

# Music Mirrors - A life story resource using sound and music: Spreading the concept across South London

## Introduction

Music Mirrors is a simple digital resource made with people at an early stage of memory loss linking their life stories to recorded music and sound in a way that is easily accessible and portable throughout their journey with dementia. The concept was developed by 'Come Singing' a voluntary organisation in Norfolk, and Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Mental Health Trust. It is used by and can be shared between people at home, hospital, care homes and third sector organisations as a reminiscence tool and contributes to person centred care by stimulating conversation and engagement.



*"it will help us to give person centred care and help us to prevent challenging behaviour"*  
 – Care home worker

## Case Study

**Link Age Southwark** has been providing friendly volunteer support to older people in Southwark for over 20 years and offers a befriending service for people with mild-moderate dementia. A staff member attended the training workshop and enthused by the passion of Heather Edwards and the concept, particularly that the Mirror is available online and can be retrieved in any setting, such as hospital, care homes or other settings, decided to train the Charity's volunteer befrienders. Befrienders visit weekly and are well placed to discuss and record the information needed to make a Mirror, which can be used when they visit each week but also by care staff to encourage meaningful interactions and conversations regardless of whether family members are around to prompt about a person's life, interests and passions.

### Making the Mirror

**Gwen:** "It is the best thing ever. It was fun making the mirror, I've been sitting up in bed laughing my head off – once you start going back to those times – it makes you laugh when you listen to it. It was alright to do, only a problem if I had to write something down as my spelling isn't good"

**Janet:** "We talked about important memories one week, then I went away to find the music and the next week we listened to it together. It encouraged us to do more things over and beyond the mirror – we chatted about lots of other music and memories"



### Using the technology

**Janet:** "There are loads of clips on YouTube. I was amazed in fact and really surprised I could find most of the originals, for example Flanagan & Allen actually singing 'Underneath the Arches'. When I couldn't find the original it was a question of choosing the most appropriate and showing it to Gwen. It was easy to upload the songs from YouTube to the Music Mirrors website. Gwen has the details so anyone can get it"

### How does Music Mirrors help you?

**Gwen:** "It keeps you alive, keeps your brain going and we had a good laugh. These memories are all locked up in your head, they come and go but you know they are there – this helps get them out. It is like opening a shut door – letting the memories out"

**Janet:** "It is useful to have a focus. Gwen and I have never struggled to find things to talk about but for some people it will help to do something together, to talk about, and to go back to – it acts as a prompt"

### Gwen's Music Mirror

**Molly Malone (Cockles & Mussels):** Memories of Sunday tea in the 1960s when the delivery man used to come and sell cockles and winkles. Memories of putting the black 'foot' of the winkles on her face as pretend beauty spots.

**Little Boxes by Pete Seeger:** Memories of overcrowded housing in the 1960s, her family of 7 sharing 2 bedrooms and waiting to be rehoused.

**There's an old mill down the stream by Nellie Dean:** Memories as a young girl sitting in her Grandmother's house watching the men coming out the pub singing this song, and the women carrying jugs of beer back home.

**Underneath the Arches by Flanagan & Allen:** memories of sleeping under the arches during air raids and this being a popular song in the music halls during the war.

**Coming to take me away (ha ha) by Jerry Samuels:** memories of her eldest son singing this song whilst heavily pregnant with her twin boys waiting to be transferred from home to the maternity hospital.

*"thinking about how not just music, but sounds were very important in triggering motions and memories"*

– Community Group volunteer

## Aim

To increase the number of people with dementia using Music Mirrors by developing a 'Train the Trainer' programme for professionals, care home staff and volunteers across a variety of health, social care and community settings in South London.

## Method

Train the Trainer sessions were offered free of charge to care homes, organisations, community groups and individuals between February and August 2016. Participants completed evaluation forms on the day and followed up in September 2016.

*"it will give me a creative tool to know residents better in the home I work in. It will allow me to spend quality and meaningful time with them"*

– Care home worker



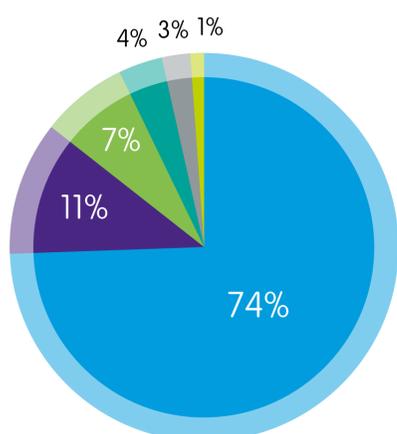
*"very moved by what a difference music and sound can make to a persons' life"*

– Activity Coordinator

## Results

182 people attended training in Music Mirrors. 165 people participated in the full training session (2.5 hours) and 17 in a shortened training session (1.5 hours). Care home staff accounted for 74% of people trained (145 people) with training sessions held across six care homes, two care home forums and attendance at the three 'open' workshops. In total 50 care homes, two hospitals and one university were represented with remaining participants from dementia peer support groups and arts organisations for people with dementia. Ten out of 12 South London Boroughs received training.

## % of participants by organisation type



- Over 90% of participants rating the quality and content of training as good or excellent.
- Two organisations adopted Music Mirrors as an academic intervention study in care homes.
- A Local Authority is using Music Mirrors as a quality measure with Activity Coordinators based in care homes.
- Six community groups and one befriender's organisation had cascaded the training to volunteers.
- A number of care homes are using Music Mirrors with residents

■ Care Home 
 ■ Hospital 
 ■ Community Group 
 ■ Library 
 ■ Arts Groups 
 ■ CCG