

Music will help more people living with dementia, thanks to new funding for social prescribing

- Music can help reduce the often-distressing symptoms of dementia, for example 40% reduction in depression levels through regular singing in care settings ^[1].
- Music therapy reduces agitation and the need for medication in 67% of people with dementia ^[2].
- It can also improve quality of life, creating moments of joy by bringing people into the here and now.
- New funding from Music for Dementia and the National Academy for Social Prescribing will help more people benefit from the power of music and social prescribing by providing grants to organisations delivering musical services for people with dementia.

New funding will allow more people with dementia to benefit from the power of music through specially designed programmes including singing and drumming.

The National Academy for Social Prescribing (NASP) and Music for Dementia have joined forces to support four organisations providing musical services for people living with dementia through social prescribing. Music for Dementia is a national campaign calling for music to be made accessible to everyone with a diagnosis of dementia and for it to become an integral part of care plans. NASP was established to advance social prescribing. This funding supports their shared objective to support social prescribing activities that promote health and wellbeing at a national and local level.

John Sharpe, who was diagnosed with dementia six years ago, attends The Derbyshire Stroke & Neuro Therapy Centre. He says: “Music is my memories. It makes me remember the bands I saw long ago, such as Queen at Earls Court in 1982 and Bowie in Manchester. I really enjoy talking to my friends here about music and bands, it’s so good to remember them together.

He has only attended the centre for a few months but is already benefitting from its services. John continues: “My dementia has no cure - my arms and legs look fine, but my brain isn’t. I love coming to the centre and seeing singers like Claire from Razzle Dazzle and Paper Kite, it brings a smile to my face.”

The projects receiving funds are:

- **Musica Music and Wellbeing CIC**, which offers music workshops across the country for people living with dementia in care settings and online training for carers
- **The Derbyshire Stroke & Neuro Therapy Centre**, which also reaches into South Yorkshire and provides a diverse musical programme for its service users
- Arts and community venue **The Seagull Theatre Lowestoft**, which is planning to extend its Singing for the Brain Groups into an existing area and one new area, and in doing so attract an additional 40 to 60 families

- **Saffron Hall Trust**, which runs a thriving Together in Sound music therapy group in partnership with Cambridge Institute of Music Therapy Research at Anglia Ruskin University

Grace Meadows, Music for Dementia Campaign Director said:

“It is wonderful to be able to work closely with NASP on this project and to be offering a second round of grants this year to musical activities working with people with dementia. As an expert grant maker in this field The Utley Foundation, who back the Music for Dementia campaign, have been able to move swiftly to ensure that the money is channelled into communities where this funding can make a real impact and benefit individuals and carers directly.

“We hope this partnership paves the way for further ventures in the future, enabling more people with dementia to access music and enjoy its many benefits through social prescribing.”

James Sanderson, Chief Executive of the National Academy for Social Prescribing, said:

“We know that music is powerful and meaningful for many, whether it’s learning something new or reminiscing over an old song.

“Supporting meaningful social prescribing activities like this, in communities in England, allows more people to support the people they work with in a personal way. We are pleased to be able to help fund these activities, to help more people benefit.”

Director at The Seagull Theatre Lowestoft, Des Reynolds said:

“This funding will mean that our successful music appreciation group will be able to expand and offer more people the opportunity to experience the transformational impact of music on the lives of those with dementia. We’ll be able to reach out to more families to enjoy our Sunday Classics film club where we use reminiscence and a wonderful team of professional actors to take our customers truly back in time. We’re overjoyed that more local families will receive support to maximise the enjoyment they can share with their loved ones at our many dementia accessible events.”

Des believes the services offered by The Seagull Theatre Lowestoft truly benefit carers as well as people living with dementia, citing a carer who had been a stage performer but was feeling sad and lacking confidence having looked after her husband, who has lived with dementia for over 10 years. By joining the Music Appreciation group, she was able to mix with other carers and people with dementia and eventually took a lead role in the group, both playing instruments and leading sing-a-longs. The carer added enormous value to the group and had found it had helped her ‘return to her being’, by improving her confidence and wellbeing. In addition, her husband had the opportunity to mix with others and his interaction levels grew to the point he started singing, particularly when his wife played.

Chief Executive at The Derbyshire Stroke & Neuro Therapy Centre, Julie Wheelhouse said:

“We use music to support reminiscence activities, help people to relax, encourage participation in exercise sessions and most importantly to bring a sense of enjoyment and fun with friends. We were delighted to be awarded a grant which will enable us to develop our existing use of music by employing our own Neuro Music therapist and purchase a diverse range of instruments that everyone will be able to use and enjoy.”

Learning and Participation Director at Saffron Hall, Thomas Hardy said:

“We’re delighted to receive this support for our Together in Sound Programme, which has been established for several years here in Saffron Walden. During this last year in particular, it has been described as a ‘lifeline’ by those taking part. This funding will help us develop our first satellite project in another part of Essex. As we do this, we’re particularly excited about developing stronger partnerships with the healthcare sector, working closely with social prescribing link workers to ensure our work reaches as many people who will benefit as possible.”

CEO at Musica Music and Wellbeing CIC, Rosie Mead said:

“This funding will enable us to roll out our online training and coaching, Press Play to Rewind, to healthcare professionals working in over 200 care homes nationwide. Our programme provides care staff with the skills, knowledge and confidence to provide meaningful music for individuals living with dementia. We are incredibly grateful to Music for Dementia and NASP for providing us with this opportunity to impact the lives of so many people living with dementia in care homes.”

Notes

Recognising the value of music in social prescribing, NASP has contributed £100,000 to the new funding with a further £12,107 coming from public donations given to the Utleay Foundation for the Music for Dementia campaign.

[1] [Abraha I, Rimland JM, Trotta FM et al.](#)

[2] [All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts Health and Wellbeing](#)

The above and other stats about music and dementia can be found on the [Facts about Music and Dementia](#) infographic.

Media contacts

For further media information or to set up interviews please contact Paula Hunter or Sam Jones at Big Bang PR on paula@bigbangpr.co.uk 07739 989915 or sam@bigbangpr.co.uk 07531 625233.

For further information or to set up interviews with the National Academy for Social Prescribing, contact communications@NASP.info.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

About Music for Dementia

[Music for Dementia](#), funded by The Utley Foundation, campaigns for people with dementia to have music as an integral part of their care whatever their circumstances. We are calling on the music industry, philanthropists, and the health and social care sectors to help make this possible.

The campaign offers several invaluable resources for people living with dementia and their carers:

[M4d Radio](#) – launched in June 2020 to bring meaningful music direct into people’s homes, this group of five online radio stations plays tunes from the 30s to the 70s. m4d Radio won two dementia care awards in 2020.

[Musical Map for Dementia](#) – an online interactive map which will become the largest and most comprehensive database of dementia-friendly music services in the UK.

[The Musical Guide](#) – a 2-page leaflet listing a range of musical activities for people with dementia and their carers to incorporate into the lives during COVID-19 and beyond.

About the National Academy of Social Prescribing

The National Academy for Social Prescribing is a charity dedicated to the advancement of social prescribing through promotion, collaboration and innovation. They work to create partnerships, across the arts, health, sports, leisure, and the natural environment, alongside other aspects of our lives, to promote health and wellbeing at a national and local level. They champion social prescribing and the work of local communities in connecting people for wellbeing.

Their objectives are to

- Make some noise – raising the profile of social prescribing
- Find resources – develop innovative funding partnerships
- Build relationships – broker and build relationships across all sectors
- Improve the evidence – shape and share the evidence base
- Spread what works – promote learning on social prescribing

[Find out more on their website.](#)