

My Musical Memories Reminiscence Programme



University
of Worcester
Association for
Dementia Studies

"...when he first started off he didn't open his mouth, now he sings..."

Evaluation of a pilot intervention providing musical reminiscence sessions.

Background:

The My Musical Memories Reminiscence Programme provided a music reminiscence programme exclusively for people living with dementia, comprising hour-long, weekly sessions.

It aimed to empower people living with dementia to engage within their community through participation and enjoyment of specially tailored music, artefacts (LP covers, photos, and personal photos), and percussion instruments.

The My Musical Memories Reminiscence Programme also aimed to provide opportunities for respite and support for family carers by encouraging fellow carers to share their experiences with each other in a separate room. Sessions were run by a session leader, with support from several volunteers.

About the Association for Dementia Studies:

The Association for Dementia Studies is an active research and education centre. Our multi-professional team are experts in the field of person-centred dementia care and support.

Through research, education, consultancy and scholarship, we make a cutting-edge contribution to building evidence-based practical ways of working with people living with dementia and their families that enables them to live well.



Personalised playlists and booklets were prepared for each couple who took part.



These booklets included relevant photos and snippets of information about how the participant responded during the sessions or the significance of each track.



The provision of these personalised playlists and booklets was intended to encourage continued engagement and improved interaction within each couple.



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Evaluation:

During the project, two parallel series of seven My Musical Memories Reminiscence Programme sessions were conducted in North and South Worcestershire.

The ten-month evaluation included:

- Carer focus groups prior to each series of sessions;
- Carer and volunteer focus groups immediately following the final session of each series;
- An interview with the Session Leader at the end of each series;
- Follow-up face-to-face interviews with each participating dyad approximately 6-8 weeks after their final session.
- Participant observation of the majority of the sessions, using the 'Creative Expressive Activities Assessment', an observation tool specifically marketed for assessment of the impact of creative interventions;
- Participant observation sheets completed at the end of every session by each volunteer.

“he was over the moon when we came out, you know, it really, it does him good.”

“He was on top of the world, and you could see he got the interest back, he didn’t just sit down and look into space”

“It’s turned into quite a social event hasn’t it, it’s not all about the music.”

Findings:

The evaluation indicated that the My Musical Memories Reminiscence Programme had a positive impact on all who were involved; indeed many of the carers and volunteers expressed a desire for the programme to continue indefinitely.

The main successful elements of this programme included:

- Providing a unique opportunity for people living with dementia and their carers to spend time with their peers;
- The small size of the groups, combined with a high ratio of experienced, volunteers to participants (generally 2:1);
- The ability of these volunteers to converse and reminisce with participants about the local area;
- An experienced, person-centred session leader, whose familiarity with the local area promoted personalised reminiscence;
- An accessible venue that could accommodate the needs of participants and carers;
- Considerable preparation for each session;
- The provision of a personalised playlist and booklet that enabled ongoing benefit to those dyads who made use of them.

Recommendations:

As part of the evaluation an intervention manual providing guidance on how to prepare for and run sessions was developed. This should be disseminated to interested parties to assist with future My Musical Memories Reminiscence Programme sessions.



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