



Song Seeking

A Singing and Wellbeing Programme
in Direct Provision

A report by Sing Ireland



Co-funded by the
European Union

Note to the Reader

This report outlines the context, development, and impact of Sing Ireland's Song Seeking programme, while also highlighting opportunities to grow and replicate the work in similar settings elsewhere.

It begins by briefly introducing SWAN and Sing Ireland—its mission, vision, and journey so far—and then places the Song Seeking programme within that wider context. From there, the report explores what Song Seeking is - its origins, objectives, and how it evolved on the ground.

You'll find details on the programme timeline, methodology, activities, and the locations involved. It also included reflections on group dynamics, the contributions of facilitators, and the role of performance and community events in the lives of participants.

Further on, the report addresses some of the challenges we encountered, the opportunities that emerged, and includes testimonials from those involved. It wraps up with key considerations for developing similar programmes, as well as concluding thoughts and relevant resources for anyone interested in this kind of work.

We hope this report gives a clear and useful picture of the Song Seeking programme, and encourages further thinking about the role of singing, creativity, belonging and wellbeing in challenging contexts and settings.



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Introduction



SWAN (Singing With Additional Needs) is a European collaboration funded by the Creative Europe Programme. The project unites partners from various countries across Europe with the aim of promoting social inclusion through collective singing. It particularly supports individuals facing additional challenges, including disabilities, mental or physical health conditions, and other social or psychological barriers.

The project recognises how powerful singing can be in improving wellbeing, creating a sense of community, and fostering feelings of belonging. At its heart, SWAN is dedicated to making singing opportunities truly accessible for everyone, addressing the obstacles that often prevent many from taking part in cultural activities.

Led by Norsk Sangerforum in Norway, the initiative brings together partners from Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, and Türkiye. SWAN's activities include developing digital resources for visually impaired singers, supporting mental health through inclusive music-making, creating choirs for people affected by cancer, and building a Europe-wide database highlighting excellent examples of inclusive singing projects.

Sing Ireland plays a leading role in the work focused on adults with additional needs in community singing settings, with special attention given to migrants. Working closely with partners in Ireland and Türkiye, this part of the project explores how collective singing can improve wellbeing, strengthen social connections, and help people settle into new cultural environments.

The SWAN project brings significant benefits: enhancing mental and social wellbeing, reducing isolation, and creating opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to connect and thrive together.

We are honoured to be part of this vital European effort and deeply appreciate the support of the Creative Europe Programme.



Sing Ireland is the national organisation that supports all forms of group singing in Ireland. We were previously operating as the Association of Irish Choirs / Cumann Náisiúnta na gCór, but 38 years as the Association of Irish Choirs, the organisation rebranded to Sing Ireland in 2019 to allow it to further strengthen its role in supporting the diverse sector of choirs and singing groups in Ireland. Sing Ireland represents over 229,000 people who regularly sing in groups in Ireland, from amateur youth choirs and singing groups in care homes to professional choirs and singing groups covering a wide range of musical genres and styles. Until 2018 when we became Sing Ireland. We engage with and inspire our singers, the wider group singing community and the general public to experience the life-enhancing impact of singing.

After 38 years of successfully promoting and developing the choral singing landscape, our organisation changed its name in 2019, to be more consistent towards pursuing our vision- enhancing lives through singing. This is a vision of a SINGing IRELAND - an Ireland where our collective voice resonates and enhances lives through singing.

Through group singing, the following values underpin our plan: belonging, collaboration and creativity. These are central across all areas of our work. Sing Ireland oversees the [Irish Youth Choirs](#) for ages 14-17 year olds and 18-28 year olds, we run the [International Choral Conducting Summer School](#), which is in its 44th year in 2025. In addition we facilitate programmes in the community ranging from an early years programme for 4-6 year olds right up to our offerings for the ageing voice. Accessibility for all is at the heart of our work and is particularly relevant in our [Song Seeking](#) and [Sing for Life](#) programming. The Song Seeking Programme has embodied all elements of our mission, vision and values as it has grown and developed to its current iteration.



About Song Seeking

Song Seeking is a collaborative programme that brings together participants from migrant communities living in Ireland, and local communities through the shared experience of group singing. The programme was piloted in 2018 in collaboration with Mary Immaculate College in Limerick and Dr Ailbhe Kenny, the Irish Refugee Council and Sing Ireland, and with funding from Creative Ireland. The programme fosters wellbeing, cultural exchange, and social inclusion through music.

Song Seeking was developed in response to the growing need for community-based arts and wellbeing projects for individuals living in Direct Provision and temporary accommodation settings in Ireland. When it was piloted in 2018, Song Seeking was a group singing research project across six Direct Provision Centres. The project involved inter-generational group singing workshops, shared 'SingIn' days with local choirs, a new choral commission, a large-scale 'Big Sing' event and a final conference. Research throughout the process was integral to the project and this was led by Dr Ailbhe Kenny. [1]

During the pandemic the programme was unable to continue, but in 2023, Sing Ireland re-developed the work in new settings in the Munster region of Ireland, in Counties Limerick, Clare and Tipperary. This iteration of the Song Seeking project, coordinated by Sing Ireland, has continued since then and with the funding through SWAN and Creative Europe, it has developed to new settings and new audiences in 2024 and 2025. In Ireland, "emergency migrant status" generally refers to a designation or status granted to individuals facing extraordinary circumstances. These situations often necessitate urgent international protection or temporary refuge, such as the need for critical medical treatment, the death or serious illness of a close family member, or a well-founded fear of persecution. [2]

[1] https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/app/uploads/2020/09/SongSeeking_REPORT.pdf

[2] <https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/moving-country/asylum-seekers-and-refugees/the-asylum-process-in-ireland/applying-for-refugee-status-in-ireland/#2473e9>

Those who are provided temporary protection are provided accommodation in settings that are referred to as Direct Provision Centres, which are long term centres dedicated to providing accommodation and temporary accommodation settings, which are primarily made up of hotels, housing estates and other commercial venues that have been adapted to provide accommodation to those seeking temporary accommodation.

The Song Seeking programme was active in a range of these settings in Ennis, Shannon, and Lisdoonvarna, Co. Clare, Limerick City and Clonmel in Co. Tipperary. The programme as it currently exists is designed to create inclusive spaces for musical participation, empower community connection, and enhance individual and collective wellbeing. Using group singing as a means of building connections, breaking down barriers, and providing an opportunity for migrants and local communities to come together to explore shared interests and creative opportunities, the programme has made group singing a source of well-being and respite for many of those seeking protection in Ireland.

‘The [Song Seeking] programme is just a holiday for the soul, a real holiday’.

Participant from Ukraine, living in Lisdoonvarna, Co. Clare.



Programme Timeline

2018

Programme piloted in collaboration with Mary Immaculate College, Irish Refugee Council, and Sing Ireland.

- Inter-generational group singing workshops conducted across six Direct Provision Centres.
- Shared "Sing-In" days with local choirs organised.
- New choral commission.
- Large-scale "Big Sing" event held.
- Final conference conducted.

2020

Pandemic Period

Programme was paused



2022-2023

Sing Ireland redeveloped the programme in new settings in the Munster Region.

- These included Ennis, Shannon and Lisdoonvarna in Co. Clare, Limerick City and Clonmel in Co. Tipperary.
- This was supported with funding from Rethink Ireland. [3]
- The programme ran for six months with weekly sessions in 5 locations.
- The work involved two large-scale events; one in Glór Arts Centre in Ennis in August 2023, and one in Hotel Minella in December 2023.
- The group contributed to an event in The University of Limerick as part of their People' Choir event facilitated by Dr Kathleen Turner.
- The participants were primarily those seeking International Protection in Ireland from the Ukraine.

[3] https://rethinkireland.ie/case_study/the-song-seeking-programme/

Programme Timeline

2024-2025

The programme was funded through participation in the SWAN Project (A project supported by the European Union's Creative Europe programme), along with funding from Creative Ireland Limerick, Creative Ireland Kildare and the Arts Council of Ireland.

- Programme expanded to new settings - these included Abbey Grove in Limerick, an estate housing women and children and the IPAS centre in Sallins Co. Kildare.
- The continuation of the programme and the development of greater understanding and resources.
- To date there have been two community Singing events that have connected the participants - one in Clane, Co. Kildare and one in Clonmel, Co. Tipperary in December 2024.
- Participation in the People's Choir event in UL on the 12 March 2025.
- Further events planned for August 2025 as part of the SWAN project during the 44th International Choral Conducting Summer School at the University of Limerick. [4]

[4] Sing Ireland are based in the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance in the University of Limerick.

Song Seeking in Action

Through Song Seeking, Sing Ireland highlighted the power of music to bridge cross cultural and linguistic boundaries. The programme empowered residents and community members to co-create meaningful experiences. By fostering empathy and reducing social isolation, the initiative played a key role in Ireland's national integration and wellbeing strategy.

The Song Seeking programme was evaluated using mixed methods, including participant observation, facilitator interviews, and feedback from community partners. These insights helped assess the impact of the programme on emotional wellbeing, social connectedness, and intercultural understanding.



Song Seeking Locations and Sessions

The Song Seeking programme looks different in each setting as it responds to the needs of the participants and the resources available in the community. The Song Seeking programme approach of responding to those in the settings involved has enabled the programme to be intergenerational since the pilot. In the current sessions, each venue and session dictates the make up of the participants and how the sessions are tailored. Being responsive to the needs of those interested in participating strengthens the opportunity for success and increases numbers in each setting. Below is a summary of the settings that have been involved, the approaches used to engage with the participants in each setting and the key learnings from the Song Seeking Programme.



Abbey Grove, Co. Limerick

Current Demographic: Approximately 45 participants aged 5-11 years olds with infrequent interaction and participation from their female relatives.

The Abbey Grove location involved consists primarily of mothers and children. The sessions are focused on engaging with the children under the age of 13 in singing, creativity and music exploration. The sessions thus provide the mothers with an opportunity to connect and talk and to have some time separate to their children in the room next door. In this setting, our musician Matthew adapts the programme to match the interest of the children participating. Throughout the work, sessions have varied based on the children's ages. For younger children, the focus has been on nursery rhymes and games. When there are more older children, sessions have involved improvisation and activities tailored to their musical preferences.

A key component of the work in this setting has been our outreach and connection to the local school communities where we have worked within the classroom setting. This has enabled our facilitators to use singing as a gateway for the children to collaborate with their school peers, and to share creative opportunities. Elements of this work have included translating songs into a number of languages, sourcing songs that use sounds rather than lyrics and using body percussion as a tool for inclusivity and opportunity.

hooting Star

STARTING NOTE... C
INTRODUCTION... 16 beats

Andy Beck

With celestial wonder $\text{♩} = 63$ Count in: 1 2 3 4

F Bb/F C/F Bb/F F Bb/F C/F Bb/F

mp

Star shn-ing bright in the mid-dle of the night, oh, star in the mid-right sky.

F Bb/F C/F Bb/F F Bb/F E^{\flat} $\text{C}^{\flat}/\text{B}^{\flat}$ C^{\flat}

Star shn-ing bright in the mid-dle of the night, how did you learn to fly?

F Bb/F C/F Bb/F $\text{C}^{\flat}/\text{B}^{\flat}$ F C/E

Star shn-ing bright in the mid-dle of the night, grant me a wish to

$\text{C}^{\flat}/\text{B}^{\flat}$ F Bb/F C/F Bb/F F Bb/F

How did you learn to fly?

C/F Bb/F F Bb/F C/F Bb/F F Bb/F

Star, ch, star with a tail o

Star shn-ing bright in the mid-dle of the night, oh, star with a tail o

B^{\flat} $\text{C}^{\flat}/\text{B}^{\flat}$ C^{\flat} F Bb/F C/F Bb/F $\text{C}^{\flat}/\text{B}^{\flat}$

white, star, ch, grant me a wish to

white, star shn-ing bright in the mid-dle of the night, grant me a wish to

F C/E $\text{C}^{\flat}/\text{B}^{\flat}$ A D/A E/A D/A

night, Grant me a wish to night, Grant me a wish to night.

A D/A E/A D/A F Bb/F C/F Bb/F

Star so bright, Star so bright

F Bb/F C/F F Bb F/A

Shoot - ing star, Shoot - ing star.

F C/E $\text{C}^{\flat}/\text{B}^{\flat}$ A D/A E/A D/A

night, Grant me a wish to night, Grant me a wish to night.

A D/A E/A D/A F Bb/F C/F Bb/F

Star so bright, Star so bright

F Bb/F C/F F Bb F/A

Shoot - ing star, Shoot - ing star.

G^{\flat} C F F/A Bb F/A

now that you're in my view, shoot - ing star.

$\text{A}^{\flat}/\text{G}^{\flat}$ D^{\flat} $\text{C}^{\flat}/\text{B}^{\flat}$ dim poco rit a tempo Bb/F

make my wish come true, make my wish come true

C/F Bb/F F Bb/F C/F Bb/F F Bb/F

Star, Star shn-ing bright in the

C/F Bb/F F Bb/F E^{\flat} $\text{C}^{\flat}/\text{B}^{\flat}$ C^{\flat} F Bb/F

oh, star in the sky so vast, star

mid-dle of the night, oh, star in the sky so vast, star shn-ing bright in

C/F Bb/F $\text{C}^{\flat}/\text{B}^{\flat}$ F C/E $\text{C}^{\flat}/\text{B}^{\flat}$

oh, don't dis-ap-pear too fast, Don't dis-ap-pear too

mid-dle of the night, don't dis-ap-pear too fast, Don't dis-ap-pear too

F Bb/F C/F Bb/F F Bb/F C/F $\text{D}^{\flat}/\text{C}^{\flat}$

fast, fast

Star shn-ing bright in the

Bb F/A G^{\flat} C F F/A

Shoot - ing star, why must you fade a - way?

Shoot - ing star, why must you fade a - way?

Bb F/A $\text{A}^{\flat}/\text{G}^{\flat}$ D^{\flat}

Shoot - ing star, don't you want to

Shoot - ing star, don't you want to

$\text{C}^{\flat}/\text{B}^{\flat}$ dim poco rit a tempo F Bb/F C/F Bb/F

stay? stay?

Star shn-ing bright in the

Ukrainian Translation

Звезда сияющая ярко посреди ночи,
Звезда на полуночном небе
Звезда сияющая ярко посреди ночи,
Как ты научилась летать?

Как ты научилась летать?

Звезда сияющая ярко посреди ночи,
Ох, звезда с белым хвостом
Звезда сияющая ярко посреди ночи,
Исполни мое желание этой ночью
Исполни мое желание этой ночью

Такая яркая звезда

Падающая звезда, теперь когда я вижу
тебя
Падающая звезда, заставь мое желание
сбыться

Звезда сияющая ярко посреди ночи,
Ох, звезда на огромном небе
Звезда сияющая ярко посреди ночи,
Не исчезай так быстро
Не исчезай так быстро

Падающая звезда, почему ты должна
исчезнуть?
Падающая звезда, неужели ты не хочешь
остаться?

Ох, Падающая звезда, Падающая звезда
Когда-то я еще увижу тебя



Shooting Star: Ukranian Translation

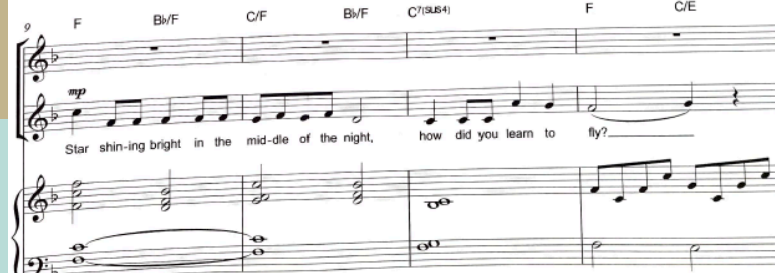
Звезда сияющая ярко посреди ночи,
Звезда на полуночном небе
Звезда сияющая ярко посреди ночи,
Как ты научилась летать?
Как ты научилась летать?

Звезда сияющая ярко посреди ночи,
Ох, звезда с белым хвостом
Звезда сияющая ярко посреди ночи,
Исполни мое желание этой ночью
Исполни мое желание этой ночью

Shooting Star



Andy Beck



Padlet

Padlet

Sing Ireland + 1 • 18m
SongSeeking 1
Let's Get Singing!

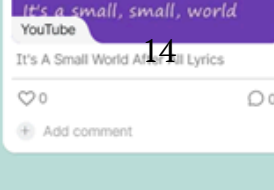
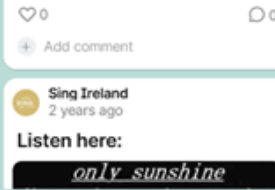
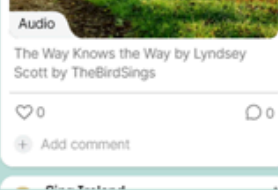
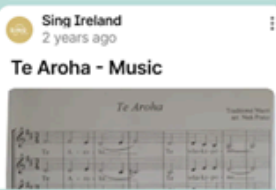
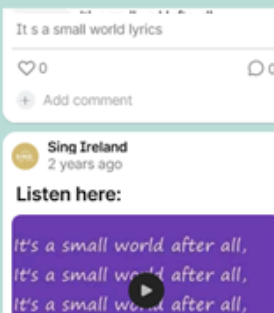
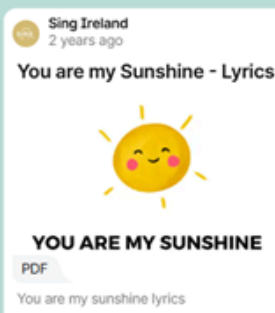
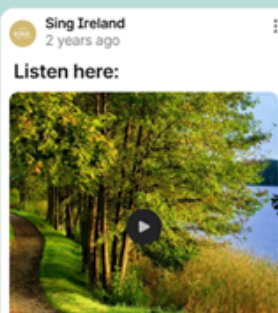
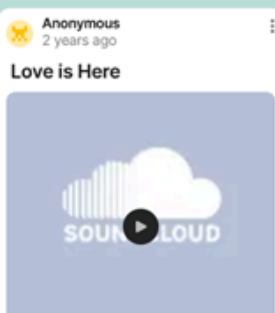
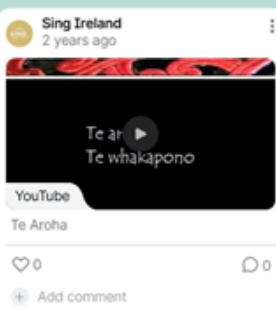
Te aro te
whackapono -
Māori song

Love is Here – Maria
Wood

The way knows the
way by Lyndsey
Scott

You are my Sunshine

It's a Small World



Knockalisheen, Co. Clare

Current Demographic: 20 participants aged 5-15 years old

Knockalisheen is a custom built direct provision centre that provides temporary accommodation for migrants from a number of countries. The profile of the participants varies from young children to adults in old age. The sessions in this location began with the pilot and we have returned to it with the programme each time. Currently, we work with a group of approximately 20 children and young people in the centre. It continues to be the most transient location involved in the programme, and one of the greatest challenges has been that the facilitators will make progress with a group for a number of weeks only to return the next week to a new group of participants, and previous participants have been moved to long term locations. The every changing nature of the group provides consistent challenges in having repertoire and activities planned, and it has provided the facilitator with a strong sense of his own ability to adapt and pivot in each session.

Ennis and Lisdoonvarna, Co. Clare

Current Demographic: Approximately 15 Adults aged from 40-65+

These locations have consisted of adult participants from Ukraine who are resident in a number of temporary accommodation settings based in hotels in the locality. Similar to Knockalisheen, the participants can change without warning, due to changes in their living situation. This setting has a greater number of male participants than other locations and their involvement has included participants with an ability to play instruments who contribute to the group in this way. This group responds particularly favourably to working towards a performance and cultural exchange and their attendance at group events is always high. The session in Ennis has included members of other singing groups and community choirs in the location which adds to the group and build connections for the participants into the community.

Clonmel, Co. Tipperary

Current Demographic: Approximately 60 participants ranging in age from 3-55+ years old

The sessions in Clonmel take place in Hotel Minella, a functioning hotel in the centre of the town, which has dedicated a wing to temporary accommodation for migrants from Ukraine. The sessions here have been made up of primarily female participants. The age range of the main participants is mid 20s to mid 50s and for some of them, they have young children, so a number of children at the session is regular occurrence. To support this, the facilitator brings along games, lego and art activities for the children and young people. They are given the choice of participating in the singing or playing in the room while their mothers and guardians participate. One of the highlights of this programme has been the identification of a participant who was a music teacher and performer in Ukraine. She has developed to the position of co-facilitator with our lead facilitator and she plays the keyboard, translates the directions and suggests repertoire.

This setting has been hugely successful in terms of supporting the integration of the participants to other singing groups in the town. Our facilitator connected them with a male singing group who are over 65 and a female singing group in the town. The three groups now perform together, and our sessions are focused more on the facilitators working with the two existing local choirs and the participants from the original location joining this groups and attending their weekly sessions.



Participants of all ages and backgrounds engaging in a Song Seeking session in Clonmel, Tipperary in December 2024.

Sallins, Co. Kildare

Current Demographic: 20 Female participants from 18 -mid 40s

This setting was the most recent addition to the programme and there are approximately 20 participants, the majority of which are female. The weekly sessions are attended by just women and a number of male participants have attended the performances. The group represents 14 nationalities and many religious backgrounds. One of the greatest challenges has been to find music to sing that is responsive to the beliefs and respectful of the boundaries of the group. Cultural exchange and sharing songs each week is an important aspect of this group and one that centres the sessions. The participants prepare and plan their contributions to the sessions when it is their turn.

Through our sessions, we have connected the group to a female choir in the neighbouring town and these two groups have performed together. These opportunities have been invaluable in encouraging the participants outside of the centre where they are resident to meet and interact with members of the local community.

Participants from the Sallins location at the group singing event in December 2024



Facilitators and Group Dynamics

The facilitators for Song Seeking around Ireland are musicians with a variety of backgrounds. They are made up of musicians with backgrounds and expertise in community music, music therapy, and classical training. In their work outside Sing Ireland they work as performers, songwriters, musician educators, and community workers. Their range of expertise and experience has enabled them to create a space that is calm and welcoming for all.

In our experience, one of the key facets of success in this programme has been the confidence of the musician that leads the session. The environment is one that many musicians would find challenging. From week to week, the settings can experience changes in personnel, participants and residents and many external factors can impact the success of the setting.

The key skills identified in our musicians are:

- Confidence in their own ability.
- A strong ability to be adaptable and to respond in the moment.
- A range of experience that provides a wide knowledge of songs, musical styles and genres.
- The ability to read the group and to alter and change their work based on the needs presented.
- An interest in reflective practice and their own professional development.
- Delivery that is primarily using aural skills with a limited amount of resources shared in the form of Youtube videos, lyrics and translations.

In developing the programme, Sing Ireland has sought to build opportunities for connection and continuous professional development into the work. This has included a WhatsApp group for quick communications and troubleshooting challenges that arise on a weekly basis, and providing the facilitators with an instant connection to their peers around the country.

Their work includes quarterly check-ins online where the group get to update each other on their sessions, share their successes and challenges and share ideas and repertoire. One of the key learnings from these sessions after the first year of the work in 2023, was the importance of redefining what success looked like musically and socially. For many of the participants, who have experienced trauma and loss, the sessions include intense emotional reactions. For the facilitators, this can mean that the sessions sometimes feel unsuccessful or uncomfortable, when in fact, the space to work through their feelings through music and creativity is a positive impact in a difficult and challenging situation.

In terms of musical achievements and output, the realisation that success would come at a slower pace and often looks different to traditional 'western classical music' ideals, meant that our facilitators had to build their own resilience and challenge their own expectations of the participants and themselves. The importance of social safety for all the participants, of every age group, became a key aim of the work. Performance outputs often looked different but they were responsive and illustrative of what was possible, and in all cases, of a willingness to share and build connections through singing.



A Song Seeking facilitator leads a singing session at a community gathering.

Importance of Performance Opportunities

Throughout our work on the Song Seeking programme, we have come to realise the importance of performance opportunities and group events. The groups have responded really positively to working towards a performance output, even if it is focused on song-sharing and connecting with others from groups around the country. Planning these opportunities on a regular basis has been an important aspect of the work and one that the facilitators also name as important for their own learning and connection.

From our experiences a number of elements have proven important to ensure success for these group events:

- A venue with appropriate space for participants to move around and to choose the ways they participate.
- A meal and refreshments so that missing meals in their accommodation does not become a stressor.
- A facilitation team that features each of the facilitators - by giving each facilitator an opportunity to lead the group, they learn from each other and experience new songs and ideas.
- A variety of delivery that includes movement, and body percussion.
- A generous amount of time given to warm up songs and movement to support them in feeling comfortable in the space.
- Travel to and from the event.

Testimonials

The following testimonials have been gathered across the programme and settings to date, from facilitators, staff members of the settings and the participants themselves. To hear the groups from Clonmel and speak of their experiences with Song Seeking, you can find out more [here](#). [5]

'I genuinely enjoyed facilitating the Song Seeking programme as it enabled people from all walks of life to meet through the comfortable medium of song. It's much easier to socialise when music is involved. Particularly for people that may want a social outlet but are nervous, or new to the area and want to meet other people with a similar interest. It was a great opportunity for people to do something they loved in a comfortable, safe space while also broadening their social circle and showcasing songs from their culture/language. The sessions created a space where cultural exchange was valued and encouraged.

Throughout the programme in Glór we had people singing songs in Ukrainian, Bangla, as Gaeilge, and English etc. When songs were sung in different languages it gave an insight into people's different cultures, as the singer would proceed to explain the meaning of the songs, and furthermore, it sparked conversations regarding details of the country's cultures/way of life. It was just so nice sometimes to give people the space to talk about home and what they love about home. As a facilitator, the song seeking programme was very rewarding and I was proud on behalf of Sing Ireland, to hold that special space for people every week.'

Kathleen Malone, Facilitator for Song Seeking in Co. Clare

[5] Song Seeking Participants from Clonmel, Co. Tipperary and Ennis, Co. Clare
<https://youtu.be/XJWTLBSnMT4?feature=shared>

‘Songseeking has been such an enriching experience for me as a facilitator, from meeting people from diverse places, learning about singing cultures and seeing everyone's willingness to share their songs. The beauty of these encounters is in the smiles, the laughs in between songs and singing together fluently irrespective of our native languages. The Song Seeking gatherings have shown me how singing connects us, creates community and how important it is to have this time together each week getting to know about one another, in and through song.’

Kate Daly, Facilitator in Co. Clare & Engagement Officer for Sing Ireland

‘I’ve been working with the Song Seeking Project within Sing Ireland over the past year. It has been a meaningful journey of learning with and from the children in the group. Every week, we come together to sing, co-create songs, and explore music that the children themselves have brought to the sessions. It's all about music, connection, and building rapport—creating a shared space for joyful expression through singing and play.’

Matthew Pellicano, Facilitator for Song Seeking in Co. Limerick

‘For me, these singing sessions have got me out of the room and helped me make friends. I had not sang here in Ireland, I sang in my home country of Jordan, and now I sing every week and have new friends’.

Bernadine, participant in Sallins, Co. Kildare

‘The children and young people at Abbey Grove love their weekly sessions with Matthew, it’s something they really look forward to.

Matthew has a fantastic way of connecting with them, and it's clear that he creates a space where they feel safe and valued. This kind of engagement is incredibly important for their emotional wellbeing and sense of belonging, especially in the context of asylum seeking and displacement.

Whether it's singing familiar songs, trying out instruments, or just being able to have fun in a relaxed space, his sessions bring a lot of joy and energy.’

Niamh Dillion, Abbey Grove General Manager

Conclusion

The Song Seeking programme shows what's possible when music is used not just as an artform, but as a way of building connection, fostering resilience, and creating space for people to feel seen and heard. In settings where many participants are living with uncertainty, being dislocated, and the weight of what they've left behind, singing together offers something simple yet deeply meaningful: a sense of belonging.

What makes this programme work isn't a fixed model or a tightly defined structure. It's the willingness to listen, to adapt, and to create something that responds to each community in its own way. That flexibility is key. From small children singing rhymes to adults sharing songs from their own cultures, the sessions are shaped by the people in the room.

Facilitators play a vital role, bringing not only musical skill but warmth, patience, and the ability to hold space when things are unpredictable or emotionally charged. The programme teaches us that success doesn't always come from musical development markers or a polished performance. Sometimes it's a moment of laughter, a shared rhythm, or simply showing up each week and being together.

For those thinking of developing a similar programme, a few things stand out from our experience:

- Let the people in the room shape the work. Each setting is different, and it starts with listening.
- Flexibility is essential. With temporary accommodation, group membership changes often.
- Facilitators need support. Regular check-ins and chances to share with peers make a difference.
- Embrace cultural variety. Include songs in different languages and let stories surface naturally.
- Performances can be valuable, but they're not everything. Success can look and feel many different ways.

Song Seeking isn't just about singing, it's about making room for happiness and joy, exchange, and shared humanity in places where they're often in short supply. We hope this report encourages others to explore what can happen when creativity and care come together, and when communities are invited to find their voice together.

Resources

Song Seeking Pilot Project

[https://143807436.fs1.hubspotusercontent-eu1.net/hubfs/143807436/SongSeeking_REPORT%20\(3\).pdf](https://143807436.fs1.hubspotusercontent-eu1.net/hubfs/143807436/SongSeeking_REPORT%20(3).pdf)

Song Seeking Songbook

https://143807436.fs1.hubspotusercontent-eu1.net/hubfs/143807436/SongSeeking_SONGBOOK.pdf

Song Seeking Resources for Facilitators

Padlet Resource 1

<https://padlet.com/singireland/songseeking-1-1xhz1l05jiwzjibc>

Padlet Resource 2

<https://padlet.com/singireland/songseeking-2-b7buiu7kkovhfk5w>

Padlet Resource 3

<https://padlet.com/singireland/songseeking-3-edybvid6awl5t8mu>



Co-funded by the
European Union