particular areas of practice, and perceived lack of professional development across leading and managing community singing groups.

*"There is a diverse cross over between our singing worlds as a community singing sector."* – Attendee, Comfort Of Voices

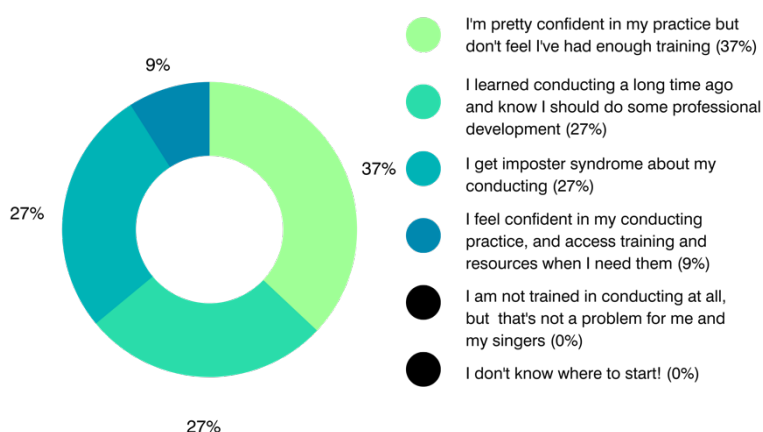
## Professional development opportunities (CPD) in community singing leadership in Scotland - how do you think we are doing as a sector?



Most selected that Scotland does not offer enough community singing leading professional development opportunity, with many others experiencing time or financial barriers to accessing existing opportunity. There was acknowledgement of the differing qualifications or experience required across Scotland's diverse community singing sector, and that leadership/conducting training pathways exist for some areas, but not all.

A further provocation was introduced in the context of training new or emerging community singing leaders: **Are we providing our emerging or young song leaders with enough information to put them on the path ready for freelancing?**

## Being a conductor, what are your biggest worries about your own practice?



A brief discussion centred around the formal training offer at institutional level. *"Conservatoires and HE institutions have possibly given pressure on what they believe success looks like and that has been detrimental to the community singing leading workforce."* - Presenter, Comfort Of Voices

## SESSION 2: CONTEXT IS THE KEY - The second session was focused on three topics:

- Inclusive Practice
- Singing songs from cultural traditions. What do we need to consider?
- What singers want!

### Inclusive Practice

Discussions around access and inclusion encouraged the following considerations to emerge:

- What support and resources do people organising singing activity need to make their environments more accessible and inclusive? The main areas and answers were:

**Physical Space:** Location, access, safe and warm space, ventilation.

**Approach:** Voices and experience, using non-musical language, teaching by ear, clear communication.

**Resources:** Audio learning resources, differently printed words, subject matter, clear information.

- If groups are so different and their purposes, aims and visions are so varied, when we provide guidance, what should inclusive practice look like?
- What if you define your group by protected characteristics?
- Can everyone be welcome in every choir environment?
- If inclusivity is at the detriment of others, e.g. loud disrupts / need for one to one support, how do you go about finding the right group or space for that person? Is it ok to turn people away from your group?

Advice given by presenters included:

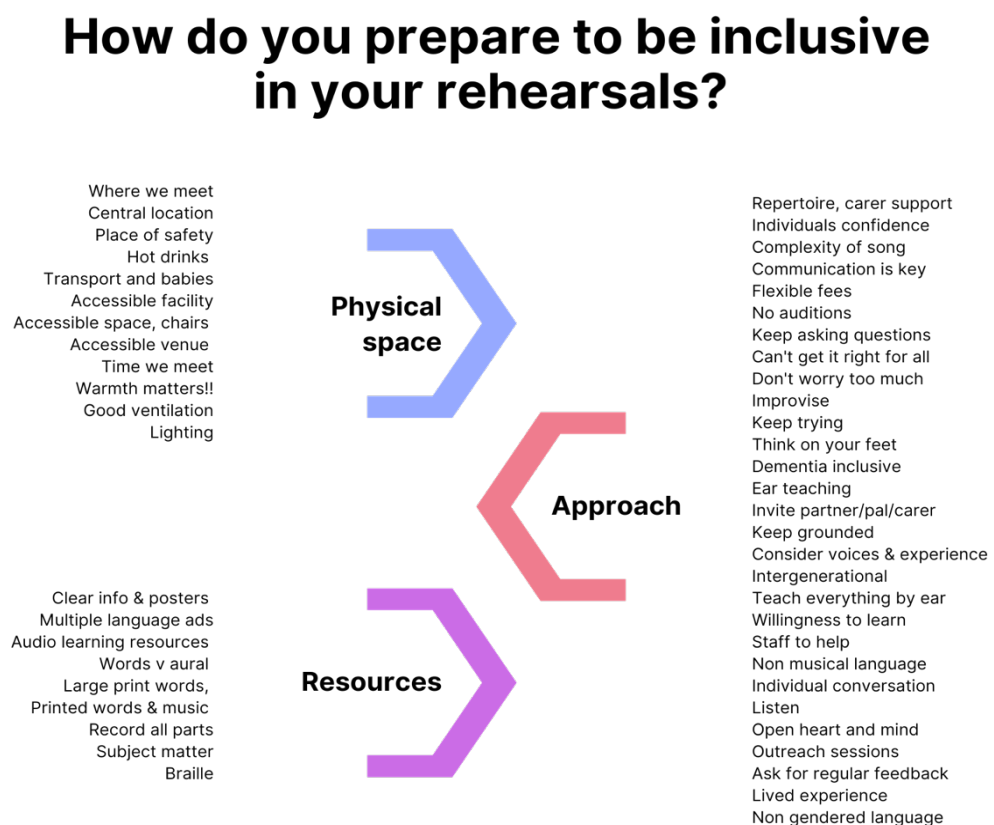
- First address barriers specific to the people in your group or those who are banging at the door.
- You are unlikely to spot all barriers, but you can ask individuals, the group, others with lived experience.
- Circumstances can change, so ask again. Barriers are not always big.
- What can community choirs can do to soften the edges for those with dementia to be included?

Concerns raised:

- Extra work required to create inclusivity as a leader isn't recognised financially, or in terms of capacity within the community singing leader role. Additionally, the leader may not always have the time, expertise, or resources to attend to specific requirements. "We only know what we know."

### Poll Cloud:

A quick poll cloud assembled attendees' thoughts on preparing for inclusivity in rehearsals:

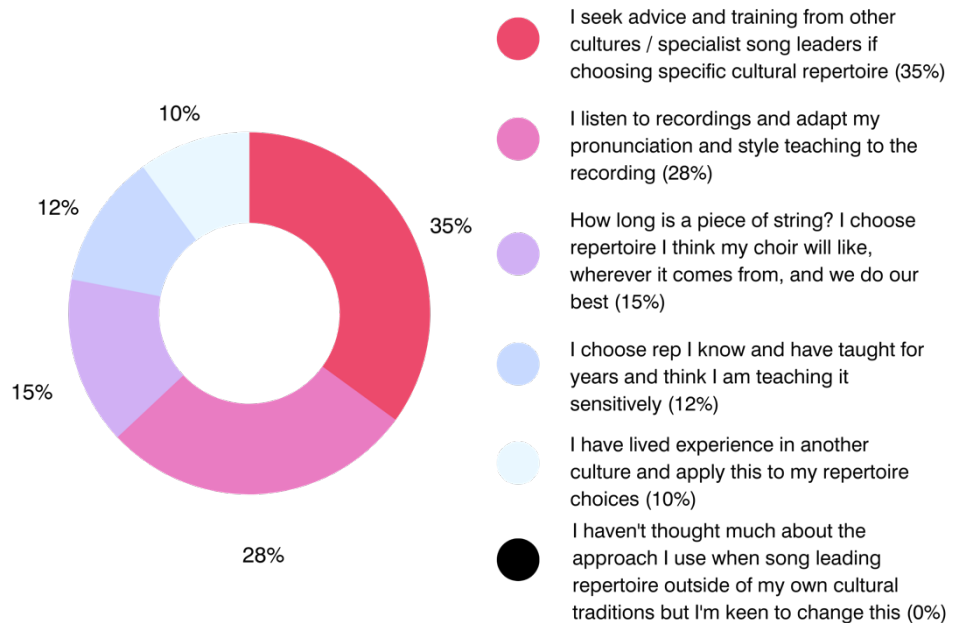


## Singing songs from cultural traditions. What do we need to consider?

A brief discussion concluded that this topic is very complex and requires significant thought. Comments included: *"Doing your homework is key... It's ok to be wrong and not know, as long as you are open and sensitive... Paying back: we can make sure the song writer, culture, arranger, is adequately paid for their work and celebrated... Contact arrangers and composers can help find out context... Ask permission and provide credit... Use singers in your groups to offer expertise and knowledge on pronunciations and translations... Offering where a song is from can really impact engagement."*

### Preparing to sing songs from outside your own culture

A quick poll showed that of those who filled in the poll, expertise, research or consideration was part of their preparation.



### What singers want!

Dr Kathleen Cronie presented her own research which asked, 'why do your singers come into the room for that session with you?' She found that it was about vision:

- Coordination, safeguarding, teaching
- Vocal-advising, vocal duty of care, singer prioritising demands
- Conducting tools, leadership style, personal qualities

Dr Cronie discussed with attendees what they thought the role of the community singing leader is to their singers. The discussion found that most of the leaders were prioritising the needs and desires of their singers already. They unanimously agreed that *"The song leader / conductor is the heart and the soul of the choir."* Central discussion points are shown in the cycle --->



### Do you think what your singers want from you as a conductor or leader has changed since Covid19 began?

In a quick poll:

**61%** said that nothing has changed.

**24%** found that choir members don't seem to be as committed anymore no matter what they do.

**10%** said that the needs have changed and are really demanding, they don't have enough capacity; and **5%** said that their singers want totally different things from them post Covid.



## SESSION 3: CARE, WELLBEING, HEALTH & GROWTH

The third session posed the following provocations:

- Embodied singing
- How do we address the trauma of the pandemic in our practice?
- Lung health and breathing well
- Engaging with research and evaluation

### Embodied singing

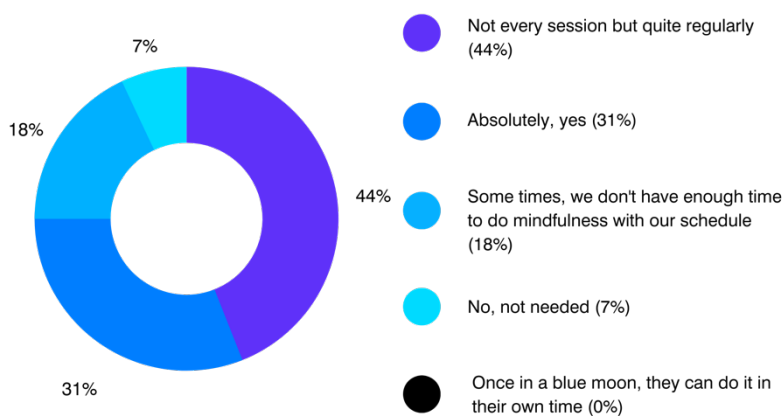
This session explored the holistic 'embodied singing' approach in song leading, *"moving to feel the colours in the song, involving the whole body so I feel it, not just sing it with my face"*.

Discussion evolved around the reality that each community singing leader may be working with people with complex traumas without necessarily knowing, and that some approaches to leading singing may risk exposing raw emotions. Some community singing groups exist specifically to support vulnerable groups, and may be run by specialists or therapists, and some may not.

Concerns raised included:

- Safeguarding issues for practitioners – how do we ensure that singing leaders can support the members, especially if specialist accommodations are required? How can we safeguard responsibly?
- Should we have skills, knowledge, training... even if a session is not focussed as a wellbeing practise?
- Accidental exclusion or triggering which results in a less safe space for an individual, such as not noticing an offhand comment someone else has made or asking singers to put away phones or fiddling devices when they need them to stay calm.

Do you think that the community singing sector leaders should be incorporating mindfulness in to their sessions as a standard practice?



***"Make sure your choir members are safe to go home at the end, through discussion or a mindfulness activity."*** -

*Music Therapist Attendee, Comfort Of Voices*

Mindfulness was raised as a useful method for both singing sessions and as a regular routine for the health of community singing leaders. **44%** think mindfulness should be regularly incorporated into community singing sessions as a standard practice.

***"As a community singing leader, my body is often at its most well when teaching and singing. It's the bit after that needs more work."***

- Attendee, Comfort Of Voices

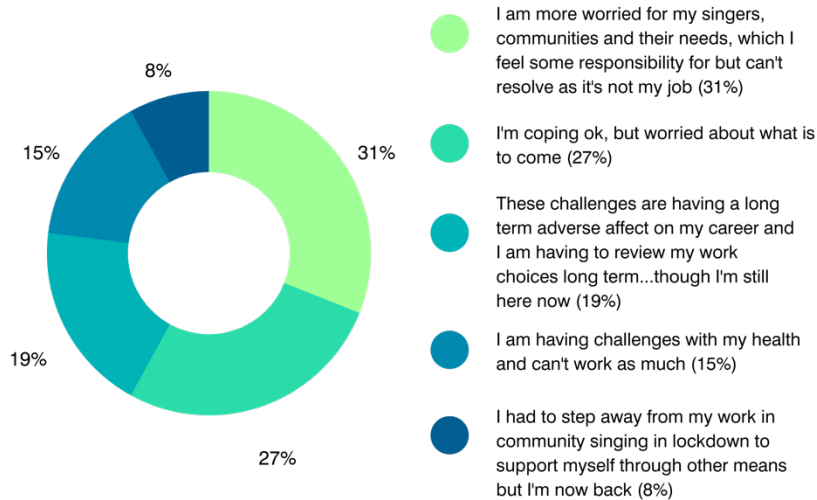
How do you feel about promoting a holistic approach to teaching and performing in your practice?



## How do we address the trauma of the pandemic in our practice?

*"We've all experienced a massive global trauma which has amplified many things for everyone. We now have to help people move forward gently as leaders. As leaders you need to be gentle with yourself."*

How has Covid19 and the current cost of living crisis affected you as a community singing leader?



Attendees unanimously agreed that looking after their own health and wellbeing was a positive way to address the trauma of Covid19 in their practice, so that they could be well to support their singers.

*"Attracting new members and increasing confidence in members under this Covid world: people are scared and anxious or gallow and over it and keeping a balance in the room is like hugging plates."*

*Responder to pre-conference survey*

*"When I couldn't work, two charities were amazing: Help Musicians UK, Royal Society of Musicians."*

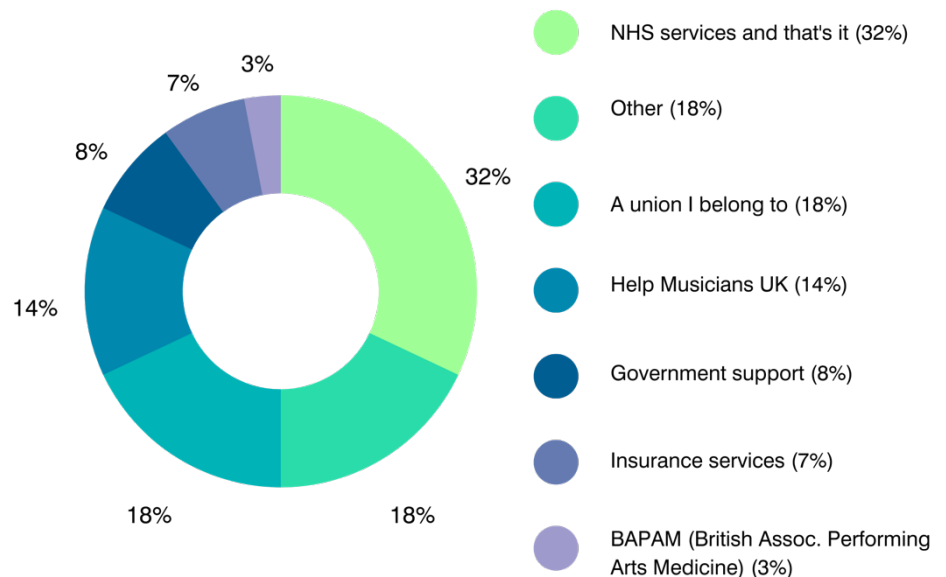
*- Presenter, Comfort of Voices*

The poll seeking information on where help is sought in an emergency, was implemented to discover whether Scotland's Community Singing Leaders are aware of pre-existing support.

Concerns voiced in the discussion included:

- No sick pay for freelancers and loss of income in an emergency
- Partners/family subsidising their career if unable to work
- No mechanism for finding 'deputy' singing leaders outside of personal networks
- The possible need for a 'plan B career' in the event of not being able to work

As a community singing leader, what help do you access in an emergency, for advice, and/or treatment?

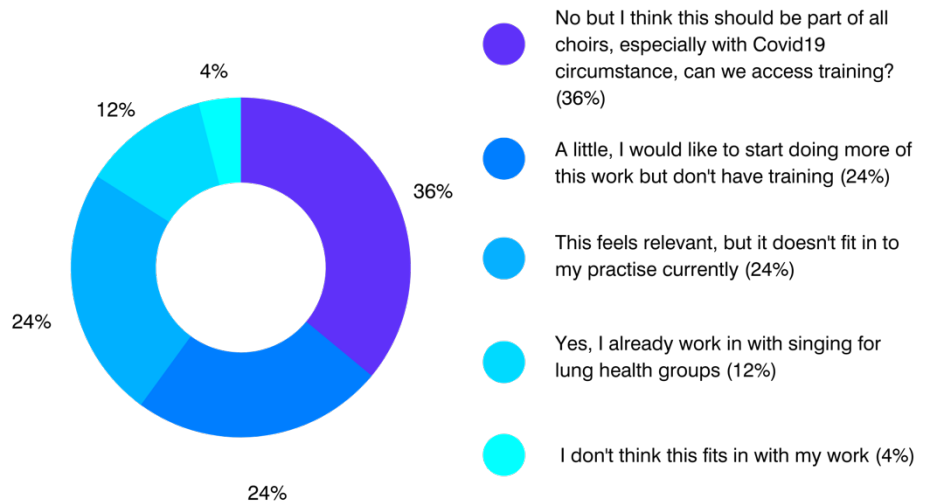


## Lung health & breathing well

A workshop on breathing for lung health with specialist practitioner Rachel Hynes revealed that Long Covid could affect the vagus nerve, which is connected to the vocal cords and muscles at the back of the throat.

Those with vagus nerve problems could face long-term issues with their voice, difficulty swallowing, dizziness, a high heart rate or low blood pressure. Singing, humming, chanting and gargling can activate these muscles and positively stimulate the vagus nerve. Community singing leaders were encouraged to look in to 'Rayvox' straws, a straw phonation vocal development tool with evidence-based design, to exercise and improve vocal fold technique, easing tired or fatigued vocal folds through 'semi-occlusion'.

Do you do any work around singing for lung health?



## Engaging with research & evaluation

*"Projecting forward... how do we best commission, collect and share the evidence we need that will help demonstrate the impact and reach of our singing work in a health and wellbeing context?"*

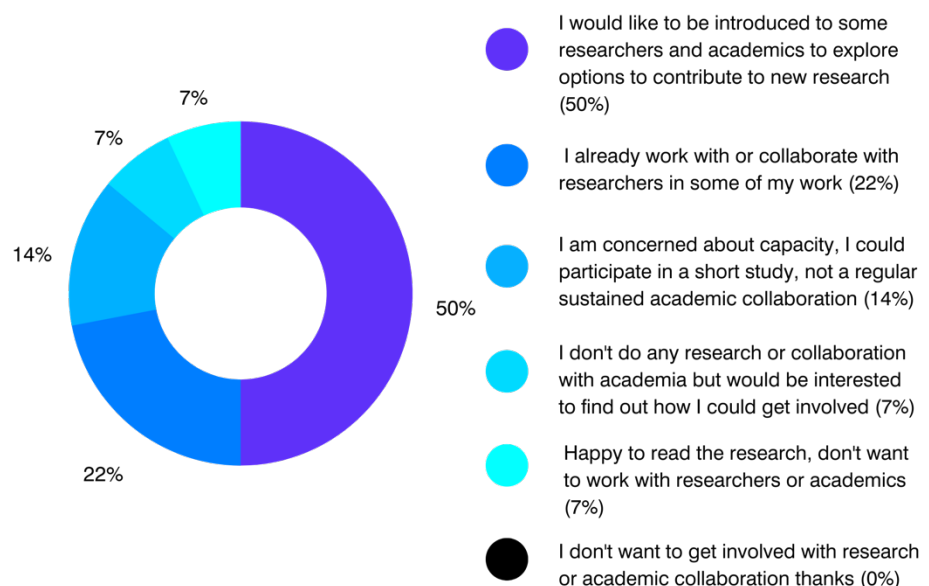
Scotland's Singing for Health Network and England's Singing for Health Network (UK wide) discussed research, social prescribing and working on deep data collection with funder Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

Attendees voiced concerns:

- There is a danger of being pulled into evidence gathering that is not that useful for community singing group or sector development, or for community singing leaders themselves
- Collecting the right data to inform strategy, reports or fundraising is a specialist practice and takes time
- We need training and resources in collecting evidence for fundraising
- We don't get paid for data collection, this is valuable time

A quick poll showed a unanimously positive response to research within the community singing sector.

## Working with researchers and academia



## SESSION 4: COLLABORATION & COLLECTIVE ACTION - This session posed:

- What are the challenges and opportunities of thinking and working collaboratively?
- Frameworks for the future and elevator pitches

### What are the challenges and opportunities of thinking and working collaboratively?

- Making a network of people who can support you when needed
  - Creating a common language for all to use comfortably
  - Building a resource to be inputted and used by all
  - A channel of communication to ask for help amongst others who know what you are going through
  - Everyone to raise their game with the inspiration of others' work they may not have known before
  - Learn from/with and help celebrate those with perceived differing styles and skill sets
  - To be lifted and supported as we all make these journeys into song over the next few years.

**Opportunities**      **Challenges**

- Having the time & brain space & energy to form & sustain colleague relationships on top of your own work
  - Being able to recognise different skill sets in people, regardless if it differs wildly to your own style/methods
  - Funding and sustainability
  - Clear common language communication
  - Equal and fair pay
  - Difference in education and qualifications between tutors
  - Maybe distance and the fact we are spread across the country
  - Unequal resources

**Frameworks for the future** - needs, concerns and ideas from throughout the conference were reflected back to the attendees, as in the infographic below:



## Elevator Pitches

In support of momentum towards achieving sustainability in the Scottish community singing sector, during the final moments of Comfort Of Voices and in our post-conference survey, all attendees were asked:

***What is your big idea for the next chapter of the Scottish Community Singing sector?  
Include ideas that are local, regional or national.***

The question generated 50 separate elevator pitches, which have been analysed and condensed into categories. Each category incorporates several headline ideas as voiced by the community singing leaders.

- Awareness
- Resources
- Training
- Collaboration
- Support
- Events

### Awareness / Campaigns

1. **Agency to sing:** give all voices a chance to sing without judgement; challenge perceived attitudes towards singing being 'bad' or embarrassing.
2. **Children's & young people's mental health:** how singing can help this crisis, through research-based evidence.
3. **Mental health challenges for new and young parents:** can we find ways to reach those isolated people through singing (alongside Singing Mama's great work).

### Resources

1. **Song library:** a library of arrangements, warmups, and songs from across Scotland, for different groups and abilities, available to access, hire or purchase.
2. **Scottish Community Choir Songbook:** old and new, including work with new songwriters, in Gaelic, Scots, English and other languages.
3. **Community singing operations and management:** a bank of written resources for community singing groups including links to various pre-existing resources, specialist guidance for leaders and committees on the operating of a group and sustaining momentum, plus evidence sharing – research templates, case studies or reflections.
4. **Advice:** protocol specifically for community choirs on challenging circumstances such as death of a choir member.

### Training

1. **Training roadmap for community singing leaders:** clear progression pathway for 'apprentices' designed and led by experienced professionals. Training provided during community singing sessions in a deep, sustained approach. Leading to sharing of workload, diversification of leaders, accountability, good practice, and sector growth. Opportunities to 'have a go' and learn from mistakes.
2. **Specialist training:** for working with vulnerable or specific groups, eg. Luminate for those with dementia; vocal health and supporting general health especially for those with challenging conditions.
3. **Workshops and webinars:** topics including marketing, communications, fundraising, conducting digitally hybrid community singing sessions, choir specific arranging and music writing software sessions.



## **Collaboration**

1. **National Community Choirs of Scotland:** membership for independent choirs and individual leaders dedicated to development of our skills and best practice.
2. **Connecting Scotland's singing practices:** collaboration between all singing practices in Scotland: community singing, choral, opera, pop, trad, Gaelic etc.
3. **Connecting Scotland to work elsewhere:** like the Sing Up Foundation in England, sharing resources and collaborating.
4. **Social prescribing:** carers and patients together singing together – part of social prescribing / GP offer / community link.
5. **International and intercultural links:** share ideas internationally about some of the universals and specific differences of our artistic practice as song/singing/choir leaders. Cross collaborations where we learn songs from each other's traditions.
6. **Collaboration with experts:** collaborating with people who are experts on arranging songs.
7. **Cross-sector collaboration:** joint work with dance e.g., Movement Medicine, ZeroOne.

## **Support**

1. **Scotland Community Singing Network:** constituted group with development worker who is great at marketing, raises money to support the sector and to subsidise community singing leader fees for choirs who can't afford it. A network to find depts/get dep work. An opportunities newsletter with funding, job opportunities and training available.
2. **Mentoring programme for community singing leaders:** to aid personal and professional development, and reflective practice. This could be 'hosted' and resourced by one or more organisations, run by coordinator with a team of trained mentors. It could include a variety of formats such as mentor-mentee, peer-to-peer and group mentoring.
3. **Choral singing ONLINE HUBS for each city/area, featuring:** a well-maintained list of local choirs; bulletin boards facilitating contacts between choirs, who can support each other from reciprocal advertising to volunteer at concerts to loan/hire of scores; online discussions that could feed into conferences; networking help eg. for finding a specialist guest leader, pronunciation advice, emergency cover, general solidarity.
4. **Support for isolated leaders:** find new ways to involve and support community singing in the rural and isolated parts of Scotland, and those experiencing challenges.
5. **Standards:** creation of a set of standards for safeguarding community singing leaders, promoting equality and fair pay, a pension plan, subsidised rates from Creative Scotland for community choirs to pay the standard rates. MU representative for choirs and song groups to represent the exact sorts of teaching we do, setting suitable pay guidance.

## **Events**

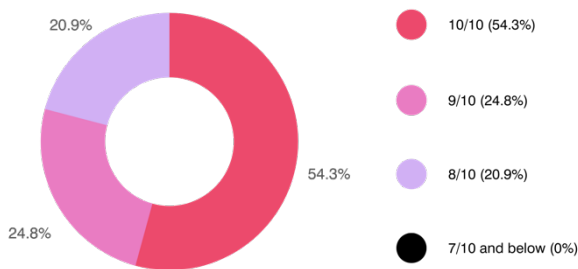
1. **Scottish Community Leader Singing Group Gatherings:** monthly or quarterly circle where people can share songs, practice wellness exercises, and maybe have a facilitated discussion on a certain talking point (like Comfort Of Voices).
2. **Community Choir Showcase in Scotland:** a largescale festival of singing for all choirs, singing for health groups and song leaders, regardless of genre or demographic, that's non-competitive, in a friendly, inclusive environment.
3. **A choir of singing leaders in Scotland:** our own choir that we are all automatically entitled to be a member of, with residential opportunities, possibly involving local performances. A bi-product would inevitably be that we would learn from each other, and new ideas and innovations would spark out of it all the time.
4. **Creche Choir:** adult event, toddlers / kids voice workshops too.
5. **Choir Exchange:** smaller choir exchanges and collaborations rather than massed sings.
6. **PechaKucha (chit chat) meets a scratch night for song leaders:** a regular meet-up to try out new arrangements/songs that are in work in progress.

## Other post-conference survey data

**38 people filled in the post-conference surveys.** There was one survey for presenters, which: 14 completed, and one for conference participant attendees, which had 22 responses.

### PRESENTERS

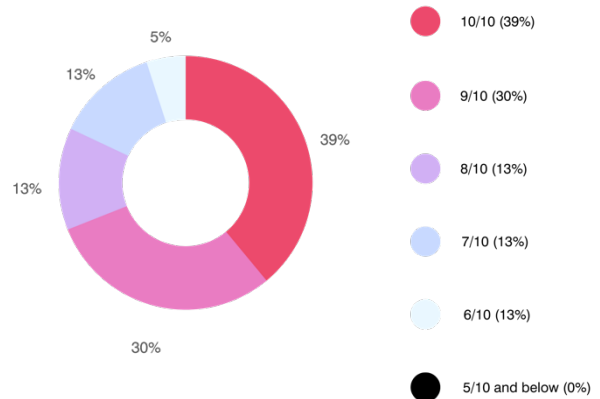
How informative were the Comfort of Voices Presenters?  
From 0-10 with 10 being most informative and useful, 0 being not informative and useful



100% of presenters who filled in the post-conference survey rated the informativeness of Comfort of Voices presenters at least 8 out of 10. With 54% rating the informativeness at 10/10.

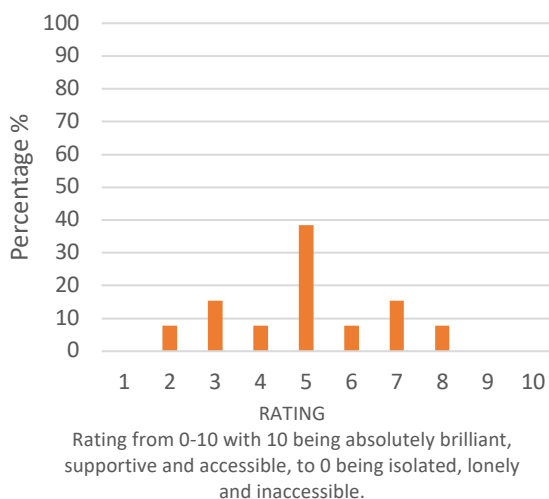
### ATTENDEES

How informative were the Comfort of Voices Presenters?  
From 0-10 with 10 being most informative and useful, 0 being not informative and useful



82% of attendees who filled in the post-conference survey rated the informativeness of Comfort of Voices presenters at least 8 out of 10. With 39% rating the informativeness at 10/10.

How are we doing as a Scottish Community Singing sector in supporting our leaders?



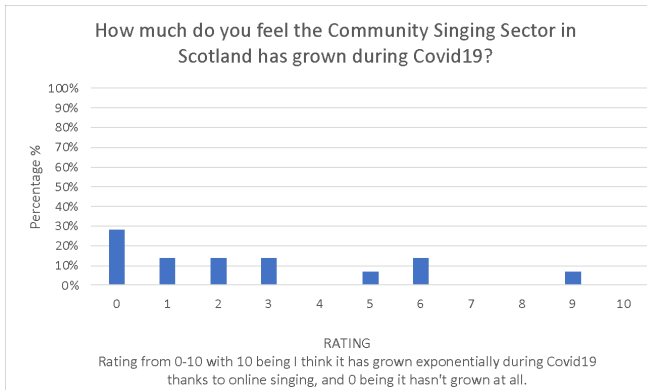
Presenters rated the support for the community sector singing leaders at present. 69.25% rated the support at 5/10 or below, with 30.75% rating support at 6/10 or above.

How are we doing as a Scottish Community Singing sector in supporting our leaders?



Attendees rated the support for the community singing sector leaders at present. 55% rated the support at 5/10 or below, 45% rated the support at 6/10 or above.

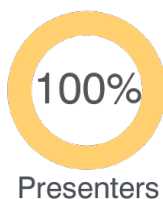
### PRESENTERS



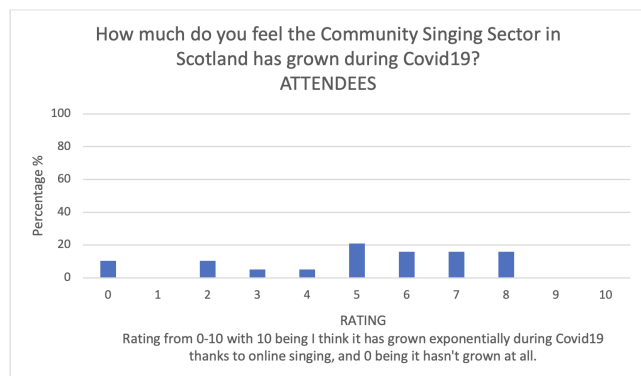
22% of presenters who filled in the post-conference survey think that the community singing sector has grown exponentially during covid19 (at least 6 out of 10). 78% do not think the sector has grown much or at all during covid19 (5 out of 10 or below).

#### PRESENTERS:

Do you endorse the idea of a national community singing sector support plan?



### ATTENDEES



48% of attendees who filled in the post-conference survey think that the community singing sector has grown exponentially during covid19 (at least 6 out of 10). 52% do not think the sector has grown much or at all during covid19 (5 out of 10 or below).

#### ATTENDEES:

Do you endorse the idea of a national community singing sector support plan?



### Qualitative data highlights from the post conference surveys

*I felt very honoured to have been asked to share some songs at the conference to bring everyone into a space to discuss Context and Inclusion. I am very passionate about inclusion and working towards becoming more inclusive as a sector. I was just so pleased that this was a topic (as recognised from the initial surveys) that was to be discussed.*

*After so long of being on your own the need and desire to be with others and share experiences with those that would understand, was very strong.*

*It felt important to re/connect with group singing leaders after such a long period of disconnect. I wanted to learn from the expert knowledge of others, and to give back by contributing something which could be useful for others.*

*Experiencing singing together really resonated with me because it gave the opportunity to really value and enjoy what we do as singing leaders when we facilitate group singing.*

*Just wonderful to be a part in a group, learning something I didn't know, making a glorious sound and having the feeling of satisfaction, inspiration, put joy and wellness which you get when you make music together with voices.*

*Mary Ann Kennedy's Gaelic song was wonderful, so high energy and so well-received, everyone was buzzing and loving it which made it all the more fun to sing. You could FEEL the barriers being broken*

*down with her joy and passion for the Gaelic culture, and she made the beauty of the language come alive - without labouring over each word - this is the first time I've heard someone talk about Gaelic words as having breath and life and shape in them. It had the instantaneous effect of making me want to sing it, feel it, understand it and dance to it.*

*It was really important to find solidarity in the issues that are shared struggles. Hearing the difficulties of freelance work, and the emotional, social and cultural responsibilities of singing leading being voiced in discussions made these challenges feel less isolating as I felt that there was a safe community around me to explore these challenges with.*

*I very rarely have the chance to see others work - our job can be oddly isolating, if you're the only group leader in the room then you're never with others who completely understand what we do.*

*I feel I am more comfortable just to contact someone now if I need help or have work to offer, and I have more of an idea of who is out there. Apart for going to Ali's events many years back, really this is the first time that I think 'time and space' has been given to getting us all together with a real purpose - singing and invaluable talking around it.*

*I left feeling inspired about our work and future possibilities.*

*I learned that there are other folks with the same professional concerns as me which has been a huge relief.*

*We need to share the leadership when we are ill, so we should share it when we are well too.*

*I thought it was really powerful to hear how much choir leaders are carrying with them all the time, i.e. how much of an impact their participants have on them and how much support is really needed/should be in place to make this work safe and rewarding for choir leaders. This will feed into how we will provide support for leaders in the future.*

*The event was incredibly successful at creating a safe and friendly space for practice and knowledge sharing. It was exciting to be offered so many starting points for further reflecting, discussing and learning.*

*It exceeded my expectations. I often find that at conferences around 1/3 sessions are of interest/use whereas I was totally engaged throughout almost the whole weekend. I only wanted more time with some of the presenters :)*

*I came home totally inspired and reenergised. I don't think I'd recognised that following the last few years of lockdowns I'd been left still tired and I'd lost some of my energy for my work and this weekend has been an absolute balm and boost. I'm tackling a project now that I'd almost given up on purely because I've fallen back in love with the project idea after the songference.*

*Truly one of the best conferences I've ever attended. The mix of sessions, the ground covered, the way of capturing intent and momentum, together with the sheer joy and mastery of song-sharing, all showing how vibrant Scotland's singing sector is, how valuable our singing leaders are, and how exciting our future is.*

*I am a member of a not-for-profit organisation called Community Music Victoria (in Australia) and this sounded like exactly the kind of event we would love to run, with topics that are close to our hearts.*

*As a disabled caregiver who used to be a community singing leader I really crave opportunities to sing in a group, but can't get to them most of the time. So when something comes up online, ESPECIALLY something aimed at singing leaders, I jump at the chance!*

*I really felt like I was there. It was great to see that this style of integrated live and online events can work. I invited someone from Community Music Victoria, our local state community music organisation, to come along so that they could see how it worked as they have been working towards something similar. Being*

*able to access community music even in the midst of my caregiving responsibilities has been such a life line.*

*Keeping music leaders connected is the single best thing one can do for music-making communities.*

*The conference provided helpful insight into the experience and current practice of the participants. It shone a light on opportunities for future collaboration and shared learning.*

*It was useful but I feel I need another opportunity to speak with more people. Some of the subjects we touched on were huge and I don't think I had enough head space to process them and have as many chats as I would have liked.*

*Our job can be a very lonely one and it's great to attend an event like this and remind yourself that you're actually doing okay and the work that we do is so valuable to many people, including ourselves.*

*I've gained a better understanding of how I can use singing to help my own mental health issues and in turn support others better going forward.*

*Glad that group singing is being taken seriously and approving of the efforts to get more recognition of its value to so many groups and people generally, including people with health challenges.*

*I've come away feeling like I REALLY need to carve out time to participate in singing again, and perhaps even lead some circle singing groups again. My caregiving role is so unpredictable, as is my disability, so I had to retire from the regular group I'd run for ten years, but I'm sure I can organise respite so that I can lead a group once a month or once a quarter. Also, hearing Penny speak about how she felt better whenever she was leading, I totally resonate with that as someone with chronic pain and fatigue. And also hearing Corrina Hewat talk about being dissociated whenever she led singing really struck a cord with me. Actually, there were lots of lightbulb moments, and realising that many people have had similar experiences as me with illness, trauma etc.*

*Surpassed my expectations. I knew it would be good but it was fantastic.*

*Comfort of Voices was an invaluable experience for me to meet choral leaders and to learn from others.*

*I thought it was really fabulous to see cross-sector support. For example, it would be unusual to see classical and 'opera' choruses attending a community singing leading conference in Australia*

*It was a truly beautiful weekend and I felt privileged to be in a room full of so many inspiring, interesting, and passionate people*

*I also was so grateful that there were some fully funded seats available. Thank you for making the event so accessible and inclusive.*