



For immediate release

News Release

Alzheimer's Society's Singing for the Brain groups helping thousands more people with dementia stay connected thanks to additional funding

- **Over 80 new groups are to be run thanks to funding from the Utley Foundation, helping to reach 2,400 more people with dementia**
- People with dementia are hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic, in terms of numbers of deaths but also long-term impact of social isolation
- **Singing for the Brain** groups help keep people with dementia connected and engaged, music shown to be huge benefit to wellbeing
- Alzheimer's Society has created unique training and delivery options online allowing care providers and community groups to deliver groups during lockdown

Alzheimer's Society has collaborated with the Utley Foundation, through its campaign Music for Dementia, to enable 80 more Singing for the Brain groups to be set up across the UK. Music for Dementia, a national campaign backed by The Utley Foundation, aims to make music freely available for everyone living with dementia.

The funding from the Utley Foundation will allow 2,400** more people with dementia and their carers to take part in groups, offering important brain activity, a sense of routine and much-needed social contact, as they face the impact of being isolated and alone during lockdown.

The pandemic has hit people with dementia the hardest, with over a quarter of all deaths due to coronavirus accounted for by people with dementia, and an additional unexplained 52% increase in deaths above normal, unrelated to the virus, likely due to combination of social isolation and the interruption of normal health services.

Singing for the Brain groups keep people with dementia connected, engaged with others, and are a way for people with dementia and carers to interact remotely in virtual singing groups. Sessions bring people affected by dementia together to sing a variety of songs they know and love, with fun vocal exercises that help improve brain activity and increase wellbeing.

Evidence shows that music can help improve and support mood, alertness and engagement of people with dementia, with research* showing that musical memory is often retained when other memories are lost; music can help people to recall memories due to the nature of preserved memory for song and music in the brain.

Since lockdown, Alzheimer's Society has moved the Singing for the Brain sessions online, developing over a hundred singing groups that improve the lives of thousands of people with dementia across the UK on a weekly basis. Singing for the Brain Live, held at the end of April, streamed a session live on Facebook, joined by Alzheimer's Society Ambassador Vicky McClure and hundreds of people affected.

The lockdown has forced Alzheimer's Society to develop innovative ways to deliver all training, support and contact for the groups virtually, working with a number of care homes and other organisations throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland to deliver Singing for the Brain to their communities. The support of £28,000 from Utlely Foundation will help Alzheimer's Society enable individuals and organisations to deliver their own Singing for the Brain sessions.

Alzheimer's Society offers a range of services to help people affected by dementia in desperate need of support. The charity has also made over 96,600 welfare calls and is taking thousands of calls to its Dementia Connect support line each month, which people say are a lifeline to them. That's why Alzheimer's Society has launched an **Emergency Appeal** at alzheimers.org.uk/Emergency, so Alzheimer's Society can continue these vital services.

Helen Foster, Director of Operations for Alzheimer's Society said: "We are delighted and excited that this donation from the Utlely Foundation allows us to bring Singing for the Brain to so many more people affected by dementia. They have been hit hardest by the coronavirus pandemic, and it is vital that we can adapt our usual face-to-face services to ensure people with dementia know they aren't alone during the crisis, and that support is available.

Like all charities, Alzheimer's Society has been badly hit financially at this time, which is why we're so grateful for every penny donated to fund our vital services and Emergency Appeal to support the 850,000 people in the UK living with dementia."

Neil Utlely, Founder and Trustee of the Utlely Foundation added: "Music is so crucial to the wellbeing of people living with dementia, which is why we set up our Music for Dementia campaign and why we are so pleased to be able to fund this work by Alzheimer's Society and their Singing for the Brain initiative.

"It is shocking to see the impact that COVID-19 has had on people with dementia and giving more than 2000 people access to this successful service will enable them to regularly experience that connection and mood lift that comes with musical interaction."

ENDS

Donate to Alzheimer's Society's Emergency Appeal at alzheimers.org.uk to support people with dementia through this uncertain time.

** Based on approx. 30 members per group. Group sizes range from 20-70.

* Results from survey sent out via Alzheimer's Society services between 1-6 May 2020. The survey was completed online. In total, 878 people completed the questionnaire, with variations in completion rate for different sections of the survey.

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Additional information

Alzheimer's Society's Dementia Connect support line has received hundreds of calls from people telling us they have seen symptoms increase and their or loved ones' health deteriorating. Over three quarters (78%)* of people affected by dementia disclose that the coronavirus pandemic has made them feel more lonely or isolated than before. The lack of social contact and visits from friends and family, alongside a disruption to routine, has caused people to see permanent increase in symptoms over lockdown, including the loss of the ability to speak and communicate and to carry out day-to-day tasks like washing and eating, and an increase in depression.

About Alzheimer's Society

- Alzheimer's Society's Dementia Connect support line 0333 150 3456 provides information and practical measures for people affected by dementia around the coronavirus and directs people towards other reliable sources. For up to date information, services and practical advice, please visit alzheimers.org.uk
- Alzheimer's Society is the UK's leading dementia charity. We provide information and support, fund research, campaign to improve care and create lasting change for people affected by dementia in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- Dementia deaths are rising year on year and 225,000 will develop dementia this year - that's one every three minutes.
- Dementia costs the UK economy over £26 billion per year. This is the equivalent of more than £30,000 per person with dementia.
- Alzheimer's Society funds research into the cause, care, cure and prevention of all types of dementia and has committed to spend at least £150 million on research over the next decade. This includes a £50 million investment in the UK's first dedicated Dementia Research Institute.

About The Utley Foundation

The Utley Foundation was founded in 2014 by Neil and Nicky Utley. The Foundation exists to advance social causes and to act as a catalyst for greater funding and wider action for the causes it supports. Music is a personal passion of the founders and trustees and underpins many of the key funding areas of interest to the foundation. The trust has other charitable objectives including Armed Forces Veterans, Children and Overseas Aid. For more information please see: www.utleyfoundation.org.uk

About Music for Dementia

Music for Dementia campaigns for people with dementia to have the right to music as part of their care and access music free of charge, wherever they are. We are calling on the music

industry, philanthropists, and the health and social care sectors to help make it free and easy for people with dementia to access music. Find out more about Music for Dementia at musicfordementia.org.uk/