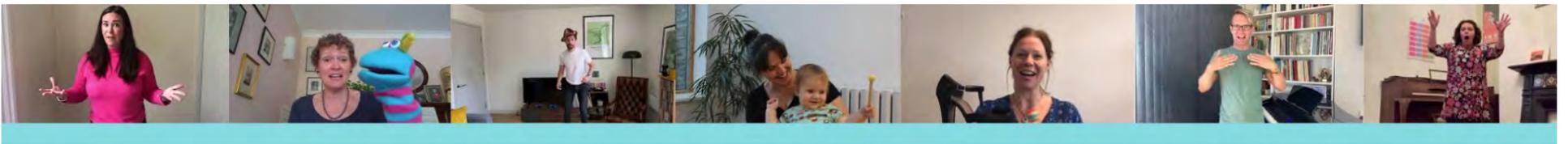
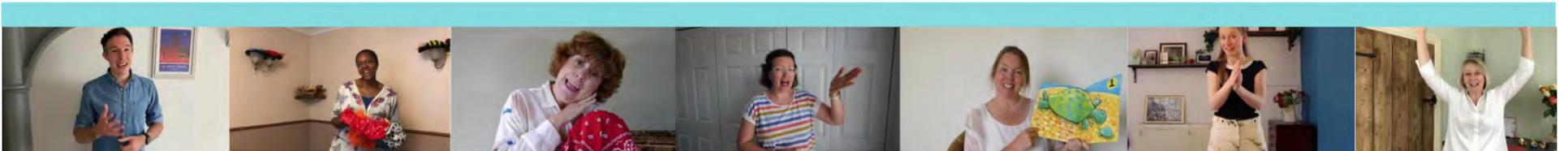


All screenshots captured from Voices Foundation Digital delivery



INSIDE VOICES

 TheVoicesFoundation
 @Voices_Found



JENNIFER COLEMAN-PEERS

Jennifer Coleman-Peers was appointed as Interim CEO in April 2020 while Rebecca Le Brocq is away on maternity leave. The organisation is thrilled that Jennifer, who has extensive experience across fundraising, communications and strategic development, is leading Voices Foundation during this time.

With more than 15 years' in the charity sector, Jennifer has dedicated her career to enabling children and young people to thrive, no matter what their background or ability. As a graduate trainee at the NSPCC, she was part of the core team that drove the FULL STOP Appeal and went on to become Head of Volunteer Board Fundraising. For the past seven years Jennifer has worked with the Institute of Imagination (iOi), a charity focused on ensuring children, young people, families, adults and educators are supported to develop the skills they will need to thrive in an uncertain future. She built the iOi's fundraising operation from the ground up and led the development of the organisation's brand and communications strategy as well as their core operations and governance. Prior to joining Voices Foundation, Jennifer worked in a consultancy capacity with a range of organisations to support their fundraising and strategic development.

TRANSFORMING MUSIC EDUCATION: HELPING EVERY CHILD FIND THEIR VOICE

"Lockdown Britain" (Daily Mail), "End of Freedom" (The Daily Telegraph), "Exams cancelled after virus forces schools to shutdown" (The Times), "Teachers spread virus more than their pupils" (The Guardian). None of us could have predicted these headlines at the start of 2020. We are living through extraordinary times that have forced us all to make enormous changes to our lives. At Voices Foundation we have not allowed ourselves to be simply buffeted by events. Our commitment has and always will be to ensure that children benefit from a high-quality music education. We have therefore used the pandemic, its impact on children and our response, as a lens through which to review our purpose and goals. There are undoubtedly still tough times ahead, but we are confident that we will continue to deliver impact through this crisis and will be better placed to deliver change on the other side.

hundreds of teachers to continue their musical journeys through lockdown; spending a combined 5 months and 11 days on the platform.

We have had to be agile in our approach, and we have learnt a lot along the way, but we are proud that we have continued to deliver impact for children across the country in the most difficult of circumstances. We are also excited by the potential of digital to act as a complement and alternative to our established in-person delivery, helping us broaden our reach and deepen our impact.

This thinking has informed the development of our new three-year strategy, which we have undertaken in parallel with our pandemic response. Voices Foundation was founded 26 years ago in the knowledge that music, and singing in particular, can have a transformative impact on children's

life) were on average 22 months behind their more advantaged peers and that this has not improved since 2011. These findings were compiled before the pandemic. In September, a study by the National Foundation for Educational Research found that the Covid-19 lockdown had widened the gap by as much as 46%, with just 1% of pupils in the wealthiest areas being estimated to have lost six months in effective learning, whilst in the poorest areas more than 10 times as many were affected.

We know that a high-quality music education can be life-changing for children, not just in terms of developing their musicianship but also by supporting their engagement and attainment at school and their wellbeing. The EPI's finding that music is one of the most inequalitarian subjects, with both high disadvantage and participation gaps, is therefore particularly dismaying. The EPI found that disadvantaged pupils are 38% less likely than non-disadvantaged pupils to take Music at GCSE, for example, and, when they do, they score the equivalent of 20 months behind their wealthier peers.

The EPI report concludes that the gap will never close without systemic change. This means that if we do not act now, successive generations of children will be failed by an education system that does not serve to 'level up' but instead entrenches inequality.

'MUSIC EDUCATION CHARITIES MUST WORK TOGETHER TO BRING ABOUT THE SYSTEMIC CHANGE NEEDED TO ADDRESS THE GAP IN MUSIC EDUCATION IN OUR SCHOOLS. WEALTH SHOULD NOT BE A DETERMINANT OF SUCCESS IN OUR SOCIETY. WE MUST ACT NOW TO ENSURE THAT EVERY CHILD IS ABLE TO DEVELOP THEIR MUSICIANSHIP AND EXPERIENCE THE JOY THAT IT CAN BRING.'

Back in March, with lockdown and school closures on the horizon, the team worked quickly to translate our in-person delivery to the digital world. We had already been working behind the scenes on our digital strategy, but the coronavirus pandemic accelerated plans to provide our programmes online.

In April, we launched our Virtual Singing Assemblies, a daily dose of inspiration from a number of our Practitioners to support parents with home schooling and teachers still supporting keyworker and vulnerable children in the classroom. This collection of short videos is now available on our YouTube channel alongside our Into Music and Into Choral playlists. They have received more than 16,000 views to date.

In May, we launched Voices Connect: Digital Training, a way for the teachers that we had been working with in class to continue accessing the expert guidance of our Voices Foundation Practitioners remotely. The online platform hosted two brand new eight-module courses, Musical Foundations led by Sally Cathcart and Choral Essentials led by Charles MacDougall. Switching to a digital medium gave teachers the freedom to access Voices Foundation training whenever/wherever they were able. This allowed

development. In order to reach as many children as possible, the decision was taken to focus on the education system, working with and through the statutory obligation to teach music and the national curriculum framework, rather than on direct delivery to children.

As we look ahead to the next three years, we have decided to bring that focus on seeking to bring about systemic change to the fore with our new vision – transforming music education so every child can find their voice.

Since our early days testing our approach in a small number of schools in London, we have made enormous strides towards helping as many children as possible unlock their musical ability, develop core skills and improve their wellbeing. Our strategic goals for 2020-23 build on this success and seek to further increase the impact we are able to make, particularly for those children experiencing disadvantage.

In August, the Education Policy Institute (EPI) published the 'Education in England: Annual Report 2020'. It revealed that persistently disadvantaged children (on free school meals >80% of their school

During our new strategy period we will be undertaking research to deepen our understanding of our impact for children experiencing disadvantage, so that we can better target our interventions. We will continue to work side by side with teachers in schools and will provide a range of digital tools to support musical learning both at school and at home. We will also champion the role that music can play in supporting every child, no matter what their background or ability, in developing the skills they need to thrive.

With schools now re-open, we are excited to once again be in classrooms up and down the country, supporting teachers and inspiring children. There has been much concern about the risks of singing in relation to Covid-19, but recent research and updated government guidance offers plenty of ways for us to get children singing and engaging with music. Like many charitable organisations, we are facing tough times financially, as schools defer programmes and funders prioritise front line health and welfare support, but our ambition for children is not diminished. With your continued support we will reach more children and deliver greater impact in the years to come. Together we will ensure that every child can find their voice.

WELCOME TO THE NINTH EDITION OF THE VOICES FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER. IN THIS ISSUE WE FOCUS ON THE IMPACT OF OUR WORK AND HOW WE'VE CONTINUED TO DELIVER THROUGH CHALLENGING TIMES. WE INVITE TEACHERS, SUPPORTERS

AND PARTNERS TO TELL YOU ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE OF VOICES FOUNDATION. WE HOPE THAT THIS NEWSLETTER KEEPS YOU INFORMED AND EXCITED ABOUT THE NEXT YEAR OF SINGING! WE REMAIN INDEBTED TO YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT.



MUSIC IS CENTRAL: HAYLEY GUTHRIE

HAYLEY GUTHRIE IS A YEAR 5 TEACHER AND MUSIC LEAD AT CENTRAL PRIMARY SCHOOL IN WATFORD. CENTRAL PRIMARY IS A LONGSTANDING VOICES FOUNDATION SCHOOL WITH A VIBRANT COMMUNITY WHERE MUSIC HAS BECOME 'CENTRAL' FOR PUPILS AND STAFF. WE'RE PLEASED TO FEATURE HAYLEY'S ARTICLE HERE:

PARTNERSHIP

When I started at Central, we didn't have Voices. I am not a trained singer, but I've always loved singing. When it came to teaching music, I didn't really know where to start, wasn't confident and didn't have a bank of songs that were age appropriate for the children. I didn't understand that there were musical skills that needed to be taught.

When we started working with Voices Foundation, I was ever so grateful to have access to proper planning and structure surrounding music. Almost overnight, I went from being really anxious to feeling confident in my ability to lead singing and was able to help other teachers who weren't as confident.

At the beginning of the programme, there were a few teachers who really didn't like singing. However, once we all got to know Katie Neilson, our Voices Foundation Practitioner, staff began to embrace music in school. Katie has always invested in individuals in the school and doesn't just deliver to the group. She makes sure all teachers have the tools to succeed.

Katie's staff training sessions are really inclusive and essential to building confidence across the team. Her sessions quickly became a staff favourite as, compared to other training events, Voices Foundation training had us actively participating in music and gave us a chance to practice and build up our bank of music teaching skills. As we bring on Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) each year, the support from Voices Foundation, combined with the musical skills already present in the staff helps make music a vital element of Continuing Professional Development & Learning (CPDL).

MUSICAL COMMUNITY

Voices Foundation has made singing such a strong part of our community. We use singing wherever we can to celebrate important events. We recently had all pupils come together to sing for the departure of John Mynott, our (now previous) Headteacher.

The language the pupils now have about music is so impressive. They can talk to you about musical skills and are so enthusiastic to share their learning. Before Voices Foundation, our pupils couldn't tell you what makes up a music lesson, but now students are eager to tell (and show) us about rhythm, pulse, and metre. We're often left with our mouths open by how well students have embraced music and taken in new information.

Two years ago, I took a group of Year 3 pupils to the Voices Foundation 25th Anniversary celebration at St John's Smith Square in London. Now in Year 5, we're still seeing the impact this event has had on these pupils. In a recent 'lockdown diary' assignment, one specific pupil (Wasif)

remarked about his experience and even listed 'Hey Sokoly', a piece from the Voices Foundation Songs of Home resource, as his favourite song. After two years, Wasif was able to sing this for me. It's clear these pupils haven't forgotten the impact of music and certainly haven't lost their love for making music in school. It's not just about Maths and English here. Working with Voices Foundation helps me as a leader and it helps everyone. To have something so structured and easy to follow and to have the community of support is truly amazing.

LOCKDOWN LEARNING

When we found out about the lockdown in March of this year, we needed to act quickly and tried to do the best we could to help parents support their children at home. We kept up with all of our lessons and (thanks to our bank of resources from Voices Foundation) were able to keep providing tools for musical learning at home. We enjoyed having access to the Voices Foundation Virtual Singing Assemblies and shared these with our parents and pupils. I even heard back from some of the parents who were really grateful to use the singing assemblies as an opportunity to make music with their children at home.

For teachers, we were lucky to continue receiving support from Voices Foundation via the Voices Connect Digital Training platform. Although this was quite different from what we were used to (singing into a computer screen vs. in a classroom) it was still nice to receive continued feedback from our practitioner Katie.

LOOKING AHEAD: MUSIC AS A WAY FORWARD

As we look ahead to this academic year, our pupils and staff are all eager to have singing assemblies again. While we're unable to come together as we have before, our practitioner Katie and the Voices Foundation team have been helpful in following appropriate guidance, clarifying what we can and can't do.

In terms of music lessons, we're working in groups of 15 or less and encouraging lessons to take place outside where possible. We're only using gentle singing voices and encouraging safe ways of making music (rhythm work, musical instruments, body percussion, etc.). We've already made sure to schedule digital training meetings with Katie and will continue to take advantage of Voices Foundation's digital tools (Voices Connect Digital Training, Virtual Singing Assemblies and more...).

Central Primary has always been a creative and musical school. One of the first questions we asked ourselves as we returned to school this year is: 'How are we doing music?' Our years of partnership with Voices Foundation have shown us the value of music education for pupils and staff and we will continue to make this a priority going forward. We are proud to be a Voices Foundation school.

BEHIND THE SINGS: AN INTERVIEW WITH CHARLOTTE BROSNAN



VOICES FOUNDATION PRACTITIONER, CHARLOTTE BROSNAN, IS A PROFESSIONAL SINGER, CONDUCTOR AND WORKSHOP LEADER WITH A WEALTH OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE. SHE HAS A GLITTERING CAREER AS A SINGER, HAVING PERFORMED ALL OVER THE WORLD IN PROFESSIONAL QUINTET APOLLO5 AND AS A SOLOIST. CHARLOTTE ENJOYS A WIDE VARIETY OF TEACHING AND WORKSHOP ROLES FOR VARIOUS SCHOOLS AND NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS. WE RECENTLY CAUGHT UP WITH CHARLOTTE TO HEAR MORE ABOUT HER ROLE AS A VOICES FOUNDATION CHORAL PRACTITIONER.

'IT'S BEEN REALLY POSITIVE. I THINK IT'S A GREAT PLATFORM FILLED WITH HIGH-QUALITY ONLINE LEARNING.'

Hello Charlotte! First of all, what's it like to work with Voices Foundation?
I love it. I think it's an amazing charity and I feel very supported by them as a Practitioner. I love the work we do because it's so important, going all over the country, visiting schools in deprived areas to bring children music and support their teachers with it. I love seeing the joy on children's faces when I turn up. They can't wait to sing. I always get loads of high fives and hugs when I get into one of my schools. I've had so many lovely moments with children. Some children may have spent the first few sessions running around the room, not joining in, and by session six they're sitting at the front, joining in, being really well behaved and the teachers can't believe it. I love the relationships I have with the teachers too, just to see them grow. It's changed them.

What have been your highlights working with Voices Foundation?
I have so many stories about children changing through music. At the end of a session in one school, I asked if anyone had any questions and one girl raised her hand. She said she didn't really have a question, but asked if she could have a hug. She gave me a hug and then the whole of year five gave me a hug! As I was leaving, her teacher came up to me almost in tears. She said the girl who had asked for a hug normally doesn't even want to answer a question in front of the class and couldn't believe that she'd sung a solo in front of the whole year in our session. That child ended up singing a solo in the final singing celebration in front of the whole school, including governors and the mayor. To go from her not being able to answer a question in front of a teacher to being able to sing a solo in front of the whole school was remarkable. Just seeing how our work changes children and teachers is amazing.



What has your experience been like using Voices Connect, our digital learning platform?
It's been really positive. I think it's a great platform filled with high-quality online learning. As the teachers were getting to grips with it, so were we, but I think the responses we've seen from teachers have been really great.

In a way it's made parts of what we do even more focused. When I go to a school, I'll have a CPD session with a teacher for about twenty minutes to discuss my notes and what they can work on. Voices Connect on the other hand is a full step-by-step course and we've been offering one-to-one Zoom calls too. I think the teachers have been enjoying it and I've loved having some quality time with them during these calls. I often give teachers singing lessons if they aren't as confident with their voice. They're of course confident standing up in front of a class teaching Maths or Science because they're a teacher, but they might not have ever sung. I've been having weekly Zoom singing lessons with one of my teachers and she has been brilliant. We work on a song for her voice and then spend the rest of the session on songs she can do with the children. She really puts the work in, and it's been lovely having that extra time to work on songs with her one-on-one.

Thank you Charlotte!

It's been wonderful to speak directly to one of our Practitioners about their experience. Charlotte's thoughts and the stories she's shared truly show us how the work we do at Voices Foundation has a real impact on the lives of children and teachers that we work with. A huge thank you to all our Practitioners for the work they do and to our supporters for making our work possible.



What made you want to teach people to sing and lead through song?
I think because I was very fortunate to do a lot of singing growing up. I went to state schools, but my Grandpa was a choir master and organist. My Mum was a singer and she ran baby music classes, so I was introduced to music from the youngest age possible. I was very lucky to sing in my county choir and National Youth Choir. I was given so many singing opportunities growing up and they are some of my happiest times. I went on to sing full-time in an acapella quintet for three and a half years and we did a lot of outreach work in deprived areas. It was incredible to see children's astonished faces; so many of them had never seen live music before. I wanted to give every child the opportunity to sing.

I will also always remember the Voices Foundation 25th Anniversary celebrations at St John's Smith Square. Lots of the schools I work with were there and I managed to get a front row seat to see them. I felt like all of their parents. They were all waving at me. They were so excited. Not long before the event, I was at one of those schools and some of the children asked me where London was. They had no clue, as they had only been out of the town they lived in once. The idea of going to London was so alien to them. To be able to give these children the opportunity to come down to the capital to perform in one of the most amazing places was a really proud moment.

How have you found leading our Virtual Singing Assemblies?
I've loved it. It's different, quite challenging, but I felt on such a high every time I finished one. I think because I know how it feels to lead one in person, I know how much energy it requires. After I finished my first one, my Fitbit thought I'd done a workout! It's great, but a little strange to not have the feedback from the children in front of you. It was a little nerve-racking using technology instead too. I never get nervous leading in real life!

Luckily, I've had years of leading singing assemblies, so the songs I used I use a lot; I know the troublesome bits, the bits I need to repeat a little bit more and what works. I had a notification on Twitter that one of my schools had taken a video of the children I teach doing my singing assembly and it just made my day. It was great to watch them following me, all moving their hips just like me. It was so fun, and I think it was lovely for the children to see us leading online. It's a great reminder of what we do.



INSIDE MUSIC DIGITAL

In the last issue of Inside Voices, we noted that we would be releasing our inaugural digital resource for teachers in 2020. We are excited to share that the Beta version of our Inside Music Song Bank (previously OTLC) has been released for internal testing and the live site will be released in early October. The Inside Music Song Bank is an interactive tool for our teachers, based on our award-winning Inside Music books. Phase 1 includes digital access to our Early Years resources and activities with guidance and video and audio modeling. We are excited for the live release of the site, as we believe it will be a very useful digital tool for teachers, especially during these difficult times and will complement our other digital offers.



UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN CHRISTOPHER HOPTON

“We’ve seen two years’ worth of digital transformation in two months” the CEO of Microsoft told investors at the end of April. For Voices Foundation the story was no different.

The announcement that schools would shut on 20th March, two weeks before the end of the Easter term, set us major challenges. With our programmes relying on face-to-face contact how could we finish school programmes with a third of the curriculum still to go? What would be the effect on our self-employed Practitioners as they went into lockdown along with the rest of the population? How would our financial position be impacted?

Fortunately, we had held a regular Board meeting a few days earlier and realised the Government was about to restrict normal activities. We had therefore appointed a Board committee to work with Jennifer and her team to address whatever challenges arose.

The Corona Committee, as it became known, met weekly via Zoom with a standing agenda to discuss the wellbeing of the Voices Foundation team, options for continuing to deliver school programmes and the approaching financial challenges.

As Chair of the Committee it was truly impressive to hear the progress the team had made each week and its suggestions for further initiatives. Trustees then contributed ideas and lessons from other organisations they were involved with before helping the team set priorities for the next week.

The challenge of delivering programmes to schools which were shut indefinitely was significant, but the results were spectacular. By the end of March, a daily Virtual Singing Assembly had been launched. Six weeks later Voices Connect went live delivering weekly video sessions to schools. Practitioners were involved throughout, taking turns to deliver Virtual Singing Assemblies, recording content for Voices Connect and contacting their schools to offer follow up sessions for individual teachers.

Within two months Voices Foundation had gone from delivering its programmes face-to-face to delivering them online. The team worked tirelessly to come up with solutions – remaining positive and upbeat throughout. Trustees provided regular guidance on the way forward. Practitioners were involved every step of the way recording high quality material at short notice. Schools responded positively with a majority signing up to Voices Connect.

It was inspiring to see how determined the team was to ensure that children continued to receive high quality music education, how creative it was in finding ways to overcome each challenge and how well the team bounced back when a proposed way forward proved to be unworkable.

Whilst the development of our digital delivery happened remarkably quickly, our financial challenges took longer to materialise. Fortunately, most of our income for 2019-20 was already committed. However, we soon realised that future years would be far from easy. Our income is divided evenly between the contributions paid by schools for our programmes and voluntary income in the form

of grants and donations. As we engaged with schools about new programmes, we found the level of uncertainty about reopening meant many were unable to sign up to programmes for the following year before the end of the summer term. Similarly, some of our supporters were finding it difficult to guarantee future grants or donations as dividend income on which they relied fell away.

Our voluntary income is critical for us. It helps subsidise the cost of school programmes and supports future development. In the short term we want to ensure as many schools as possible can benefit from Voices Foundation programmes as they reopen and seek ways to reintegrate their children back into school life. We know how important music can be in that regard. We are budgeting particularly carefully this year to minimise our routine costs to be able to work with as many schools as possible.

In the longer term we want to build on the progress made in our digital delivery whilst schools were closed. The potential of using that capability to reach schools we could not otherwise serve is very exciting.

In the circumstances we faced the team did brilliantly to adapt to new and difficult circumstances. We learned how to deliver our programmes remotely. We created outstanding online video content. We know the need for high quality music education is even stronger in the current environment. We now have an opportunity to enhance our digital delivery further. If any supporter would like to help us grasp that opportunity, please would they contact Jennifer.



VOICES CONNECT: TAKING TEACHER TRAINING ONLINE

Voices Foundation are proud to be celebrating our five-year partnership with the David Ross Education Trust (DRET) – which coincided both with the COVID-19 pandemic and the final terms of our PHF Teacher Development Fund (TDF) project.

Our ‘Singing School’ TDF project began in September 2018 and we have been working with six DRET primaries in Hull, Grimsby and Northamptonshire, where a significant number of pupils experience disadvantage. The aim is to empower teachers and Senior Leaders to embed learning in and through singing to bring about sustainable change for schools.

There was a strong desire for our partnership to develop an understanding of what is and is not effective in our process of teacher development and to test the hypothesis that the Singing School programme could provide a model for school improvement across the Trust. Through our project, we have been particularly interested in exploring how Continuing Professional Development (CPD) can function both through Trust-wide cascade systems and through asset-based approaches that respond directly to the development needs of individual schools and teachers.

In light of our project learning from Year 1, we have continued to refine CPD inputs for teachers in response to their needs: ‘It’s moved from more generic CPD, to ‘what does each teacher need to progress?’ (Class teacher).

Feedback surveys from teachers this past year have highlighted the effectiveness of combined Trust-wide approaches, such as regional clustered CPD, with school-level CPD inputs, such as individual in-class visits from Practitioners:

- 27% increase in survey responses from teachers stating they feel they have received sufficient professional development to lead singing
- 15% increase in agreement in teacher surveys that teachers are able to adapt music activity to suit pupil need

With just over one term remaining on our project when the COVID-19 outbreak led to UK school closures, it was a priority for us to find a way to continue to work with teachers in the Summer term. We were interested in how we might replicate the success of our face-to-face CPD inputs, particularly clustered training sessions that focussed on accelerating teachers’ understanding of musical concepts and skills, followed up by Voices Foundation Practitioners supporting the application of this learning back in the classroom.

Choral Practitioner Matthew Roughley feels the move online will continue to allow us to support individual needs: *‘The [Voices Connect courses] will give us the opportunity to focus on teachers and their leading, developing and cementing the fundamental skills so that when the children come back to school, they will be leaps ahead of where we left off.’*

Teachers have already reflected on the way the online training has impacted their learning: *‘It has been a very useful course. I’ve learnt a lot. Great to refresh what I already know and learn new ways to teach children.’*

The flexibility provided by digital CPD will play an important role in our delivery this year, and beyond. Simon Toyne, Executive Director of Music at DRET, feels it might, in fact, unlock possibilities for deeper learning:

‘It changes everything. We’ll be able to get to far more teachers online, as this is something any teacher can join to top up their skills at any time. Teachers can access the things they need support with most frequently, such as ‘how do I teach a song?’, but the model will also allow us to respond specifically to individual needs.’

While there is so much uncertainty about what the year ahead will bring and when we will be back in the classroom, we are thrilled to have found a way to keep learning - and singing - together.

VOICES FOUNDATION WOULD LIKE TO THANK:

A huge thank you to everyone who supports the Voices Foundation. Around 50% of our income comes from fundraising and it is thanks to our individual donors, members of the Annual Giving Scheme, companies and Trusts and Foundations that we are able to deliver effective and life-changing work in so many schools.

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