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Type of Presentation: Oral Presentation

'Those who feel the breath of sadness, sit down next to me' Choir with No Name - belonging & music.

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Learning Goal:

To have raised awareness of the effect of community, and of singing communally, on mental health.

To have contributed to the ongoing debate around non-pharmaceutical approaches to supporting those with psychosis and other mental health issues.

To have investigated the growing movement for social prescribing and how it might help the marginalised.

Abstract Text:

Periods of psychosis in my 20s, and the trauma that preceded them, left deep traces which have taken a lifetime to unpick.

Abiding feelings include regret – regret that a lot of the tools available for 'treatment' are so blunt, damaging and traumatic.

While a sectioned inpatient I was lucky enough to access music – the chaplain allowed me (an atheist) to play the harmonium for his Sunday service. At another key point of my life I found a 'world' music choir – which was simply lifechanging, and a huge support in many different ways.

As a music student in my 60s I was privileged, in 2018, to join Choir with no Name, a choir in Central London whose members come from many different backgrounds, and include people with addiction issues, mental health issues, and who may be homeless. I was carrying out Observation in Practice for a final Project as part of an Open University/Trinity Laban conservatoire course Certificate in the Practice of Music Making.

The power of singing, and the sense of wellbeing and community to be gained from and by the group, is enormous and almost unquantifiable. I would like to present part of my story, and the story of the choir, with video and sound clips, as an illustration of this power.

**ON THE HEALING POWER
OF HUMAN RECONNECTION**