

NHS Ayrshire & Arran



Meeting:	Ayrshire and Arran NHS Board
Meeting date:	Monday 8 December 2025
Title:	Patient Experience: Cath's Story – Vibrant Voices
Responsible Director:	Mark Inglis, Director of South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership
Report Author:	Geraldine Jordan, Director of Clinical and Care Governance Laura Harvey, QI Lead, Patient Experience

1. Purpose

This is presented to the Board for:

- Discussion

This paper relates to:

- Government policy/directive
- Local policy

This aligns to the following NHS Scotland quality ambition(s):

- Safe
- Effective
- Person Centred

2. Report summary

2.1 Situation

This healthcare story introduces the Vibrant Voices Singing Group and highlights the experience of Cath, a member of the group. It outlines the positive impact that the Vibrant Voices Singing Group has had on her physical and mental wellbeing.

Vibrant Voices is a project implemented by the Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) Service currently only available in South Ayrshire. It provides a universal, inclusive, group singing intervention for adults (aged 16+) with communication difficulties and their partners/carers/family members. The Group aims to positively impact on the psycho-social wellbeing of all participants and support and enhance communication skills.

2.2 Background

Cath contacted the Patient Experience Team via a feedback leaflet to share her positive experience and to let us know of the significant impact this group has had, not only on her recovery from neck cancer surgery, but also on her physical and mental wellbeing.

Cath had been a social worker for over 20 years, before retiring following her cancer diagnosis. After two surgeries in November 2024, radiotherapy and a course of chemotherapy, Cath was left with some facial paralysis, a slight slur and a hoarse voice. This impacted Cath's confidence as communication had been key during her working life which made her reluctant to go out. A friend suggested singing as a way to improve her voice and after doing some online research, Cath came across Vibrant Voices.

People with communication difficulties often face emotional distress, isolation and barriers to accessing services. Communication challenges are linked with increased risk of mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression. The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) recognises the close relationship between mental health and speech, language and communication needs. Singing interventions have been shown to improve mood, speech, breath control, confidence and voice quality, and studies show clear benefits for people with conditions such as stroke, Parkinson's disease and dementia. Singing in groups also has emotional benefits, including developing friendships, improving self-esteem and positively impacting on a person's confidence and sense of identity.

Vibrant Voices is funded through South Ayrshire HSCP Improvement and Innovation fund currently, with around £75,000 invested over a period of 2 years to allow for the development of this initiative.

2.3 Assessment

The Vibrant Voices Singing Group was initially launched in Ayr in February 2024. The group runs weekly, for one hour, and they are free to attend for anyone living in South Ayrshire, with no need to book.

A 'total communication approach' underpins the sessions, using speech, visuals, gesture and other strategies to support individual needs. This approach has been found to increase confidence and engagement in social situations, and lead to an improvement in overall wellbeing.

Vibrant Voices is an innovation like no other in South Ayrshire - it is a group of inspirational adults with many different kinds of communication difficulties, who come together to connect with each other and feel uplifted. It is the members that make Vibrant Voices the success it is, and the staff are committed to them to provide an inclusive, supportive space to enhance their communication, confidence and wellbeing.

In listening to Cath's story, there is no doubt that there are many other patients from across all Health and Social Care areas who could benefit from a similar initiative.

2.3.1 Quality/patient care

Singing is used as a therapeutic intervention for people with communication difficulties to positively impact on the psycho-social wellbeing of the participants to support and enhance their communication skills. It is also used to support the ageing population and provide a resource for people to access within the community to help them improve their own health and wellbeing.

In South Ayrshire's adult community Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) service, all patients referred for communication difficulties receive information about Vibrant Voices. Some attend while on the outpatient waiting list, and a few opt to engage with Vibrant Voices instead of attending for specialist input. This improves the patient experience as it reduces demand for specialist one to one SLT input and helps to support waiting times for others accessing the service.

2.3.2 Workforce

Vibrant Voices is led by a Speech and Language Therapist, with support from a Senior Health Care Support worker for SLT, and invaluable help is provided by dedicated volunteers, and a volunteer pianist provides live music.

The biggest impact on patient experience is our staff, their interactions and the quality of the care they deliver. It is evident that Fiona and her Team's enthusiasm and commitment is what makes this group so successful.

2.3.3 Financial

No financial impact

2.3.4 Risk assessment/management

No identified risk

2.3.5 Equality and diversity, including health inequalities

An impact assessment is not required as the individual sharing the story has given consent and any impact on others will be individual.

There has been a very positive response to Vibrant Voices, with interest from various different service users (people with Dementia, Parkinson's Disease, Progressive Supranuclear Palsy (PSP), Stroke, Multiple Sclerosis, voice difficulties, learning difficulties, dysfluency and neurodivergent individuals). Participants currently range from aged 17 to over 90 years old. People attend Vibrant Voices from within the community all across South Ayrshire and from local Care Homes. Membership has expanded over time with an average of 70 people attending weekly in the South of Ayrshire.

2.3.6 Other impact

Vibrant Voices aligns with many of the South Ayrshire HSCP strategic priorities and supports the Ageing Well Strategy:

1. We nurture and are part of communities that care for each other
2. We make a positive impact beyond the services we deliver
3. We are an ambitious and effective partnership

This project also aligns with the values of the South Ayrshire Wellbeing Pledge as it is a commitment to patients and their families to support psycho-social

wellbeing from a social prescriptive perspective, and it encourages people to connect and care for each other.

Evidence suggests access to group singing has many benefits in neurological rehabilitation and it is a valuable option as a source of support within the community to help people improve their health and well-being.

- **Best value**

Cath's story demonstrates the negative impact on confidence and wellbeing that a life changing diagnosis can have and the positive impact that successful and appropriate interventions can have.

- **Safe, Caring & Respectful**

Cath's story fully complies with our corporate objectives and highlights the importance of applying them to every patient throughout their care journey.

2.3.7 Communication, involvement, engagement and consultation

This patient story is presented for awareness and to support learning and improvement across our services.

2.3.8 Route to the meeting

This story has not been heard at any other meetings but has been shared with the service involved.

2.1 Recommendation

Members are asked to listen to Cath's story.