

citizen songwriters

Creating social harmony through song



Our work at a glance
2018—2022



Citizen Songwriters is a social enterprise based in the North East of England that brings people together through **community songwriting workshops** and **performances**. Citizen Songwriters aims to **strengthen communities**, support people who are **socially isolated** and enable individuals to **discover their story** and participate in the cultural life of their community.

PARTICIPATION

Citizen Songwriters empowers individuals to participate in storytelling, writing lyrics and creating music to share the story of the people and places where they live.

CREATIVITY

Citizen Songwriters believes everyone is inherently creative and encourages people to explore their creative imagination, regardless of musical experience.

CONNECTION

Citizen Songwriters actively encourages people who have been marginalised from participating in the arts and seeks to create new cultural stories about the rich diversity of British society.



Since 2018* we have completed...

*As of May 2022

24 projects



9 recording sessions



21 performances



23 songs written



**320 hours of
workshops**



Creating unique songs together

Since 2018, Citizen Songwriters has been bringing people across the North East of England together from different walks of life telling stories through creating meaningful songs.

We have been offering unique experiences for people to connect creatively with themselves, with each other and with the communities where they live through music and storytelling. This includes both adult group learning and school workshops focusing on creative writing, songwriting, singing and playing musical instruments.

Citizen Songwriters is a not-for-profit 'Community Interest Company' currently employing two part-time music facilitators as well as other freelance musicians to work on specific projects.

Songwriting experiences tailored to specific communities

No two Citizen Songwriters projects are the same. Some times we'll be writing a unique song for a special occasion, for example celebrating a local community or heritage event. Other times we'll be supporting a group to create their own songs on a theme. Groups can vary from a few individuals up to a class of 30. Since 2018 we have:

- Sought funding, designed and delivered **8 original community songwriting projects** (of the total 24 projects).
- Completed **10 commissions** from local authorities, Arts Council Creative People & Places schemes, charities and arts organisations.
- Been contracted to deliver **14 other activities and community music projects**, including over 100 sessions.



Most of our work supports communities who have not had opportunities to create music, or where songs will make a strong social and cultural impact, giving people ways of combating loneliness, isolation and connecting communities who wouldn't otherwise meet.

Working with diverse groups across the North East

- Refugees and people who are seeking sanctuary.
- Isolated communities and areas with high deprivation and unemployment.
- People facing isolation and loneliness due to cognitive impairment or mental health challenges.

The majority of our work to date is run by founding director and singer-songwriter Sam Slatcher and vocal coach and singer-songwriter Alexandra Summerson. From 2022, we are actively expanding our pool of songwriting facilitators across County Durham, to train and support musicians who have the necessary musical abilities but who may not have had the opportunities yet to apply their practice in the context of community songwriting. In doing so, we'll be able to give more communities across the North East our unique experience of creative engagement and all the benefits it brings for improving mental health, wellbeing and community harmony. The next section showcases some of our '**Original**' projects, our '**Commissions**', and other '**Activities**' we've run.

OVERVIEW OF OUR WORK

ORIGINAL—Work we've designed, secured funding, and delivered

- Stories of Sanctuary (2018) - see case study
- Stories of Sanctuary UK Tour (2019)
- 'Change the Narrative' with Action Foundation, Newcastle (2019)
- Citizens Online (2020)
- Monthly Songwriting Hangout Online (2020—2021)
- Songs of Shildon, 'Life along the Line' (2021) - see case study
- Songs for the Soul, Stanley (2021—2022) - see case study
- Songs of Shildon, 'Shildon in Song' (2022) - see case study



COMMISSIONS—Work we've had commissioned

- Middlesbrough Stronger Communities Songwriting (2019)
- Create & Connect with City of Sanctuary UK (2020—2021)
- Shildon Town, with Greenfield Arts (2020)
- Barefoot Kitchen, Middlesbrough (2021)
- Borderlands Arts & Culture, Middlesbrough and Liverton (2021)
- Celebrating 1000 years of Bede, Durham Cathedral (2022)
- The Dales School, Blyth, Train Song (2022)
- 'A Song for Change' with Adfam, Sunderland (2022)
- Borderlands Arts & Culture, Grangetown (2022) - see case study
- Sunderland Stories of Sanctuary, Sunderland Council (2022)



ACTIVITIES—Activities/workshops we've been contracted to deliver

- Welcome Town, Stockton Arts Centre (2019)
- Oasis Community Housing Gateshead Songwriting Sessions (2019)
- Holy Island 'St Aidan's Day' songwriting workshop (2019)
- Jack Drum Arts 'Sound Out' Programme (2020)
- (4) Unforgettable Experiences online workshops (2020) - see case study
- Refugee Week with City of Sanctuary UK (2020)
- Scottish Interfaith Week (2020)
- Jack Drum Arts Online Programme for carers (2020)
- 'Songwriting' at RTPProjects, Durham (2020)
- RTPeople's Choir, with RTPProjects, Durham (2021)
- see case study



ORIGINAL—Case study:

STORIES OF SANCTUARY

Location: Durham

Duration: April 2018 - November 2019

Participants: Residents of Co. Durham including Syrian refugees and young people (40 participants)

Output: 4 workshops, 6 rehearsals, 13 professionally recorded songs, 3 performances

Detail: The project brought together people seeking sanctuary to create a performance piece all about different stories of seeking sanctuary in the North East, from ancient stories of saints, to those who migrated to work as miners, to people seeking sanctuary from modern day war. Workshop participants became a choir of 15 young people and performed their songs with viola player Raghad Haddad from the National Syria Orchestra & Durham singer-songwriter Sam Slatcher.

Funders: Arts Council England Grant for the Arts (£11916)



"When I was singing I felt every word I sang. These songs express exactly how we feel" - workshop participant and choir member

“This is a brilliantly creative project, enabling young people to develop their own skills and share their stories—stories that need to be listened to and taken seriously for they contribute to the building of safe spaces of sanctuary for all”

Rev Dr Inderjit Bhogal, founder of City of Sanctuary



Stories of Sanctuary

Durham Cathedral, March 2019

ORIGINAL—Case study:

SONGS OF SHILDON

Location: Shildon

Duration: April 2021 - April 2022

Participants: Local residents (30 participants) and primary school pupils (30 pupils)

Output: 4 workshops, 3 rehearsals, 4 professionally recorded songs, 5 performances

Detail: Capturing stories from Shildon, the world's first railway town, through song in community workshops, school workshops and a local choir. The project partnered with the Friends of Stockton & Darlington Railway, Locomotion, Shildon Railway Institute and the Shildon Institute Singers, supporting the development of a local choir and a professionally recorded EP of songs.

Funders:

Bishop Auckland and Shildon Action Area Partnership (£4833)

Durham County Council Culture, Sport & Tourism Service (£8782)



"I love the overall concept of bringing the history and heritage of a place to life through music and working with the community. As someone who knows very little about Shildon, I found it all really interesting" - audience member



"It's been a real delight to see this project evolve. Citizen Songwriters have gone over and above in running the project by being involved in wider community events to continue to showcase the songs beyond the project"
- Dave Reynolds, Shildon Railway Institute



ORIGINAL—Case study:

SONGS FOR THE SOUL

Location: Stanley


Duration: July 2021 - March 2022

Participants: Local residents of Stanley (9 participants)

Output: 12 workshops, 2 rehearsals, 2 recording sessions

Detail: The project brought together several people from PACT House (a local charity offering practical and emotional support) as well as members of the public who become part of the project. A series of songwriting sessions held at PACT House and Pelton Grange Farm led by Alexandra Summerson resulted in an album of songs recorded at PACT House, Stanley. The songs all addressed coping with mental health, the challenges of growing up and exploring identities in a changing world.

Funders: County Durham Community Foundation Stanley Community Fund (£3738)



“Having this group to come to every week has been fantastic, getting back socialising, and it’s a way for me to be heard without actually saying anything. And ironically, they have actually managed to get me singing as well, so it’s been a huge confidence boost”

- workshop participant



Recording original songs at PACT House, Stanley



COMMISSION—Case Study

BORDERLAND ARTS AND CULTURE

Commissions are pieces of work that external organisations pay us to create specially through working with the communities the songs are about and intended for.

Participants: 17

Duration: 3 days

Brief: To work with the Grangetown Generations to write a song that reflects the different generations in Grangetown.

Commissioned by: Borderlands Arts & Culture

Result: A song called 'Born of Iron, Made of Steel' inspired by the artwork at Grangetown Library that told a story of different peoples' memories of days out up Eston Hills as experienced by different generations, including primary school pupils from a local school.

"Citizen Songwriters is an excellent vehicle for bringing together a very diverse group of residents experiencing a variety of challenges. Their exceptional engagement skills created a space where all could contribute equally to create songs. Using art and culture in an innovative way resulted in people developing positive relationships, which have outlived the project"

- Shahda Khan, Borderland Arts & Culture



ACTIVITY—Case Study

UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCES

Participants: 20

Duration: 4 x 12 weekly sessions online

Activity: To deliver interactive and practical online arts, culture and heritage based songwriting activities to help people with neurological conditions and their carers. Citizen Songwriters also produced a songwriting resource pack for Unforgettable Experience.

Organisation: Unforgettable Experiences



Activities include delivering workshops on behalf of other organisations, as well as teaching singing and how to use instruments to write songs.

“In a time when we’ve been a lot more constrained, having to be at home a lot more, it’s been like being able to visit a different country, or do something completely different whilst still being at home and that has been really important to me”

- Participant

ACTIVITY—Case Study

RTPeople's CHOIR

Participants: 15

Duration: July 2021—Ongoing

Activity: Running a community choir with RTPProjects' 'pals' to support peoples' mental health and wellbeing.

Organisation: RTPProjects, Durham

“I’m just very grateful to Citizen Songwriters because I feel part of something really quite magical. They have given us the tools to express stuff that otherwise, personally, I wouldn’t have managed to do”

- Participant



The Citizen Songwriters team

Sam Slatcher is one of the founders and directors of Citizen Songwriters, a singer-songwriter and community music facilitator. Sam has a PhD in Human Geography at Durham University having researched participatory approaches to arts-based community projects.



Alex Summerson is a singer/songwriter and performer, having trained as a music facilitator at Canterbury Christ Church University. She has curated multiple performances, worked with community groups, and run various choirs. Alex joined Citizen Songwriters in March 2020.

Pippa Bell is one of the founders and directors of Citizen Songwriters with a background in education and using the visual arts to engage with people of all ages and backgrounds including prisoners, sanctuary seekers and refugees.



Shams Abdou Moussa has been advocating nationwide on behalf of people seeking sanctuary in the UK. Living in Darlington, Shams has been a volunteer, and now director, with Citizen Songwriters supporting our partnership with City of Sanctuary UK as well as our work in Shildon.

Emma Gray began as an intern with Citizen Songwriters and now frequently edits videos and produces content for social media. Emma is currently studying BA (Hons) Graphic Design at Camberwell, University of the Arts London. Emma enjoys playing the piano when she is not working or studying.



Raghad Haddad is a classical viola player who sought sanctuary in the UK in 2016. She has performed with the National Syrian Orchestra, as well as Daniel Barenboim's East West Divan Orchestra. She regularly performs with the Stories of Sanctuary project.

GETTING INVOLVED

As a participant... Learn, Create, Imagine, Write, Sing, Enjoy

Each year we run approximately 8 projects across the North East of England. As well as more focused songwriting community projects, from time to time we run public songwriting groups where anyone can join in. Sign up to our mailing list via our website: www.citizensongwriters.org where we'll send you details of what's on.

As a partner... Connect, Discover, Reach, Fulfil, Unlock

We rely on community partners for the running of our projects. A successful project involves working collaboratively with a local coordinator/contact who can support and advertise our workshops, events and performances. If you are part of a community group, arts organisation, charity, faith group, or local authority and would like to collaborate with us, or you'd like to commission us to create a song with your group, drop us a line at: info@citizensongwriters.org

As a music practitioner... Learn, Train, Grow, Experiment, Upskill

We are always keen to meet musicians who might be interested in running community songwriting workshops with us. If you have some experience with playing an instrument and/or writing your own music and would like to learn more about becoming a 'citizen songwriter', then we'd love to hear from you. We offer training and paid work opportunities for self-employed freelance musicians.

Email us at: info@citizensongwriters.org



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CitizenSongs



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Citizen Songwriters is a registered Community Interest Company, no. 11735927



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County Durham
Community Foundation



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