



Singing by Heart The Salvation Army Music and Dementia

It is widely acknowledged that music can trigger memories and feelings in those living with dementia. Singing by Heart, uses a mix of popular hymns, such as 'Joy in my Heart', and popular songs like 'Moon River', which span the decades. Each song has been carefully selected to ensure they're fondly recognised by the people in the groups.

Each song begins with a passage of scripture and finishes with a prayer. The sessions are designed to encourage communication, recollection of memories, and happy thoughts for those taking part.

It is also hoped carers will find the sessions beneficial through enabling time for them to relax, make friends, and share experiences.

Ivy, 85, has attended the Sedgley Singing by Heart group since last September. She takes two buses from her house to attend and says she "really looks forward to it". Ivy said: "I'm a firm believer that everybody loves music and the happiness it can bring.

"My mother suffered for many years with dementia and I really think she would have enjoyed a group like this. Seeing everyone connect with the music in the room is wonderful. Caring for someone with dementia can be so hard and sometimes a smile is all you want. That is what Singing by Heart can offer."



For each church to run a singing group they must first take a "Dementia Friends" course, an Alzheimer's Society initiative. A song lyric book and training video has been produced by The Salvation Army to support the programme.

The Salvation Army is dedicated to supporting older people and runs 13 residential care homes around the UK, as well as befriending services, day centres and a range of activities to combat isolation.



Like with many programmes we are having to adapt and offer so much of our established programmes in different ways.

We know that music can play such an important role in the lives of people living with Dementia and their loved ones. Over the past 3 years **Singing by Heart** has been a hugely successful collaboration between ourselves in OPM and with our colleagues in the Music and Creative Arts (MACA) team.

We are hosting Live sessions via Zoom now and online Leaders Training.



Singing by Heart has been promoted in the UK's largest ever study into the benefits of music for people living with Dementia. The new report from the Commission on Dementia and Music, produced by the International Longevity Centre called 'What would life be – without a song or a dance, what are we? calls for the growing positive evidence base to support a more co-ordinated roll-out of provision across the country.

Sally Bowell, Research Fellow, ILC-UK said:

“Music should not just be considered a nice-to-have, or an ‘add-on’. Music has tangible, evidence-based benefits for people with dementia, such as helping to minimise the behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia, tackling depression and anxiety, and, importantly, helping to improve quality of life. We want to raise awareness of these important benefits and rally organisations and individuals alike to help champion access to music for people with dementia.”

Further Information

Contact

andrew.wileman@salvationarmy.org.uk

ali.thornton@stark@salvationarmy.org.uk

olderpeoplesministries@salvationarmy.org.uk