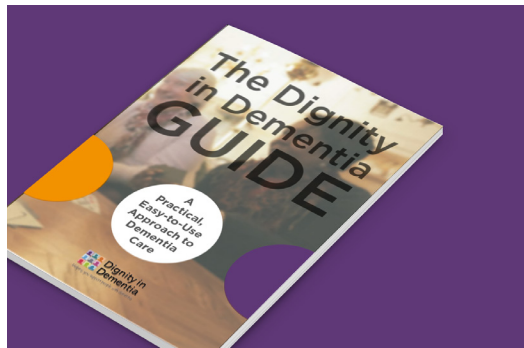


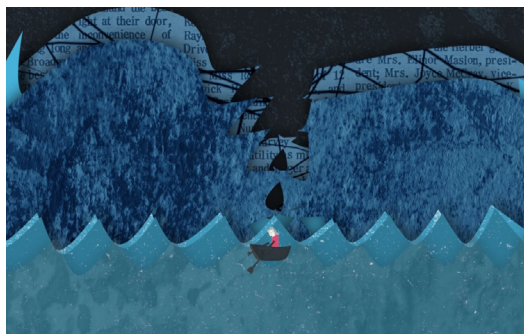
# DIGNITY IN DEMENTIA RESOURCES



**The Dignity in Dementia Guide:**  
A practical, easy-to-use approach to dementia care



**The Dignity in Dementia Emergency App**  
Free to download from the apple and android app stores - search using Dementia Emergency



**Short Animation**  
'Dementia Poem - I May Be Forgetful'  
Available on our website

Please contact us for more details or see our web site: [www.dignityindementia.org](http://www.dignityindementia.org)

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## DIGNITY IN DEMENTIA

## THE SINGING GROUP GUIDE.



## INTRODUCTION

Most of us enjoy singing, be it along with the radio or in the shower, when we're alone. Even those who think their voice isn't very good, can have a great time singing along to a favourite song.

As well as being great fun, singing is recognised as being hugely beneficial for well-being as it can impact positively on our physical, emotional and social health. It can:

**Help strengthen our immune system.**  
**Be a physical workout for our lungs and help increase our aerobic capacity and stamina.**  
**Aid our sleep.**  
**Boost our mood and reduce stress.**  
**Improve our mental alertness.**

And when we sing with others it can enhance our enjoyment further, widen our circle of friends, help improve our self-esteem and increase our confidence.

That's why Dignity in Dementia is encouraging community groups to set up a local singing group. However, we'd ask that they are dementia embracing. Inevitably within your local community there will be a number of people who are living with dementia and they too are likely to enjoy singing with others. Indeed evidence suggests that music and singing offers a unique and important way for people with dementia to communicate with others and continue to feel connected and valued.

Being part of a dementia embracing singing group also helps individuals with dementia and their main family carer, to continue to have links within their local community, something that can easily get lost as the disease progresses. Additionally they help reduce the stigma of dementia, as group members see first hand that people living with the disease can experience fun and with the right support, continue to have rewarding moments.

We've been running hugely successful dementia embracing singing groups in small rural towns (Ambleside, Sedbergh and Silverdale) since April 2015 and we're often asked if we can set them up in other locations. Unfortunately we aren't able to do this. Instead, we've produced this guide, and hope it will be useful for community groups and individuals who are considering establishing one. It includes a range of practical information on finding a venue, sourcing volunteers, advertising the group, types of songs to sing, where to find the lyrics, supporting members with dementia and possible sources of funding. Of course we'll also be happy to speak to those considering setting up a group, to share our experiences and answer any questions.

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## THINGS TO REMEMBER

Choosing the right songs will have a major impact on the success of your group. We sing songs from popular show's/ films of the 1950s and 60s, well-liked pop and folk songs mostly from the 50s, 60s or 70s and classics such as Que Sera Sera and Blowing In The Wind. A word of warning. Don't assume, because the group is likely to have a majority of older people, they will automatically enjoy singing songs from World War 1 and 2. Today's 70 somethings, were either teenagers or in their 20s during the 1960s and therefore are much more likely to connect with the music of that era. That's not to say you can't sing war songs now and again if the group enjoy them, just be wary of singing them too often.

**"THE GROUP IS ABOUT HAVING FUN, ENJOYING THE COMPANY OF OTHERS, AND FEELING PART OF A LOCAL COMMUNITY. IT'S REALLY IMPORTANT THAT MEMBERS FEEL RELAXED."**

Whilst singing together is at the heart of the group, taking time between songs to reminisce and chat about memories the songs conjure up for individuals is equally valid. In our Sedbergh group we sang a Beatles song and learnt that a couple that come from Liverpool originally, had seen them live in the 1960s. Other group members were incredibly impressed. It's amazing how we can learn new and really interesting things about people when they share their memories of songs.



## SETTING UP A DEMENTIA EMBRACING SINGING GROUP

If you see value in setting up a group, you'll need to find someone with organisational skills who is willing to pull it together. They don't need to have musical ability, as they probably won't be the singing lead - that's the second person that needs to be identified.

The organisational lead will work with a small steering group to:

- Consider the frequency of sessions. Will they be weekly, two weekly or monthly? (We run ours weekly for 44 weeks of the year. We have August off as it's summer holiday time and we have a two week break at Christmas and Easter. )
- Consider the best day of the week to run sessions. However before deciding on the day/time it's worth checking out if anything else happens regularly in your locality that could prevent your potential singing group members from attending. For example is there an exercise group?
- Consider the best time of the day. People with dementia are generally more alert in the mornings. We run our groups late morning so that their carers don't feel too rushed or pressured.
- Source a venue. It's best if it can be a downstairs room and have a kitchen and toilet facilities. This means that those whose mobility is poor aren't inadvertently prevented from coming. We use free venues to keep our costs low. For example, we use the library in Ambleside, the community room belonging to a sheltered accommodation scheme in Sedbergh and a church hall in Silverdale. If there are tables available that's really helpful and means people can put drinks on the table rather than on the floor. We take along our own refreshments (tea/coffee/biscuits/cake) and this also helps keep our costs to a minimum.
- Find a willing singing lead. They will be a person who enjoys singing, can hold a tune and is enthusiastic and encouraging. They don't need experience of running a choir, although if they have some, that's a bonus. Remember this is a singing group that comes together to have fun and the singing lead needs to recognise this and be relaxed

if occasionally the sound produced, is a little flat. One of our group singing leads enjoyed singing at church before taking on the singing lead role, whilst another had been a trainer, so was used to working with groups. She certainly didn't see herself as a singer.

- Consider if donations are going to be collected. We charge £2 per session to cover the cost of refreshments and photocopying of song lyrics, and group members are very willing to pay it.
- Find a willing volunteer who's happy to make tea/coffee and wash up afterwards. The group members without dementia are often willing to do this.
- Advertise the group. Create a poster and distribute locally to key places such as community boards, post offices, local shops and pubs. If you're in a really small rural location, you might consider a mail drop to all the houses. Also use word of mouth to spread the message and advertise in the local Parish magazine.

Once the group is ready to run - the organisational lead will purchase refreshments and replenish as necessary, provide on-going support to the singing lead and other group members and collect the cash if you decide to ask for payment.



## THE SINGING LEAD

As mentioned above, the singing lead doesn't need to be experienced at running a choir. However they do need to enjoy music, be able to hold a tune and feel confident to lead a group.

When we first set up our groups we thought we'd need a music lead and an accompanying keyboard player. However our groups sing acappella, (without music) and it works surprisingly well.

Our singing leads start each session with simple warm up exercises, which help the group to avoid potential damage to their vocal cords. They are also good fun and generally raise a laugh. Examples of warm up exercises can be found on the internet.

They then lead the group through a variety of songs, finding the right note to start.

Very occasionally our groups sing simple rounds, such as Three Blind Mice or London's Burning. The singing lead needs to be aware of the people with dementia in the group and not make it too complicated, as it's possible they will lose confidence and become frustrated. If singing a round, it's worth making sure your group members with dementia have sight of someone they can easily follow.

We find the lyrics for our songs and copy/type them and then photocopy the required number. We use a simple to read font such as Arial or Calibri and size 16. This helps those with diminishing sight to read the lyrics more easily. If the song is a long one, we often only print out a few verses, in order to keep it to one sheet of paper. Before printing, make sure that the lyrics are as you remember them. The wording on some sites can differ from what we know, therefore make sure you make any necessary changes before printing.



## THE SONGS

Ask the group for suggestions of songs. They will happily make them. You'll also find that some members with a computer and printer, will be willing to print off copies of lyrics.

Some songs, that are popular with our groups include:

- Hey Big Spender
- Edelweiss
- My Favourite Things
- Yellow Submarine
- Twist and Shout
- Sway
- If you knew Susie
- Magic Moments
- Consider Yourself
- I'd Do Anything
- Food Glorious Food
- Oh What A Beautiful Morning
- Supercalifragilistic-expialidocious
- Let's Go Fly A Kite
- I Feel Pretty
- Michael Row The Boat Ashore
- Drunken Sailor
- Quartermasters Stores
- Lambeth Walk
- The Wild Rover
- The Wild Mountain Thyme
- She'll Be Coming Round The Moun
- Scarborough Fair
- My Bonnie Lies Over The Mountain
- Greensleeves
- Danny Boy
- Waltzing Matilda
- Swing Low Sweet Chariot
- Amazing Grace
- Que Sera Sera

At certain times of the year, such as Christmas or Easter, you may want to theme your sessions and find relevant songs to sing.

## SUPPORTING MEMBERS WITH DEMENTIA AND THEIR MAIN CARER

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Our dementia embracing singing groups, of course, welcome members with dementia and their family carers. Attending sessions together provides an opportunity for them both to participate in an enjoyable activity, something they may not have done for some time. However, once we have got to know the individual's with dementia and can see that they feel comfortable with the group, we offer the main carer the option of using the time for personal respite. They don't all take up the offer, as many really enjoy the singing. In our Ambleside, Sedbergh and Silverdale groups the number of people with dementia is approximately 4 out of 15.

Because it's a dementia embracing group, and all members join knowing this, family carers can be relaxed about their family member with dementia, sometimes displaying unusual characteristics associated with the disease. As an example being forgetful, asking the same question many times or experiencing communication difficulties. The family carers know that they and their family member will be accepted and they don't need to explain the situation or apologise.

Additionally we've found that some of the more challenging behaviours that family carers experience at home, diminish during singing sessions. This is because the group members with dementia are engaged, happy, active and interested.

It's vitally important that your group members with dementia feel accepted and are supported in the most appropriate way. Try not to inadvertently disempower individuals. For example they may still be able to choose the next



**THERE ARE A RANGE OF BOOKS AND RESOURCES AVAILABLE IN MOST LIBRARIES TO HELP EXPAND YOUR DEMENTIA KNOWLEDGE. ALTERNATIVELY, YOU CAN PURCHASE OUR DIGNITY IN DEMENTIA GUIDE FOR £7 PLUS £1.20 POSTAGE.**

song, pass the lyrics on to the person sitting next to them or help with the washing up and doing so will help them to feel connected, useful and valued. However, those whose dementia is more advanced are likely to find such questions or instructions confusing, so try to avoid making them feel anxious and uncomfortable by asking them to do things they aren't able to do any more.

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

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You may want to seek funding to support your dementia embracing singing group. Small pots of money are sometimes available from local organisations and it's worth checking these out. If you are Cumbria based have a look at the Cumbria Community Fund to see if your work meets any of the criteria for the funds they hold. To be eligible for funds you are likely to need to set up a volunteer committee and produce a set of rules or constitution. You'll also likely to need a bank account with two signatories. For more information go to <http://www.cumbriafoundation.org>

### **Other possible funders include:**

The Greggs Foundation (although you need to be based in a community with a Greggs shop). [www.greggsfoundation.org.uk/grants](http://www.greggsfoundation.org.uk/grants)

Your local parish or town council

Your local Lions, Rotary or Soroptimist Club

Cumberland Building Society Community Fund

[www.cumberland.co.uk/about/community](http://www.cumberland.co.uk/about/community)

Other Building Societies with offices close to you

Post Code Community Trust

[www.postcodecommunitytrust.org.uk/applying-for-a-grant](http://www.postcodecommunitytrust.org.uk/applying-for-a-grant)

It's also worthwhile checking out Cumbria CVS, (Cumbria Council for Voluntary Service). They offer help, advice, training and support to third sector groups throughout Cumbria.



# EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF YOUR SINGING GROUP

If you do manage to get funding, you're likely to be asked to provide feedback on how the money was spent. Therefore you'll need to consider how you'll capture the information you'll include. Options include:

- 1 A simple to complete questionnaire that you give to group members to complete - see our example. You can then collate the responses and produce a report.

## SONGSTERS FEEDBACK

As we approach the end of the year, we're hoping you'll be willing to provide some feedback about your experiences of being a part of our Songsters group. We'll then use this as part of our evaluation to our funders and include some of your quotes in new funding bids.

### What does the songsters mean to you?

Please score by ticking against each word or statement with 1 being not important to me and 6 being very important to me.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Companionship						
Fun						
Improved morale						
Breaks down barriers						
Increases my feelings of wellbeing						
Co-operation with others						
Enhances my mood						
Evokes emotions						
Is energizing						
Reduces my stress						
Encourages a sense of community						

Is anything else important to you? - please add words or statements that you think are missing.

Has coming to the Songsters changed how you think about dementia? Yes / No  
If yes how?

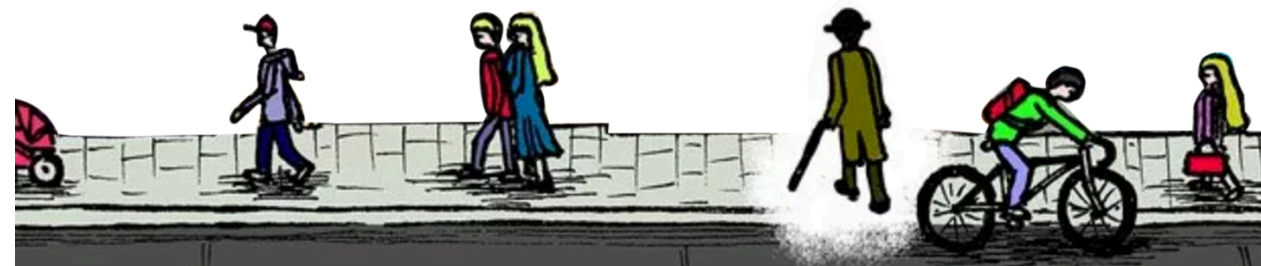
Any other comments?

### For family carers/members of the group with dementia

Please provide a sentence or two about how well supported to you feel by the group.

Please provide a sentence or two about the value of meeting others affected by dementia

If you were able to send a message to others affected by dementia who are considering joining the group, what would you say?



## 2

Brief anonymised case studies. Case studies are a great way to illustrate the experiences of a person, and demonstrate the impact of your singing group and how the person has benefitted. For example:

### Case Study Example 1

*XX is 86 and was born in Manchester and lived there until she moved to the Lakes when she was 82. She trained as a primary school teacher, married her husband and had two children. Singing was always important to her and she incorporated it regularly into her work in school and in her parenting when her children were young. She especially likes traditional folk songs and Gilbert and Sullivan.*

*Her son, a keen outdoor enthusiast and moved to the lakes to pursue his work and hobbies. XX and her husband often visited him and his family. XX's husband died when she was 75 and whilst she had a good support group locally, the family felt that as her health was deteriorating, it was a good idea for her to move to be close to her son. She now lives in sheltered accommodation.*

*She says that attending the Songsters is a life-line and she looks forward to it every week. Even though her family is relatively close by she doesn't see them everyday and sometimes she feels lonely. She loves the companionship that the group provides and has made new friends since attending. She really appreciates it when the singing lead searches out some of her favourite songs and encourages her to sing them for the group. It's even more fun when the whole group sing them and enjoy them too.*

*XX said "I'd be really lost without the Songsters. I always leave feeling contented and happy. Thank you for making it happen."*

### Case Study Example 2

*XXX is in his late 60s and has dementia. He was diagnosed 7 years ago. His wife, who is his main carer is also in her mid 60s. She gave up work to support him. XXX is very confused and relies greatly on his wife. This takes it toll on her, as she has very little time to herself. XXX feels more confident when she is within sight and able to direct him.*

*It was suggested that they both attend the Songsters group. Initially they came together and enjoyed the companionship and support offered by the others in the group. They also enjoyed the singing and took great delight in singing songs that they knew well and the memories these provoked.*

*As XXX became more settled, his wife felt able to leave him for short periods. This enabled her to have brief periods of respite and attend Dr's appointments etc. Initially XXX was a little anxious but with support from group members he quickly became calm and was happy to join in the singing. Over the weeks she was able to leave him for longer periods and before Christmas enjoyed a special lunch with a friend - something she hadn't done since XXX's diagnosis.*

*Mrs XXX said "Whilst I really enjoy singing with XXX as part the Songsters, it's wonderful to have occasional time to myself so that I can achieve chores more quickly or even have moments of precious 'me' time. Thank you Songsters for giving me the opportunity to do this.*