

# BreathStars

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## Contextual information

BreathStars is an experimental project testing if singing helps the breathing of children with asthma. It is a partnership approach between Unlimited Potential and Brightness Management Limited, ran by Heather Henry – a nurse entrepreneur. BreathStars seeks to build competences around asthma in the community. The project also seeks to spread the learning, helping other schools and community organisations learn how to set up their own groups.

## Activities

BreathStars work with the pre-established school choir to increase the competencies of children and staff. The school choir runs weekly, but the BreathStars team come in up to once a month to reinforce what they've done.

The sessions are taught through a mixture of breathing exercises and games and focus on warming up; posture; phrase length; diaphragmatic breathing; and how we breathe.

## Inputs and Outputs

Table 1: BreathStars

Session	Number of attendees per session	Number of unique participants engaged per year	Number of sessions per year	Cost to run one session	Charge per attendee per session (to the school)
Music therapy and asthma led sessions	35	35	12	£450	£0
Choir sessions	35	35	39	£35	£0

## Outcomes

### Confidence

Low confidence and anxiety are common in children with asthma, but increased confidence was reported by teachers, parents and children themselves for all children with or without asthma. For children, being *“able to sing in front of the whole school”*

was viewed as a real milestone and learning a new skill and seeing improvements in their singing all contributed to growing confidence. Parents reported their children *"coming out of their shell"* and teachers have seen children become more confident in class.

*"When I first started choir, I felt shy and lonely and I didn't have the courage to do anything. When I had been going for a very long time I now feel quite courageous and like I can do things and not be afraid because I can stand up and sing in front of everybody now."*

### Improved lung health

Though hard to measure in the short term, this is a key outcome for the programme. Families involved in the test programme did say that children were breathing better and using their reliever inhalers less, but so far this has not been tested for the St Pauls Peel school choir group.

### Making friends

This was a key outcome for many of the children involved in the choir. Children *"felt amazing"* at having *"made loads of new friends"* and the choir was described as *"feeling like a family"*.

*"When I first joined choir, I felt lonely and nervous, but now I have made new friends after a few weeks."*

## Other VfM and wider considerations

### Attribution

An attribution of 70% can be applied to BreathStars. This is because the confidence building aspect of the programme could be attributed to the school choir, which existed prior to the BreathStars project and many of the children would be involved with regardless. Similarly, improved lung health is hard to measure in the short term and thus, as the project is not yet complete, hard to measure.

### Economy

The average cost to the state per asthmatic episode is £977.09 (adjusted for inflation)<sup>11</sup>. While not all 35 children in the group have asthma, in the trial project the 6 children with asthma reported improved lung health. Therefore, with the 70% attribution taken into account, it can be estimated that BreathStars has saved the state £4,103.78 if it has prevented the six children having at least one asthmatic episode.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.globalvaluexchange.org/valuations/584580621c584a1f40e43681>

## Efficiency

BreathStars currently spends £193.29 per person per year to maintain each of the groups listed in Table 1.

Gross cost of groups = £6,765

Less money charged to groups = £0

Net cost of groups = £6,765

Number of unique attendees = 35

Cost per unique attendee per year = £193.29

## Effectiveness

The confidence building aspect of BreathStars has a value of £569.59 (adjusted for inflation)<sup>12</sup> per child per year to the state. When the attribution of 70% is accounted for this becomes worth £13,954.96.

## Equity

The choir is open to all children at the school, and the children with asthma are deliberately not separated from the children without asthma so that there is reduced stigma.

### VfM summary – BreathStars

Net costs = £6,765

Total value added\* = £18,058.73

**Effective value generated = £11,293.73**

\*Economy and Effectiveness indicators

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