



Major boost for dementia community with the first ever music and dementia website

9 January 2019, UK: The Music for Dementia website is being launched on Wednesday 9 January and will be the first ever central information hub for advice, evidence-based research, and expertise on why music, in its rich variety of forms, is essential for people living with dementia and their carers. Bringing the music and dementia sectors together, this website is a first of its kind in demonstrating the importance of music in dementia care.

Responding directly to the ILC-UK's Commission report published in January, 'What would life be, without a song or dance, what are we: a report from the commission on dementia and music', demonstrates that this campaign is truly focused on enhancing quality of life for people living with dementia and those who care for them, by making access to information about music services easier. **'The website is a living, dynamic source of information', says Grace Meadows, Programme Director for Music for Dementia. 'Working with all the music, dementia, care and health communities, this site will be all encompassing and inclusive, and we want to encourage people to share their work with us so we can be making people aware of what musical activities are available in their communities and supporting access to them.'**

For the 850,000 people currently living with dementia in the UK, there are 700,000 informal carers caring for them every day.[1] 63.5% of carers say they have had no or not enough support.[2] The Music for Dementia campaign aims to help change this through ensuring carers are also supported to access musical activities. Without our carers, paid and unpaid, our society would be unable to cope with the strain of dementia. Dementia is the leading healthcare crisis of our time and the leading cause of death in the UK [3]. With the cost of dementia in the UK expected to more than double in the next 25 years, from £26bn to £55n in 2040.[4] It has higher health and social care costs (£11.9bn) than cancer

The website promotes the wide range of musical activities available for people living with dementia, from how to compile a playlist through to advice on how to find a music therapist. Music enriches and supports personalised care and as the key source of information about music, the website explains how to make music part of your every day routine.

Research shows, that when used appropriately through a personalised approach, music can make the delivery of care more effective and efficient, enabling carers to have more time to create meaningful moments with the people they are caring for. Music enhances people's experiences of using services and helps people living with dementia to be seen for who they are, beyond their dementia.

In 2015, the then health secretary, Jeremy Hunt said the government wanted to make the UK the most dementia-friendly country in the world by 2020.[5] The aim of the Music for Dementia campaign is a direct response to this challenge by working to ensure that everyone living with dementia has access to music by 2020.

The whole experience of a care home changes when you introduce meaningful music programmes. As well as being enjoyable and mood enhancing, it can develop the skills and confidence of care professionals as part of their day-to-day person-centred approach to care, support identity, relationships, and community and add a valuable new resource to the care tool kit. Music enables people living with dementia to be more than recipients of care, it enables them to contribute to their communities and explore their own creativity and musicality.

Live Music Now, a charity providing live musical experiences for a diverse range of people, recently published their [‘Live Music in Care report: Music benefits the whole care home and contributes to person-centred care’ report recommending that live music should be essential in all UK care homes](#). Evan Dawson, Executive Director, says ‘The potential benefits of music to individuals and society are significant, underpinned by a clear and respected evidence base.

<https://www.musicfordementia.org.uk> is structured for interactive use by carers, health professionals, practitioners, commissioners, academics and researchers – and most importantly, people living with dementia. It incorporates insightful case studies, blogs, interactive short films, and advice and guidance from across the health, care, dementia and music sectors. The site is a hub for collaboration and connecting people in an easy to access and view format for all.

The website follows the recent announcement from the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Matt Hancock MP, on the inclusion of musical activities, including music therapy, in care for people living with dementia to help reduce and manage dementia symptoms.

Baroness Sally Greengross, International Longevity Centre-UK (ILC), “ILC very much welcomes the musicfordementia2020 website, which responds directly to recommendations made by our Commission on Dementia and Music.

Analysis by the ILC, undertaken for the Commission, showed that music helps to significantly minimise some of the symptoms of dementia, such as agitation, and can help to tackle anxiety and depression. Moreover, evidence suggests that music helps us to reconnect with loved ones with dementia.

However, at present we know that too many people are missing out on the opportunity to engage in music-based activities. Bringing together learning and information about activities in this website will be a vital first step to widening access and opportunity for everyone.”

The Department of Health and Social Care’s recommendation that GPs prescribe personal playlists along with other forms of musical activities to reduce the symptoms of dementia, such as agitation, apathy and psychological distress comes from compelling evidence. There may be as many as 320,000 people with dementia in residential settings who do not have access to meaningful arts provision.[6] **Says Professor Martin Green OBE, Chief Executive, Care England, “Music can evoke memories, provide opportunities to share experiences and connect people to families, friends and other residents. Through shared memories and experiences music can enhance the quality of life for everyone who need care and support services”**

It is thought that around 566,700 people with dementia live in the community and it is not currently known how many of these people are able to access music-based interventions. [7]

Says Grace Meadows, Programme Director, Music for Dementia, ‘For someone living with dementia, music can be the lifeline, the connector that stops them from being locked away in a lonely and isolated world. Music, in its many forms; recorded, live, participatory, interactive, therapy, has the power to transform lives. There is some excellent work happening across the country; in people’s homes, the community, care settings, hospitals and hospices. However, this is not happening everywhere across the UK. This website is the major first step in helping to ensure that everyone living with dementia has access to the music that matters to them.”

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