

Music in social care plans for people with dementia

A GUIDE FOR SOCIAL WORKERS ON HOW TO EMBED MUSIC IN
PERSONALISED SOCIAL CARE PLANS FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH
DEMENTIA, AND THEIR CARERS



“If we take just a moment to consider how music has influenced our own lives, both emotionally and socially it isn’t hard to then make the link between music and wellbeing. This is even more important for those people with dementia who may have lost some of those precious memories but may still feel the emotions music stirs up for them.”

“This guide will support professionals and families and individuals receiving care to think about music as part of a therapeutic response to wellbeing. Care plans need to embrace what is important in someone’s life, and not just describe the transactional care and support they need. When we include music in care plans, we immediately make them more personalised.”

Fran Leddra
Chief Social Worker England


Department
of Health &
Social Care

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Introduction

We have produced this guide to explain why music should be a part of personalised care plans for people living with dementia, and how to make this part of your assessment.

Included within the next few pages are details about the benefits of the musical approach and how it relates to the wellbeing aspect of the Care Act 2014.

It will also help you to understand how you can identify the value of music during a person's strength-based assessment, how to include music-based activities into their care plan and the role of link workers, family and friends in this.

The authors of this guide are Music for Dementia, a national campaign to make music available for everyone living with dementia, that is led and funded by the Utley Foundation, a family charitable trust.

The guide is supported by the Dementia Choices Action Alliance (DCAN) and NHSE and has been co-produced with the Office of the Chief Social Worker for Adults, DHSC.

“Alzheimer’s Society supports singing for the brain as we know that music can be a really important part of the life of a person living with dementia. Singing can improve brain activity, wellbeing and mood and everyone who attends Singing for the Brain tells us sessions improve their life in some way. It’s also something that family and friends can share with the person they are caring for.”

Kate Lee, CEO Alzheimer’s Society

The benefits of music for people living with dementia

Music is a universal experience that people living with dementia can enjoy and experience at any time and throughout their journey with dementia. It can also be a specific activity or a bespoke intervention to meet particular needs:



We use the phrase 'music-based activities' to describe the wide variety of music on offer which include: singing, listening to music in the home, developing a playlist of favourite songs or music, watching musicals, singing in a physical or virtual choir or group, singing and dancing or walking to music, singing along with a musician, and specialist music therapy.

Some of the many benefits of music:

- **Enabling people living with dementia to be 'seen as the person they are'** beyond their condition
- **Engaging people positively across the spectrum of severity** from diagnosis to end of life care, as the ability to appreciate, respond to and participate in music making remains intact when other skills and abilities have declined
- **Alleviating symptoms** associated with dementia such as agitation, apathy and anxiety
- **Providing a channel for communication** when speech is no longer possible or available
- **Re-energising people** living with dementia as they experience and enjoy music from their past
- **Actively connecting people** living with dementia with carers and their loved ones 'in the here and now' through sharing and enjoying music and musical experiences together
- **Enabling people living with dementia to contribute to others' wellbeing** through singing and playing a musical instrument.

Music is not just a nicety within a person's care plan and has a useful role to play in prevention, diagnosis and care – see Appendix B for evidence infographic..

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>PREVENTION</p> <p>Playing a musical instrument can act as a protective factor against dementia.</p> | <p>DIAGNOSIS</p> <p>Singing in a choir or group can help to process a diagnosis of dementia.</p> | <p>CARE</p> <p>Music therapy can improve quality of life and has been shown to reduce agitation, anxiety and depression.</p> |
| <p>What else can music do?</p> <p>Some music-based activities can improve general cognition and attention.</p> | <p>What else can music do?</p> <p>Some music-based activities can improve autobiographical memory - recalling past events to help with being in the here and now.</p> | <p>What else can music do?</p> <p>Music therapy can significantly improve communication skills, including fluency, and understanding and using words.</p> |

Music-based activities can have wider benefits too, such as:

- **Improving the quality of professional care** experienced by people living with dementia
- **Reducing the associated pressures** of caring on families and unpaid carers
- **Reducing unnecessary care costs** through, for example, reducing the need to use anti-psychotic drugs.

“Usually, Malcolm is a people’s person but unfortunately isolation has caused low moods and he can appear quite lost sometimes.

I use music when I notice he is getting agitated. For example after watching the news we put Andre Rieu on and he is up singing and dancing every time.”

Diana, 75 is the main carer for her husband Malcolm, 77

The Care Act 2014

The **Care Act** requires Local Authorities to apply 'the wellbeing principle' to care and to promote wellbeing at the heart of care and support when they are considering a person's needs and those of their unpaid carers.

This all-encompassing term covers overall health and wellbeing in which music-based activities can play a part, for example:

- Physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Control by the individual over their day-to-day life (including over care and support provided and the way they are provided)
- Personal dignity (including treatment of the individual with respect)
- Participation in work, education, training or recreation
- Social and economic wellbeing
- The individual's contribution to society

Additionally, the Later Life Care checklist for people preparing for a strengths-based assessment includes (in the questions relating to medical needs) '**Are there any hobbies or interests that you wish to maintain?**' alongside other questions about depression and physical exercise. Music-based activities can help in this aspect as well.

Including music in strengths-based assessments

As a Social Worker you can raise music as an area for discussion during the initial and annual care and support assessment. There are many areas in someone's life where music might have played an important role: their love of sport, their faith or spiritual life, their work, their relationships with family and friends.

NICE guidance describes the assessment process as a conversation about the wellbeing of the person living with dementia and what they want to be able to do in their daily life.

SCIE highlight the statutory guidance on using a strengths-based approach. This suggests assessors should seek to focus on what is strong, and not what is wrong, enabling a different type of conversation. In so doing, social workers (and other involved professionals) can identify the outcomes a person wants to achieve through the care they receive. The result is based on what the person living with dementia is able and wants to do rather than just assessing their needs and how they can best be met.

As well as promoting the person's strengths and interests, the assessment process and outcomes should promote independence, recognise the effects of loneliness, and respect peoples' dignity. The personalised care plan that it informs describes how their care and support can be met in ways that are flexible, clear, appropriate, and reviewed regularly.

Through a few key prompts, you can identify the extent to which music has been and still is an important part of a person's life, and in what way it could be a part of the individual's care plan. Try to think holistically with the person about who they are, what matters to them, and the ways in which music might be woven through their life.

Examples of prompts you could use:

How:

- How important is music to you and why?
- How do you like experiencing music – listening, singing, playing?
- Would you like to learn how to play an instrument?
- Do you like dancing, moving or exercising to music?
- Do you like singing along with others as part of a choir or group?
- Do you like going to live music performances?
- Do you like watching musical films or TV shows with theme tunes and do you have any favourites?
- How do you like listening to music – on the radio, using CDs on a CD player, through headphones and a smart phone, attending live concerts?
- Who do you like to experience music with? Family, friends?
- Do you like to experience music as part of worship or spiritual reflection?

What:

- What music do you enjoy most and why?
- What kind of music do you dislike and why?
- What sort of music brings back memories for you and why?
- What kind of music or musicians do you like to listen to and why?
- What 'music era or decade' do you most identify with and why?
- What songs from your childhood and your youth did you like?
- What songs remind you of a favourite holiday, a special event or a place?
- What sort of music activities did you used to do that you would like to do again?
- What kind of music activities have you never tried but would like to?

When:

- When throughout the day do you like listening to music?
- What kinds of music do you like at different times of the day?
- Do you like to have your favourite music playing gently in the background where you are living?
- Do you like to have silence at times in your day? If so, when?

“During isolation I've been keeping myself busy by composing songs and playing the guitar in my home. In absence of friends and family, I have found being able to make music a great help.”

Paul Hitchmough, 67, who has Alzheimer's Disease and lives alone in Liverpool

Conducting a strengths-based music assessment

Below are some suggestions about how you might conduct the music element of the assessment process:

More than one conversation

- The formal assessment that includes music and outcomes could take place over more than one occasion and over a period of time.
- The assessment might happen after the relationship between you and the person has developed through informal visits and conversations about music beforehand.

Keep a record

- The outcomes to be achieved for a person living with dementia will change over time so the early record of music interests and preferences you write may be useful to refer to at later stages in the person's 'dementia journey'.
- You will routinely keep a record of what is said and what happens during the meetings, conversations and assessment process. This record should include any music preferences outcomes identified and initial ideas about how they might be achieved. Appendix C is template record sheet that you could adapt for use during the process.

Non-verbal prompts

- It may, in some cases, be appropriate to use alternative approaches to verbal prompts about music to gain an understanding of a person's musical preferences. These might be observing their response to different types of music you play to them or watching their behaviour in a group musical activity such as singing together.

Involve paid and unpaid carers

- You could ask family members and friends, or carers, to have some preliminary conversations about music in the life of the person before you undertake the formal strengths-based assessment.

Look out for 'red flags'

- Watch out for 'red flag' songs or music that might trigger unpleasant or unwanted feelings or memories.
- There are some rare forms of dementia that may make listening and processing music difficult. You should also take into account any existing medical conditions, such as hearing loss.

Playlist for Life has a variety of resources to help people develop a collection of songs which make up a 'soundtrack of your life', including conversation starters and prompts about musical memories, how to access music tracks online, and creating a music journal.

Some care homes offer the opportunity for their residents to participate in a Singing for the Brain or music and movement groups. They may also enable musicians to visit and play, include music therapy or encourage people to play percussion or other instruments as an integral part of their care offer.

Some ways of incorporating music-based activities in a care plan for people living with dementia

1. Tune in to radio shows such as m4d Radio or BBC Memory Radio that play music and shows from previous eras
2. Listen to music on the radio, CD/record player, TV, smart speaker, or smartphone
3. Find and play favourite songs by streaming on a smartphone, tablet or computer
4. Watch favourite musical films on DVDs or through a streaming service such as Netflix
5. Create a playlist of favourite songs and music
6. Play or learn to play a musical instrument
7. Join a 'Singing for the Brain' group (run by Alzheimer's Society)
8. Join a local choir
9. Have an NHS music social prescription
10. Receive support from a specialist music therapist.

Music in social care plans

The way that music-based activities are provided in the care plan of a person living with dementia will be determined by the outcome of that individual's strengths-based assessment and their responses to the questions about music. We would encourage that an individual's musical preferences are listed high up in their care plans, alongside other key information about their needs and wishes.

Low cost

The cost of providing music-based activities within a care plan can be low or negligible, or provided for free or part-funded, so this should not be a barrier to including music as appropriate as an eligible need.

Care workers supporting people in their own homes or providing care in residential care may be able to provide some of the music-based activities identified in the care plan at negligible cost and in a very short amount of time e.g. tuning in the radio to a favourite radio station, playing a favourite musical DVD, putting a pre-recorded playlist of favourite music on the CD player or streaming it through smart speaker.

A shared experience

Ultimately, music is a tool to enhance relationships and quality of life. In any and all music activity (or activities) included in someone's care plan, it is vital that the music isn't something that is done to the person, rather it is something that is about being with them and experiencing the music together to support relationships and enhance quality of life.

Social Prescriptions and Link Workers

Social prescribing is one component of the NHS Comprehensive Model of Personalised Care, shown below:

1. [Shared decision making](#)
2. [Personalised care and support planning](#)
3. [Enabling choice, including legal rights to choice](#)
4. [Social prescribing and community-based support](#)
5. [Supported self-management](#)
6. [Personal health budgets and integrated personal budgets](#)

We believe that being connected to music-based activities is one type of social prescription that will help to improve the quality of life for people living with dementia.

Your assessment and care plan can also be used as part of the conversation that a Link Worker has with a person living with dementia and their carer to create a music-based social prescription.

NHS Link Workers based in Primary Care Networks take referrals from local GPs and in some cases other local agencies, and spend time with people building trusting relationships, and listening carefully to what matters to people and what motivates them. They work with individuals to create a shared plan based on what matters to them, to help them take control of their health and wellbeing.

Link Workers also help people to connect with their community, supporting them to make their own choices and help them build confidence to manage social situations, such as community group activities. They may often signpost to musical activities as a social prescription for people in the early stages of dementia as a means of connecting people with community support and improving their quality of life.

To support continuity of care, it is helpful for social workers to ask if a person has a musical social prescription. If so, it is valuable to think with them about whether this is still relevant, how can this be adapted to support their current needs and integrated into their social care plan to help alleviate symptoms and support quality of life.

“Music evokes emotion and emotion can bring memory. Music brings back the feeling of life when nothing else can.”

Dr Oliver Sacks

Family and friends supporting the plan

Assessments and care plans for people living with dementia often directly involve families, and friends. They can help to identify and provide the music-based activities that a person might enjoy as part of their care plan. You may also wish to incorporate this into the carer's assessment as music can play just as important a role in supporting their health and wellbeing.

Ways that family and friends can support the musical elements of a person's care plan or a music social prescription (even if they are not living with them) are set out in the [Musical Guide](#).

Some key suggestions within the guide are:

- Stay in touch on the phone and ask what sort of music-based activities the person would like to take part in
- Have a virtual 'sing along' or listen to music together over the phone or on a tablet or computer
- Make a playlist and give it to them as present
- Talk to the carer supporting them or living with them about how to make listening to music or taking part in music-based activities could be made possible
- Support the person to attend music-based activities in the community
- Support grandchildren to talk to their grandparent about their favourite music and produce a playlist for them

Phil's Story

"My mum always enjoyed the old music hall songs so as kids we all learnt the words and the tunes to songs like 'Daisy Daisy', 'Pack up your troubles' and 'Burlington Bertie'. Mum's dementia eventually meant she had to move into residential care and on my regular visits to see her we used to go for walks around the home and gardens chatting and singing these old songs together.

She couldn't say who I was, but she enjoyed my visits and we really connected as we sang together and held hands as we walked.

The amazing thing was she managed to remember the songs even though the words and the tunes got a bit hazy towards the end.

The change in the way she sang those songs over the four years also helped me to grasp the effect the dementia was having on her. And they are now the strongest memory I have of the precious time we shared together before she died."

Appendix A

Linking with local opportunities for music-based activities

The Music for Dementia [Musical Map](#) has information about the location of different types of music-based activities that are available across the country.

Below are three examples of how such activities from local or national musical service providers can make a significant impact.

June and Eddie's Story

"Before my eyes, Eddie started disappearing. But when music therapy came into his life, his world lit up again.

In the music, Eddie found himself again and the drummer in Eddie shone through.

We are so grateful to the therapy because in these moments of music Eddie was transformed, and I would get my husband back."

(Case study provided by Nordoff Robbins)

Fiona's Story

"Well, the playlist for life is a massive success. I put almost 70 songs onto it (so that's over 3 hours), and Mum and Dad listened to the whole lot this morning.

Apparently, Dad could remember loads of the words, and could name the singers – sometimes when Mum couldn't! Mum said it was quite an emotional experience for her seeing Dad so normal. It's amazing what a powerful trigger this has turned out to be.

I know music is often cited as something that can really get through to people with dementia, but I'll admit I'm very surprised at how well it worked given that Dad has never been especially interested. It's given them both a very happy day."

(Case Study: Playlist for life)

Moyra and John's Story

"The online sessions have been a lifeline not just for John but for me. They are a landmark in what are very long weeks. I think it's really important for our general wellbeing. It's also a whole new experience and the engagement with the computer is important for John. It's really good to see everybody, to connect and make the music together."

(Case study: Together in Sound)

Appendix B

Evidence Infographic

Music and dementia – the facts



Dementia numbers are rising...

There are approximately
885,000

people with dementia in the UK.



x2 By 2040 this figure is predicted to almost **double to 1.6 million.**

209,600 people will develop dementia this year, that's
1 every 3 minutes

There are nearly **700,000** unpaid carers for people with dementia.

70% of people in care homes have dementia or severe memory problems.

There are over **42,000** people under 65 with dementia in the UK.

25,000+ People from black, Asian and minority ethnic groups in the UK are affected.

Living well with music:

Music helps **improve** overall health and wellbeing – lowers stress-related hormones, maintains cognitive health, encourages social and communication skills, and physical health through movement.

Music can help to

reduce

heart rate, blood pressure and anxiety.



Music can **trigger** the brain to release chemicals such as endorphins that distract the body from pain.

Singing is good for you. Residents who took part in a music therapy choir more than **doubled** their quality of life scores whilst **halving** their depressive symptoms.

The magic of music:

4 key areas are

improved ↑↑↑

by music based interventions for people living with dementia: general attention, cognition, memory, speech and communication skills.



The costs:

Dementia **costs** the UK

£34.7bn

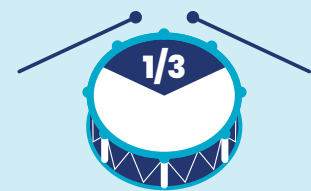
every year. The health and social care costs of dementia are more than those of cancer and chronic heart disease combined.



Two thirds of the cost of dementia is paid for by people living with dementia and their families, through unpaid care and care home fees.

Unpaid carers save the UK economy **£13.9bn** a year by supporting someone with dementia.

Playing a musical instrument in older adulthood may help to **reduce** the risk of developing dementia by more than a **third**.



Music works:

Music therapy has been shown to be the **best** type of therapy for **reducing** the behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia.

Music therapy **reduces** agitation and need for medication in

67% of people with dementia.

Through regular singing, depression levels can be **reduced** by

40% in care settings.

Singing in residential care homes can **halve** anxiety.

The ability to process, respond to and engage with music remains **intact** however severe the dementia.



The numbers:

For every **£1 invested** in the Silver Lining music and dementia project, the social **ROI was £1.93**, a

93% increase

Music therapy is the **most cost effective** way to alleviate agitation in care homes. Up to

35 times less expensive

when compared with many other therapies and interventions.



“When delivered effectively, music gives carers and loved ones an avenue through which to sustain relationships and share experiences and can help to minimise the often-upsetting symptoms of dementia such as agitation, anxiety and depression. Moreover, it can help to improve a person’s wellbeing and quality of life.”

Co-Chair of All Party Parliamentary Group on dementia, Baroness Greengross

Appendix C

Template for recording music needs and comments for care plans

Use and adapt this template to be a routine part of your strengths-based assessment for developing a care plan

| Prompt on music | Response of person | Comment by social worker / link worker / other |
|---|--------------------|--|
| Tell me about you and music | | |
| How important is music to you and why? | | |
| What kind of music do you enjoy most and why? | | |
| What kind of music do you dislike and why? | | |
| What sort of music 'gets you going' and why? | | |
| What sort of music helps you feel relaxed and why? | | |
| What sort of music bring back memories for you and why? | | |
| What kind of music and musicians do you like to listen to and why? | | |
| What 'music era or decade' do you most identify with e.g. the 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s, 00s, 10s and why? | | |
| What sort of music activities did you used to do that you would like to do again? | | |
| What kind of music activities have you never tried but would like to? | | |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| When throughout the day do you like listening to music? | | |
| What kinds of music do you like at different times of the day? | | |
| Do you like to have your favourite music playing gently in the background where you are living? | | |
| Do you like to have silence throughout your day? If so, when? | | |
| How do you like experiencing music – listening, singing, playing? | | |
| Would you like to learn an instrument? | | |
| Do you like dancing, moving or exercising to music? | | |
| Do you like singing along with others as part of a choir or group? | | |
| Do you like going to live music performances? | | |
| Do you like watching musical films and do you have any favourites? | | |
| How do you like listening to music – via the radio, using CDs on a CD player, through headphones and a smart phone/ device, attending live performances? | | |
| Who do you like to experience music with? | | |
| Anything else about you and music? | | |

Any feedback on using this template and conducting strengths-based music assessments would be much appreciated. Please email info@musicfordementia.org.uk