



Lesley's Journey to Better Breathing and Mental Well-being Through Breathe Easy Singing Sessions

Introduction

Lesley, a 67-year-old woman living with chronic asthma, had always struggled with her breathing, especially during the colder months. Despite following her doctor's advice, her lung function hadn't improved much, and she often found herself feeling isolated and worried about her condition. Like many others with chronic lung conditions, Lesley's health challenges were taking a toll not only on her physical well-being but also on her mental health. Loneliness became an unwelcome companion, and the effort of managing her breathing left her feeling exhausted and disconnected from the community.

That changed one December afternoon when Lesley attended her local Breathe Easy group's Christmas party. This wasn't just any party—it included a singing session that would eventually transform Lesley's life, improving both her lung function and her sense of belonging. The event was funded by the Community Health Catalyst Programme, and what started as a festive gathering quickly turned into a turning point for Lesley and others like her.

The Singing Session: A Breath of Fresh Air

Lesley had always loved music, but she had never thought of singing as something that could help her breathe easier. At the Christmas party, a professional singer invited the group to join them in a sing-along of familiar songs. Hesitant at first, Lesley found herself swept up in the joy of the moment. As the group sang together, something unexpected happened—Lesley realised she wasn't struggling to breathe as much. The act of singing seemed to make her breathing deeper and easier.

The professional singer didn't just entertain—he also explained how singing could help people with lung conditions strengthen their respiratory muscles. He introduced the group to breathing techniques that supported lung function, and Lesley could feel the difference almost immediately. For the first time in a long while, she felt like she had control over her breathing. Singing along to songs that brought back happy memories, she realised how much joy this simple act could bring.

After the session, Lesley felt more alive than she had in months. "I've been singing regularly since last Christmas," she shared later. "It's made my breathing a lot easier, and everyone who joins in has a great time and lots of laughs."

Impact Beyond the Christmas Party

The impact of that Christmas singing session went far beyond the event itself. Inspired by how much her breathing had improved, Lesley and other members of the Breathe Easy group decided to continue singing together. They started a YouTube singing group, where they would meet regularly to sing along to videos and practice the breathing techniques they had learned. For

Lesley, these singing sessions became a lifeline, helping her not only to manage her asthma but also to reconnect with others.

Silvia and Chalkie, another couple who attended the Christmas event, echoed Lesley's sentiments. "Singing has been so beneficial for us," they said. "It's helped with our lung capacity, but also with our mental well-being. We're able to do more—walking, exercising, and just feeling better overall."

For Lesley, the singing group wasn't just about breathing better; it was about feeling better emotionally. The social isolation she had once felt seemed to melt away as she bonded with others over music. "What a lovely afternoon we had," Christine, another participant, reflected. "The singer lifted all of our spirits, and the laughter we shared was just as important as the breathing exercises."

How This Initiative Helps the NHS

What makes this story even more powerful is how initiatives like the Breathe Easy singing sessions help alleviate pressure on the NHS. By improving lung function and mental well-being, these community-driven activities prevent possible hospital visits and reduce the need for medical interventions.

For people like Lesley, regular singing exercises have become a natural way to manage her asthma, reducing her risk of complications that might otherwise send her to A&E. The singing group helps participants build better respiratory strength, making it easier to manage their symptoms at home. This proactive approach keeps individuals healthier and less reliant on frequent medical care.

Moreover, the mental health benefits cannot be overstated. The group provides a sense of community, reducing loneliness and improving overall happiness. By addressing mental health and social isolation, the Breathe Easy sessions indirectly reduce the need for NHS mental health services, which are often stretched thin.

The Ripple Effect: A Better Life for Lesley and Her Peers

Since that first Christmas singing session, Lesley has become a regular participant in the group's activities. She no longer feels as isolated, and her breathing has noticeably improved. She's even able to walk longer distances and engage in light exercise—something she hadn't been able to do comfortably for years.

"I didn't realise how much of an impact singing would have on me," Lesley shared. "It's such a simple thing, but it's made a world of difference in my life. I'm breathing easier, I'm happier, and I have something to look forward to. I hope we can keep this going."

The rest of the group shares similar sentiments. Brenda, who had also benefited from the sessions, expressed her hope to continue: "I'm hoping we can have the same singer again this year. We've all been looking forward to singing together, and it's become such a big part of how we take care of ourselves."

Conclusion: A Story of Empowerment and Health

Lesley's journey with Breathe Easy is a testament to the power of community, connection, and creativity in improving health outcomes. By incorporating a simple yet effective activity like singing, the group has not only helped members manage their breathing but also created a space where people feel supported and connected.

For the NHS, this initiative highlights the value of community-based, preventive health measures that can reduce hospital admissions and provide holistic care.

As Lesley and her friends continue to sing, breathe, and support each other, they serve as an inspiring example of how small, consistent efforts can lead to significant improvements in both physical and mental well-being.



Fig. 1 Professional Singer Performing at Breathe Easy's Christmas Event