

Singing Strategy 2020-2023

Singing at the Heart of Musical Learning

The Surrey Music Education Hub believes that singing should be placed at the heart of musical learning. The aim of this strategy is to create a framework for the provision of vocal opportunities which promote vocal health, enjoyment and quality of provision which enable lifelong singing and a foundation for musical learning.

Surrey Music Hub

The Surrey Music Hub (SMH) is a strategic alliance between organisations with involvement in music education. By working together, SMH will ensure children and young people receive music education that is high quality, wide ranging, sustainable and accessible to all, with progression routes from 0-25 years. Developing a singing strategy that aims to give every child and young person in Surrey the opportunity to sing and progress to the next level of excellence is one of the core roles of the Surrey Music Hub.

Aims of this Document

The strategy provides a framework and direction for SMH vocal work for the next three years. It has been developed and updated from previous SMH vocal strategies and takes into account the changing landscape of music education and the importance of singing for schools and communities. As this is a working document it may be subject to change. The strategy categorises singing work under five areas of focus: county-wide co-ordination; singing in schools; singing for C&YP with special education needs and disabilities and those experiencing challenging circumstances; singing and health; progression and resources. It also links to the following strategies and priorities:

Surrey Arts (including Surrey Music Hub) Business Plan 2018–2020

The core roles for SMH as identified by the Department for Education and/or Ofsted are first and further access to music-making through whole class ensemble teaching programmes; singing strategy; ensembles; and progression routes. Extension roles for SMH include continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers; instrument hire for learners and providing inspirational experiences of music-making for children and young people.

Surrey County Council Organisational Strategy 2020–2025

This document sets out the Council's objectives for Surrey over the next five years, and how these will contribute to the "Community Vision for Surrey in 2030". The document outlines aspirations for the Council and its commitment to four principles: 1) focus on ensuring no one is left behind; 2) a fresh approach to working in partnership; 3) support people to help themselves and each other; 4) involve and engage residents earlier and more often in designing and delivering services.

Department for Education 'The Importance of Music – A National Plan for Music Education' (2011)

Core Role 4: Develop a singing strategy to ensure that every pupil is singing regularly and that choirs and other ensembles are available in the area. Children from all backgrounds and every part of England should have the opportunity to learn to sing and progress to the next level of excellence if they wish to.

Arts Council England – 'Let's Create' (2020–2030)

"Let's Create" is a 10-year strategic framework for Arts Council England with the aspiration for England to be a country in which "the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish, and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences". The principles of Ambition and Quality; Dynamism; Inclusivity and Relevance; and Environmental Responsibility are central to the strategy.

FOCUS AREA 1: COUNTY-WIDE CO-ORDINATION

The county of Surrey is full of singing! From singing for babies and very young children in our Children’s Centres to the growing number of choral societies, community choirs and workplace choirs there are many opportunities to reap the benefits from participating in singing and vocal work in Surrey. Surrey boasts a strong choral tradition that is embodied in the annual Leith Hill Musical Festival, a choral competition popular amongst local choral societies which was once conducted by renowned English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams.

Much of this work however happens in isolation and there is a real need for a co-ordinated approach which enables everyone to know about and access what is on offer. There are also gaps in provision, both in terms of genre and geography which we continue to identify and respond to through the creation of new work and pilot programmes which can then be replicated across the county. By working in this way, Surrey can continue to build on its existing wealth of opportunity to ensure that the benefits of participating in singing can reach everyone in the county.

Inspirational Performances and Events

Surrey Arts continues to collaborate with local choirs, artists, arts organisations and venues to create inspirational performances and events. In summer 2018, we produced our new community opera commission **“No Sound Ever Dies”** at Brooklands Museum as part of the **“Brooklands in Sound Festival”**. In 2020, the Surrey County Youth Choirs will join forces with local community choirs to perform **“The Girl From Aleppo”** by composer Cecilia McDowall.

Vocal Development Leadership

The Surrey Vocal Development Leader works with a team of vocal tutors to coordinate county singing activity; audit need and gaps in provision, develop new programmes in response to need; link with other colleagues/programmes where vocal work is a constituent part; manage a pool of skilled singing leaders; provide a lead contact for singing/vocal work and advocate singing across the county.

Associate Choirs

The Associate Choir scheme is a means by which adult community choirs can support the development of the Surrey Youth Choir, the Surrey Youth Training Choir and Surrey Foundation level choirs in order to provide out-of-school singing opportunities for children and young people.

Choirs Database

We maintain a database of choirs for all ages across Surrey to help signpost residents to a local singing group that’s right for them.



Performers in ‘No Sound Ever Dies’, Surrey Arts’ community opera celebrating the history of Brooklands Museum and premiered at Brooklands in July 2018. Photography by Emma Brown

FOCUS AREA 2: SCHOOLS

Approximately 190,000 students attend Surrey schools (4 nurseries, 299 primary schools, 54 secondary schools, 22 special schools and 8 pupil referral units - SCC School Organisational Plan 2018-2027). SMH will work strategically to ensure singing and vocal work can thrive in all its schools and all pupils have the opportunity to sing regularly and progress to the next level of excellence if they wish to. Our vocal team will work together with teachers in schools in order to identify gaps where support for singing is needed or schools which might benefit from singing interventions. SMH continues to support and develop existing projects such as the popular Primary Music Festivals as well as developing new projects like Singing Picnics and Singing Schools. To ensure support for singing and vocal work reaches as many schools and pupils as possible we will focus on continued professional development and training, giving teachers the support they need to confidently use singing in the classroom, set up school choirs and understand the benefits of singing to teaching and learning.

Current Activities

Continued Professional Development

SMH has developed a variety of INSET courses for teachers in singing and vocal work. Many are aimed at teachers who have not necessarily trained in music but are tasked with leading singing in their schools. We also offer training and advice for specialist music teachers.

Primary Music Festivals

The annual Primary Music Festivals are an important event in the SMH calendar with several thousand children taking part each year. We will continue to develop the festivals to make them available to more schools, to broaden the number of schools involved, to increase CPD opportunities linked to the Festivals, to align them with our Hub priorities and to ensure that they are sustainable for the future.



Singing Picnics

Singing Picnics give primary schools children and their teachers the opportunity to play singing games and enjoy a picnic lunch at parks and inspirational spaces across Surrey. Since being introduced in 2016, the Picnics have provided an enjoyable way for schools to take part in group music making without the need to prepare for a formal performance. We will continue to develop Singing Picnics as a way of working with new schools, bringing them to new locations and new partnerships, while expanding the vocal apprentice and CPD opportunities within the project.



Singing Schools

We will work with the Voices Foundation to pilot a programme of support for singing in a number of schools in need of a singing initiative. We will integrate the project with our vocal CPD programme and with the SMH Vocal Team in order to provide legacy enabling us to deliver the project more widely in future years, and using pilot schools as case studies.

FOCUS AREA 3: WIDENING ACCESS

Equality of opportunity is one of the main focus areas for SMH. We understand that some children and young people may have difficulty accessing our services in schools or through our ensembles. We are aware that despite Surrey being an affluent county, not all children and young people enjoy the quality of life shared by others. SMH will work closely with partners to ensure its services reach children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and those who may experience barriers to participation in schools or who are experiencing challenging circumstances.

We will work with schools to identify socioeconomic barriers to musical learning and progression and devise programmes to address these challenges through our vocal programmes. We will identify areas of cultural cold spots and provide opportunities for those at risk of social isolation and who may not otherwise have access to musical participation and progression.

Current Activities

Specialist SEND Choirs

SMH runs a number of choirs for children, young people and adults who have Special Educational Needs and/or who are Disabled (SEND). The choirs are based in SEND-specialist schools and in the community. Our adult SEND choir the High Notes, provides continued singing opportunities for adults with SEND once they have left education. SMH also works with day centres such as the Lockwood Centre in Guildford to provide regular weekly singing activities for their service users.

Inclusive Vocal Projects

Projects like Singing Picnics and Brooklands' "No Sound Ever Dies" are designed to involve both mainstream and specialist schools in singing activity that brings children together in shared music-making increasing empathy and understanding that come with the enjoyment of singing together.

The 'I Speak Music' Project

I Speak Music celebrates diversity in Surrey through music. It supports newly arrived and vulnerable young people (for example young asylum seekers, young refugees, young people who have been trafficked to UK) through music-making, including song writing sessions and the recording of a Christmas single in 2018.

Foundation-Level Choirs

SMH recognises that a barrier to group singing is often the lack of a locally available group to join. To address this, we are working with partners including schools, local trusts, national providers and community groups to create a network of Foundation-level choirs for primary school aged children to enjoy group singing out of school time while developing core musicality that they will be able to draw on throughout their musical life.



Members of UP! Orchestra perform in "No Sound Ever Dies", Brooklands Museum, July 2018.

Photography by Emma Brown

FOCUS AREA 4: PROGRESSION AND RESOURCES

A goal of the Surrey Music Hub is to provide clear progression routes through music. It is vital that ongoing identification and highlighting of progression routes for young singers including regional groups (for example the Surrey Youth Choir, Farnham Youth Choir, Surrey Youth Training Choir, Just So Singers) and national groups (such as the National Children's Choir) continues. Showcasing opportunities such as the Primary Music Festival "guest choirs", large scale events such as the specially-commissioned community opera "No Sound Ever Dies", regional and county-wide concerts and information about how to participate in national opportunities such as the Music for Youth Proms and BBC Choir of the Year should be shared.

SMH will utilise online resources such as www.surreymusichub.com and www.surreyartsinteractive.co.uk as virtual learning environments to share repertoire, lesson plans and warm ups as well as national and international research into singing such as the research work of the Institute of Education. SMH will consider using the virtual learning environment to highlight resources developed by others and ensure the best use of the extensive collection of repertoire and reference material at the Surrey Performing Arts Library. In terms of human resources, SMH will support the continued development of its professional vocal staff and will maximise opportunities to work with organisations such as the Voices Foundation, the Royal Opera House, and National Youth Choir of Great Britain, as well as internationally-recognised experts in singing and choral leading.

Current Activities

Information Sharing and Networking

SMH will develop its online resources including www.surreymusichub.com and www.surreyartsinteractive.co.uk as virtual learning environments and social media to share information about singing/vocal opportunities and resources. SMH will constantly monitor what is available, identify any gaps in progression opportunities and look at ways to fill these gaps.

Advocacy and Information

Working in conjunction with our existing and new strategic partners on a national and local basis, we will provide information about current trends in singing and vocal work and what is happening regionally and nationally. We will continue to work to ensure that our professional vocal leaders stay current with vocal best practice and research to support lifelong healthy singing.

Young Singing Leaders

The SMH supports young people in developing their own vocal leading skills. Vocal projects for younger children are designed to allow for the involvement of older children and young people as "Young Singing Leaders", who help to lead activities alongside the professional team and act as inspirational role models for their younger peers. Practical "on-the-ground" delivery in projects such as Singing Picnics is supported through specialised training sessions to coach young leaders in approaches to delivery. For those aspiring to a career as a music leader, a small number of formal placements are offered each year.



Progression Routes Through Singing Ensembles

SMH will develop a family of singing groups, both in-house and linked to other organisations, to provide tiered progression for young singers in a range of styles. We will ensure that singing leaders work at the highest standards with a thorough understanding of safeguarding the young voice through its development, and up-to-date knowledge and use of best practice in vocal production. Key to this model is a strong foundation of entry-level singing groups spread across the county to ensure that high-quality singing is accessible to children and young people from all Surrey communities. Foundation groups will work closely with intermediate and advanced ensembles providing aspirational experiences for young children and leadership opportunities for young people.

Trainee Singing Tutors

Surrey Arts and the SMH have voluntary work placement opportunities available for adult musicians and teachers wishing to develop their skills as vocal leaders. Under the direction of Surrey Arts lead vocal teachers and ensemble conductors, trainees assist in the delivery of practical workshops and music-making activities for children, young people and adults. Trainees are offered a programme of specialised CPD to further develop their skills.



New Composers

SMH has a long history of working directly with living composers such as Hannah Conway (*Magna Carta*) and Joanna Lee (*No Sound Ever Dies*) which we will continue with projects including *The Girl From Aleppo* (Cecilia McDowall) and *Friday Afternoons* (2020, Russell Hepplewhite). Our vocal ensembles will continue to programme new and diverse works from a range of living composers.

Staying Abreast of Best Practice

SMH will encourage all of its vocal team to be members of national organisations for singing teachers and choral leaders including the Association of Teachers of Singing, The Association of British Choral Directors, and the British Voice Association. SMH will continue its partnership agreement with the Association of Teachers of Singing to offer membership discounts to all SMH vocal teachers. We will support our vocal team in attending regional and national conferences, and international symposiums such as EuroVox.

FOCUS AREA 5: LIFELONG SINGING AND HEALTH

The benefits of singing for our health are well-documented. SMH is committed to embedding singing in schools and the community to enhance health and wellbeing, combat isolation, and strengthen communities. We will ensure that vocal provision through the SMH is grounded in best practice to support vocal health and to instil the fundamentals of lifelong musicianship through singing. We will accomplish these goals through the continued development of singing groups, forming partnerships with health care professionals, information sharing and networking and training.

Current Activity

Singing for Early Years

The Surrey Music Hub recognises that singing plays an important part in children’s social, musical and educational development and runs two groups for Early Years children which use singing as the cornerstone for musical learning and enjoyment: Jinglebugs and Singing Bugs. SMGH also provides specialist training workshops in leading singing at Early Years and KS1, and are devising new programmes of work to support increased singing in Early Years.

Singing Picnics

Singing Picnics combine singing with active games in inspirational outdoor settings. Children and teachers learn fun and active singing games which they take back to school for use in the classroom or on the playground. The activities promote both mental and physical wellbeing and are enjoyed equally by children and teachers.

‘Singing for Health’ Training

A five-day ‘Singing for Health’ course was offered to vocal teachers by practitioners from the Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts & Health. We will continue to provide training opportunities for Singing and Health and to expand our work in this area, working with nationally-recognised experts.

Adult Health and Wellbeing Choirs

The SMH offers “Sing for Pleasure” and “Learn to Sing” groups for adult singers of any level of ability to enjoy the well-documented health and wellbeing benefits of singing. We work with community groups and local District and Borough Councils to signpost people to local singing opportunities.

