

Sharon Chitty

In the run up to International Nurses' Day (12th May), we speak to one of our own special nurses Sharon Chitty, a staff nurse on Waterside, who is the brainchild behind our new hospital Choir which is proving incredibly popular with staff and patients alike.

Sharon tells us how she came up with the idea for a hospital Choir and her reasons for bringing staff together in vocal unison. She also shares her future hopes for the Choir and explains how a recent 'Tour' of the Hospital proved a smash hit with patients.



Can you tell us more about your role at the Trust?

I'm a staff nurse on Waterside ward, the private unit of Weston General Hospital.

We care for a range of patients and pride ourselves on looking after them and their families at what can be a very stressful time.

Sharon Chitty (far right) and the other members of The Sliding Scales

Can you tell us how the new hospital Choir came to be formed and your role in that?

The idea of starting a choir was something that I had been thinking of for quite a while. Whilst working on Kewstoke Ward, helping to take care of the acute elderly and people with dementia, I would sing songs of their era to them – they seemed to enjoy it, and the seed was planted for the Choir.

At the end of last year I reached out to see if staff at the hospital might be interested in the forming a Choir – the feedback was overwhelming! I received more than 160 responses from staff who either wanted to join the Choir or who thought it was a great idea. It gave me the confidence that a hospital Choir could help to bring together staff from different parts of the Hospital.

Our Choir officially formed at the end of last year and we call ourselves *'The Sliding Scales'*. It includes more than 20 members from all areas of the hospital, including nurses, admin and Paediatric staff. Dr Matthew Goh, a urology specialist, is our Musical Director and Andrew Rix, from Finance, is our pianist so there is a great mix of people involved in the Choir – and it's growing all of the time.

Do you think a hospital Choir can help to benefit patients?

I believe it can be very beneficial. As someone who is passionate about music, I understand its power to improve mood, help encourage togetherness and overall wellbeing. It has also been a wonderful opportunity for staff from different specialities to come together.

We held a pilot performance over Christmas where we sang carols which proved popular with patients and visitors – it was incredibly moving to see some patients singing through tears.

Some of our patients are with us for weeks at a time, and sometimes it can be a bit lonely for them. Music has the ability to uplift patients and provide a fun distraction. By offering live musical performances (through our various 'ward Tours') I believe we're adding to their hospital experience.

You mentioned that the Choir has 'toured the hospital' performing for patients – can you provide any more information about that?

The new Choir recently embarked on our first public performances – an 'Easter Tour' of Weston General's wards, which saw us serenading patients with songs from popular musicals, including *The Sound of Music*, *Oliver* and *Oklahoma*.

Our patients and visitors seemed to really enjoy the performance and a few commented that it provided a really welcome distraction from their stay in hospital.

Are staff given time out (for example during working hours) to rehearse for the Choir?

We all rehearse outside of working hours and we perform for our patients during our own time. It's fun for us while also adding to the best possible experience for our patients and visitors during their stay.

What's next for the Choir?

Our aim is to continue to perform at the hospital during different times of the year for patients – we are also considering playing outside events at some stage too.

So, do not be surprised to hear more singing echoing down the corridors of Weston General Hospital and, if you're a patient, visitor or a member of staff, please keep an eye out for *'The Sliding Scales'*, at a ward near you soon!

With International Nurses Day approaching, do you think nurses need to be recognised more for their work?

International Nurses Day is a great way to ‘shine the spotlight’ on nurses and all that they do. Sometimes it’s good to take a moment to reflect on the difference nurses make to people’s lives.

There are so many proactive, forward-thinking nurses, both at this Trust and across the country that go the extra mile to ensure patients receive the best possible care.

Will you or your team be doing anything special to mark International Nurses Day?

You never know, perhaps *The Sliding Scales* might make an impromptu performance on our wards to mark International Nurses Day – watch this space!

View our hospital Choir performing for patients by clicking [HERE](#).

Sharon Chitty is a staff nurse on our Waterside ward at Weston Area Health NHS Trust.

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