

Tips and tricks – how to get more children in your choir



Important points to remember

- + We are responsible for future generations of church music; therefore we need to work hard to make sure that there is a future generation.
 - + Growth doesn't happen in just one step – just keep taking small steps.
 - + Not everything has to be done by *you* – get other people to take on tasks and only do what you can do.
 - + Make sure that you are in contact with a pool of singers/musicians large enough that when some people are unable to attend, there are still enough people.
 - + Meet people where they are; don't expect everyone to be where you want them to be – they will grow in skill, experience and faith... in time.
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Awareness

Advertise that you exist and what you offer! It may seem obvious, but don't assume that people will know what being part of a church choir involves. One way of doing this is by making flyers or posters to put up in places where people will stop or sit down, such as:

- + Doctor or dentist waiting rooms,
- + Libraries,
- + Schools or
- + Shops.

Another way to advertise your choir is through social media. When choosing which platform(s) to use, think about who you are targeting. For example, if you want to advertise the choir to the children themselves, you may want to consider using Instagram, whereas if you are aiming to tell the parents about the choir, it might be better to use Facebook or Twitter.

Tip: If you are thinking of using social media, find out if your church already has a Facebook page which you can use.

Top tip: Use pictures where people are looking happy!

Making flyers

When putting a flyer together about your choir, it is important to answer some basic questions that lots of people will have, such as:

- + What will I gain from joining the choir?
- + What kind of commitment is expected from me?
- + Will it cost me any money?
- + Where, when and how often does the choir meet?
- + Do I need to know a lot about music?

Tip: Try to make the document attractive, brief and easy to read.

You could also include details about repertoire, past performances, benefits of belonging to the choir and social activities. **Make sure you include details on how to join!**

Also consider why people will enjoy it and decide to join:

- + Will people feel that they fit in?
- + Will everybody be able to sing the music?
- + Will they understand what is happening in services?
- + Is it too big a commitment (remember that not everybody will be able to attend every rehearsal)?

You could include answers to some of these questions in just a few words: accessible, welcoming, flexible, etc. They might give people a much better impression of the choir if they find the idea of joining a bit daunting!

Top tip: Involve members of your choir in designing/writing and distributing your leaflets!

Open rehearsals and workshops

It can be very hard to commit yourself to something when you have only read about it and have very little idea what being involved will be like. Why not try running an open rehearsal or workshop where children who are potential choristers can come along and try it out? There are different ways to do this depending on what you want the event to be like – you could organise an event where the visitors could join in with a rehearsal and take part in a service, or you could have a more open workshop where visitors could choose to just listen and watch or take part if they preferred.

Another option would be to give people the opportunity to sign up to come along to and take part in one of your normal rehearsals. Whichever way you choose to do this, ensure that everyone feels welcome, whether they choose to participate or not.

Tip: If you have an open rehearsal where visiting children can take part, you could get your current choir members to be 'buddies' for the visitors. This could make the visitors feel much more welcome and if they are struggling, they will have somebody to help them.

School visits

When recruiting young choir members, you could consider making a presentation about your choir during assemblies in local schools. If it is possible, you could ask some choir members to talk about being in the choir, especially if they already go to the school you are presenting at.

Tip: This would be a great opportunity to advertise your open rehearsals!

Having a vision for your choir

It is crucial to have a vision for your choir, otherwise it is hard when things don't happen quickly. Think about what you want and how you might get to that point – what does success look like? What will you need to get others to do that you can't do by yourself? How will you start?

As a way of showing you that this *can* be done, we have put together a worked example:

+ By Sept 2024, I would like to have a choir of 24 trebles

To get there:

- + By Sept 2023 I need to be transitioning the first cohort to be leaders, showing the third cohort of 10 the way
- + By Sept 2022 I need to welcome my second cohort (10)
- + By Jan 2022 I need to start rehearsals with my new choir (first cohort, 10 singers)
- + In Sept 2021 I need to launch plans for my new choir, with a timeline and supporting information/publicity

NOW I need to:

- + Formulate the vision
- + Build the project team
- + Talk with the PCC and the vicar
- + Get advice on where to advertise
- + Make sure I understand what it takes to work safely with children... (see next page)

Safeguarding

If you want children to join your choir, you need to have some safeguarding training. This is really important to make sure that everyone is protected, **including you!** If you are unsure what to do, talk to us – the RSCM is an accredited safeguarding training institution. There will also be a safeguarding lead in your church community.

Music choices

Make sure that you consider the musical skills of your choir when choosing music. To keep people in your choir, ensure that the music is challenging enough to make it enjoyable but not so challenging that people struggle. When choosing music of different styles, try to make sure that there is something for everyone. If you can, try to choose music that will help people to understand the flow of the church's year, for example music which relates to seasons during the church's year.

Tip: Remember that there are lots of different styles of church music available – perhaps you could think about trying some contemporary hymns if you normally use more traditional ones?

Achievements

If the children feel a sense of achievement, they are more likely to want to keep coming. If they know that they will get a certificate if they attend at least 80% of rehearsals, for instance, they might try harder to come as often as they possibly can, as this will encourage them. Plus, you get more singers more often!! There are many different rewards and achievements children can gain within a choir, for example:

- + Certificates for attendance
 - + Ribbons
 - + Certificates for completing sections when working towards a ribbon, or for completing Voice for Life levels
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RSCM resources

The RSCM has lots of resources to help children to complete levels of Voice for Life. Soon, you will be able to access Voice for Life Digital – a brand new resource to help children develop their musical skills and progress through the Voice for Life levels. This will tie in with the Voice for Life books, but it is more interactive and there are many more ways to help children learn!

RSCM Education

The RSCM has recently released its **Education Plan** which covers a wide range of areas, including helping you as choir trainers! To find out more, type 'education plan' into the search bar at the top of the RSCM website. <https://www.rscm.org.uk/education-plan>