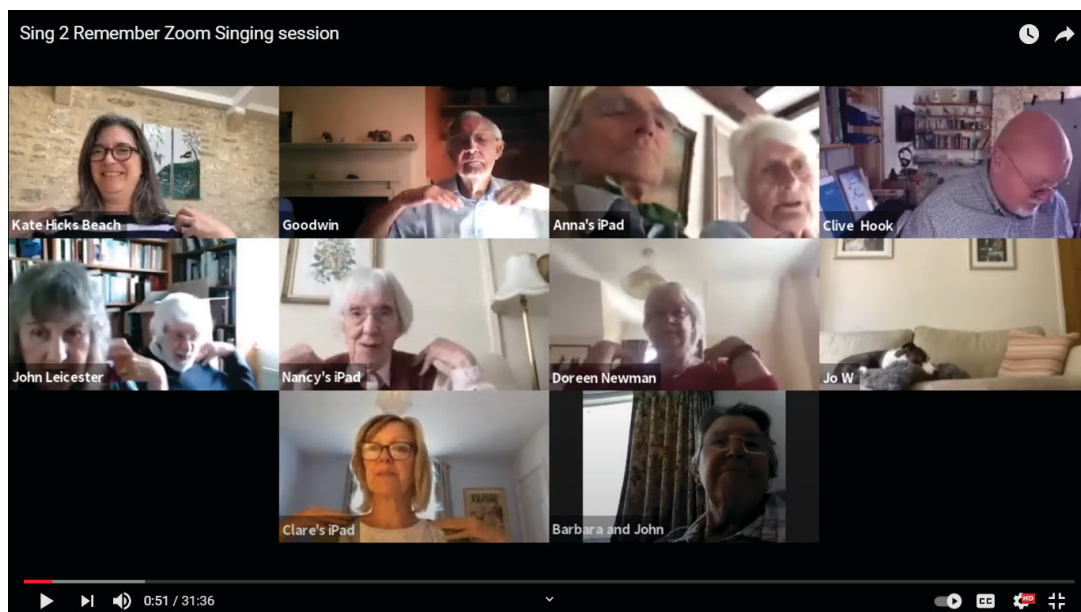


# mindsong

## Annual Report 2020



*Thank you all for the wonderful nonsense you send each Friday. I absolutely love Fridays it makes me feel good all week. Please do not stop making me a happy soul all week, much love to you all from me, I have had a ball for weeks.*

*As I live alone I sometimes panic because I have no family near me in Gloucester. I have been in isolation since March and it looks as if we will all be fastened in for the foreseeable future. The one highlight is our Wednesday sessions, where we exercise and sing. It is lovely to learn new songs which also help my breathing and being in a group lessens the feeling of isolation.*

*I have always loved to sing but unfortunately I'm rubbish now, but I can still cheer myself up singing songs I remember and the new ones we learn every week. I will try to exercise more with my breathing and hope it helps my voice to return a little to what it was.*

PARTICIPANT - BREATHE IN SING OUT

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## About Mindsong

We have been in existence since 2007 and became a charity in 2012 and changed to a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) in February 2018.

We provide three core services: Music Therapy in care homes, Music Therapy @ Home and Meaningful Music singing groups, also in care homes and day centres.

Though we are primarily dementia focussed Mindsong is part of the innovative provision of Arts on Prescription (Social Prescribing) in Gloucestershire and works with people who have chronic lung conditions.

We also provide training and support to professional musicians in running dementia-sensitive sessions in care homes.

### Our Mission statement

We reach people with dementia through music and song, unlocking memories and offering hope and joy in a world where words and thoughts are lost.

### Our values

We want to see music accepted as an integral part of older peoples' care; appearing in strategy documents and embedded in care plan thinking. We aim to lead the way in making music accessible for people with dementia across the county and regionally.

Charity Number: 1177043

### How to contact us

Administration Office: PO Box 205, Tewkesbury GL20 9EL

Phone: 01684 273656 | 07989 936270

Email: [admin@mindsong.org.uk](mailto:admin@mindsong.org.uk)

Website: [mindsong.org.uk](http://mindsong.org.uk)

## How we work and govern ourselves

Mindsong is run by a team of experienced professionals and passionate volunteers, reporting to a board of trustees. Our governing document is our constitution and we are a CIO.

We are an excellent employer, particularly for women, offering a range of part-time roles. We prize and encourage a good work/life balance.

We actively seek to appoint skilled trustees who take part not only in our planning and decision making, but who also take the time to volunteer with our singing groups and to support our delivery.

A large part of our work is delivered by our team of trained volunteers who donate their time and skills to benefit people with dementia.

We do not rent or own premises and all staff work from home. Usually meetings are held wherever we can find good coffee. Cake helps too. During 2020 – Zoom was our friend.

### Objectives & Activities

According to our constitution:

The objects shall be to promote and protect the physical and mental health of people living with dementia and other neurodegenerative conditions, and other health conditions where music would have a significant impact, and those that care for them, through the provision of music therapy, meaningful music, support, education and practical advice.

## Declaration

The Trustees are aware of their responsibilities with respect to public benefit as defined by the Charities Act (2006) and they are confident that the activities of the charity deliver significant public benefit to participants drawn from a wide variety of sources within the local area. We act to ensure that no person is excluded from our activity where there is space for them and the appropriate equipment and support is available.

### Who we work with

People who have mid to late-stage dementia and who live in care homes, or are being cared for in their own homes, are often wrongly assumed to be the least able to participate or contribute in any activity. As well as problems with memory and confusion, people with dementia may experience challenges with verbal communication and social interaction, anxiety and depression. Difficulties with coordination and hearing/visual impairment may add to their communication problems.

We believe in giving people with dementia a voice and enabling positive participation and contribution. We deliver our services with respect for those at their most vulnerable. The people we work with are at the centre of all that we do.

In addition, we use our skills as part of Arts on Prescription, running courses that will have an impact on health and wellbeing. In 2020 these courses were aimed at people with chronic lung disease and aphasia.



## Our Trustees

|                   |                        |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| Helen Owen        | Chair (Until Feb 2021) |
| Elaine Grunbaum   | Treasurer              |
| Sylvia Ardron     | Secretary              |
| Dr Anthea Holland | Founder                |
| Katy Bagnall      |                        |
| Cecil Sanderson   | (Retired May 2020)     |
| Philippa Shaw     |                        |
| Mitch Watkins     | Chair (From Feb 2021)  |
| Ashwin Pillay     | (Since Nov 2020)       |

## Our Core Team

|                  |                                    |
|------------------|------------------------------------|
| Karen Lawton     | Chief Executive                    |
| Julia Glaudot    | Administrator                      |
| Maggie Grady     | Director of Music Therapy          |
| Ruth Melhuish    | Deputy Director of Music Therapy   |
| Shirley Grant    | Administrator (Music Therapy)      |
| Kate Hicks Beach | Director of Volunteer-Led Services |

## Volunteer Area Coordinators

Annette Miles, Bob Merrill, Charles Scott, Kay Tily, Sheila Bloodworth, Jo Simons.

## Music Therapists

Ruth Melhuish, Philly Fowler, Misha Law, Kim Roberts, Sophie Whisker, Cat Mitchel Beamish, Jez Hargreaves, Nick Atkins, Will Draper, Will Lawton, Maggie Grady, Ali Jeffrey.

## Breathe In Sing out Vocal Leaders

Kirsty Abraham, Rose Smith, Ruth Melhuish, Philly Fowler.

## Carer Support Team

Anthea Holland, Sylvia Ardron, Paul Clough, Aileen Graham, Annette Miles, Edwina Hicks, Justine Foster, Lis Holmes, Ron Eaglestone.

## How we meet our Objects

Mindsong provides a range of therapeutic services to people with mid- to late-stage dementia, and other neurological disorders such as Parkinson's and Huntington's disease, who live in care homes and private homes or who are resident on hospital wards or attend day centres.

We use highly skilled, HCPC (Health & Care Professions Council) registered music therapists (all of whom are educated to post-graduate level) to provide our music therapy services.

Our Meaningful Music Singing Group service is provided by our volunteers (many of whom are ex-health and mental health professionals) who are trained and supported by our Director of Volunteer-Led Services and her team.

We also take on additional projects where music can have a significant impact on health.

*"I want Mindsong and the outside world to know how important this has been to us and how these sessions have always been the one thing in the week that we look forward to."*

FAMILY CARER, MT@H



## About This Report

This annual report is not the usual one, dedicated to our finances, achievements and growth, although we have certainly achieved and grown. We have lived through an extraordinary year and we felt it was important to talk about the way the pandemic affected us, not only in our work, but also in our own lives as both were so important to keeping things going.

So much has happened over the last 10 months and so much will be forgotten if we don't record it. So... welcome to our Pandemic Report.

For us 2020 began like any other year. We'd planned what we could provide, budgeted for it and looked at some new work we could add in to fill gaps we'd noticed the year before. We had our first conference on the horizon in April and all the places were booked with a fantastic mix of NHS colleagues, care staff and people interested in what we do. The year was looking rosy and exciting. There was a looming blot on the landscape however and we were watching the news.

I remember those first coaches arriving, taking people into quarantine. The first hint that this would be serious. Early mornings over that first cuppa became a trawl through news sites, trying to predict what would happen next. Watching Italy become overwhelmed. We cancelled the conference.

Wash your hands. A week of 'stay at home'. The 8pm broadcast by the PM, announcing the lockdown. The intake of breath. No matter that we were expecting it – still a shocking moment. There was a flurry of contacting friends and family. 'Are you OK?' Let's not mention loo roll and pasta mania.

Mindsong, as it turned out, was already set up to



work with a lockdown. We all work from home and live all over the county. We are excellent at communicating with each other. We have a tremendous network through our volunteers and contacts. We know our communities.

Team meetings swapped to Zoom, twice a week. That first adrenaline rush of dealing with a crisis gave us all the stamina we needed to make changes, adapt, make strategic decisions and push things on. We quickly found that with the NHS diverted to Covid we were the only dementia organisation on the ground working with people in their own homes.

Care homes were closed. That meant day centres were too. Respite for carers was completely withdrawn. The challenges ahead became crystal clear.

Now we've become used to seeing masks drying on the airer and a pile of clean ones by the front door. Used to having hand sanitiser in the car and in our pockets. Used to treating the post and parcels as virus ridden and needing some quarantine or a good wipe down.



At home, we take our exercise, keep our distance, miss our friends and family and those hugs. But at the time of writing the vaccine is being rolled out and there is, at last, light at the end of the lockdown.

At Mindsong, we have learnt a lot during this year (and of course as we carry on in 2021), we've developed new skills and been amazed at our resilience.

We've worked in ways that some considered impossible for our clients. They were not. We have learnt so many new skills. We have increased digital literacy not only for ourselves but for everyone we work with. We have kept people together and brought relief and joy into some dark days.

This year's report is more of a diary, so dip in. Some of us have written from a personal angle, others more about the work. Writing our diaries has been therapeutic and an important record of a very strange time.

Karen Lawton CEO

### A Note From The Board:

*The Trustees would like to offer their heartfelt thanks to every person who works for Mindsong. From our CEO and core team, our area coordinators, our music therapists and vocal leaders and of course our wonderful volunteers – you have all risen to the challenge of this pandemic. You have been creative, resilient, strong, supportive, tireless, inventive, funny, and completely amazing.*

*Thank you SO much!  
Never mind the exercise  
and breathing, the weekly  
sessions with Rose and the  
gang are a lifeline in these  
isolated days.*

BREATHE IN SING OUT PARTICIPANT

# So, if everyone is on mute? Is your camera on? Next slide please...

## Covid – the nitty gritty overview

When it was obvious the UK would be affected we needed to know all of our options for keeping the services running. We audited our clients and participants, all of whom fell into the high risk bracket for Covid-19, by phone. Staff too.

- Assessed for risk, vulnerability, care package, family support, communication, technology, isolation.
- Same audit with all staff and volunteers, looking at mental and physical health, risk, potential financial difficulty for freelancers and technology.
- Potential risks for Mindsong were loss of income, committed and trained volunteers drifting away, staff illness, services delivered online not engaging with clients.

## Lockdown:

Due to the way we function, and spread of personnel, we were in a good position to put bespoke packages together. We were able to respond quickly and no service saw a dip in provision beyond 2 weeks.

## Music Therapy @ Home (MT@H):

A quick response to clients at high risk with additional support built in for carers. Carers were facing many new challenges, such as a person with dementia not understanding lockdown and why they can't go out. They were also experiencing increased isolation and in many cases zero respite. Some difficult safeguarding issues arose due to frustration.

## Working in Partnership:

Relationships developed over time proved invaluable during lockdown as we worked with local organisations to better support our clients. Early on (9th April), this involved an agreement with our NHS Dementia Commissioner and the local police to continue delivering music therapy to our most vulnerable clients via their gardens. This proved invaluable in supporting well-being and mental health.

We delivered therapy online using whatever technology the client had available: Zoom, Skype, Facebook live stream, WhatsApp. Where no internet was available we provided therapy via phone, CDs or DVDs. Extra levels of support for family carers and our links with local organisations meant we were well-placed to signpost to relevant services and frequently act as advocates.

*Additional support: Monthly support calls for carers monitored crisis points. Where concerns were present we switched to weekly calls and signposting to other agencies where appropriate.*

## Meaningful Music:

Volunteers were supported and Operation Love Bomb began. All care homes were contacted and all residents sent personalised letters/cards. Moving on to Zoom sessions bespoke to each home, using resident's names, plus support calls. DVDs were sent where needed. Garden Sessions began in suitable homes.

As the scale of the pandemic became obvious, visits to Activity Co-ordinators we know well were important – giving time to talk about their experiences safely, to be comforted and supported.

The pilot project, Sing to Remember switched to Zoom – would it work? A regular 40 members said a hearty 'Yes!'

## Breathe in Sing out (BiSo):

Continued via Zoom after checking which participants had the technology. This was successful and welcomed. After-session break out groups were set up for peer support and socialising. Sessions continued during the summer and autumn breaks to alleviate loneliness.

DVDs of sessions were filmed and sent out to all participants, including those not able to access Zoom. Pulmonary Rehab was not running, but members of the PR team joined our Zoom sessions to offer advice.



## Planning:

We realised quite quickly that this was a marathon for our clients and participants so revamped our forward plans so we could maintain our digital delivery, with in-person service where appropriate, until the crisis is over.

When restrictions eased in the summer we continued to add physically distanced sessions alongside digital delivery to offer choice. We do not believe we should dictate to people who are nearing the end of their lives what they can and cannot choose to participate in. The intention is to provide for everyone. If our staff were well and

our participants were well, we worked outside or in someone's home with appropriate measures in place.

## Outcomes:

With a few adjustments as we've learnt more about new technologies, all our services ran successfully and were welcomed (referrers and participants were delighted we were still up and running).

We constantly reviewed how effective these new ways of working were, refining as necessary.

All we have learnt will leave us able to be even more responsive when the pandemic ends. We can still work with care homes during Norovirus closures for example. We are no longer bound by geography, and could provide therapy for anyone in their own home with the necessary technology.

We are also knitting the two main strands of delivery together more tightly. Initiating the Befriending service (Befriending Pods) for people once MT@H ends, using trained volunteers who have a nursing, counselling or clinical background and introducing MT@H participants to Sing To Remember choirs where appropriate.

*He said she wished she had more words to describe how glorious the effect has been on them both, in every area of their lives.*

CARER SUPPORTER COMMENTING ON  
FEEDBACK FROM FAMILY CARER

## Diary number 1 – Ruth

### Deputy Director of Music Therapy



#### Reflections on 2020

Mid-March: the reality of the pandemic is beginning to set in. My visits to nursing homes are abruptly stopped and my final university lecture of the term has to be conducted online. Conferences and meetings are cancelled: one person arrives for my BISO group at Abbeydale Community Centre. It becomes clear that washing hands and sneezing into elbows is not going to be enough to protect us from the virus, especially for our vulnerable clients with COPD and dementia.

I hear murmurings about something called Zoom which people are using to experiment with running groups and choirs online. Could this be the way forward for our BISO groups? On 24th March, the day after the national lockdown begins (and I have spent the night on a mercy mission to Leeds and back to rescue my daughter) the vocal leaders get together on Zoom for the first time, ably led through its workings by Kirsty who has been learning fast with other singing colleagues. The

mysteries of mute, unmute and screen-sharing are divulged and explored. We make a plan to contact all our group members and invite them to join us on Zoom if they are willing and able. Some are not keen, but most agree to give it a try, and so BISO by Zoom is born.

Nine months later, these online groups are going strong. Membership is robust, possibly more so than in pre-COVID days, as people don't have to struggle to get out of the house to attend the group and can be there even on days of poor health or grim weather. Due to cost savings on travel we were able to continue running throughout the summer, avoiding the long break which many had found difficult the previous year. In my group (Gloucester) we have been able to maintain links for elderly, isolated and housebound people, introducing technology for the first time to a 93 year-old and enabling another lady who doesn't use a computer to stay in touch by phoning into the group.

Had I been told in those early days that this new way of working would become the oft-quoted "new normal", I would have been both sceptical and pessimistic about the future. Looking back now, however, I see more than anything the positives of what we have achieved. I remember the sense of trepidation during those initial forays into online working, but also the sense of solidarity amongst my Mindsong colleagues. We all shared a determination to find ways to continue supporting the people we work with, even if we couldn't see them face to face. For those who couldn't or didn't want to go online, we made our own videos at home and they were posted out to anyone who wanted one. We have supported each other to learn the new skills we need, and then passed those skills on to help others stay connected with us. Sometimes this has had the added benefit of enabling those people to share these skills to keep in touch with family and friends too.

We also explored different ways of delivering music therapy sessions – over the phone, on Zoom, WhatsApp or Facebook, whatever was accessible for our clients. As the lockdown eased and summer

arrived, we were able to go and visit people in their gardens, allowing us to share the benefits of both music and nature. Wet weather wasn't always a deterrent: I won't forget my first experience of offering music therapy in a poly-tunnel as the rain thundered overhead. Moving into autumn, we embraced the need to sing through face coverings and visors, arming ourselves with Dettol wipes so that we could start going into people's homes safely. Checklists, monitoring, keeping up to date with new guidelines in the constantly changing situation: all of this, so daunting and unnerving at first, has become part of what we do.

I feel very proud of what I as a music therapist and vocal leader have achieved in keeping going when many other services faltered or ground to a halt. At Mindsong we adapted to the situation; we rose to the challenge of establishing what was possible and we delivered it. In the process, we developed new ways of working that I am sure are now here to stay. They will become a part of what Mindsong can offer, helping to ensure that our services and activities are accessible and sustainable. On a personal level, I cherish the fact that while much of my other work has fallen away as a result of the COVID crisis, at Mindsong opportunities have continued to grow and develop. For me this has had the best possible outcome, resulting in a new role supporting Maggie as Deputy Director of Music Therapy. I am sure that Mindsong will continue to flourish in 2021 and I am very much looking forward to being a part of it.

*Ruth Melhuish*

*8 December 2020*

*Mindsong has been life-changing. It's been absolutely brilliant for Mum and the family.*

**FAMILY CARER**

## Diary number 2 – Maggie

### Director of Music Therapy



#### Music Therapy; Working through the Pandemic – 2020 reflections

Well, what a year this has been!

Covid-19 has affected us all, on a global scale, and the restrictions put in place to try and keep us safe have changed the way we interact and go about our daily lives. For people living with dementia and their carers, there have been some incredibly challenging times to get through. Particularly in the first national lockdown, the sudden halting of respite care, closure of community groups that provided a point of social contact, and the cessation of personal care, or reduction in it, was felt acutely.

Many medical professionals held consultations online or over the phone instead of in person, and in some cases friends and family members were unable to visit. Deterioration of people in care homes due to lack of contact was widely reported in the press, and this sadly also affected

people with dementia still living at home, in the community. Family carers who were receiving support suddenly found themselves coping on their own, 24/7, and although things have improved over the year as services discover how to work and continue to support people in these difficult times, there are still many who feel they are coping pretty much on their own. As the pandemic continues, we are all having to find inner strength, resilience, and stamina to keep going.



Our 'Music Therapy at Home' service has never been more essential, and I'm really proud that we kept delivering this service throughout the pandemic, and have continued to develop it in order to best support the people we're working with.

Early in the first lockdown I contacted our NHS Dementia Commissioner and Gloucestershire Police for permission to travel and deliver Music Therapy. Many sessions happened sat outside in a garden, on a driveway or front step of someone's house, with music and singing filling the neighbourhood! I often found, in garden sessions with my client, that

passers-by would wander over and join in! Another wonderful example of how music can so quickly and easily spread joy and happiness, even in the grips of a global pandemic.

Despite current thinking that online therapy wouldn't work, we discovered that it could work very well for some people, with one of our clients convinced that the therapist was in the room with him during online sessions. We provided individual technical support where needed and once we'd helped someone to engage online for the first time, they went on to connect with their family, increasing their ability to socialise and helping to reduce isolation. Some family carers recorded the online sessions and replayed them at other times during the week to help support wellbeing, giving an unexpected added value to online Music Therapy.

*I'd rate the impact of Zoom sessions around 75% compared to face to face Music Therapy.*

**FAMILY CARER**

We also continued to go into people's homes to deliver therapy with PPE, following strict guidelines to reduce the risk of transmission as much as possible. For many of our clients, this was the only face to face contact they experienced week-on week, and has been described as 'a lifeline'. For me, this highlights the essential truth that we are social beings and need human connection to validate who we are, to affirm our existence in the world and to flourish as individual human beings. Once again, I am reminded of the core ethos at the heart of Mindsong, to love, respect and value a person right through to end of life.

Demand for our service gathered pace during the year, particularly as we were one of very few services that continued to run throughout the

*It's almost as if he's in a trance, singing songs, saying profound things. Music lifts him to a time when problems didn't exist.*

**FAMILY CARER**

lockdowns. During the pandemic we received 70 referrals and worked with 68 clients and their carers. Our therapy team has been nothing short of wonderful. They have responded compassionately, creatively and flexibly to all the changes and challenges we faced. We held regular Music Therapy team meetings and one to one phone calls to check in with each other, keep connected, and explore the possibilities of working in new ways. Different emotional and psychological issues have arisen for our clients and our therapists have held these all within the therapeutic process.

These have included changes for carers affecting their sense of identity, increases in stress levels and people not being able to grieve for a loved one in the way they would normally expect to. There have also been some challenging safeguarding cases which we have supported and helped to resolve. As well as providing much needed therapy, we work with our clients to find personalised ways of using music to support daily care routines and wellbeing. We also signpost to relevant services and act as advocates where appropriate.

Our Carer Support Team has also been amazing and has gone above and beyond in their support, both of our clients and our therapists. Their particular skills in making relationships quickly, listening carefully and being able to assess situations over the phone have been invaluable. This role has evolved to be even more integral to the therapy service itself, with the team making monthly support phone calls to family carers during the first lockdown to maintain our contact. Due to increasing demand, we have expanded this team and now have 9 Carer Supporters.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank both the Music Therapy and Carer Support teams for

their incredible work this year.

It is often difficult to end therapy, and this has been magnified during the pandemic. For some, the 12 sessions we offer is enough to bring a positive change. For others, longer is needed. Some of our clients continue with us and contribute towards the cost of the service. For some, where loneliness and isolation are the major issues, we have introduced a new initiative, Befriending Pods, once therapy has finished. Befriending Pods is a service that connects our Music Therapy and Volunteer strands of work.

Volunteers particularly skilled in listening link up with our clients online or by phone to talk and sing together. This provides an ongoing relationship with Mindsong and extra connection during Covid 19. Relationships and friendships develop in a sustainable way. There is a handover from the therapist to the Pod, and the couple can be referred back to Music Therapy if the Pod suspects a further clinical intervention is needed. It has been wonderful to work with the Volunteer Team in this way and I'd like to thank Kate Hicks-Beach for setting up this service alongside me.

Despite everything, 2020 has been another year of extraordinary growth for our Music Therapy at Home service, and has highlighted just how needed this service is, how highly it is valued by our own teams, our clients and our referrers. I have to give huge thanks to our Music Therapy at Home Administrator, Shirley Grant, without whom we wouldn't be able to run this service anywhere near as smoothly or to such capacity. It has also been wonderful to have Ruth Melhuish in post as Deputy Director of Music Therapy from October 2020.

*It's like a blanket... All my pain disappears.*

**PERSON WITH DEMENTIA SPEAKING ABOUT MUSIC THERAPY**

# Breathe in **SING OUT**

Funded by Gloucestershire NHS Clinical  
Commissioning Group

*"I attend the Thursday BiSo group – currently, of course, via Zoom. As well as helping me to control my breathing I am finding the actual sessions great fun and very uplifting in these strange times."*

Our singing groups for people with persistent lung conditions have also continued throughout the pandemic, via Zoom. We quickly moved online in the first lockdown and have been running 5 groups a week, with over 60 people participating. For those that couldn't access Zoom, we created a DVD with four sessions, one from each vocal leader, and posted these out to people.

Once again, the people we're working with are more vulnerable to Covid 19; many have been shielding, and some haven't really left their house since March apart from for an occasional walk.

We quickly became aware that taking our usual break between courses left many of our participants without company, most were shielding. The decision to keep going was an easy one and we know what a difference it made.

Our Vocal Leaders have shown resilience, creativity and flexibility; learning quickly how to make the sessions work online. This has included utilising shared screens, pre-recordings of music so that harmony can be shared, break-out rooms to encourage social interaction, and setting personalised goals with each participant to encourage optimum breathing techniques and self-management of conditions.

*"I know what to do if short of breath and I feel I have some control to prevent panic. The more I practise the more control I have."*

*"My breathing is so much better than when I started and I am very much more aware of how I breathe and my posture."*

*"I find that joining in with my group lifts my spirits, inspires me to continue. I find that with the zoom sessions, it is easier to get to know people and have a chat than it is when we meet together when you are new."*

*"It's a really good feeling being with other people with breathing problems, it makes me feel more 'normal' and not so isolated. I have a very supportive husband and family, but unless you have experienced breathing problems it's sometimes hard to understand the anxiety that sometimes comes with your condition."*

I'd like to thank the Vocal Leaders for their amazing perseverance, creativity and hard work, and also thank you to Julia Glaudot and Shirley Grant for your support behind the scenes.



## Final thoughts...

2020 certainly brought its challenges and there were times when I felt close to being overwhelmed and quite exhausted. It is at these moments, though, that Mindsong shines brightly as a team. We have a strong Core Team with good, respectful relationships between us all. Throughout the year we met regularly over Zoom, twice a week to begin with, and shared our challenges and our successes. Thank you for being such great people to work with! And of course, massive thanks to Karen for guiding us all and steering the Mindsong ship so steadily through these stormy waters.

Maggie Grady, December 2020

## Reflections on 2020 from our music therapists

Philly – Music Therapist



Hello, well it's certainly been a different year!

I've continued to work within our team of MT@home therapists seeing a variety of clients with specific dementia needs and their spouse/carer. During the pandemic our clients have needed some very specialised extra support due to isolation and limited services which have abruptly stopped such as day centres and respite care. A first we were able to see people in their gardens with masks/visors and then in their homes as the year progressed and the weather became more challenging.

However, on reflection our adaptability in the circumstances brought a lot of joy in experiencing outside work, meeting appreciative neighbours (!), family members and wearing many hats (yes literally, choice of sun hat or rain hat!). It also gave one of my clients, who likes to wander, more freedom to do exactly that alongside the music outside. An added bonus was that I was able to experience a lot of lovely gardens.

Of course we have had to adhere to strict guidelines which has been extremely challenging in regard to singing with a mask/visor on which has meant I have been unable to play the violin or viola inside. However, I can't help but see the brighter side and as always humour is a great way of getting to know people and, if appropriate, to lift their mood, so I usually joke when wearing my visor about needing a light sabre or that I'm doing an impression of Darth Vader! It has also enabled me to hone my guitar skills more, using this as my accompanying/improvising instrument.

Our COPD groups have continued online via zoom which at first was a technical challenge but are running fairly smoothly now with new referrals coming in. We have continued to receive some very positive feedback from the participants concerning their lung health and also in being able to support people through this time. I, as always, thank Mindsong for supporting me and offering me many opportunities.

Sophie – Music Therapist

## Face to face Music Therapy during the COVID-19 pandemic



There can be significant challenges to online Music Therapy sessions for older adults living with dementia. There are practical considerations: do they have access to appropriate devices and the internet? How confident/competent are they when engaging with this technology? Will it provide an additional barrier to a positive therapeutic experience? Are they happy/able to sing, or do they have access to their own instruments to aid their participation? The lived dementia experience will also influence the suitability of remote sessions: does the client live on their own or with their care giver? Is the client able to engage through a screen? Are they able to focus and respond appropriately/how much prompting and support do they require to be able to benefit? What emotional impact does remote contact have on the client; is it more stressful/disorienting than helpful?

I work with 2 long term clients who live alone and receive several visits a day from carers to support their personal care needs. One is visually impaired and cannot access video technology. We attempted a couple of phone-based sessions, but she instinctively keeps phone calls brief and didn't want to sing down the phone; she recognises my voice when I visit every fortnight but couldn't equate the phone calls with me. The other very rarely speaks any more. We tried a few virtual sessions but as we communicate almost exclusively through drumming and I also needed the care staff to be available to facilitate the session, charge the iPad etc. it was quickly apparent that continuing face to face sessions was the better option for both of them.

I worked from their gardens while they stayed inside between April-October 2020, and then moved inside whilst using PPE, maintaining distancing and opening windows/doors to promote good ventilation. It felt important to maintain the routine of their usual rhythm of sessions, which has provided predictability and structure at a time when most other services have become more limited or had to stop. The visually impaired client is very articulate and has expressed gratitude that we've been able to keep singing together. I've been able to help her process personal losses, to provide

company and boost her mood through shared musical experiences.

The male client isn't able to express his experience of sessions, but his carers have said that they notice a difference in his mood and levels of motivation afterwards. Whilst his verbal communication has noticeably declined (and this has accelerated since March 2020), he still demonstrates warmth, communicative intent, curiosity, playfulness and connectedness when drumming. He has gradually displayed more anxious tendencies, including repetitive sensory "stimming" such as rocking and stroking since the beginning of the first lockdown but musical engagement is still able to connect deeply with him and bring him actively into the present moment.

For clients living with their caregiver/s, face to face sessions have often still been preferable to remote options. Most caregivers have expressed feeling exhausted, overwhelmed and fearful as other support networks and opportunities have had to be put on hold. Some have felt angry and abandoned by other agencies and have felt desperate for more hands on, practical support with their caring responsibilities as community visits, day centre provision and respite opportunities disappeared overnight.

In most of these cases, face to face sessions have been particularly appreciated as most other support has only been available remotely - but as we all know, physical proximity and social interaction are vital for wellbeing. The potential of virtual technology is incredible, but communicatively a lot can be missed as hearing and seeing are impaired via the screens and the distance. Communication is about so much more than the words people say, and often what someone longs to say is easier expressed (or confessed) in person than it is over the phone or via a video call.

I can't overstate how much of a privilege it is to be able to continue to work face to face with clients, albeit smothered in PPE and liberally doused with sanitiser. I am so grateful to be working within a county and an organisation that recognises and

values the potential of Music Therapy, and that has resourced and facilitated the continuation of our work at a time when so many other services have had to go entirely online or halt operating indefinitely. I've been humbled by the gratitude and relief that clients and caregivers have shared with me about being able to experience something positive, engaging and "real" over the last 10 months. It's certainly made every smile-with-my-eyes under a face covering, sweaty visor-forehead and hands cracked from sanitiser worthwhile. So many of these people have felt - do feel - largely abandoned, and it's both devastating and vital to be able to meet them in the midst of their experience of these awful and isolating times.

## Diary number 3 – Kate Director of Volunteer-Led Services



## Meaningful Music Singing Groups & Sing to Remember

A few weeks before the first lockdown of 2020, the Volunteer Coordinator team began to talk to volunteers about their safety and the safety of the residents that they were visiting. By the time the lockdown was officially enforced, all singing groups had been called off for at least two weeks. This is a summary of the activity of the Singing Group team

and the Mindsong volunteers from March 2020.

## The Team

Annette Miles (North Cotswolds), Bob Merrill (Stroud and Cirencester), Charles Scott (Forest of Dean), Jo Simons (Cheltenham), Kay Tily (South Glos), and Sheila Bloodworth (Gloucester) all stayed fully operational, safe and well. Bob may have had Covid but was able to keep working throughout and was keen to do so. Kay was shielding throughout the lockdown, and Charles was in the vulnerable category. Morale fluctuated but our Zoom meetings became a real source of support. Walter Lee-Hynes (Forest of Dean) although newly in his role working with Charles, had to step down after a close family bereavement. He is volunteering in the Forest delivering meals, and is still involved as a volunteer.

## Zoom

We all signed up to Zoom on 18th March 2020. This played a surprising and central role in our work this year. It's also changed the structure of team operations and we now meet on a weekly basis. It has been invaluable in terms of sharing ideas, keeping each other afloat, creative thinking and fundamentally, sharing music with residents and others. It has made the group very solid, and mutually supportive, sharing workloads, and providing a safe space to share in general.

## The core team weekly meeting

This has also been fundamental in communication, working together, mutual support and coming up with new ways to reach people.



## Month by Month

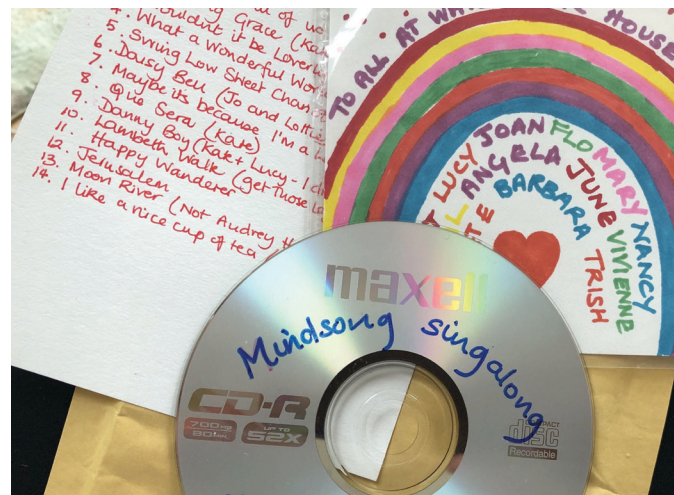
### March:

Shut down all singing groups in care homes and day centres. Cancelled 5th Sing to Remember session at Ashcroft Road.

### April:

Very formative month. Many activities that continued throughout the pandemic were set up now. Established our weekly team meetings on Zoom. Began to experiment with it and consider other ways of reaching our residents.

- Volunteer contact, well-being and communication: started monthly letter to volunteers. Some remained very much in contact and participated throughout, some have taken a step back for now. Some needed support themselves and the team tried to do that wherever possible. Each member of the team in touch with every single volunteer on their patch.
- Charles Scott set up Mindsong Volunteer Facebook page. Gained 70 members and is useful platform for news, uploading videos, sharing and support.
- **Operation Love bomb:** Most volunteer groups (45) took part, and continued throughout the year, sending in letters, postcards, songs, lyrics, handmade cards, cakes, pumpkins, you name it, to residents and staff at our homes. Feedback entirely positive!



*"I just wanted to send an email to express our great thanks for the work you have continued to do with us throughout the past year. We have appreciated the DVDs, CDs and cards sent from you. Your Christmas virtual concert went down particularly well, with the resident group really enjoying watching it - it got them and us in the festive spirit! Thank you"*

Well-being coordinator at The Elms

### Zoom videos:

During April, team started creating videos of songs, trying to simulate as closely as possible the singing sessions we have in person: warm welcome, familiar songs, very personal, and simple.

Getting to know Zoom and discovering what we could do. Began encouraging volunteers to get involved and talking to staff about what tech they had and how they could receive what we were making for them. Within a few weeks 11 volunteer groups making individual videos, uploaded to YouTube and links sent out to homes.

### Zoom or Skype live sessions:

All started in April too, with 2 groups who continued throughout 2020 to Zoom into their homes on a weekly basis thanks to volunteer/trustee Mitch Watkins, and volunteers at Hunters, and a dedicated team of volunteers at Hyperion.

*"Thank you so much for today. You all came across really well. Although we could not see you well the sound was great. As for us, what could go wrong went wrong today! I'm sure it must be a full moon tonight. BUT the residents that wanted to take part did and really enjoyed it. Thanks so much. You are all stars and really helping me and the residents through these tough times."*

- Activities coordinator, Hyperion House

### DVDs and CDs:

Some homes preferred recordings on DVD or CD. Helped volunteers produce these and high quality DVD by a group in the Forest and distributed to all the homes in the area.

### PPE:

Care homes almost completely overlooked with regards to life-saving PPE for staff. Through a contact producing visors, we were able to supply 9 homes in April with visors for staff, and Kay Tily coordinated, with the help of Jo Simons, a huge effort in creating masks, headbands and scrub bags for care home staff, and latterly for music therapists. At least 40 volunteers contributed to this.

### Contact with homes:

At outset the response was varied. Some responded immediately, facilitating contact, others battened down the hatches to cope with what was going on. Certain areas more responsive than others but Coordinator team made fortnightly attempts to contact every home. Some homes are without a/cs. Cheltenham homes very responsive throughout, Gloucester homes very hard to keep in contact with. North Cots homes in good communication with Annette, and same for Cirencester. Stroud quiet, South Glos in communication but don't want any involvement.

*Thank you so much for the gorgeous cards you have been sending to us, the residents really do miss singing with you all but they sure really love the postcards you all send to us.*

ACTIVITIES COORDINATOR,  
NORTHLEACH COURT

### Sing to Remember:

Had 4 meetings in person at Ashcroft Road, very disappointed to stop them, but quickly realised could set up on Zoom. Before this, distributed members' names amongst volunteers and during

April made weekly phone calls to make sure members were all okay. Discussed Zoom with them and decided to set it up for May. Bob extremely good at helping members with the idea and set up, phoning people to get them onto meetings. Our first Zoom Sing to Remember was 13th May, prior to that we sent out singalong videos to members to keep them in touch. Also met online with support team: Maggie Grady, Nikki Rowe, Olivia la'Porta, Jennie Gray, Anton Wynn, Julie Battishill and discussed how to support the group remotely. Dedicated group of volunteers, led by Kate and Bob, and also Annette, present at every Zoom. By end of 2020 up to Zoom 28! These volunteers are: Doreen Newman, Clare Burke, Clive Hook, Jo Williams, Mitch Watkins and Liz Seigal.



### May:

I'll start May with Sing to Remember.

### Sing to Remember:

Had first of 28 Zooms, attended by 20 members and volunteers. By December, had a regular group of between 34 and 40 members, with some not missing a single session. Quickly discovered we could flag up and signpost various issues for members with the help of volunteers who supported the group by singing, reading poems, helping distribute words, assisting with technology and observing members to see how they were doing. Able on at least 3 occasions to identify members having serious difficulties, and put them

in touch with Carer Support team before the session had even finished.

### The Mindsong Manual:

Paul Clough and I began working together having discussed it prior to lockdown. Paul happy to edit and guide the writing, so I began to draft an outline and a list of contents and start writing chapters of the manual. Manual, funded by Utleby Foundation, part of larger project to share how to set up and run dementia focussed Singing Groups with others.

### Personal note:

Noted in diary during May that the task of supporting, adapting and trying to keep volunteers and care homes engaged was very intense, and occasionally exhausting for me and all the team. There are moments of hopelessness and wondering if there is any point, and swimming so hard against the tide, and then something wonderful happens and you get some fabulous feedback, and pick yourself up and carry on. The support of the Coordinator team and the Core team has been invaluable and the leadership from Karen has held everything together in extraordinary circumstances.

### Volunteer/homes log:

During May I started a log of which volunteers and homes were engaged and active, and which weren't. The Coordinator team kept up their telephoning and also phoning volunteers without email to keep them updated. Updated database, removing the few volunteers who felt that they couldn't continue.

### VE Day:

Produced VE Day video for our homes and it proved a great success and has had 400 views to date!

### June and July:

Months of productivity. Having established that most volunteers would not be going into homes in the near future, tried to encourage as many as possible to engage in making videos to send

in. A lot of effort put in by the team, with good results from some areas. Some volunteers launched themselves into this: a group in the Forest led by Chris Renfield, the volunteers at Badgeworth Court, Northleach Court, Hunters, Hyperion, Elm Grove and many others. One set of volunteers from Steppes made their own DVD and offered to copy it for other homes to use. The Meaningful Music Groups YouTube channel has many of the videos uploaded for any of the homes to subscribe to. We all found that residents are able to interact with these videos and especially when made personally for each group.

*I just wanted to give you feedback about the recent video made for the residents. It went down very well, they sang along and even danced!! Thank you for mentioning the names, especially for Christine - it amazed her to hear her name being mentioned.*

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

### Befriending Pods:

More people trying to access Mindsong's MT@H and more joining Sing To Remember. It's apparent there's a missing link. People not yet in need of MT@H but needing some help might benefit from one to one or small group befriending based on sharing chat and music. Both arms of Mindsong joined forces to get this off the ground with Maggie and Shirley identifying clients in need and Kate and team identifying volunteers who might be suitable. A few Befriending Pods up and running - will continue to develop.

### Garden visits:

Started work on possibility that some volunteers able to go and sing with residents from gardens or

patios. Not going to be possible at all homes, and not safe for all volunteers. Contacted homes - set about organising it for the warmer weather. First garden visit end of June, at Watermoor House. Continued weekly, also at Paternoster. Garden visits started during July at several homes in Cheltenham and across the county. Found you needed no more than 4 volunteers so could socially distance, but it helped if they were strong singers. Singing across a divide, in the open air, made it hard to project so advised to keep sessions shorter. 14 care homes invited volunteer groups in for garden visits over the summer and early autumn.



### Inclusion:

One of the things we were really trying to do was keep residents included in what was going on outside in the world, apart from the news of Covid. To that end we encouraged and created themed sessions: Easter, summer, Harvest, autumn etc - really helped keep some joy in people's lives by thinking of the special moments in the year.

### August:

Tried to take a step back. Apart from Garden visits, which were up and running in a group of homes, the team needed a bit of time to recover from the very demanding months of trying to keep

everything going, people engaged and residents and staff not forgotten. This was no small task. Continued to make videos, DVDs, write letters etc - Jo and Kay produced activity packs and mixed ability quiz/fact sheets for staff to enjoy with residents. Began to look ahead at autumn and Christmas and think about what we might be able to do for residents and staff in the likelihood of no contact.

*It was lovely to see the photo. I'd like to personally thank you for the sessions. My Dad was immobile and almost blind for the months he was in the home, and more than anything else, the singing really perked him up. When I visited, he would tell me what had been sung, and we sang some through some of them together.*

*As a family we all played the piano and always enjoyed singing and playing whenever we were together. I can safely say that you really helped make his final months there very happy. You are very much valued.*

*Email from daughter of resident at Badgeworth to volunteer group*

### September:

Restarted phone calls and emails to staff and volunteers, urging them to get on board with some of the upcoming significant themes: Harvest, autumn, Halloween.

*I've played the autumn themed singalong and the residents really enjoyed listening more than singing. More compliments to your voice!! Pat did have a bit of competition when you sang, we tried to see who can sing the last note longer, it was really great fun and hilarious!! We've put up our autumn decorations too. Thank you so much again.*

WELLBEING COORDINATOR

### Queens Award for Voluntary Service:

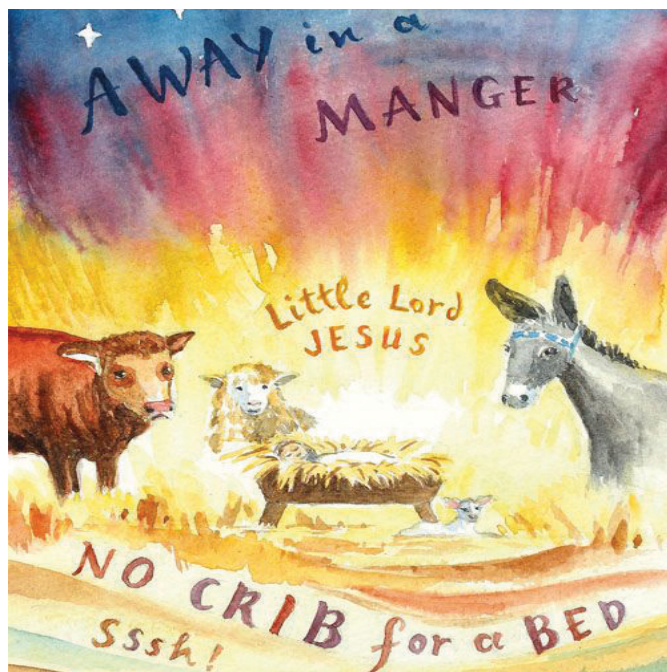
Delighted to be nominated on behalf of our volunteers – they certainly deserve this. Amazingly kind testimonials from Steve Chamberlain, Activities Coordinator at Hunters Care Home, and Natalya James at Hyperion House. Want to fast forward to June 2021 to find out if we win!

### Managing Memory Together (MMT):

KHB attended the seminar presented by MMT showcasing new videos aimed at different ethnic communities in Gloucester and highlighted what help is available and how to encourage different groups to access it.

### Christmas Cards:

Volunteer Jo Neil (a superb watercolour artist) offered to create some Mindsong Christmas cards designed with dementia in mind, containing lyrics of each illustrated carol or Christmas song. An anonymous donor contributed £400 to the production of these. Now need to sell them.



### Volunteer get-togethers:

Organised volunteer Zoom meeting for each area of the county for end October.

### October:

Busy month looking towards end of the year. Produced a Singing Together Session for staff to use with residents called Name that Tune, with prompts and photographs based around our most popular songs sung with residents. Continued to encourage volunteers to get on board with videos given the likelihood of being with residents extremely unlikely. Some groups taking a lot of time to come round to it but by now a great number of groups on-board, and others sharing the general videos made by the team, with their home or homes.

### November:

Another busy month. Shared Name that Tune to all homes. Held Volunteer Area get togethers attended by 55 volunteers. Really productive and attended by some volunteers who hadn't been able to be active. Good to know they were still involved and feeling part of Mindsong. Monthly letters have been, it seems, very useful for keeping people connected to what they are doing and engaged with Mindsong in general.

### New Volunteers:

Amazingly, having lost only a handful of volunteers over the year, we had 2 training sessions for new volunteers during November. Some have already been involved in carolling, making videos and we will be getting them fully active this year. Have 7 new volunteers in 3 areas of the county.

### Preparations for Christmas:

Started preparing for Christmas in many ways:

- Kay came up with idea of Christmas bags which were made by someone from the Gloucestershire Sewers and distributed during November and December to all our homes containing carol sheets, bells, 12 days of Christmas and Christmas cards and gifts. Carol sheets printed for free by Tewkesbury Printing (thank you!)
- Sent out carol sheets for all groups agreeing to

be carollers

- Created Christmas video
- Encouraged volunteer groups to do the same and Forest of Dean team came up with a fantastic film
- Discovered amongst our volunteers, our own Father Christmas, Badgeworth Volunteer Bob Cooper
- Wrote very first and very own Mindsong Pantomime: Gnomeo and Julia.

### December:

So busy. Rolling out the plans laid out in November for bringing a bit of Christmas to our homes, residents and staff:

### Cards:

Continued to sell and deliver cards, much appreciated and enjoyed by all. Feedback from as far away as possible!

*We loved receiving your Xmas Card and for a while it was the only one we received. Annalise photocopied the little lyrics in the front of your card and handed them around on Christmas Eve for a sing song of Away in the Manger which was very sweet.*

FROM FRIEND IN AUSTRALIA!

### Panto:

Recorded and sent out the Mindsong Panto – surprisingly positive reaction with 183 views so far! Lucky to have Julia Gaudot as star of the show – upped the ante considerably. Great fun to do, and the fact that all of the team were on board and fully participating is a testament to how we have come together this year as a group, and overcome our reticence for performing. Worth noting too

that Kay knitted her costume for the panto! That's dedication.



### Carolling:

22 homes had visits from Mindsong carollers and such was the dedication of Charles and the Rodley singers that they went out on Christmas Eve:



*I just wanted on behalf of our lovely residents to extend heartfelt thanks to you and Mindsong for the carol singing on Christmas eve, It was wonderful to hear our residents singing along, we have so missed you all. Thanks you so much for bringing us all a festive smile in tough times*

ACTIVITIES COORDINATOR, RODLEY HOUSE

Christmas bags:

Distributed and were a good way of dropping by to say hello, having a word with staff, and just keeping in contact. Had a lot of feedback from this gesture, and thanks from homes for what we've done this year.

Sing to Remember:

Had final S2R Zoom of the year on 18th December. Has become very close knit group and everyone sent lovely Christmas messages to each other. Sent out a Jacquie Lawson (online) card to all participants - who have become confident with the tech! Wonderful response to Christmas message from Bob from one member who lives alone with dementia and who manages to get onto the meeting each week with Bob's help. Very funny woman and always up for a leg pull, but this is a really lovely message which made us all cry!

*Thank you all so much for cheering up an old bird, I Really look forward to Fridays,*

*Brilliant and thank you so much.*

*Happy Christmas to you all, have a good time.*

*See you soon. Xxxxxxx.*

*Thank you so much.*

*Sorry about all the mistakes, I may get it right soon. Love to all.*

Manual:

First draft of Mindsong Manual is finished and will be sent to Karen in January, and also to Ken from Kent Arts & Wellbeing who has offered to be a first reader as someone hoping to set up a network similar to Mindsong. Paul Clough has edited and also written some chapters and has driven the project when I was running out of steam!

Some 2020 statistics:

Homes:

- 50 actively engaged with videos/links/zooms
- 6 in conversation about new groups and using

video links

- 2 closed during Covid (day centres)

Garden visits:

- 14 care homes had garden visits

Carolling:

- 22 care homes had carolling visits

Volunteers:

- 347 volunteers - not all active but all engaged.

**Sad news:** two of our volunteers died during Covid: Rosie Atkinson and John Bristol, neither from Covid. Both very sad losses to Mindsong.

Diary number 4 - Julia

Administrator



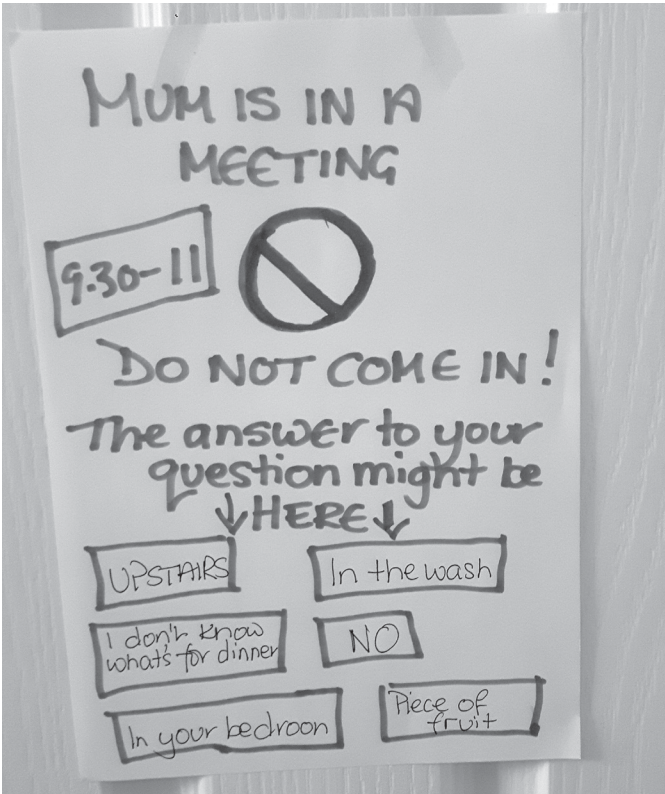
Children, home schooling & working

Lockdown - my experience

In the middle of March 2020 my world changed overnight. I went from busy working mum of three to busy working mum of three home-schooled children with my husband in my office! Initially it all felt a bit of a novelty, we set up the children at various tables downstairs and I started working early mornings and into the evenings around school

hours. Fast forward a month or so, the novelty had well and truly worn off, I was exhausted, the kids were fed up and wanted to see people other than their parents and it was clear Covid wasn't going away anytime soon. I felt a strange jealousy towards those furloughed who weren't trying to juggle everything but could just do the home schooling. People would send me pictures of the artwork they had created in all this free time they had - meanwhile I felt like I was doing everything badly and nothing had my full attention.

Somehow, we made it through the months and reducing my hours made life a bit easier. We established a bit of a routine where the kids finished schoolwork earlier in the day, allowing me to start work earlier and then not work evenings. We enjoyed the garden and the warm weather and I have great memories of abandoning school to set up the paddling pool on the loveliest of days! In terms of work, I needed it, to feel like me. I am certainly not a natural teacher and whilst I love my kids to bits, being on call from 6.30am to bedtime is not easy. Team meetings over zoom became the norm, but although I was used to working from home this felt so isolating - even in a house full of people.



I feel like we all pitched in preparing ourselves for going back into the real world - tracking down and sourcing PPE, writing new policies and contacting clients. It felt like all around us were standing still waiting but Mindsong looked for ways round every problem - our people needed us, and we didn't let them down. I love how BISO reinvented itself and watching a few sessions it was clear what a lifeline this was, a beacon in a lonely, isolating time.

I have had to remind myself many times that this is a crisis, this is just surviving this period we are in and it won't be forever. Just focus on the one day we are in and try to find the positives in that day. Whether it is a cuddle from one of my children, or a trip to a takeaway coffee shop or my personal favourite - family movie night where we are snuggled up in front of the fire watching a movie. These little moments keep us going on to the next day. Home school fails will happen but as a wise lady once told me - they have a roof over their heads, food on the table, a warm house and they are loved.

Diary number 5 - Shirley

Music Therapy Administrator

2020 what a year and where to begin.

Well the most joyous thing for me was the arrival of my second granddaughter on January 8 2020 with the promise of wonderful experiences and opportunities, this was coupled with the excitement of our house move which, although already delayed from the previous December, was due to complete in March, couldn't wait.

10 March arrived, we moved, fantastic, more space and the opportunity of an office for me now that I was working from home, a nice little setup, laptop, printer, few shelves and new stationery, very exciting.

There was so much going on in my world that in truth the news of this 'virus' that was about had not fully embedded itself in my thoughts. I went out to dinner with friends, one of whom was going on a cruise and who flippantly said 'It will be fine so

long as the virus doesn't become a pandemic'. That is a word I hadn't really thought about, surely not, this is Britain, whatever this virus is, it will soon be sorted I felt sure.

23 March, Lockdown, crikey, OK we'll do what the government says and get this thing over and done with.

The core team at Mindsong rallied together and Zoom meetings were set up...this is new! But good. Twice a week, excellent, we could all stay in touch and discuss and try to understand the implications of what this all meant. Twice weekly meetings were held to check firstly on how we all were and secondly, but as importantly, how we were going to still continue to deliver our services to our clients.

If I am honest I can't really recall clearly what came first but without hesitation or delay our therapists were setting up remote services using WhatsApp, Facebook, Zoom and most importantly phone calls to our clients, checking on how they were, did they need anything, were they being supported? It was immediately obvious that our clients needed us to continue to deliver the music therapy, so sessions continued using the technology that was available. Where technology wasn't in place our therapists were having conversations with carers who were enabling setup of equipment and if this wasn't an option telephone therapy was the order of the day.

None of this had been done before.

But what about assessments? Our Carer Supporter Team could no longer visit to do the initial assessment nor visit again after 12 weeks to do the post assessment, what to do? With their agreement our Supporters agreed to phone the clients and assess their needs over the phone, this was challenging as so much of assessing client need is not vocal but visual – but they did it.

It soon became obvious that one assessment by phone, coupled with music therapy via remote technology was falling far short of the service our clients should expect and benefit from, therefore we introduced monthly support calls from our Supporters to keep in touch, reduce clients'

isolation and check on their needs; building the relationship needed to support the interaction that was now missing from their lives.

My daughter, like my elderly parents, lives within walking distance and I suddenly found myself thrust into the role of chief shopper, distributing available toilet rolls at every opportunity. Newspapers were being saved just in case and Mike bless him returned home one day with a shrink-wrapped bale of blue paper towel and bin liners... just in case!!

I became my daughter's support network as, with a new baby and a boisterous 5-year-old, she was finding the restrictions of lockdown very stressful. Amalie (aged 5) initially couldn't understand why she suddenly couldn't come and see us and Kelly's husband, a labourer, still able to work, only heightened her levels of anxiety and I found myself working more fractured days due to the pop-ins for coffee that turned into play dates, all accommodated outside.



My mother, who is normally active and gregarious, was finding the confinement of staying in with my father difficult. His reliance on her was increasing due to his complicated medical and emotional issues, so this meant that regular drop-ins for a chat and food drop off with her were also becoming more frequent. But it was OK as this

thing would soon pass and although it wouldn't be quickly I certainly felt that by September we would be getting back to normal. The weather was good so we could meet outside, enjoy the sun and just get on with it.

Amalie's 5th birthday was looming in May and the graphs on the news were showing a decrease in the numbers of deaths. The regulations allowed, so we went to her house to have a small celebration with her. On our arrival she said 'come in quickly and we'll all be quiet so the neighbours won't know and we won't get into trouble', my heart broke, not just for her but for all the other families for whom this scenario was a reality.

News came of schools being able to return prior to the Summer holidays and it felt like we were finally getting somewhere, this had to be positive.

Work continued and we remained as busy as ever with referrals. New documentation was being produced to audit and evidence how we were delivering our service and spreadsheets were growing daily with additional columns of information.

It is interesting that when the lockdown was originally announced there was a feeling that we would suddenly go quiet and have less to do, but as it transpired the complete opposite happened. The monthly phone calls the Supporters were making highlighted the fact that carers were feeling the strain due to a lack of activities for their loved ones and no facility for respite.

Clients with dementia were becoming increasingly confused as to why they couldn't go out. The core team continued with twice weekly meetings talking through ideas, sharing thoughts and ways of improving and expanding the service and different ways of working as well as supporting each other. Karen was central to updating us with the latest government guidance and advice at every meeting.

I have to be honest, I found that I was getting quite depressed each time I watched the news so I elected to watch the briefings but that was all.

The rest of the summer seems to be a bit of a blur, I recall the restrictions were lifted and I managed to get the very first hair appointment at my hairdressers on Saturday July 4, Hooray!

We celebrated Mum's 80th in the garden. I now realise how fortunate we were to be able to achieve such a day, and for my mum it was a godsend as my father had been particularly low with depression and telling everyone that he would be dead before her birthday!

Soon the summer holidays were over and the children returned to school although this hadn't always felt like it would be a certainty. By now we had managed to secure recurring slots with Asda, soon to be amended for Sainsbury's due to availability and reliability. Arrangements for my new kitchen to be fitted were being made, as renovating the house had taken a bit of a back seat.

### Lock down 2, here we go again.

Not a lot to say really, we seemed to have everything workwise in place except that it was becoming more difficult to manage the numbers of clients being referred to us so we decided as a team to recruit more Supporters.

This band of Supporters had grown from 3 to 5 and now to 9 since the beginning of the year.

Coupled with the increase in the number of therapists, which now totalled 12, I found that managing the amount of information coming in needed to be streamlined and I was juggling too many balls... I broke.

The news of the second lockdown, the volume of data and incredibly sensitive information that was being recorded and sheer emotional tiredness stopped me in my tracks. This is where the wonderful team I am part of came into their own and I was told to stop, curl up on the sofa with an old movie or a good book and switch off. I cannot express how valuable working within a team that is so supportive of the welfare of each other is.

The flowers which arrived tipped me over the

edge, so I dutifully took myself to the sofa loaded the DVD and settled in for a soggy afternoon. The message on the card (which sits on my computer)... 'this too will pass'.

Gosh, this is revealing and I am surprising myself with the emotion I am feeling in documenting the year. I am incredibly frustrated that I didn't journal properly as this is something I have done on and off for many years.

Christmas, with all its uncertainties, seemed to come and go and although further restrictions were in place our bubbles had been created. These were simply a reconstruction of how we had managed the family dynamic earlier in the year. The dark nights and restrictions put paid to Mum's and my Scrabble Mondays, removing another small social activity from her restricted lifestyle. Would this thing ever be over?

News of a vaccine, it seemed almost impossible to believe, light at the end of the tunnel, then the news that the schools would not be returning as the rate of infection was rising sharply. Emotions at that point; anger - would somebody make the right decision and get us out of this rollercoaster of misinformation; sadness - for the millions of people who were being affected so badly, socially, emotionally and physically; desperation - at the fact that there is nothing that I or anyone seemed to be able to do to make things better.

New Year's Eve, bought a scare for my father of a suspected heart attack and I was called to my parents' house to make the decisions regarding an ambulance. It was a tumultuous few days and although it wasn't a heart attack he did require numerous tests, new medications and aids to support his daily living. We managed to get him settled. But I became increasingly aware of how tired and short tempered my mum was becoming.

### Lockdown 3

At the time of writing this the numbers of infections are reducing but are still far too high for any suggestion of things changing and restrictions being lifted. It has been suggested that schools will probably be closed until at least Easter.

In amongst this last year the core team expanded by bringing Ruth on board to act as Maggie's Deputy Director of Music therapy. Ruth's arrival has enabled us to see with new eyes how we need to streamline the service further and rather than putting more and more strategies in place, revisit the strategies we had initially and bring them up to date. We are currently working on this collaboratively. She is already an invaluable part of the team.

It has been a few weeks since I have added to this in which time the vaccine rollout has been phenomenal. For the first time in ages there feels like optimism in the air.

Watch this space.

Shirley 19/2/21

# Financial Review

Our policy on finances and reserves

Where possible we aim to begin each calendar year with funds in place for that year. We look for a broad portfolio of funding which includes grants and trusts, philanthropic giving, donations and earned income. We ask any funder to see any grant or donation as an investment in the work that we do and its progression. We rarely seek project funding unless we are piloting new work.

Where it is the wish of donors that funding is designated to specific projects, the trustees segregate money as appropriate with a view to allocating it to such projects as soon as practicable.

It is our intention to retain such reserves that will fulfil our obligations as employers, offer flexibility when offering our services to those in crisis and to provide stability when a grant ends.

Covid - 19

When assessing the impact of the pandemic, it was obvious that some income streams, such as donations or events, would decrease significantly and other expected funding could be diverted. It quickly became apparent that we would need additional funding to meet demand over and above our budget, against confirmed income, set in Nov 2019 for 2020. It was our realistic expectation that grant giving bodies would release emergency funds in 2020, but may, potentially, have little to offer in 2021, when demand for our services could still be high. Our policy, to enable us to provide additional services well into 2021, was to apply for any appropriate grants that would allow us to fulfill our remit. Together with a policy of building strong reserves we were able to raise enough funds to meet the needs of our communities and begin 2021 able to meet our budget.

Future Planning

We continue to develop, refine and expand the services we offer. We also look at where there are gaps in provision both geographically and demographically, and if there is need we will do our best to address it. We will look at any opportunities that are offered to us and, where they use our skills and relate to our Objects, we will find innovative ways to take on new challenges.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, we will continue to deliver all our services in whichever way best suits those we work with.

Donations & Support

Every year we are overwhelmed at the number of donations that flood in, we would not be able to offer half the services we do without them. We are also so incredibly fortunate to have the support of local funders, who have been there for us from the very beginning and have invested in us and spurred us on.

The pandemic brought its own particular set of challenges and at first we were unsure how we would meet them. However - funders in Gloucestershire were quick to support. National funders, who we would not normally have submitted a bid to made grants available alongside simple applications.

Staff and volunteers came up with fundraising schemes and put so much energy into seeing them through.

We have been asked to do so much more than we'd budgeted for this year, the need was great but so was the will to meet it. This is a thank you to every funder, every donor, everyone who sold a Christmas card or went to an online concert. We couldn't have done it without you.

Our Funders

- Julia & Hans Rausing Trust
- The National Lottery
- The Utley Foundation
- The Rank Foundation
- The Mercers Company
- The Barnwood Trust
- NHS Gloucestershire CCG
- The Gloucestershire Association for Disabilities
- The Fore, Gloucester Community Foundation
- The Henry Smith Trust
- The Notgrove Trust
- The Nicholas Jones Trust & Cherry Jones
- Tewkesbury Borough Council

Donations from

- Thames Water
- Loud Crowd
- Keen Thinking Simplicity
- Spotlight Stationery (our sponsors for the year)
- Tewkesbury Abbey
- Sounds of Song
- Lord S Vestey
- Cecil Sanderson
- J Partington
- Kate Hicks Beach (River Rooms & Christmas Cards)
- Bob Merril (eggs, eggs and more eggs)
- S Lyon
- Katy Bagnall

Donations in memory of

- R Kay
- Jo Jackson
- Elizabeth Morris
- Rosie Atkinson
- Elsie Duffy
- Aunt Muriel
- Dorothy Green



## Detailed Statement of Financial Activities

For The Year Ended 31 December 2020

| Income & Endowments             | 31.12.20       | 31.12.19       |
|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Donations &amp; Legacies</b> |                |                |
| Donations                       | 36,265         | 47,184         |
| <b>Charitable Activities</b>    |                |                |
| Grants                          | 226, 615       | 120,000        |
| Care Home Contributions         | 11,368         | 22,523         |
| Other music therapy income      | 3,417          | 6,387          |
| Other Delivery                  | 820            | 3,524          |
| Clinical commissioning          | 51,700         | 90,712         |
|                                 | 293,920        | 243,146        |
| <b>Total Income Resources</b>   | <b>330,185</b> | <b>290,330</b> |
| <b>Expenditure</b>              |                |                |
| <b>Charitable Activities</b>    |                |                |
| Wages                           | 8,199          | 10,683         |
| Insurance                       | 735            | 517            |
| Marketing                       | 48             | 1,875          |
| Cost of Fundraising             | 1,270          | 552            |
| Volunteer costs and expenses    | 45,834         | 52,450         |
| Delivery of music therapy       | 110,281        | 101,644        |
| Clinical commissioning          | -              | 8,239          |
| Together in song                | -              | 853            |
| Other delivery                  | 595            | 4,057          |
| Training                        | 1,865          | 1,052          |
| Equipment                       | 3,414          | 1,311          |
| Travel                          | 334            | 2,002          |
| Administration                  | 50,429         | 49,000         |
|                                 | 223,004        | 234,235        |
| <b>Support Costs</b>            |                |                |
| <b>Governance Costs</b>         |                |                |
| Independent Examination         | 1,200          | 1,200          |
| <b>Total resources expended</b> | <b>224,204</b> | <b>235,435</b> |
| <b>Net Income</b>               | <b>105,981</b> | <b>54,895</b>  |



*"One week Martha could not get her Mum to go into the conservatory to hear Cat (the therapist) in the garden.*

*So Cat suggested she and Martha just had a chat together. Martha had been on the verge of tears, but chatting to Cat then 'was the moment that changed everything!'*

*Martha now feels a huge amount better."*

Administration Office:  
PO Box 205, Tewkesbury GL20 9EL  
Phone: 01684 273656  
Email: [admin@mindsong.org.uk](mailto:admin@mindsong.org.uk)  
Website: [www.mindsong.org.uk](http://www.mindsong.org.uk)