

# darts



# singing for memory

## Programme Review and Evaluation September 2022

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## About this report

This review and evaluation was commissioned by darts with the purpose of examining outcomes and impacts relating to the programme 'Singing for Memory'. This report was written for link workers, voluntary organisations and charities supporting people living with dementia and their carers, and others who might have the opportunity to commission the Singing for Memory programme for people living with dementia (or those experiencing memory challenges) and their carers.

## Report context

This review and evaluation of Singing for Memory was conducted between April and September 2022. The Singing for Memory programme had been running since 2017 and delivery had to be adapted across the Covid-19 pandemic, through garden performances, the production of CDs and DVDs etc. Face-to-face sessions since May 2021 within government recommended guidelines and continued to risk assess the groups to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the people with dementia and family carers. At the time of writing, the UK was also experiencing 'Cost of Living' and energy crises, as well as one of the hottest summers on record with temperatures in Doncaster reaching 39°C in July.

## About the author

Dr Robyn Dowlen is a researcher, chartered psychologist, and musician with expertise in the field of music in the context of the care and everyday lives of people living with dementia. She is an expert in consolidating evidence in different topic areas under the umbrella of creative health, having published numerous reviews in this area. She has a wide range of experience in working with people living with dementia, caregivers, musicians and cultural organisations to understand the 'in the moment' and lasting benefits of music in a range of contexts. Robyn is Chair of the Board of Directors for String of Hearts CIC (a community music organisation for older people) and has also been featured as an expert voice in an upcoming BBC short documentary on music and dementia.

## Executive summary

Singing for Memory is a **singing and creative music making programme** designed for people living with dementia, those experiencing memory challenges, and their carers. Sessions are **free to attend** and are run at The Point **every Monday** between 2:00pm and 3:30pm. **The programme is managed by darts and led by professional musicians.**

darts commissioned this evaluation with the aim of **reviewing and synthesising previous Singing for Memory evaluative materials**, as well as **analysing the 'in the moment' experiences** of people living with dementia and their carers during Singing for Memory sessions.

The synthesis of previous evaluative materials combined with observations of live sessions during the summer of 2022, led to the development of **four key observations**

Overall, Singing for Memory contributes to the ability of people living with dementia and their carers to **live well across their dementia journey**. The opportunity to take part in sustained, long-term activity is **rooted within people's routines and makes them feel connected and supported**. In the (near) future, the darts team hope that Singing for Memory becomes an **embedded part of the dementia offer in Doncaster** – and are **seeking sustainable, long-term funding** to be able to support people with dementia and their carers as they navigate the complexities of what it means to live with dementia.

## Key Observations



### Gently challenging, meaningful activity

- People with dementia enjoy coming to Singing for Memory
- It is tailored activity that incorporates music from each person's life story
- Creativity and learning new songs are important parts of sessions
- People share musical memories and collectively reminisce.



### Feeling connected and supported

- People with dementia and carers find friendship and support through Singing for Memory
- Carers feel a sense of respite and are able to talk with other carers
- It is a space where people come together without judgement.
- The longevity of the programme is important as many participants build sessions into their weekly routines



### A safe, welcoming space

- The Point is a beautiful, welcoming space
- The darts team ensure the venue is as safe as possible for people to visit.
- The space is within an arts venue, and the team encourage wider engagement with exhibitions and the on site cafe.



### High quality musical provision

- Singing for Memory is led by professional musicians with expertise in working musically with people with dementia
- A highly skilled project management team, volunteers and front of house team support the project,
- There is an ethos that people with dementia should have access to high quality arts.

## Background

### Music, singing, and dementia – a brief overview of the literature

There is growing evidence that music can support the wellbeing and quality of life of people living with dementia and their care partners [1]. Music has been shown to engender feelings of connectedness to other people and affords opportunities for people living with dementia to share their life stories through the soundtracks of their lives [2].

Music is also a powerful communicative tool for people living with dementia, especially when they are no longer able to use words to express themselves [3]. People living with dementia embody their musical experiences and show strong emotional reactions and connections to different musical pieces, styles, and new music that is co-created 'in the moment' [4].

The positive impacts of music for people living with dementia have been observed across multiple contexts – including in care home, community and hospital settings – and across a person's dementia journey, from mild to severe presentations. Taking part in singing groups has also been shown to improve carers sense of wellbeing and emotional resilience, including enhancing their ability to cope with caring responsibilities [5, 6].

During the Covid-19 pandemic, when face-to-face music making or singing was not possible, many musicians and cultural organisations adapted and innovated their practice to ensure access to music was still possible for people with dementia and their carers – whether this was through distanced performances or delivery through online platforms [7].

Arts organisations in England have played a key role in the development and delivery of programmes which aim to use music as a tool for wellbeing, connectedness and creative expression for people living with dementia and their carers for many years. This expertise has recently been applied to social prescribing contexts, where people with dementia and their care partners are able to be referred to community-based music programmes which has led to positive outcomes relating to people with dementia's sense of wellbeing and connectedness [8].

Overall, there is a growing interest in the role and value of music in supporting the wellbeing and quality of life of people living with dementia and their care partners. There is a central role for arts organisations in supporting the wider application of music-based approaches that can support the wellbeing and quality of life of people living with dementia and those who support them.

***'The universal nature of the ability to enjoy music provides a very powerful tool to enhance the quality of life of people with dementia.'***

***Prof. Alistair Burns, National Director for Dementia and Older People's Mental Health at NHS England***



## Evaluation overview

The overarching aim of this evaluation was to review and synthesise previous Singing for Memory evaluative materials, as well as analysing the 'in the moment' experiences of people living with dementia and their carers during Singing for Memory sessions. The findings from this evaluation are presented in a case study format, outlining what the programme looks like; how it is supported by the darts team, musicians, and volunteers; and the key outcomes for people living with dementia and their carers.

darts commissioned Robyn in March 2022 to conduct a review of previous Singing for Memory outputs alongside an evaluation of current practices. This was a programme evaluation and so did not require formal ethical review. However, as an external evaluator she was only granted access to publicly available reports or information (i.e. webpages, reports to funders) and previous evaluation materials where participants had agreed to quotes or images being used for evaluative purposes. This evaluation did not include an economic evaluation.



## Methods

The overarching framework for this study was a case study methodology, bringing together archive documents with 'in the moment' observation of the Singing for Memory sessions. While the majority of the evaluation was retrospective in nature (examining previously published reports, case studies and reports to funders) Robyn attended and conducted observations in three Singing for Memory sessions in July and August 2022. All group members were given a letter written ahead of the observed sessions which included a photo of Robyn to familiarise the group with her appearance and contact details in case they had any questions to ask. The group provided verbal agreement for note taking to happen during the sessions and were informed that their names would not be attached to any evaluation outputs and kept anonymous.

A range of short, semi-structured interviews were also conducted with three Singing for Memory musicians, two darts team members, one project volunteer and two family carers. These interviews lasted between 20–45 minutes.

The review and synthesis of previous darts Singing for Memory evaluation materials was conducted across the four month project. A full list of materials that was examined can be found in Appendix 1.

## Analysis

All data was qualitative in nature and a thematic analysis approach [9] was used to bring together key observations that form the case study that follows. The following steps were taken through the analysis process:

- 1) Data familiarisation – reading and re-reading all data sources and making analytic notes
- 2) Data coding – working through each individual data source and identifying segments of data relevant to the evaluation objectives
- 3) Generating themes – identifying shared patterns across the data sources and creating thematic areas
- 4) Reviewing themes – checking the themes make sense across the data sources
- 5) Refining themes – discussing themes with the darts and Singing for Memory team and developing strong thematic descriptions

## Case Study – Singing for Memory

Singing for Memory is a singing and creative music making programme designed for people living with dementia, those experiencing memory challenges, and their carers. Sessions are free to attend and are run at The Point every Monday between 2:00pm and 3:30pm. The programme is managed by darts and led by professional musicians who are either Core Artists at darts or freelance. Each musician has a wealth of experience in using music in the context of dementia and are highly skilled in singing, song writing and facilitating musical improvisation. For an overview of the musicians involved in



the project see Box 1. Sessions are also supported by volunteers who support the musicians with the running of the sessions (i.e., handing out song lyrics, making hot drinks) as well as help to boost the volume of the group's singing.

#### Box 1: Musician experience

**Janet** is part of the Core Artist Team at darts. She is a singer and songwriter and has a long history of supporting music-based community programmes. Janet initiated the development of the Singing for Memory programme with the darts team and has been leading it since it began in 2017.

**Luke** is a classically trained musician and composer who has been working for darts since 2017 and leading Singing for Memory sessions since Spring 2021. Luke had been working musically with people living with dementia for more than 20 years

**Ali** is a trained singer with over 20 years experience working musically with people living with dementia. She has been leading Singing for Memory sessions for the past year.

The sessions bring together a wide range of musical activities in a group setting which encourage singing, creativity and group connection. Figure 1 depicts the key components of Singing for Memory sessions and Table 1 outlines a typical session format. During the observational period, sessions were typically attended by 6-8 people. Group sizes had significantly reduced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, with pre-pandemic group sizes being around 20 people per session. The impacts of Covid on the programme are further outlined in Box 2.

**Figure 1: Key components of Singing for Memory sessions**





**Table 1: Singing for Memory session format**

<b>Musical activity</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Approx. timings</b>
<b>Hello Song</b>	The group sing a welcome song together. Group members are encouraged to choose an action that represents them as a person, or how they are feeling that day. The group copies the action while welcoming the person by name into the session.	10 minutes
<b>Shared familiar song – group singing</b>	A familiar song is introduced to the group – for example, Oh What a Beautiful Morning – song sheets are handed out with lyrics printed on them. The singing of these songs often prompts discussions about the lyrics or reminiscence around particular memories associated with the song or the singers (e.g. Cliff Richards). The musician sings with the group and provides musical accompaniment on guitar or accordion.	10 minutes
<b>Teaching a new song</b>	The musicians introduce a new song to the group – these are sometimes original songs composed by the musicians or their colleagues, or are songs in another language (such as a Zimbabwean Lullaby). Participants accompany the song with tuned and untuned percussive instruments (i.e. glockenspiels, rain sticks)	15 minutes
<b>Shared familiar song – solos</b>	Group members are encouraged to sing solos during familiar songs. When a member contributes a solo, the group directs their attention towards that person for the duration of their solo and gives a round of applause at the end.	10 minutes
<b>Tea break and group socialising</b>	The group chat and share stories over cups of tea. The conversations often stem from what has been sung in the session up to this point.	10 minutes
<b>Writing song lyrics</b>	Group members are encouraged to adapt the lyrics of familiar songs to create new verses to sing together. For example, the musician asked for examples of holidays the group wanted to take in the context of We're All Going On a Summer Holiday. Every member of the group contributes to a shared verse and they sing this together using the original melody.	20 minutes
<b>Group reflection</b>	The musician leads an informal reflection with the group members – asking what they liked in the session and whether there are any songs they would like to sing the next week.	5 minutes

The sessions take place in an accessible and welcoming space at The Point located on the South Parade in Doncaster. The venue is well connected to public transport links and has parking available for those travelling by car.

The front of house team provides a warm welcome into the space for everyone who visits the building, making sure to share information about the layout of the building, the facilities and signposting towards the venues café and other exhibition spaces.

The room is bright and spacious, with a semi-circle of chairs placed in a socially distanced way facing the musician, a flipchart stand, and a selection of tuned and untuned percussive instruments. The room is well ventilated, has an air purifying system, and carbon dioxide levels are measured regularly to ensure the safety of group members who attend.

### **Box 2: The impacts of Covid-19**

The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the delivery of Singing for Memory. Following government guidance, Singing for Memory paused face-to-face sessions until May 2021.

To ensure group members were still able to access elements of the Singing for Memory sessions during the pandemic, darts and the musicians adapted their practice to take music to group members safely and within recommended guidelines. Singing in groups was particularly impacted by social distancing measures and so darts implemented a number of strategies to meet the emotional and musical needs of the Singing for Memory group members, including:

1. Garden gigs – socially distanced performances in group members gardens
2. CDs and DVDs – video and audio recorded by Singing for Memory musicians
3. Sine FM – regular slot on the radio station
4. Singing for Memory newsletters – sharing photos of garden performances, reflecting back on past Singing for Memory sessions and accompanying information for CDs/DVDs
5. Phone calls – staying in regular contact with group members

When group members were able to return to in person sessions, darts took a number of safety precautions to ensure the health and wellbeing of those who were able to attend in person. Some people were no longer able to return to The Point – whether this was because of moving into a care home, having lost confidence to leave their homes, or having sadly passed away.

## Key observations

The analysis of Singing for Memory evaluation materials, observations and interviews led to the development of 4 key observations, which will be explored in detail within this section. These interlinked observations combined lead to the positive programme impacts observed including, positive emotional expression, improved mood and reported increases in wellbeing. The observations are as follows:

- 1) Gently challenging, meaningful activity
- 2) Feeling connected and supported
- 3) A safe and welcoming space
- 4) High quality musical provision

The following section will outline each observation in detail and draw on quotes from interviews with the delivery team and evaluative materials. Wider research literature is also used to show the wider implications of the themes within the broader dementia context.

### Gently challenging, meaningful activity

Singing for Memory provides meaningful and stimulating activity for the people living with dementia who attend and their family carers. Across the evaluation materials that were examined and the observations that were conducted, it was clear that people really enjoyed coming to the Singing for Memory sessions, smiling, laughing and being engaged throughout – as noted by Lucy [Director, Arts & Health] “it's laughter it's fun. It's humour, it's silliness”. When looking to the wider dementia literature, people with dementia report themselves that the opportunity to take part in activities that are enjoyable and meaningful rank highly in their desired outcomes from community-based interventions [10].

Singing for Memory is also tailored week-by-week to the individuals who attend, providing a unique and enriching approach to the use of music within this context. During each session people living with dementia share memories associated with pieces of music and their musical interests and tastes shape the following sessions, as is indicated in the following quote by one of the musicians:

***‘It’s that connection with your life and things that are important and have been the soundtrack to your life. I think is extraordinary to witness that, and be part of that, and to enable that is a very extraordinary thing.’***

***Ali, musician***

This enables people living with dementia, in the words of Janet [musician], “to be heard, to be valued”.

While parts of the session focus on the singing of familiar music, the importance of creativity was highlighted across previous evaluation materials and interviews.



While the focus can often be placed on reminiscence in the context of dementia [2], the creative elements of the session afforded people with dementia the opportunity to be spontaneous, playful, and grounded 'in the moment'. The Singing for Memory group also has access to a wide range of instruments (tuned and untuned percussion), which were used to create musical soundscapes. This approach was observed to build people's confidence and resulted in feeling a sense of achievement through the new lyrics or songs that are co-created.

While the creation of new song lyrics or songs may come as a challenge to some people living with dementia, the Singing for Memory musicians are incredibly skilled at supporting the contributions of all group members and are 'gently challenging', as the quotes below highlight:

***'We try and make a wide window for success. So where someone can't coordinate they just go off and sing the song, or if they can't do the rhythm then they've got the song to fall back onto. There's a safety net for you to be able to carry on and participate and be part of the group.'***

***Luke, musician***

***'In this group we use instruments and I love that thing of creating soundscapes because then that takes you away from all the other stuff. It's not structured, it's creating something 'in the moment' using those sounds, which is unique and beautiful.'***

***Ali, musician***

Overall, this theme highlights the role Singing for Memory plays in providing meaningful, purposeful and enjoyable musical activity for people living with dementia which supports the development of self-confidence and self-esteem.

### **Feeling connected and supported**

Singing for Memory takes a group-based approach to music making, bringing together people living with dementia and their carers with others in a shared, creative space. The sense of connection between group members, the musicians, and the darts project team is really evident within sessions. The focus of sessions is on singing and making music together, and when walking into the space it is never pointed out who in the room is living with dementia and who is not, as this quote from Lucy [Director, Arts & Health] illustrates:

***'When we're in the room, the talk isn't about the illness. The talk is about the songs or creating new songs together. ...It's coming to a space which is non-medical, which is about having an experience together with your loved one. Where you are kind of both at the same level - it's new for both of you, it's an experience for both of you. So that relation shifts - it's not carer and cared for. It's husband and wife going in and taking part.'***

Carers, in particular, report that they see Singing for Memory as a form of respite, where they can take part in a shared social activity with their spouse, parent or friend. As one carer shared during one of the observational sessions –

***“It’s something interactive and fun for my mum to do that doesn’t rely on conversation”.***

It is important to note that this sense of connection and wellbeing is facilitated through the musical activities and social time – the music offers opportunities to have fun and enjoy time together, which in turn (as Cara, Arts & Health project manager, notes) enables a sense of: “connectedness, agency, recognition and socialising – more than if you were just having a cup of tea.”

While the focus of sessions is on shared music making, carers value the opportunity the sessions give them to come together with other carers in similar situations, as Ben and Carol (not their real names) report:

***‘As well as the singing itself, it’s an opportunity for me to chat to other people – particularly those who are in a similar situation to myself. It can be really difficult to see a parent change so much, but knowing that other people are sharing a similar experience makes me feel less alone and more connected to others.’***

***Ben, son of PLWD***

***‘The singing itself really lifts your spirits. It lifted mine from my point of view as a carer – I didn’t have to worry about what he was doing and it was a little bit of respite where we could relax.’***

***Carol, wife of PLWD***



This was also observed by the session musicians, who understood that Singing for Memory offered opportunities for people with dementia and their carers to come together with other people without judgements.

***'The thing is its respite for both parties - the carer can relax a little bit and can see the person that they care for is fine and having a good time. Its something for them to talk about afterwards, refer back to. If I do song sheets, there's always the option for them to take them home and carry on singing if they want to.'***

***Janet, musician***

***'I would say people coming out of their usual place and getting together with other people who have similar or different issues to them and being with people who don't have memory issues as well. So mixing with people at different stages of what is going on with their illness or their condition. I think it is really important for people to be together. If you have a similar understanding, you can then share what's going on and people with just get it immediately. There's no judgement, people sort of understand it.'***

***Ali, musician***

This sense of connection for the people living with dementia and sense of respite for their carers is built over time, and is dependent on the programme's regular, long-term provision. Participants build Singing for Memory into their weekly routine, and look forward to attending each week, as the quotes below showcase:

***'It would terrible if Singing for Memory didn't continue – it would leave a real hole in our lives.'***

***Ben, son of PLWD***

***'You were just sort of looking forward to going back to the next session, it was something to look forward to in the week.'***

***Carol, wife of PLWD***

The longevity of the programme also provides opportunities for carers to continue attending even if the person they care for moves into a care home or dies. The musicians and darts team support these individuals to continue attending the groups, and offer opportunities to take part in other programmes at The Point – keeping them connected to the organisation and supported through this particular life transition.

Unfortunately, the group size has reduced significantly as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. This has been identified as one of the biggest challenges for the darts team. While darts were able to adapt during the crisis to provide music during periods where face-to-face sessions were not possible, the pandemic has had a knock-on impact on the confidence of group members to attend, as highlighted by Ali [musician]:



***'I think really what's got in the way is the pandemic because people stopped going to things, two years on people are iller, people have died, people have got out of routines and habits, people have lost confidence. There are people I know who are still not leaving the house, or not like they were before that's for sure – really nervous.'***

One of the main aims of the Singing for Memory programme going forwards is to build group numbers back to before the pandemic in a safe way – building confidence and creating new community connections through social prescribing and dementia support organisations, for example.

Overall, this theme highlights the benefits of Singing for Memory in allowing people living with dementia and carers to feel connected to and supported by others. Due to shared experiences of living with a dementia diagnosis across the group, it feels like a safe place where carers can have respite from some of their caring responsibilities and have fun with others.

### **A safe and welcoming space**

Singing for Memory takes place in a beautiful, bright space within The Point. Every precaution is taken to make sure the environment is safe and accessible to people with dementia and their carers. While the Singing for Memory sessions are 90 minutes long, the group members are encouraged to and supported in accessing the wider spaces within the venue, including exhibition spaces and the café.

As well as being a safe and accessible physical space at The Point, people with dementia and their carers value the warmth of the metaphorical space. Participants describe Singing for Memory as a 'space without judgement' and 'a place for them to be themselves'. As Carol [wife of PLWD] and Ben [son of PLWD] shared:

***'It was wonderful. It was like going home. You just felt so comfortable there.'***  
**Carol**

***'We come to The Point because it is friendly and welcoming – it feels like a safe space and I don't have to constantly be on my toes.'***  
**Ben**

The musicians and project team are very aware of how the space feels to people with dementia and family carers and adapt their delivery to ensure an environment where any and all musical or verbal contributions are acknowledged and valued, as is highlighted in the following quotes:

*'I think somewhere like here is a safe space for people to be, for them to be themselves and to express themselves in a way that they want to.... we provide very safe space for people to make mistakes in and to be allowed to make mistakes and fail and have another go and be supported.'*

*Luke, musician*

*'People would say, "I feel like it's a space I can come to and I won't be judged. So if [my husband with dementia] exhibits strange behaviour or is swearing or shouting or something like that it doesn't matter."'*

*Lucy, Director, Arts & Health*

*'I think for the person with dementia, it's being in a space where all of their contributions are completely valid, even if they don't sort of make sense to the norm, you know, to whomever else is in the room.'*

*Lucy, Director, Arts & Health*

During the Covid-19 project, access to the physical space was not possible. But the darts team worked to be able to bring the safe spaces to people in their home environments to ensure the continued access to music where judgements about dementia were left at the metaphorical door. The programme and its ethos have been shown to transfer well to other dementia contexts as well, including care homes.

Overall, this theme showcases the warm atmosphere that is present at The Point and in the Singing for Memory space. The darts team continue to work hard to ensure that everyone who attends the session feels safe and welcomed.



## High quality musical provision

All of the aforementioned observations are underpinned by the fact that Singing for Memory provides people with dementia, and their carers, with high quality musical provision. When considering the session costs (which include but are not limited to: musicians planning time and delivery, refreshments, room hire, volunteer expenses, marketing and project management), the price of each Singing for Memory session is £404. This cost stays largely the same no matter the number of people with dementia and carers who attend (within what is assessed to be safe numbers for the space). Singing for Memory is a professionally delivered arts programme and is supported by the musicians, project team, volunteers and front of house staff work together to create a wholly positive, safe, and exemplary programme which can support people living with dementia to engage with music.

The team approach the sessions with an ethos that people with dementia should have access to excellent music, as highlighted by Luke [musician]: “a group of people who have dementia deserve to be able to make or take part in or have an experience of just listening to good music, just as much as, or more than anyone else.

It is important to note that not every cultural organisation chooses to work with people with dementia and their carers. darts has developed an expertise in working with people with dementia over time, and have purposely streamlined their programmes to be able to support the long-term, high-quality delivery of the Singing for Memory programme:

***‘What we deliberately did about five years ago, was really streamline all of our work. And we thought, where do we work best? Where do we have the biggest impact? I think we're going to stick with [our work with people with dementia]. You know, we are becoming experts in something.’***

***Lucy, Director, Arts & Health***

As noted earlier in this report, the musicians who deliver the Singing for Memory sessions have expertise in working musically with people living with dementia and their family carers. They lead sessions with sensitivity and place each group member at the centre of their planning – a strongly person-centred approach to delivery, as outlined by Cara [Arts & Health project manager]:

***‘They have to be really good musicians, and they have to be skilled at working in [a dementia] context as well. They bring the music to the group, but also bring the group into the music. And because there's this skill, you don't realize it it's happening, it feels like a very natural environment. So a group feels like they're naturally taking part in a really, really well played song or a really, really well-crafted song or piece of music. A good musician can respond to what's happening in the room.’***



Within sessions, the musicians and volunteers work seamlessly together allowing the focus to be wholly placed on singing together and creating new music. Volunteers support the running of the sessions by handing out song sheets but also help to boost the volume of the groups' singing. Because of the reduction in numbers because of the pandemic, this helps build a musical safety net so that group members don't feel as exposed. The volunteers who support the sessions have been in these roles since the outset of the programme, and as Cara [Arts & Health project manager] notes:

***'They've been with [Singing for Memory] since the beginning so they know all of those participants' families. And I think there's something about good volunteers where they create a feeling of community. And they really care as well.'***

It was also clear to note that the musicians gained a lot personally from delivering the Singing for Memory programme, and valued how their skills could be applied to support the wellbeing of people with dementia and their carers:

***'It feels like you're putting something in and it feels immensely enjoyable. You get quite a buzz doing it. Possibly I would say more than playing a gig to a big concert hall or something like that. I'm going to get more from it on a personal level.'***

***Luke, musician***

Overall, this theme highlights the significance of the musicians and darts team in facilitating and delivering high quality musical experiences for people with dementia and their carers. Their expertise in the delivery of Singing for Memory underpins the other three themes described within this section.

## Conclusions and hopes for the future

The overarching aim of this evaluation was to review and synthesise previous Singing for Memory evaluative materials, as well as analysing the 'in the moment' experiences of people living with dementia and their carers during Singing for Memory sessions. This led to the development of 4 key observations: 1) Gently challenging, meaningful activity; 2) Feeling connected and supported; 3) A safe, welcoming environment; and 4) High quality musical provision.

Singing for Memory was observed to be meaningful, stimulating activity for the people living with dementia who took part. In the wider research literature, people with dementia themselves report the importance of meaningful activity in helping them to feel more connected to other people and their communities throughout their dementia journey [11]. Singing for Memory offers access to person-centred music making opportunities on a weekly basis, in an arts venue. The approach taken by musicians is gently challenging, offering people with dementia to have more agency when contributing to song lyrics and musical compositions. It is deeply person-centred, with musicians incorporating songs that hold significant meaning to different group members each week. If we look at dementia through the lens of positive psychology [12], this gently challenging approach affords opportunities for people not only to live with dementia but to live well. Given the context of this work (i.e., the current cost of living and energy crises), darts hope that Singing for Memory will provide both a physical and metaphorical 'warm space' for people to feel supported during these challenging times.



Singing for Memory provided the opportunity for people with dementia and carers to feel supported by a group going through a similar journey. Healthwatch in their Doncaster Dementia Insight Report [13] note that one of the biggest challenges facing people with dementia and their carers in Doncaster is a lack of support after a diagnosis of dementia. This evaluation has demonstrated the support that is able to be provided alongside the opportunity to take part in high quality musical provision, especially for carers. It was noted that a reason that Singing for Memory felt like a safe, supportive space was because it was available every week rather than being a time-limited project. Thus, to remain this source of support to people with dementia and their carers it needs to be supported by long-term, sustainable funding. The darts team have strong hopes for the future of Singing for Memory being embedded within the dementia offer in Doncaster, working alongside social prescribers, Admiral Nurses and other dementia support organisations, Doncaster Council, and the Integrated Care System to support the holistic care of people with dementia and their carers, as this quote from Lucy [Director, Arts & Health] illustrates:

***'For me, it's longevity, it's sustainability. I want to be seen as an integral part of the care pathway for people living with dementia, because I think people deserve it.'***

This ambition, combined with an ask for more sustainable funding, will offer darts the opportunity to develop the musical workforce to broaden the delivery of Singing for Memory and diversify musical practice for Doncaster's diverse population living with dementia. While not possible within the scope of this evaluation, darts have a strong desire to engage with an economic evaluation of the Singing for Memory programme and to understand whether the programme has the potential to support people with dementia to live in their homes for longer.



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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Singing for Memory evaluation materials

Resource type	Description
Participant quotes	Anonymized quotes where permissions had been obtained for use in ongoing evaluation of Singing for Memory
Online blogs	Blogs written by family members who attended Singing for Memory
Case studies	Case studies published online outlining the impacts of Singing for Memory on specific (anonymized) individuals
Artist logs	Musician reflections on each session including what went well and what had been more challenging
Newsletters	Newsletters for Singing for Memory group members updating them on news and events during the Covid-19 pandemic
Reports to funders	Previously written reports evaluating the programme outcomes
Images	A collection of images of group members taken both before and during the Covid-19 pandemic
Scrapbooks	Scrapbooks created by group members which outlined what had happened in each session and a place to share images of their lives with the group