



THE ROYAL SCHOOL OF CHURCH MUSIC

# RSCM EDUCATION STRATEGY AND ACTIVITIES 2025 ONWARDS

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A pathway to growth which sees more people in more  
places singing, playing and enjoying church music





# Introduction

In 2027, the RSCM will celebrate its Centenary. As the charity looks towards this important milestone, a bold vision has been outlined in our Strategic Plan (2022–2027), as we enable the flourishing of church music.

From this vision come three strategic priorities:

1. Encouraging the development of church music and musicians
2. Bringing people closer to God through music
3. Promoting music in worship, and excellence in music

Education is at the heart of the RSCM's name, and at the heart of its mission. The Education Strategy therefore engages with each of the three strategic priorities, exploring how we can educate, support and resource church musicians and have a positive and formative impact on their work and development.

Embedded within this strategy is a focus on the needs of three specific groups:

1. **Young people**, without whom there is no future for church music or, indeed, for the church as a whole
2. **Music leaders**, who bear the responsibility for the flourishing of church music in their context today and play a key role in the nurture and support of the next generation of church musicians
3. **Worship leaders** (including, but not exclusively, clergy), who can help to ensure that music finds its place within the mission and ministry of the local and national church, supporting growth in faith and discipleship

This document includes:

- Tables of objectives, visions, and outcomes which respond to the RSCM's strategic priorities from an educational perspective, together with service outputs
- The details for a programme of activity that fulfils these objectives

This is a multi-year plan. The first list of activities will be visible during 2025 – indeed, some are already visible. The second list includes activities that are being planned for future years but rely on external financial support to be fully implemented.

We will be working with partner organisations on some activities to advance mutual objectives more effectively and efficiently and increase the number of people we are able to support.

# 1. Encouraging the development of church music and musicians

Objective	Vision	Outcome
1a. Engaging children and young people with church music	More children and young people encountering hymns and other good church music in schools, churches and at home, and finding opportunities to become involved in church music.	Increasing numbers of children and young people involved in church music and beginning lifetime journeys of growth in music, and faith.
1b. Enhancing the church music skills of children and young people as they grow	Children and young people finding opportunities at every stage to deepen their engagement and develop their skills, preparing them for a lifetime of musical activity, and of church music ministry.	High proportions of children and young people continuing their involvement in church music beyond their initial engagement and growing in faith and skills.
1c. Developing the organists and other instrumentalists of the future	More people, especially young people, finding and taking up opportunities to learn the organ or other instruments, and using them to lead worship.	Increasing numbers of people enabled and equipped to participate in, and lead, music in worship as instrumentalists, in churches everywhere.
1d. Developing people as music leaders	More people find opportunities to become leaders of church music in churches and schools and are supported to develop the skills they need.	Increasing numbers of people equipped to lead music in worship, in schools and churches everywhere.

Service outputs:

- resources and programmes that enable young people to encounter church music for the first time
- programmes of training for choristers; particularly, but not exclusively, for young choristers
- a broad range of musical training for church music leaders (directors, instrumentalists, organists and keyboard players etc.), which creates a culture of continuous improvement and CPD
- support for church music leaders in building, maintaining, and developing church choirs including a suite of information and education resources available online

## 2. Bringing people closer to God through music

Objective	Vision	Outcome
2a. Engaging children, young people and families in church life and faith journeys through music	Children and young people actively engaged in leading worship everywhere, through music and word, developing as disciples as they develop in musicianship.	Many more children, young people and their families embedded in the whole life of the church, practising 'musical ministry' and beginning journeys of faith.
2b. Engaging more adults in church life and faith journeys through music	Adults from all sectors of society participating actively in worship, through music and word, developing as disciples as they develop understanding of the music they sing.	Many more people embedded in the whole life of the church, singing and playing music with meaning and understanding, and beginning journeys of faith.

Service outputs:

- resources that equip music leaders in churches to place their leadership in a faith context
- training for young people that encourages faith conversations and growth, in church, in school and at home
- encouragement of collaborative working within churches – between musicians, clergy and worship leaders, youth workers etc. – enabling musicians to see their work as part of a greater whole
- support for collaboration between churches and schools through training and resources
- support for adult singers and the wider congregation in growing in faith, understanding and skills through music



### 3. Promoting music in worship, and excellence in music

Objective	Vision	Outcome
3a. Supporting all churches to make the best use of music in worship	Churches everywhere are able to use music effectively, appropriately, and with ambition, supporting their mission and ministry.	The RSCM's values embedded in the Church, supporting a rich tapestry of different types of church music provision which helps deliver the mission and ministry of every church.
3b. Promoting effective music leadership everywhere	All churches feeling able to recruit, support and nurture a skilled choir or music group leader, organist or other musician, committed to continuous improvement and growth.	Churches everywhere are able to find the people they need to lead music in worship.

Service outputs:

- opportunities for church musicians of all ages and abilities to participate in events which allow them to see themselves and their work as part of a bigger picture
- resources and support for clergy and worship leaders which enable them, and the wider church, to see music as an agent for growth



# 2025 activities

## **Hymnpact!®**

Objective(s): 1a; 2a

*Hymnpact!* is our subscription resource for primary schools and churches, providing hymns and songs which bridge the gap between what is sung in school and the hymns typically sung in many churches. *Hymnpact!* will continue to grow during 2025, with the provision of additional resources to support teachers and church leaders in using *Hymnpact!*, as well as more new hymns to learn and share. We are also planning our first *Hymnpact!* festivals, designed to bring everyone together to celebrate the joy of hymn singing.

## **Junior Choirs' toolkit**

Objective(s): 1a; 2a

During 2025, we will be launching a new Junior Choirs' toolkit – a bank of resources and training sessions to help churches plan for, establish and nurture new and revived expressions of children singing in church.

## **Voice for Life® Digital**

Objective(s): 1b; 2b

VfL Digital is the online version of the RSCM's principal music education resource for choirs, used with singers of all ages. During 2025, as well as ongoing development and maintenance, VfL Digital will be expanded to include an additional, optional, module exploring aspects of discipleship and how the music we sing relates to aspects of faith, opening the door to conversations at church and at home.

## **Voice for Life® Singing Awards**

Objective(s): 1b

Voice for Life Singing Awards are designed to celebrate the achievement and attainment of singers of all ages and support their learning and development as musicians in the context of their worshipping communities. There are three levels – Bronze, Silver and Gold Award – enabling singers to gradually expand and test their skills in a systematic way.

## **Bath Course**

Objective(s): 1a; 1b; 1c; 1d

The Bath Course remains a cornerstone of the RSCM's summer timetable, gathering together a large group of young people from across the country for a week of singing and learning together. The programme is varied, including opportunities to develop their musicianship skills, contribute to worship in different contexts and experience a wide variety of repertoire.



# 2025 activities continued ...

## **Beverley Course**

Objective(s): 1a; 1b

Building on the principles of the Bath Course, the Beverley Course in May half term offers an opportunity for young people to gather in a different part of the country for three days, including taking part in services in Beverley Minster.

## **RSCM Youth Choir (formerly the Millennium Youth Choir)**

Strategic objective(s): 1b; 1d

The RSCM Youth Choir is the RSCM's flagship auditioned choir for young singers, offering intensive opportunities for singers aged 16-23. As well as regular cathedral residencies, the programme for the Youth Choir includes opportunities for members to develop key music leadership skills they can take forward into the future.



## **Church Music Skills - Organ**

Strategic objective(s): 1c

CMS Organ was relaunched in digital form on the RSCM Hub in January 2024 and the first cohort of students, from all around the world, are currently working through the programme. During 'Play the Organ Year', initiated by the Royal College of Organists, we will be using CMS Organ to support fledgling organists to develop the core skills they need to support local congregations in worship.



## **Emerging Leaders training programme**

Strategic objective(s): 1d

We continue to invite Emerging Leaders – aspiring choral directors – to attend residential courses, giving them the opportunity to try out their developing choral direction skills in a real-life environment, with the support of experienced professional musicians. In 2024, we established an online training programme, enabling us to offer training to a larger group of leaders, and will continue to develop the programme through 2025.

## **Church Music Skills – Choir Trainer**

Strategic objective(s): 1d

During 2025, Church Music Skills – Choir Trainer will be moving online, to join CMS Organ on the RSCM Hub, offering support and training to choral directors, together with feedback from experienced tutors.

## **Choir training skills development**

Strategic objective(s): 1d

This activity encompasses several delivery streams during 2025, including working with partner organisations to deliver conductor training and online sessions to support choir trainers at a variety of levels.

## **Residentiary Choir**

Strategic objective(s): 2b; 3a

The Residentiary Choir is our flagship auditioned training choir for adult singers, which sings for worship at a cathedral for a week each summer. The choir are singing at Chester Cathedral in 2025.

## **Voices Choirs**

Objective(s): 2b; 1b

The four Voices Choirs currently offer important support, training and community for adult singers through a programme of visits to cathedrals and major churches across England, Scotland and Wales. The original purpose of Northern Cathedral Singers, Voices South and Voices West was to offer opportunities to young people from (primarily) parish church choirs, and we will be inviting a small group of young people to take part in specific cathedral visits during 2025, ahead of a fuller re-integration in 2026.

# 2026 and beyond

## In addition to 2025 activities:

### **Training sessions for clergy and congregations**

Strategic objective(s): 3a; 2b

Practical sessions to equip clergy and worship leaders to harness music to maximum effect in their churches, and support congregations in making the most of the musical resources they have available.

### **Congregational discipleship support**

Strategic objective(s): 2b

A toolkit resource to enable churches to engage with the notion of 'we are shaped by what we sing', exploring the context and application of hymn and song texts.

### **VfL Digital adult classes**

Strategic objective(s): 2b

Professional small-group online support for adult singers who wish to work through the VfL Digital programme, but where there is limited resource to support them in their local context.

### **Emerging Leaders Summer Course**

Strategic objective(s): 1d

Building on the existing online and in-person training programme, a fully immersive residential course for Emerging Leaders.

### **Qualifications for 'new' music leaders**

Strategic objective(s): 1d

A formal diploma qualification, suitable for (e.g.) cathedral and university choral and organ scholars.

### **Courses for young instrumentalists**

Strategic objective(s): 1b; 1c

Opportunities for young instrumentalists playing in a church context to enhance and develop their skills.

### **'Intermediate Youth Choir'**

Strategic objective(s): 1b

An auditioned choir for teenagers, equipping singers with skills, knowledge and enthusiasm, and giving them opportunities to begin to explore musical leadership.

### **Music leadership development**

Strategic objective(s): 1d; 3a; 3b

Initiatives to support music leaders in church contexts, including both immersive 'musical curacies' and practical tuition to build foundation skills at grass-roots level.

### **Inspiration Roadshow**

Strategic objective(s): 3a

Providing opportunities to build engagement and connection, Inspiration Roadshows organised in venues around the country will show what is possible and what 'good' can look like.

### **Leadership Festival**

Strategic objective(s): 3a

Leadership Festivals will be opportunities to bring everyone together, share successes and learn from experience, and look to the future.







THE ROYAL SCHOOL OF CHURCH MUSIC

This is an ambitious programme of activity, which we cannot achieve without the generous support of our donors, Friends, supporters and grant-making bodies. If you are able to help us enable the flourishing of church music into the future, please consider making a donation to support our work.



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