



IMPACT REPORT 2019

INTRODUCTION

Alix Lewer
Founding Director



REFLECTING ON AN EXCITING YEAR

This year saw the Include Choir take on an unprecedented number of performances. Finding ourselves singing and signing on stage at the Barbican was amazing - but we are equally proud of our performances and workshops raising awareness of inclusive communication and people's rights within the Mental Capacity Act.

A real highlight was the standing ovation we received from health and social care professionals at the London LeDeR conference, which addressed the inequalities of care that lead to the unnecessary deaths of people with learning disabilities and autism.

This year we have worked hard to raise awareness of the research evidence and values underpinning the work of Include.org and it has been wonderful to see this recognised by organisations like the Royal Society for Public Health, NHS Education England and the Social Care Institute for Excellence. The cherry on the Include Cake was of course the Giving Voice Award from the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists in recognition of services to people with communication disabilities.

THE CHALLENGE OF GROWTH

Looking ahead, the key challenge for us is one of capacity. We have an amazing and ever-growing group of members with communication needs and a fantastic team of volunteers - but we have very few dedicated staff to help us achieve our vision of a more welcoming world for people with understanding and speaking difficulties.

We have come a very long way since the first Include Choir rehearsal, but delivering activities and training, developing resources, running the choir all require sustainable funding and a skilled staff team and we want to invest in securing these.

In a relatively short time, Include.org has already done much to raise awareness and increase skills to support people with understanding and speaking difficulties - just think what we could do with increased investment in strategy and resources.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2020

Hold on to your hats. With the right support, 2020 will be an exciting year.

We are completing our first E-Learning project about inclusive communication and the Mental Capacity Act to be rolled out to a range of professional groups. We hope a parallel package for people with communication needs, their support teams and families will be close behind.

To help us achieve our goal of sustainability, and further raise awareness of inclusive communication, we will be launching a friends and members scheme.

We will be training more Include practitioners so that we can develop our musical communication outreach work in hospitals and social care settings - and in response to feedback we are exploring setting up Include Choirs in other areas.

Thank you to everyone who has helped us along this amazing road - we look forward to the next step of the journey.

Alix

WHO WE ARE



Alix Lewer
Director



Derek Hill
Trustee



Claire Dawson
Trustee



Faisal Osman
Trustee



Gemma Haley
Trustee



Nigel Leach
Treasurer



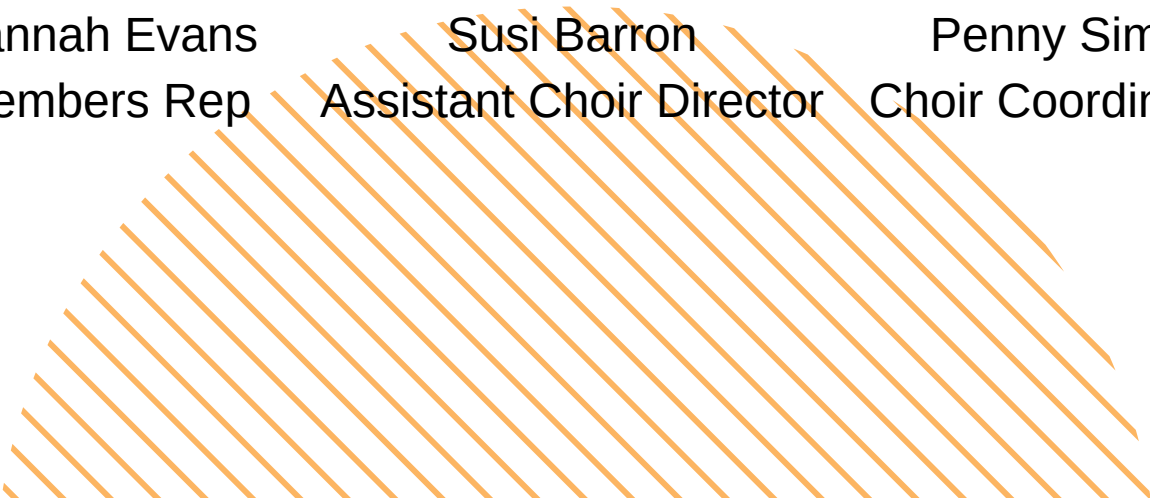
Hannah Evans
Members Rep



Susi Barron
Assistant Choir Director



Penny Sims
Choir Coordinator





"DON'T STOP ME NOW"

2019 HIGHLIGHTS



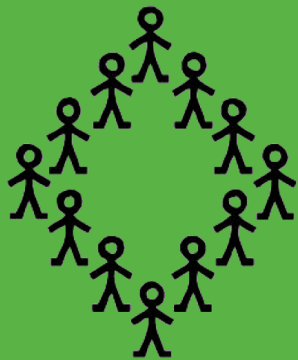
95% OF OUR MEMBERS SAY THEY HAVE LEARNED NEW SKILLS SINCE JOINING THE INCLUDE CHOIR



72 CHOIR MEMBERS
36% INCREASE
SINCE START OF 2018



100% OF OUR MEMBERS HAVE MADE NEW FRIENDS AT CHOIR.



98% OF MEMBERS SAY INCLUDE CHOIR HELPS THEM FEEL PART OF A COMMUNITY

'I learned how powerful client's voices are'



85% OF SUPPORT STAFF
UNDERSTAND THE
MENTAL CAPACITY ACT
BETTER SINCE COMING
TO THE CHOIR

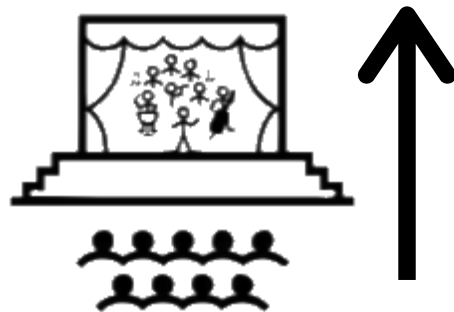
"Quite often I use signing
and songs learnt at choir
in other areas of my work
and life."



86% OF OUR
VOLUNTEERS FEEL
MORE CONFIDENT IN
COMMUNICATING WITH
PEOPLE WHO HAVE
COMMUNICATION OR
UNDERSTANDING
DIFFICULTIES



100% OF CARERS WHO
ATTEND THE CHOIR
THINK THAT THE
INCLUDE CHOIR HELPS
ITS MEMBERS PLAY A
BIGGER PART IN THE
COMMUNITY



24 PERFORMANCES
IN 2019
100% MORE THAN
2018

WHO ARE INCLUDE.ORG?



We make the world more welcoming



for people with understanding and



speaking difficulties

by:

- Running The Include Choir
- Providing outreach activities, training, consultancy and speech & language therapy
- Combining creativity, music, laughter (and occasionally cake) with clinical expertise
- Raising awareness of understanding and speaking difficulties
- Including people with understanding or speaking difficulties and teaching others how to do the same.

What are Communication Difficulties?

Communication difficulties are many and varied. They include difficulties speaking or expressing yourself, understanding speech or writing - and also understanding and following social communication rules. People often struggle to understand and engage with the world around them. They may find it hard to ask a question or ask for help. Everyone will require time, empathy and support from a communication partner or communication aid.



20 %

of the UK's population will experience communication difficulty in their lifetime.

RCSLT 2019

Who can be affected?

Communication and understanding difficulties affect many different groups of people. The majority of our members have a learning disability or autism - however, understanding and speaking difficulties are also common for people with dementia, or who have had a brain injury or stroke. When we learn a variety of ways to communicate and support communication, we ensure we can help those that need it, regardless of their circumstance or the cause of their speaking or understanding difficulty.



Many people experience speaking and understanding difficulties



REDUCING BARRIERS

Through use of inclusive communication tools and membership of an understanding community



ACCEPTANCE

Able to communicate and understand, getting your voice heard and accessing activities others take for granted.



INCLUSION

Knowing how to use inclusive communication to help others communicate, understand and reduce isolation.

♪ "Everybody Needs Somebody" ♪

What is Inclusive Communication? Why is it important?

Inclusive Communication

Inclusive Communication is based on the best evidence from speech and language therapy research. It means recognising, respecting and using all forms of communication - not just the written or spoken word. This could include using signing (we use Makaton), gestures, pen and paper, pictures, objects or facial expressions and more . It means adapting your own language and communication to help others.

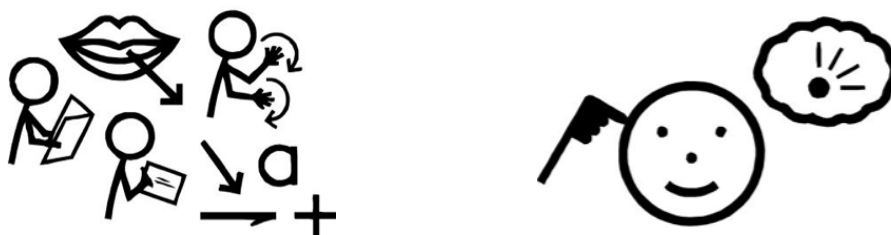
DID YOU KNOW?

ABOUT 60% OF PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES HAVE SOME SKILLS IN SYMBOLIC COMMUNICATION USING PICTURES, SIGNS OR SYMBOLS.

BILD 2019

Why is Inclusive Communication important?

When we are able to communicate with each other in a variety of ways we help to increase independence, reduce frustration, improve confidence and remove barriers. Taking the time to understand and provide the tools our members need to communicate enables them to understand and communicate their needs and ideas more effectively. This is how a true sense of belonging and membership develops. We also encourage members to act as communication partners, supporting others who experience difficulties. This is how the choir's sense of teamwork and self-worth is enhanced.



Inclusive communication helps to include people

'The people I support really enjoy coming and have gained confidence.'

Louise, Support Worker

Include is all about thinking outside the box: music, games, cake and laughter are our tools to bring inclusive communication to life and to take us one step closer to an inclusive world.

To include someone is to unlock their potential and we guarantee you'll be surprised at what people can achieve.

Choir Sessions

Our weekly choir sessions are a fun, creative and inclusive environment. Our members include people with and without communication and understanding difficulties. We use Makaton to sign all of the songs we sing as well as other communication techniques such as talking mats, objects of reference, pictorial information and accessible information.



Performances

We regularly perform locally and nationally which is not only exciting for our choir members but gives us an opportunity to demonstrate what inclusive communication looks like. We are able to raise awareness of communication and understanding difficulties and the Mental Capacity Act.



Activities

As well as our regular choir rehearsals, workshops and performances, our members take part in activities such as going to see theatre shows together. This fosters friendships and reduces the isolation faced by so many people with understanding and speaking difficulties.



Workshops and Training

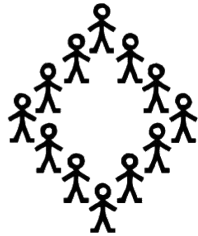
Alongside the community choir, Include.org offers accredited professional training, workshops and consultancy to care providers, businesses, schools and charities who wish to improve their inclusive communication skills. Include.org can also support individuals with personal speech and language therapy.



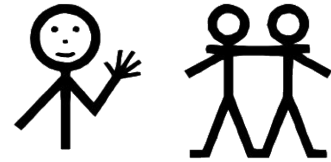
"I get by with a little help from my friends"

At the Include Choir, we know that friendship and community are a vital part of ensuring good physical and mental health. We know that when we have friends who we can communicate with and who we understand, we are less isolated, feel happier and feel more included.

In a survey by Sense, over half of disabled people reported feeling lonely, rising to over three quarters (77%) for those aged 18-34 (Sense 2017). Loneliness is associated with physical and mental health problems and poorer quality of life (Gilmore & Cuskelly, 2014).



**98% OF MEMBERS SAY
INCLUDE CHOIR HELPS
THEM FEEL PART OF A
COMMUNITY**



**100% OF OUR MEMBERS
HAVE MADE NEW FRIENDS
AT CHOIR.**

We also know that by putting people in the position of being the expert and asking their advice on the direction of the choir, we empower our members and help them advocate for themselves.

And we all benefit from their ideas.



**"I really enjoy Wednesday evenings
because it's something different to do."**

Jamie, Singer

♪ "Lean on Me" ♪

Include.org couldn't run without the dedicated volunteers who give their time each week to help.

Volunteers help by:

- Supporting in choir sessions
- Taking photos and videos
- Resource preparation
- Helping with social media
- Updating communication aids
- Fundraising
- Helping with transport
- ... and much more!



Our volunteers have won the Mayor's Volunteer Team of the Year Award two years running.

57% of our volunteers give time to the Include Choir more than once per month.

Our volunteers give over 125 hours each month to support The Include Choir - and even more support the wider work of Include.org

"What I enjoy most is seeing the enjoyment people find in singing, signing and taking part in social and musical activities that we so often take for granted."

Include Choir Volunteer

🎵 "What a Wonderful World" 🎵

The Include Choir has a much wider impact than the very important difference we make for our members with communication and understanding difficulties.

When volunteers join us, they get a rich experience in inclusive communication and take that with them into their future lives and careers.

Staff who support someone with an understanding or speaking difficulty to come to choir, are a crucial part of the choir themselves.

In the care sector, there is a very high staff turn-over and often failures in communication which can result in safeguarding issues as well as impacting on the confidence of those receiving support. Through our choir sessions we model and teach the ways that support staff and other members of the community can learn to adapt their communication to help include people who find understanding and speaking difficult.

"As a support worker I have benefitted as much as the person I support. I know for a fact, we both leave here feeling positive & enlightened by what everyone can achieve."



"...I have been treating a non-verbal patient with Dementia who uses Makaton...I could sign 'look at the dog!'. Yay! Many thanks - the Include Choir certainly reaches the part of life that other choirs cannot reach!"



"Let's go fly a kite and send it soaring"



www.include.org



[@includeorg](https://twitter.com/includeorg)



www.facebook.com/includechoir/



includechoir@include.org



[@includechoir](https://www.instagram.com/includechoir)



www.youtube.com/c/theincludechoir

Although the choir started-up in Redhill and tends to perform in London and the South East, it has a much larger geographical reach in terms of social media coverage and awareness-raising.

Many of our subscribers and social media followers live outside of Surrey and we have enquiries from people in places like Nottingham and Scotland.



2000+ Twitter followers
500+ on Facebook
140+ YouTube subscribers
100+ on Instagram

Our content aims to spread the message about inclusive communication and creates a wider sense of community.

The choir provides online channels for self-advocacy, where people with disabilities are visible and can educate others about Makaton signing.

When we're part of big events, others share things about the Include Choir too.

At the end of 2019 The Include Choir was featured in the Surrey Mirror's Review of the Year, in print and online.



🎵 "I'd like to teach the world to sing" 🎵

One of the most important roles of The Include Choir is to further the aims of Include.org and raise awareness of communication disability - and what we can all do to be more inclusive.

The choir is invited to perform at a variety of events and is experienced by a huge range of audiences and age groups, from NHS professionals to the general public.

Those audiences are not passive – oh no! Include Choir performances break down barriers, positively encouraging interaction and 'joining-in'.

Choir members often hand out instruments and visual props to those watching. The resulting smiles are infectious, as are the signing and signing skills!



"Joining in!"

Our members teach others to have a good time and be inclusive communicators.

And it is not just the immediate audience that the choir has an impact upon...our message carries much further. When we travel as a group on public transport people see us communicating inclusively. When we discuss venue accessibility for wheelchair users, or quiet areas for people with autism – we help to remind people about all the ways society can be inclusive. When our members interact with other performers or conference attendees during a lunch break – it can be an opportunity for everyone to learn something.

"I discovered how much I can learn from listening to your view points, especially expressed in this fun way."

Safeguarding Nurse Specialist
London LeDeR Conference 2019

🎵 "Help Us Make Our Own Decisions" 🎵

The Include Choir gives a voice to people who may otherwise be marginalised.

Some of our most performed songs have been written by, or in collaboration with choir members using inclusive communication techniques like signing, drawing, accessible information and Talking Mats.

There is genuine involvement and powerful self-advocacy around important issues such as the Mental Capacity Act (MCA) and being kind.

The Mental Capacity Act is a law which protects the rights of people – and encourages freedom and facilitation for people to make their own decisions.

We have performed the Battle Hymn of the MCA at numerous events.

Here is a taste of the lyrics:



"Before joining the Include Choir, I didn't even know the Mental Capacity Act existed"



"The Include Choir...conveyed the principles of the Mental Capacity Act better than I have seen done in any 'professional' training sessions"

Alex Ruck Keene, Court of Protection Barrister
National Mental Capacity Action Day 2019



"We all stand together"



Every year we aim to speak to a range of people face to face and via the radio and social media, to raise awareness. We do this as a team - we don't have a fixed spokesperson. Anyone can be the voice of The Include Choir - and a number of our members are becoming minor celebrities on local radio.

Our Choir Rep and other members regularly accompany Alix to speak about inclusive communication at local colleges or charities as well as representing The Include Choir at volunteer recruitment events.



Influential external advocates...

As well as our members often proudly telling people about The Include Choir, we attract some quite influential external advocates.

People who have seen what the choir does and want to help us raise awareness, such as our Patron, Baroness Ilora Finlay, the Mayor and local radio DJ, Neil Munday.

They become part of The Include Choir family. This is a real boost to our credibility and reach, as they enthusiastically promote our messages with genuine delight in what they have seen the choir do.

**"A fantastic local organisation...
totally inclusive (in all respects)"**

**Cllr Keith Foreman
Mayor of Reigate and Banstead 2019-20**



"I'm a believer"



Because Include.org provides such a sense of fun and uplift, there is a risk that we forget that everything we do has a serious side. Everything we do is all about speech and language therapy best practice - and how to create a world of more inclusive communication partners.

Using the Include.org training model embeds learning into meaningful, motivating activity for both staff and person with learning disability.



As well as the Include Choir, Include.org also facilitates training and professional development for NHS organisations, social care providers, charities and schools. We provide Makaton support at events such as AGMs and offer speech and language therapy and training for individuals too.

**"Insightful and Enlightening.
I learned how important it is to check clients
really understand the advice I give."**

**Workshop Participant
Citizen's Advice Bureau**



"We are Family"



Include.org doesn't just work with people with understanding and speaking difficulties, and their professional carers, we support families too.

Parents and siblings of people with learning disabilities and autism tell us that it can be hard to find genuinely inclusive activities that involve everyone in the family, so everyone can enjoy and gain pride from taking part in their own way.

"I can just step back and be her friend, rather than her mother or her carer"



Lucia and her Mum Wendy joined The Include Choir in 2019.

Lucia has cerebral palsy and learning disabilities. She has limited verbal communication skills but is very skilled in letting you know what she wants, needs or feels through her expression, gesture and a few words. No choir rehearsal or performance is complete without Lucia's boundless enthusiasm and energy. A 'yeah!!' from Lucia certainly means 'yeah!!!'

The Include Choir gives Lucia the chance to be fully included in a group who values and understands her, and gives Wendy a chance to relax and enjoy a shared passion with her daughter.

"As long as groups like The Include Choir exist, I won't worry about her so much"

Wendy & Lucia
Include Choir Members



"A Million Dreams"



We never dreamed what Include.org could become when we were 16 people in a room singing the very first 'Include Choir Hello Song'.

Growing numbers of performances mean that our members' voices have been heard far and wide - singing, co-delivering workshops and training, even presenting on local radio. It has been amazing to see confidence grow and skills blossom.



This year, our work and the research which underpins it was presented at the Health Education England and Royal College of Speech & Language Therapists Conferences. We also featured as a case study for the Royal Society for Public Health - as an excellent example of how social prescribing can improve quality of life and reduce pressures on public health and care services



But our proudest moment was being awarded the Royal College of Speech & Language Therapists' 'Giving Voice' Award in September 2019.

We can't wait to see what surprises, achievements, songs, signs and smiles the next year will bring.

"For tireless commitment to highlighting inclusive communication and creating environments where people with speech, language and communication difficulties feel welcome and accepted."

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists



www.include.org