

Group singing for people with lymphoedema or lipoedema. Report on a funded pilot project

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Introduction: A six month, pilot project for people living with lymphoedema or lipoedema was established following individual feedback from patients and the lymphoedema patient support group. The project involved the creation of a choir “The Lymph Notes” and funding was obtained to commission the expertise of the Musical Director and his team, from a local award winning community choir. The feedback from the project participants was overwhelming, with many people reporting new friendships, improved well-being and better self-management of their lymphoedema or lipoedema. 25 people have attended the weekly sessions.

Aims: To report on the experiences of taking part in a community choir primarily set up for people with lymphoedema or lipoedema; To consider the feasibility of sustaining this initiative in the longer term with ownership eventually being transferred to the group.

Method: Four outcome measures were used throughout the project; emotional scaling tool, focus groups, modified Well-Being Star and anonymous participant feedback before and after each session.

Results: The emotional scaling tool provided overall and individual results, with an average improvement of 77% (range of 9-106%). Feedback from the focus groups demonstrated improvements in physical health, mental health, (Hendry et al, 2022) and Helitzer and Moss (2022), coping strategies and reduced clinical contacts. Weekly anonymous participant feedback showed improvements in mood after each session and increased confidence over the project. The Well Being Star tool was less sensitive to this particular group and outcomes were less remarkable.

Conclusion: The pilot project ended with the release of a single recorded by The Lymph Notes. This was the culmination of the weekly rehearsals and a full day in the recording studio. The team from the choir created an accompanying video which highlighted the group’s experiences. There was a positive response on social media, which raised awareness of the choir project, lymphoedema and the local hospice where the lymphoedema service for this area is based. The group now have one Choir Master who leads the free, weekly sessions. It is open to people with other long term conditions, and the group members have greater ownership, which has allowed the lymphoedema specialists to step back from co-facilitating the weekly sessions. The participants from the initial choir project are proud of their achievements and eager to highlight their experiences with patients, clinicians and other established community choirs.