

# MAKING MUSIC ADVICE

## COVID-19: Planning for the future 1

Initial concerns for music groups at the coronavirus outbreak were about cancelling or postponing events planned in the short term and suspending regular activities.

Many groups then turned quickly to consider what they could do to keep their groups going – both from a social point of view, and musically.

Making Music has been providing support on both those fronts with [resources](#) and [inspiration](#).

But as lockdown starts to be lifted gradually, groups are looking into the future, and asking:

- When and how can we get back to meeting up in person and rehearsing?
- When and how will public events with an audience be possible again?
- How do we best manage our group in the meantime – finances, members etc.?

We don't have the answers for you – because there are no 'right' answers. Each group will have to take decisions based on current government guidance in their nation (there are now significant variations between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) and taking into account their situation, location and membership. What Making Music is seeking to do with this resource is to help you explore these questions and give you some useful tools to arrive at the best possible answer for your group.

### Risk and assessing it

We would all like crystal clear guidance that tells us: 'you can do this from 15 August' or 'don't do that'. But there is a lot science doesn't know yet about this virus and research takes time; and even the scientists don't always agree! So absolute certainties are and will remain hard to come by, and furthermore each situation, group or activity will have its own factors to consider.

So first a general note on risk: you will never entirely eliminate it; risk is ever-present in our daily lives; what we can do – as individuals, as organisers – is:

- Identify the risks associated with the activity we want to carry out
- Identify how can we minimise those risks and decide whether we can live with the remaining risk
- If we can, decide on and implement risk control measures we are able to put in place and can afford
- Communicate our plans and actions clearly to those who will be affected

Our members and audiences will have to assess their own risk (e.g. underlying health condition) and decide for themselves whether they feel comfortable joining a rehearsal or attending a performance. So it is essential that you communicate clearly what you are doing or propose to do, giving them good information to base their decision on.

And they need to trust you to deliver on what you have decided to do because returning to normal won't be only about actually making rehearsals and events as safe as possible, it will also be about the 'confidence factor'.

Everyone's 'risk thermostat' is set at a different level, so even people with the same health conditions may take different decisions for themselves, but everyone will need to feel confident that they know what to expect if they do attend and that you will rigorously implement what you have announced.

Read through our guidance to help you explore the implications of the main areas of risk for your group:

- [Meeting/rehearsing with your group](#)
- [Events with a public audience](#)

Once you have assessed the risk, you can then:

- [Consider options for your group and make a plan](#)

## 5 top tips for getting through this situation

### Learn to adapt, quickly

This is not business as usual; so forget 'we've always done it like this'; but keep focussed on what your group is about and who it's for, to evaluate any plans and actions for the current situation against that bigger picture

### Be flexible

Changing your mind is allowed when the situation around you is constantly changing! That is not weakness, it is flexibility. Take the best decision you can, at the time you have to take it – and then review it, frequently

### Experiment

Everything is different at the moment; is this the chance to sit back and think afresh about how you can fulfil your purpose? Try things out – what better time than when the rule book has just been thrown out of the window

### Ask for help

Literally – if you're stuck, ask Making Music, seek views from fellow members in our weekly Zoom meetings, talk to other groups in your area that you know

Figuratively – read, search the internet, be inspired by what you see others do in a similar situation, and that could be in Italy, the US or down the road

### Don't give up

Your group has probably been around for a while. Because you are needed. Because you are fulfilling an important role for your members, the community

So you may come out of this a bit battered, but people will still want you to be here, will still want to sing, play and go to concerts, so hang on in there!

With thanks to [Chorus Connection](#) for these 5 headings – though the detail is our own

## Stronger for the future

Music groups exist because for hundreds of years people have wanted to make and enjoy music together. They will still be here when Covid-19 fades away.

Yes this situation does throw up some challenges, but are there ways in which we can use it to make us stronger for the future?

These resources are here to help you:

- Gather your committee, members and supporters with clear communications
- Be clear what you're about and for, and for whom
- Always know how much money you have in the bank, what income you can count on, what expenditure you cannot avoid
- Seize the opportunity to learn new skills and become a seasoned traveller of the online world; this will never be a disadvantage going forward
- Seize the chance to re-evaluate how you run the group, how you present yourself to potential members and audiences, to make changes you can see are needed now you've taken a step back.

And remember: never give up. You are needed and whatever the new normal will look like, people will still want to play, sing and listen to live musicians.

# Planning for the future 2a: Meeting and rehearsing

This article is part of our [COVID-19: Planning for the future](#) resource.

Updates to this page:

- Link added to [English translation](#) of the Freiburg University risk assessment of musical activity (8 June 2020)
  - Link added to [abcd paper](#) summarising the current state of research (8 June 2020)
  - Link added to [Church Times article](#) (8 June 2020)
  - Clarification added on [Norwegian Music Council](#) guidance (10 June 2020)
  - Link added to [Danish study](#) on aerosol from brass and wind instruments (22 June 2020)
- 

## What is the risk?

- Group members catch/give Covid-19 from/to other group members in a rehearsal
- Group members catch Covid-19 by travelling to/from rehearsal room
- Group members have underlying health conditions/are in high risk/vulnerable group/ are key workers/live in a household with any of the above, so should avoid exposure to potential infection

## What do we know and therefore what can we do?

Research takes time and meanwhile reliable information is scarce; and there is much hype and misinformation around. We suggest that you always start with current government and public health guidance and information in your nation. Don't take the media's summary or angle on it for gospel, read it yourself.

## Useful general information links:

- [UK Government](#) - links to all you need to know, also links to separate information in devolved administrations, and to the NHS
- [Government blueprint for coming out of lockdown](#)
- [Our World in Data](#) - reliable stats from around the world
- [Worldometer](#) - more interesting stats
- [What happens next?](#) simulations - How an epidemic develops and can be contained

## Specific research and guidance on playing or singing together:

- There is research underway in Europe (Germany/Munich, Norway) and [the US](#), and research proposals in the UK
- Some limited studies have [published results in Germany and Austria](#) (Bamberg Symphony Orchestra, Vienna Philharmonic) and there is [guidance commissioned by the Berlin orchestras](#) (German only)
- See the [guidance](#) for music activity from the Norwegian Music Council, approved by their public health authority, including recommended room sizes
- An Australian [webinar on singing](#)
- Association of British Choral Directors (abcd) have [published a paper](#) summarising the current state of research by Professor Martin Ashley.
- [Resource](#) from the European Choral Association with links to research and rules in different European countries (see summary in appendix)
- Europe is ahead of the UK, as lockdowns have been eased already, so it is always a good idea to read up about how Germany, Italy and France are handling matters
- Also see this [Danish study](#) on the measurement of aerosol from brass and wind instruments (22 June 2020)

### Most useful piece of research so far:

The University of Freiburg, Germany, have produced [a risk assessment for musical activity](#) based on research available to the authors. This is now also available in English, but we have taken the most useful information from it and used it below (latest update at time of writing was from 19 May). Note that the report emphasises throughout that the first guiding principle must be the regulations in place in your country at the time.

*And a disclaimer: there is no guarantee that following their suggestions makes meeting up and rehearsing totally safe; however, we were impressed by the detail and the practical suggestions, which is why we have reproduced some here, to give you some ideas on potential risk minimisation measures and whether/how you might implement them for your group.*

### General transmission of COVID-19

- Via droplets which are heavier than air and thus fall down. If they land on a surface which we then touch with our hands (e.g. table), we may pick them up. Subsequently touching our face could then lead to infection
  - General prevention measures: wash hands frequently, do not touch face, clean surfaces often, wear gloves if handling items which may be touched by several people is unavoidable
- Via aerosols; these are much lighter than droplets and can therefore linger in the air, for up to 3 hours, researchers say, if there is no ventilation or draft. This makes it more likely that someone else walks through and inhales this virus 'cloud'.
  - General prevention: face coverings, meet in large spaces, social distancing, good and frequent ventilation
- Via other secretions from mouth/nose (sneezes, mucus, saliva)

- General prevention: sneeze into a tissue and dispose of it; cough/ sneeze into crook of arm; do not share items/wear gloves

## Music-specific risk-minimisation

- Reduce risk at entry point by excluding:
  - those in high risk groups
  - anyone who has been in contact with someone with symptoms of Covid-19 in the previous 5-6 days
  - anyone who has symptoms
  - anyone with a temperature above 37.5C
    - how? Questionnaire prior to rehearsal for each attendee
    - how? Measure temperature at entrance to rehearsal each time
  - neither of these will be completely reliable or exclude all potential carriers of Covid-19, but both will keep everyone's awareness raised and therefore also support compliance with other measures
- Reduce risk by creating low risk environment:
  - Play/sing outside: current research suggests that, provided recommended distances between people are kept, this is a low risk activity; follow official guidance re size of group allowed to gather
  - If in a building:
    - Frequent ventilation, ideally from windows, rather than mechanical
    - Use much larger rooms than you might usually, so that social distancing is possible to current guidance
    - Shorten rehearsals: length overall, but also rehearse in 15 min bouts, interspersed with ventilating the room
    - Ensure social distancing also possible at break times
- Reduce risk through safety measures applied to individuals:
  - Face coverings: only medical grade will prevent you from picking up the virus, but all face coverings will reduce the chance that the wearer emits aerosols and droplets; they must be well-fitted and worn to be effective
  - Distance between people: at least 2m radius around each singer or player (general – see specifics below)
  - Frequent handwashing or hand sanitising; consider gloves also
  - Specific measures for different kinds of musicians (see below)

## Singing

- Other forms of transmission present no larger risk than for other musicians, but whether there is increased risk of aerosol transmission for singers is not currently sufficiently well researched; there may be higher risk due to increased output of aerosols by singers combined with deeper in-breaths

- Report on choir in US referenced, where 53 of 61 choir members were infected, 3 were hospitalised and 2 died; aerosol transmission is discussed in the report, but other factors may have contributed: median age of choir 69; all 3 hospitalised cases had pre-existing health conditions; distance between chairs was only 15-25cms; the rehearsal lasted 2.5 hours with one 15 minute break; furthermore, the person suspected of having spread the infection had had symptoms for 3 days before the rehearsal and had also attended the previous week (before having symptoms, but potentially already infectious)
- Additional preventative measures suggested:
  - Nothing additional, but rigorous application of all suggested measures above and particularly social distancing and face coverings

## Wind Instruments

- Droplet transmission: does not seem more significant for either brass or wood wind instruments than for other instruments, therefore 2m radius distance deemed sufficient
- Aerosol transmission: research currently insufficient about transmission via aerosols for brass instrument players and flautists and whether their deeper in-breaths may also present an additional risk factor
- Additional preventative measures therefore suggested:
  - Use of a tightly woven fabric cover over the bell of brass instruments and flutes recommended and/or plastic screens between players
  - French horn players/any player coming into contact with saliva/ secretions/the inside of their instrument should observe extra thorough and frequent hand washing (at least 30 seconds)
  - For brass instruments – disposal of saliva which may be infected; this should not be emptied on to the floor, but caught in a container or with absorbent paper then disposed of safely; ideally cleaning should take place outside/ away from the rehearsal room

## Other instruments/ensembles

- No specific increased risk of transmission due to their musical activity, but recommendations as above for 2m distance between players etc.
- In general: do not share instruments/drum sticks/music
- People who have to handle items touched by other people should wear gloves for their own and others' protection (e.g. if setting up chairs/percussion)
- Pianists/accompanists:
  - Instruments cleaned/disinfected between players
  - Any player before starting should wash hands for at least 30 seconds
  - Remember 2m distance to anyone else in the room/group

## Other matters to consider

These are missing from the German risk assessment, but consider:

- Travel to rehearsals; can people drive, walk or cycle and thus avoid the risks associated with public transport? Is there parking and/or secure cycle storage at your usual or temporary (e.g. park) rehearsal venue
- Toilets; are there enough in your rehearsal venue; how often/when will they be cleaned – should you pay for additional cleaning before and after your session from the rehearsal venue’s team; what about during rehearsals; what happens if someone needs the toilet whilst rehearsals are going on – how do they reach the bathrooms; what about rehearsing outside – are there public toilets nearby, are they open again
- Break times; where will people spend the break, are they still able to stick to social distancing? You may have to remind them often
- Refreshments; probably easiest not to provide and to ask everyone to bring their own water/coffee/biscuits
- Equipment and instruments; these should not be shared or handled by more than one person ideally, so the poor percussionist may have to set up their kit on their own for now, with no help from the rest of the group; ensure people bring their own music stands etc.; do rehearsal chairs need cleaning? Can everyone set up their own chair, rather than one or two people setting out chairs for a rehearsal? How will they be cleaned at the end? It is currently not entirely clear how long droplets can last on different surfaces, so better to err on the side of too much cleaning.
- Music; everyone should have a set of music and not share; consider therefore the handing out of music at rehearsals or whether you can avoid that; can people take music home for now and be in charge of their own set of sheet music?

## Your venue

- Is your usual venue open and/or will they allow you to use it right now?
- What conditions might they have in place for you meeting at the moment?
- Parking/access for pedestrians/cyclists
- Large enough space for your full group? if not, can you change space; or consider rehearsals with only part of a group
- Can you ventilate the space well? Again, consider changing venue if not
- Is the venue cleaned before your rehearsal and after the last use by someone else? If not, you may wish to request this; but be aware that may incur additional cost
- The toilet situation
- Outdoors: do you need electricity? Can everyone bring a camping chair or folding stool? Their own music stand? Don’t forget clothes pegs or magnets to stop the music from flying away; if the rehearsal is in a public space (i.e. not a private garden), then consider that [PRS will likely be due](#), as if you were performing

## Everyone included?

Maybe your group and everyone in it will return to meeting weekly, as before Covid-19, very soon. But the likelihood is that some people will not feel able to turn up immediately – they may be in a high risk category or live with someone who is, they may be a key

worker who cannot risk exposing themselves to potential infection, or they may simply be fearful for themselves or others.

So you may have a situation where some of your group return to meeting in person, but not everybody. But presumably you'd like to make those who can't yet attend still feel part of your group, so think about what you could do. Can you livestream the rehearsal? Carry on with some online meet-ups/rehearsals? Broadcast a message from the absentees to the rest of the group? Keep in contact via email, post or telephone?

You will likely have other ideas and also of course will know your group. Just remember, in some way, those who may be stuck at home for longer than the rest.

### **Other informative articles**

- Barbershop Harmony Society, [Science and the near-term future of singing](#) - interesting, although aimed at a US context
- The Guardian, [Did singing together spread coronavirus?](#) - questions whether it was the singing which caused these choirs to get ill, rather than the close proximity of people to each other.
- The Scotsman, [How Scotland's orchestras are planning for life after lockdown](#) - how professional orchestras in Scotland envisage post-Covid-19 future
- Professor Erin Bromage, [The Risks - Know Them - Avoid Them](#) - informative in general about transmission of Covid-19
- Church Times, [Singing might not be so great a risk, after all.](#)

APPENDIX: European guidelines and recommendations

# Planning for the future 2b: Events with a public audience

This article is part of our [COVID-19: Planning for the future](#) resource.

---

## When and how will these be possible?

It is likely that public performances will be possible a bit further down the line than meeting for rehearsals, but the good news is that this is an area of huge concern for all music venues and festivals, from the Royal Albert Hall to the smallest grassroots venue in your area, from Glastonbury to the Presteigne Festival, and of course for all professional bands and music ensembles that earn most of their living by performing live to audiences.

These big money earners (for the UK economy) have been and continue to put pressure on the government to come up with guidelines which will enable live music and theatre to become possible once again. There are now also models to look at from other countries which are ahead of the UK in terms of Covid-19, e.g. South Korea where venues stayed open throughout, and countries where they have re-opened.

So guidance and conditions will undoubtedly come out in the next couple of months on this – the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) is now consulting the sector and many organisations, including Making Music, have fed into these consultations, via Arts Council England (ACE) or specific task groups set up by devolved administrations, as has happened for instance in Wales.

Making Music has also flagged during consultations that many members rehearse or perform in venues that are not dedicated arts venues, e.g. churches or community halls. We were pleased to learn that this is something on ACE's radar, so they have been giving the message to government that guidance is needed not just for a venue's primary purpose (e.g. church services), but also its other community uses.

## What might public events look like in future?

### Looking at performers

- All the risk factors and possible mitigations considered in [Planning for the future 2a: meetings and rehearsals](#) will apply here, and in addition:
- Are your performers (your group members, any professional musicians) willing to be part of an event where the public are admitted? That may cross a threshold they are not yet able or prepared to cross; ascertain their willingness first
- How can you make it safe for your group to perform with the public in the building? Look at
  - arrival/departure times

- entrances/exits
- toilets and hand-washing facilities – separate for performers and audience?
- changing rooms/space to leave instrument cases/personal belongings – arrive in concert outfit, e.g.
- address the question of refreshments – bring your own?
- is the stage or platform large enough to keep a distance between performers and between performers and audience
- What will the musical outcome be in terms of quality – is it even possible and is it acceptable to your Musical Director
- Consider outdoor performances (could this be the year of the bandstand....); they might present fewer (or more easily addressed!) challenges:
  - Discuss performers bringing their own refreshments, chairs, music stands, etc.;
  - But also what would the quality of the musical output be and would your Musical Director be willing/able to make it work?
- Remember in some places you may need a license/permission to perform, and [PRS](#) will be due on public performances

### **Looking at audiences**

What is clear from a recent [survey of 86,000 audience members](#) is that the confidence factor will, just as with your own group members, play a major role. And for some of us, the venues we perform in present additional difficulties – e.g. lack of ventilation, toilets and hand-washing facilities in churches and other community halls. But take heart, in South Korea venues remained open throughout and audiences never faltered, due to strict testing and contact-tracing measures which inspired visitors with confidence. So it is technically possible – but may not be entirely in your hands to make it happen, patience may be required.

- Talk to your audiences – if you have a mailing-list, consult them; if many of them remain fearful of leaving their homes and attending public gatherings, it may not be worth your while to stage an expensive event just yet
- Consider what experience they would have if they attended:
  - musically, you might not sound your best if you are spaced far apart and/or not up to full numbers
  - socially, audiences also come to talk to each other and sometimes to performers; if they can't do that, will they still want to come?
  - refreshments: you may not be able to offer these initially
- Your MD will need to feel that s/he can present a credible musical experience to audiences or they may not wish to be part of this, understandably, so as not to jeopardise their professional reputation

### **Hybrid live/digital**

In England, the government's [blueprint for coming out of lockdown](#) phase 2, from June onwards, foresees the possibility of performances (like sports matches) behind closed doors but broadcast to audiences. So the next step may be a performance with

your group in one space, but the audience elsewhere. This is likely to be possible earlier than live events in front of a live audience, even if June seems optimistic, given the current lack of government guidelines.

- Consider therefore: if your group is up for performing and your usual venue is happy to have you, you could stage a concert and livestream it to your audiences (and a wider public) in the comfort of their homes
- Such a hybrid proposition (performers in one place, audience elsewhere) has the benefit of live performing together and something for your group to work towards, without incurring the additional risk containment measures involved in admitting members of the public to a building
- Is this technically too hard? [Help is at hand](#) from Making Music and we can also connect you to professionals who can help; [contact us](#)

## Other considerations

Venues: are likely to be a difficult factor to manage, as for rehearsals. You will be dependent on their risk assessments, their ability to open and manage public access, their cleaning capacity, their terms and conditions – which may not chime with your views on safety.

On the other hand, many venues cannot survive without bookings, so they will be keen to open again as soon as possible – but can they do it safely or to the safety standard that you as a group want to set for your members and/or audiences?

Consider contracts: cancellation clauses in case of a second outbreak, for instance, or if guidance changes for public events, or if one of your group falls ill and therefore everyone has to self-isolate

Contracts: as well as the usual things you would consider, just as with venues, make sure that you discuss and include cancellation clauses and/or changes and postponements with all your sub-contractors, including your music professionals.

Event-specific finances: If you can only livestream or are only allowed to sell fewer tickets, but have to pay for extra cleaning, provide additional safety measures (hand-sanitising gel etc.), is a concert still a financially viable proposition?

# Planning for the future 3: Options and planning

This article is part of our [COVID-19: Planning for the future](#) resource.

For information to help you assess risk and inform your plan, see:

[Planning for the future 2a: Meetings and rehearsals](#)

[Planning for the future 2b: Events with a public audience](#)

---

So you've read lots and lots of information – now is the time to use that to plan what your group can and wants to do in the next three or six months or year.

## Options for your group

Here are three options you may want to consider.

None of these are right or wrong in themselves – they will only be right or wrong for your group, so do talk through them with your committee, members and other stakeholders.

### Option 1 – Hibernation

It can feel like everyone else is rehearsing on Zoom and whizzing together exciting videos 24/7, but that will not be the case. For every group like that, there will be a group NOT doing any of those things. So if you decide that actually pausing your group is the sensible option for you, then don't feel there is anything wrong with going into hibernation – provided you have discussed it in your committee/with your members and you all agree it is the right action for you.

#### Positives

- Not settling for second best, musically speaking, by attempting unsatisfactory activity online; you're about making music together in a room and you're going to do that again when it's possible.
- Financially, this could be a winner: you would not have membership subscriptions coming in, but you would have lower outgoings, too (but check what they would be: your MD and venue contracts; insurance; website hosting, Making Music membership! Etc.).
- Members would not feel pressure to continue paying subs or engage with the group in what they may find unsatisfactory or difficult, if the online world is a closed book to them.
- The group is still there – its history, its shared memories, its achievements; you are merely pressing 'pause'; when the situation changes, you can hit 'play' and pick up where you left off, potentially nicely refreshed from a break.
- You could also use this period to take stock and improve how the group is run, e.g. finally re-do the website, write a plan for the next 3 years, get to grips with Facebook etc.; all those things you don't normally have time for.

## Negatives

- If members don't practise during this period – will you still have a good enough membership at the end of this to play/sing the music you want to?
- Your members may decide never to come back and join another group whilst you are offline.
- Cutting your members off from an important social hub and from their friends who they might really need in this situation.
- You may lose the professional musician(s) you work with, e.g. your MD and accompanist, if they have to go and find other work in the meantime.

## Option 2 – Go virtual till spring

Rather than having to constantly adapt to an ever-changing situation, take a decision now not to meet in person until March next year. Instead, hurl yourself full-pelt into online activity.

### Positives

- You can take stock now, financially, and plan all the way to next Easter.
- Less worry about adapting all the time as things change.
- Can clearly communicate a plan now – members, audiences, your MD will know where they stand.
- You can use this period to develop the group musically.
- You can use this period to develop the group socially.
- This could increase your whole group's digital skills, something which will be useful to the group in future, but also to the members of your group in their private lives.
- Members continue to have the social support of the group, preventing issues arising from isolation and loneliness.
- Members continue to make or engage with music, so their skills will be kept up to scratch and the music will enhance their currently perhaps difficult lives.

### Negatives

- If you want members to keep paying their subscription, then you need to also plan activity which is worth their money, so this is not an 'easy' option: you need to **provide musical value** and maintain engagement over quite a long period of time, and that will require quite a lot of work! It will involve regular activity as well as projects or goals to work towards, and not everyone may be up for **recording themselves** or learning how to mix digital video.
- In addition, you will need to also provide the social connectivity which usually happens almost by itself when a group meets in person; you will have to plan quizzes and online drinks and birthday celebrations etc.
- Not every one of your members may find it easy to engage online: to be inclusive, you will have to find ways of keeping everyone on board, even if they can only be **reached by email, letter or telephone**.

- It may be a good thing to help more of your members [engage with the online world](#), but this will require more work from someone in the group – typically one to one phone calls more than once and step by step (remote!) handholding.
- Even if you put a lot of effort into including everyone, you may lose members who just do not want to engage in this way.
- You may find your MD isn't up for this and you may lose them.
- You will probably not have time to do any other reflective work – writing that 3 year plan, re-doing the website, getting to grips with Facebook, etc.

### Option 3 – Keep your options open

Keeping your options and mixing digital and in-person plans and possibilities open provides less certainty right now and means you have to keep re-visiting your plans often but gives you the flexibility to adapt to a changing situation.

#### Positives

- Maximum flexibility, so your actions will never feel out of step with the times; you won't still be zooming when everyone else is making music in a room again.
- Members will stay because they see you are doing, at any given point, as much as you can to allow them to continue enjoying their musical and social group activity.
- Earliest possible return to group activity as normal because you have left all doors open.

#### Negatives

- Like option 2, quite a lot of work for the committee and the MD, in fact even more, as you may want to play for perhaps 4 scenarios simultaneously:
  - Staying virtual till spring
  - Resuming regular meetings, but no events
  - Resuming regular meetings and planning virtual projects (recordings) and/or livestreamed events
  - Resuming regular meetings and planning in-person public events
- Less financial certainty.
- Requires really clear and frequent communication with your members, audiences, other stakeholders, so that at any given point they know what the plan is.

### Make a plan

So how do you get to a plan? Here are some steps you may want to go through.

#### **Rev up your committee**

- Is it able to meet online?

- Are there people who may now have to bow out, due to their situation?
- Are there other people in the group who are now sitting at home twiddling their thumbs and could join the committee?
- Make sure the committee is at full numbers/that there is a deputy for most roles, so that work can be shared and doesn't become too much for one person
- Meet regularly and more often than you would normally
- Make sure they all know that except for Option 1, there is still a lot of things for them to do, though they might be different to pre-lockdown. Gather their commitment!
- Whether or not your MD is part of the committee, it is crucial that s/he is part of any discussions, so make sure they know that and are able and willing to participate

Find out more on this in our [Keeping your group running](#) resource

### **Ask your members and/or audiences**

- You can do this via a free surveymonkey account, or google forms, and send out the links via email and/or social media
- Not forgetting those not online, it is easy also to then print those questionnaires and stick them in the post; or if members are really nearby, this can be part of your daily exercise...
- This is always worth doing as there will generally something coming back that you weren't expecting, including, very likely, lots of nice comments about what a great job you're doing, so that will also re-energise the committee
- Don't forget to ask about membership and subscriptions, to ascertain how many may be able and willing to carry on paying and how many, in the anonymity of a survey, may disclose that they can no longer afford their hobby
- When you do these consultations, though, you have to be prepared to listen, too. If you ask people's views and then do not respond to or act on them, then they will start to lose interest and be less supportive in future
- Feed back what you have heard and/or what you plan to do about it (even if that is just 'the next committee meeting will consider this for the plan' or 'we can't do x and y right now, but will re-visit it in future')
- When you do get to the stage of publishing your plan(s), make sure you reference back to members'/audiences' input, to show how it has been reflected and that it has been considered

### **Brainstorm ideas and risk assess them**

Think through your versions of options 1-3 and risk assess them for viability:

- Physically (e.g. usual rehearsal room, lack of park nearby, digital access)
- Support from members/audiences for any of the physically viable options (e.g. all in vulnerable age group, or 70% not online etc.)
- Ability of the committee/MD/other key personnel or volunteers to deliver various options (e.g. no-one willing to do live-streaming, MD can't do online activity or can't meet in person as married to key worker etc.)

- Financial implications for any of the options, including what/if you want to keep paying your MD/accompanist, members' views on subscriptions, audiences views on tickets or season subscriptions. For more on this read our [Planning for the future: finance](#) resource.
- Make sure, for all those aspects you are considering, that whatever you decide can be implemented; no point deciding to do something you cannot carry out.

### **Identify the possible and put it together in a plan**

The previous exercise will have left you with a smaller number of viable options for your group. Now is the time to decide which one to go for. Write a short plan which includes:

- your group's aim and purpose
- what you are planning to do in the next 3 months, 6 months, 1 year
- how you are going to make that happen (timeline etc.)
- who will make it happen
- how it will be paid for!

### **Tell the world about your plan!**

- But always start with your closest supporters – your MD, your members, your audiences etc.
- This will need as much effort and care as the creation and implementation of your plan. It may be clear in your head what will happen, but others can't see inside your head or inside your committee, so be prepared to tell everyone, and then tell them again, and then repeat it in a different way, followed by also saying it in a fun way on Facebook, printing a newsletter etc..
- Communication will keep everyone on board and will, combined with your rigorous implementation of the plan, of course, build trust in your group and in the committee

### **Summary**

This situation throws up some challenges, but time spent working through these resources and forming the best possible plan for your group will help establish a steady platform for the future.

- Gather your committee, members and supporters with clear communications
- Be clear what you're about and for, and for whom
- Always know how much money you have in the bank, what income you can count on, what expenditure you cannot avoid
- Seize the opportunity to learn new skills and become a seasoned traveller of the online world; this will never be a disadvantage going forward
- Seize the chance to re-evaluate how you run the group, how you present yourself to potential members and audiences, to make changes you can see are needed now you've taken a step back.

So remember: never give up. You are needed and whatever the new normal will look like, people will still want to play, sing and listen to live musicians.