

**DIGNITY IN
DEMENTIA**

**COMMUNITY COME DANCING
GUIDE TO SETTING UP
SESSIONS**



**Dignity in
Dementia**

Helping you support people with dementia



LOTTERY FUNDED

INTRODUCTION

In 2017 Dignity in Dementia received funding from the Heritage Lottery to set up Community Come Dancing Sessions in Milnthorpe. Our aim was to try and recreate some of the atmosphere of the 1950s and 60s dance halls by playing the music of the time and inviting members from the local community to come along and dance. We hoped that people who had been teenagers or in their 20s back then, would attend and share their stories of going dancing. We also felt that the stories needed a wider audience than Dignity in Dementia staff and a few volunteers.

As much research has been carried out on the benefits of bringing the young and old together, we felt that working with a local primary school would bring an extra dimension to our project. Additionally, we knew the children would be perfect recipients to hear the older people's stories and that this would have the added benefit of enhancing their social history knowledge.

We met with the Head Teacher of Milnthorpe Primary School to discuss whether they would partner us and thankfully Mr Hyde thought it was a great idea. We then submitted our bid to The Heritage Lottery for funding to trial intergenerational Community Come Dancing sessions in Milnthorpe for a year and were delighted that we were successful.

Work then started to turn our idea into

reality and in January 2017, we nervously sent out a press release in the hope that a short article in the local paper would entice older people to attend. We were very surprised that it also captured the interest of the BBC, which culminated in visits by Radio Cumbria and BBC North West Tonight. The resulting publicity led to a number of calls asking for advice on setting up something similar sessions in other areas. We've therefore produced this Guide to help anyone thinking of doing just that. It tells you what we did and hopefully you'll be able to learn from our experience. We'll also be happy to speak to people via email or phone and answer any questions you may have.

Email us at: info@dignityindementia.org or ring Lesley Gill on 07816 895021 or Diane Smillie on 07771682378

Dignity in Dementia's ethos and aims are to enhance the dignity of people living with dementia and their caregivers so that they can live as positive and normal a life as possible. We do this through the introduction of practical, easy to use, effective approaches that can be used by family carers and others to improve their wellbeing and the wellbeing of those with dementia. Please see our website to find more about our work.
www.dignityindementia.org

BEING DEMENTIA EMBRACING

Dignity in Dementia runs a number of community projects and all are dementia embracing. This means that whilst people with dementia and their family carers are encouraged to attend, so too are members of the community who don't necessarily have a connection to someone with dementia. In this way those affected by the disease are able to continue to stay in touch with and feel a part of their local community. For example, our Dementia Embracing Community Singing Groups have up to 25 members and 5 or 6 will have dementia. The rest are individuals from the neighbourhood who like to sing songs from the 1950s and 60s, enjoy the sense of wellbeing

this brings and the companionship that getting together provides.

Our Community Come Dancing sessions are run in exactly the same way. About half of the people who attend have dementia. The rest are family members who accompany them, paid care staff from the local care homes and some of their residents and general members of the local community who enjoy the music and fancy a dance. This works really well and has the added bonus of highlighting the fact that despite having dementia, it is possible for individuals with the right support to continue to have fun and feel joy, thereby de-stigmatising dementia.

BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY COME DANCING SESSIONS

The older people participating in our sessions benefitted from:

- meeting new people and forming new friendships
- reducing loneliness and isolation
- reminiscing and sharing personal memories of going dancing in the 1950s and 60s
- feeling valued about sharing their stories
- increased physical activity
- forging relationships with younger people and breaking down barriers
- a greater understanding of how people with dementia can, with the right support and activities, continue to live fulfilled lives and experience joy.

The children benefitted from:

- learning about going dancing in the 1950s and 60s
- developing new skills relating to dance and music
- developing confidence and new life skills – these included improved communication, organising, self management of time
- forging positive relationship with older people and breaking down barriers
- understanding more about dementia, reducing their fear about it and understanding how to communicate more effectively with people with it

The school and the local community have benefitted from:

- enhanced social relationships
- learning memories of going dancing in the 1950s and 60s

MAKING LINKS WITH A PRIMARY SCHOOL



If you are in a village or small town, there is likely to be only one primary school. However if you are in a larger town or city there will be a number of schools. If this is the case consider which one you want to partner with. Our project worked really well because the hall that we ran sessions in, was located within a 5 minute walk from the school. Also there were no main roads to cross, so the children were able to walk safely to the hall with their teacher.

We initially made an appointment to meet with the Head Teacher to discuss our idea. Schools generally welcome forging links with their local community so are likely to appreciate working with you. Following our conversation it was agreed that we would work with the Year 5 children (9 and 10 year olds), as it was felt they had the right level of maturity - also that they weren't involved in SATs. We also settled on running our sessions every other week during term time. This meant that the commitment for the school wasn't too onerous. The children arrive at the hall straight after lunch (about 1.10pm), the dance sessions run from 1.30 – 2.30 and after the older people go the children sit down for a drink and a biscuit. They then leave the hall by 2.55pm in order to get back to school for 3pm.

As Community Come Dancing was a dementia embracing project, it was important that the children felt confident around people with dementia. Therefore we went into school and delivered an age appropriate dementia awareness session a few weeks before the first session. See our Training Plan Appendix 1.

We also discussed the project with the children and showed clips of dance halls in the 1950/60s. This enabled the class to gain an understanding of what it was like when the older people went dancing in their youth and also to get a feel for the atmosphere we were trying to recreate. A word of warning, smoking was fairly prominent in the Youtube clips we showed. This didn't cause any issues for us though, as the teacher felt it was right that the children saw things as they used to be. She did however, follow it's screening up with a brief conversation about the perils of smoking.

The children asked lots of questions. These covered dementia and how they could converse with older people and whether they needed to get involved in the dancing. A lot of the girls were very excited about learning the types of dances from the era but some of the boys appeared apprehensive. When they realised it wasn't compulsory and they could serve refreshments instead or chat with the older people they seemed much happier. Having said this when the sessions started all the children danced at some stage and had a really good time.

COSTS & FUNDING

We were lucky enough to get funding to cover many of our costs from the Heritage Lottery. This paid for us to deliver our school dementia awareness sessions (we also did one for the staff), employ dance leads, hire the hall, commission the making of a film which is available to see on our website and on [Youtube](#) and produce this Guide. We were also able to buy a small thank you Easter egg for each of the children at Easter and hold a goodbye celebration event at the end of the summer term when the children left us to move up to Year 6 - new Year 5 class then took their place in September.

We charged £2 per session for older people to attend which covered the cost of refreshments.

If you need to obtain funding before you can set up a group, we suggest you check [Funding Central](#) It provides information about grants for voluntary organisations and social enterprises. It is free to use if you have an annual income of less than £100,000 and costs £100 per year for

organisations with an income above this. Alternatively, find out if there are any local funders near you. Your local CVS (Council for Voluntary Services) should be able to advise you.

However, it may be possible to run sessions at very little cost if you seek out volunteers and are able to locate a free venue. We use a church hall and do pay a hire charge. However one week when there was a plumbing issue we moved to the school hall. This might be an option for you. It didn't work quite as well. as we needed to wait for the lunch staff to finish before we could set up and it meant we were very rushed. Also the children enjoy getting out of school and therefore didn't appear to enjoy the session as much when it was held in school. However if sessions had always been held there, this may not have been an issue.

Alternatively you may consider running sessions in a care home.



THE PRACTICAL STUFF – THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Finding dance leads

It's important to source dance leads that have the confidence and skills to be able to engage and encourage all participants, both old and young. Because we were working with up to 50 people, we have two per session, although we employ three. They need to be aware of the limitations of the older people, a number of whom are frail. We found three people who fitted the remit and were excited to get involved. All have experience of working with children and adults in their professional lives.

We are currently planning on rolling Community Come Dancing out to other areas of the South Lakes where we operate, and hope to be able to find volunteer dance leads for these. This will reduce our costs significantly.



2. The venue

The venue we use has two rooms, with an open kitchen linking to the smaller room. This works very well, as people are able to leave the room where the dancing takes place and move to the smaller room when they want a quieter time. Also as the kitchen opens into it, they are able to chat to the children who are making and serving refreshments.

The venue has wheelchair access and a disabled toilet is all at ground level. If possible we suggest you look for something similar.

3. Sourcing volunteers

Whilst it had been agreed that some of the youngsters would produce and serve the refreshments, it was important that they had supervision whilst organising them. (Their teacher couldn't be in the kitchen for all of the session, as she needed to have an overview of the children on the dance floor too, as well as those chatting to the older people.) Therefore we needed several volunteers to support the kitchen duties, as well as a few more to help frailer individuals into the venue and provide additional support on the dance floor. The volunteers also enjoyed chatting to the older and younger people.

We didn't need to advertise as we have a range of contacts who were willing to help. However, it may be worth contacting some local dancing groups to see if anyone would like to be involved. There are lots of salsa and ballroom dancing groups for example, with retired people attending. Some of their members may be very willing to help out.

As the Dignity in Dementia Directors were attending all of the sessions, as was the Year 5 teacher, our volunteers didn't need to be DBS checked as they were never alone with the children or older adults. You will need to check this out however.

THE PRACTICAL STUFF – MORE THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

4. Engaging older people, including some with dementia

As mentioned earlier, our sessions weren't exclusively for individuals with dementia and therefore we advertised extensively in order to gain the interest of members of the local community. We placed posters in strategic places and on community boards, such as post offices, shops, and within GP surgeries. We also placed an advert in the Milnthorpe Parish News. This is delivered to all homes in Milnthorpe and the surrounding villages. If you plan on advertising in a Parish News, make sure you get your advert to them in good time, so that it goes into the edition that's printed before your first session.

Additionally we visited some local care homes and were delighted that 3 now send a small number of their residents regularly. We also contacted agencies that we work with such as The Alzheimer's Society, and our local Carers Association, as well as the Memory Clinic to help us identify people with dementia who may be interested in attending.

See Appendix 2 for the poster we designed. We bought the image from Shutterstock www.shutterstock.com for approximately £10.

Finally, we distributed a press release and gained interest from the local newspaper who published a short article about the project prior to our first session. It also achieved local radio and TV attention.



ON THE DAY

- We set chairs up around the dance floor so that people can rest between dances or come and observe and feel involved, if they can't or don't want to dance.
- We give out name badges as people arrive as this enables everyone to see each other's names and makes conversation easier. Two of the children take on this task, producing them for both their classmates and the older people. They use thick pens and write on address labels.
- Two other children take charge of collecting the money from attendees. We have a brightly coloured laminated sign next to a pot which says "£2 per session. Please put your money in the pot. Thank you." and they very gently point it out and give change when required.
- Although we have all the relevant insurances, we also display a laminated sign that says "We hope you enjoy yourselves today, but do take care as Dignity in Dementia can't accept responsibility for any accidents."
- We have photocopied lists of future session dates that people can take away.
- We arrive with everything we need for refreshments. Tea, coffee, milk, sugar, squash, fruit flavoured tea bags and masses of biscuits. We always include chocolate biscuits, unless it is really hot and they are likely to melt, as well as a plainer option. Jammy dodgers and pink wafers are also very popular. We take a pack of gluten free biscuits just in case someone is allergic.
- Some children like to attend wearing clothes linked to the 1950s.
- About 6 of the children prepare and serve the refreshments under adult supervision. Some volunteer for this task but the others tend to take it in turns. They also wash up throughout the session.
- A couple of the children are on door duty and hold the door open as the older people arrive and leave.
- The Dignity in Director staff and the volunteers welcome everyone and help those that need it to dance. They also chat to the children and older people.
- If they or the teacher sees someone that they think would enjoy a chat with the younger people, they encourage one or two of the children to go and talk to them. This generally happens spontaneously but occasionally needs prompting.
- The Dignity in Dementia staff clear up at the end of the session and makes sure that the hall is as they found it.



ON THE DAY – DANCE LEADS



- A playlist of popular songs from the 1950s and 60s had been agreed before our first session, however we invite people to add to this on an on-going basis.
- The dance leads organise a simple warm up session before the dancing starts properly. This involves fun limbering up exercises.
- As some of the older people are sensitive to noise, whilst others may have hearing difficulties, getting the volume right for everyone can be very challenging and the dance leads need to be aware of the complexities. Having two rooms enables those who don't like it too noisy to move away from the sound.

- When a particular track is chosen the dance leads often demonstrate a dance but no formal teaching takes place unless specifically requested.
- As well as encouraging people to dance on the dance floor, the dance leads make sure that those who can't get up are supported to move along to the music.
- To mark the end of the session, the Hokey Cokey is played and the children and older people form a large circle and dance to it. Whilst the song doesn't originate from the 1950s or 60s, everyone enjoys it and when they hear it they know it is the final dance.



EVALUATING YOUR PROJECT

If you receive funding you will be required to evaluate your project. We used a mix of one-to-one conversations and observation for this purpose, as well as our video. You can see our project evaluation on our website.



APPENDIX 1 – DEMENTIA AWARENESS SESSION PLAN

1.	Welcome and introductions
2.	How many of you have heard of dementia? What is it? Record answers on a board
3.	Show animation – The Dragon Story http://dragon.gloriousopportunity.org/31874/TheDragonStory_HD1080.mp4 What are your thoughts?
4.	Does anyone have a relative with dementia? What do they do that's unusual or different to normal? Why are they doing these things differently? Record answers on a board.
5.	What is memory? Exercise of 10 things on a tray . Let children see them all, then remove 1 item and ask what has gone? Do a few times. How did you remember what was missing? What did it feel like not to remember? How does memory help us?
6.	Explain Dementia is a disease and not part of normal aging. Show picture of the brain and lots of brain cells. These brain cells are used to send messages round the brain but what happens when these brain cells start to die?
7.	Exercise - Get class to stand in a circle. Explain they are all brain cells and their job is to whisper a message to the brain cell next to them. until the message has gone all the way round the circle. As they do this they pass a balloon to the next person. Give one child the balloon and whisper a short sentence into their ear e.g. "It's very windy outside and a dustbin has been blown over." Ask them to pass the message on. When the message gets to the last child ask them to say it out loud. The likelihood is the message will be different to the original one. Explain it has got muddled as it has moved from one brain cell to another and that this can happen when someone has dementia. Now ask every other child in the circle to sit down and explain they are brain cells that have died. Make sure the standing children (the live brain cells) don't move and the spaces from the dead cells remain in the circle. Explain it is more difficult for the message to get through when brain cells die. Do the exercise again to help them understand this, using a different sentence e.g. "There's a party at the weekend and we're all going." Ask the last child to say the sentence out loud. It is likely to have got muddled as it has moved around the circle. Then ask a few more children to sit down explaining that more brain cells have died. The gap where they have been will now be significant and again the children cannot move to fill them. Do the exercise for the final time using a different sentence – perhaps "I like lots of cheese on my spaghetti bolognese". Getting the message through the bigger gaps will be very difficult. Make the comparison to dementia as it progresses and the difficulties people with the disease can encounter. Explain how important it is to talk in simple language with short sentences. Ask uncomplicated questions and give time for the person to process them.
8.	Understanding the importance of how the person is feeling. Exercise – write down 5 things you like doing. How do they make you feel? How would you feel if you couldn't do them or see your family anymore? Explain that some people with dementia can also feel like that.

9.	Show Alzheimer's Society film of lady on bus. http://www.bit.ly/AlzSocSch2 How do you think that lady felt when no one understood her? And after when they helped her?
10.	Ask what they can you do to help people with dementia? Tell the class that it's important to continue to see past the dementia and recognise the person as someone who has lived an interesting life and experiences feelings of happiness, joy and sadness just like us.
11.	Ask the group to put their hands up if you have found the session interesting. Ask how many of you have learnt something about dementia? If acceptable give out chocolates.

COMMUNITY COME DANCING

With music from the 1950s & 60s

AT THE MHUB, MILNTHORPE, 1.30 – 2.30 PM

EVERY OTHER WEEK DURING TERM TIMES
April 19; May 3; May 17; June 7; June 21; July 5; July 19;

Do you have fond memories of going dancing back in the 50s or 60s? Then why not try and recreate them by joining us for a fun hour of music and dance. You can be as energetic as you like, or alternatively just sit and soak up the sounds whilst tapping your feet.

Refreshments and chat served by
Year 5 children from
Milnthorpe Primary School.

£2 per session to cover refreshments

For more information phone
Lesley on 07816 895021

This is an intergenerational venture designed and managed by Dignity in Dementia. All people from the local community are invited to join in. Dignity in Dementia will be on hand to help anyone with dementia.



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