Barnsley Youth Choir

BYC is an award-winning organisation that was established in 2009 by Mat Wright MBE and Keith Norton. It is a registered charity run by volunteers that seeks to provide outstanding opportunities for young people who live in Barnsley, and has developed a reputation for excellence. The choir is currently the highest ranked choir from Great Britain in the Interkultur World Rankings and has won multiple awards. Barnsley Youth Choir was presented with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (MBE) in January 2018, the highest award given to volunteer groups across the UK. This was in recognition for the outstanding support and dedication shown by the volunteer team that runs the choir.

BYC is highly inclusive and the choir's 12 sections consist of around 720 singers aged 0-24 years old. The choir also helped to establish a community adult choir, Barnsley Singers, which now has around 160 members. The choir has released 2 albums, performed on National TV and Radio and has raises money for local charities.

The use of the Kodaly system, through a close association with choirs from the Kodaly School in Kecskemet and Laszlo Duranyik, has been significant in developing young people with little prior experience or formal training. The choir has had the opportunity to work with some of the world's finest conductors and choirs in this country and abroad, and has appeared in important international venues. The choir is unusual in that it maintains a wide and diverse repertoire including Popular, Gospel, Spiritual, Folk, World and more Classical genres, and audiences appreciate the variety of music performed in concerts. BYC has developed a significant international reputation and has represented Great Britain in 13 major competition categories including the European Choir Games and World Choir Games, winning 1st prizes in 12 of them, including 3 Grand Prix titles. In 2026 BYC become double World Champions in the 2026 World Choir Games. BYC regularly tours internationally and connects with outstanding international partners. BYC has toured the Edinburgh Festival Fringe on 4 occasions, Sweden, Ireland, South Africa on 2 occasions, Latvia on 2 occasions, Spain and Germany.

Overseas visits are reciprocated with a number of outstanding international choirs and choral leaders who visit Barnsley to work with BYC. Choirs that have formed a close partnership with BYC and have visited Barnsley include: Miraculum and Aurtin Choirs (HUN), Adolf Fredriks Music School and Stockholm Youth Choir (SWE), University of Pretoria (TUKS) Camerata, Drakensberg Boys Choir, Tygerberg Children's Choir (RSA), Voices of Singapore Children's Choir (SIN), Cantabile Youth Singers (USA) and New Zealand Youth Choir (NZ).

BYC has also performed and worked with outstanding choirs from this country including Harry Christophers and The Sixteen, Farnham Youth Choir and the National Youth Choir of Great Britain Fellowship. BYC has worked with high profile soloists and has been conducted by and received training from some of the world's best choral leaders. The choir has commissioned new music from composers such as Paul Mealor (GB), Michael Barrett (RSA) and Jake Runestad (USA).

Beyond the 720 members involved, BYC also provides significant support for schools across Barnsley. In 2025-26 BYC delivered 138 workshops to over 16,000 children and provided schools with resources and training to support the delivery of singing in schools. The choir also runs access singing development days.

BYC prides itself on providing exceptional experiences for young people and engenders a sense of aspiration. Barnsley is an area of significant deprivation and being a member of BYC helps young people to develop skills and qualities that will support them throughout their lives. The choir remains steadfastly ambitious; its mission is to provide as many children as possible with extraordinary experiences and ensure that no child is left behind. It seeks to inspire and change lives through music and provide life-changing opportunities for those involved.