



FEEDBACK: AUTUMN 2018

In Autumn 2018 we undertook a short feedback exercise with our choirs, giving us a snapshot of participants' views of how involvement in the choir had impacted their well-being, social inclusion and employability skills.

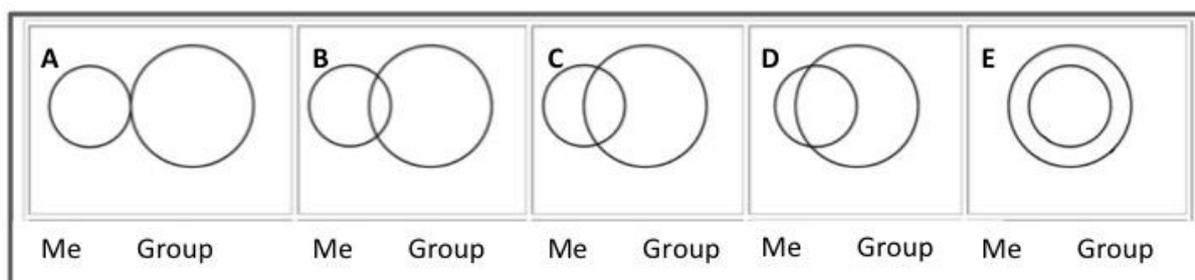
Total Responses Received: 34

Age Range (where given): 29-72

Average Age of Participant: 51

Social Inclusion

Participants were asked how much they felt part of the singing group and how much they felt part of the prison community:



Just under **64%** of survey participants felt either entirely or almost entirely part of the singing group. No one reported feeling that they were completely outside the group.

We were heartened to see that **50%** of survey participants also felt either entirely or almost entirely part of the wider prison community. However, just over **38%** felt completely or almost completely (see A and B in scale above) excluded from the prison community. It should be noted though, that of that 38% all but 2 respondees felt they were part of the singing group (C or above): *the group is providing a valuable positive community and social support to otherwise isolated individuals.*

General: Well-being, Confidence, Trust and Optimism

Participants were asked to grade whether they agreed or disagreed that involvement in the singing group has improved or increased certain factors which affect mental health and well-being, where “disagree strongly” is 1 and “agree strongly” is 7 and “neither agree nor disagree” is 4. The findings are summarised below:

	Mean	Mode
General Mental health?	6.2	7
Ability to deal with stress or anxiety?	5.7	7
General mood?	6.4	7
Feeling of social inclusion or belonging?	6	7
Willingness to try new things?	6.1	7
Confidence/ belief in yourself?	6.3	7
Willingness to join in activities?	6	7
Contact with family/ Friends?	5.6	7
Trust in other people?	5.2	4
Optimism about the future?	5.7	7

This snapshot demonstrates that the majority of participants **strongly agree** that being involved in a Beating Time group is having a **positive effect on their wellbeing** and accords with wider research on the benefits of group singing.

Employability Skills

The Autumn review also asked participants to assess the impact that being in the singing group had on a range of soft employability skills. Again, the scale range was from 1-7 where “disagree strongly” is 1 and “agree strongly” is 7 and “neither agree nor disagree” is 4. The overwhelming majority of respondees agreed (scale 5-7) that being involved in the Beating Time group has improved or increased the identified skills/traits with the balance (save for 1 individual) opting for 4, “neither agreeing or disagreeing”:

	% Agree
Ability to commit to a joint endeavour	78.8
Ability to work as part of a team	85.2
Ability to concentrate and focus	90.6
Ability to work at things/improve	88.2
Creativity/imagination	88.2
Reliability	73.5
Courage to speak/perform in public	85.3
Social Confidence	79.4
Ability to lead/set an example	73.5
Ability to work outside your comfort zone	81.8

This supports our work and stated aim to increase employment opportunities for our participants, joining up with the reducing re-offending teams in prison, with local employers and specialist employment agencies. These skills are also key to maximise the opportunities which are offered through Restart.

Comments

Participants were also given the opportunity to make any other comments that they wished about their time in choir. Giving the last word to our participants,

“Music plays a huge part in my life and coming together weekly and learning new ways to sing different songs makes the repetitive weeks seem brand new and different to normality. A huge thanks to Pete and Gina for all they do, it is very much hard work. “

“This group has had a positive effect on my mental health and is one of the few things that are looked forward to in this environment.”

“Grew in self-confidence beyond imagination. Started learning music. Hopefully one day perform a solo on my guitar for you, the team at Beating Time. Thank you for the opportunity”

“Really cool experience, chilled, amazing people. Really keep me calm, help me with stress. I do what always I wanted too. Teacher have cool skills and keeps as all as a team. Thanks a lot.”

“Being a member of the choir has changed my entire outlook on my time in HMP Bham. It has given me a new belief in my own ability. Long may it continue. Thank you”

“I really look forward to, and enjoy, the choir practices and performances. It does break up the monotony and hum-drum of prison life as there is no other music outlet here at Rye Hill. The guys, Pete and Gina and Josh were, and are, brilliant and very professional and welcoming to the choir. Also, they are brilliantly patient! I think I've grown as a performer as I normally like to play to guitar for other people to sing. The future? Maybe join a community choir or a volunteer within a musical environment. Overall, a brilliant experience with more to come. Hopefully!”

“It has given me a sense of purpose”

“It makes me feel like I'm not in prison for them 2 hrs. I'm now re-looking at starting again to play the guitar like I did when I was 18 years old. I've enjoyed myself in the choir and glad that we won gold [*Koestler Award*].”

“Beating Time/Harmony on the Hill has improved my singing and it has also made me feel happy when I have been singing. It feels like part of me comes alive. I have taken part in a solo just recently, Consider Yourself At Home, and this has given me extra confidence. The whole thing helps me relax and be calm. Peter and Gina are very good teachers and they do their job very well. I have respect for them both. Without them I don't think we would have won the certificate and the gold award. I would like to thank them for their time, coming in and teaching us.”

“I like the family feel each time I go to the choir, and to get involved as best I can.”

Beating Time

January 2019