

darts



Case Study

Singing for Memory

Singing for Memory Makes Dad Come Alive Again

Singing for Memory

Singing for Memory uses the power of song, friendship, tea and conversation to connect people living with dementia and their carers with others. The weekly group, based at [The Point](#) in Doncaster, provides a regular, safe space for people to have fun, sing familiar songs and create new ones. Each session starts with a relaxed welcome. After warming up our voices we sing a variety of familiar and new songs. We always make time for a cup of tea and a chance to chat. Singing for Memory is part of Doncaster's Keep in Mind programme, commissioned by City of Doncaster Council, and is a referral only programme.

Although he might tell you he prefers sport, former Headteacher Ernest was surrounded by music throughout his school career and is no stranger to group singing. When musician Beth led the group in carol singing at Christmas, Ernest was able to recall every word without any need for lyric sheets.

Now living with advanced Alzheimer's, Ernest regularly attends sessions at The Point with his daughter Anna, and sometimes wife Maureen. It was Maureen who first discovered Singing for Memory through Age UK Doncaster, but Anna who volunteered to bring her dad along:

"I thought, well, this is something, you know, for me and my dad to do together. If I have to work or I'm away mum will bring him, but mostly it's me."

At the time, Ernest's condition was less advanced, but he wasn't naturally one for socialising or joining groups. Anna and Maureen were concerned he was becoming isolated at home and persuaded him to give Singing for Memory a try. Anna already had fond memories of The Point from attending sessions there with her own daughter when she was a child:

"It's just such a lovely building, I think. It's got such a nice feel to it."

Anna knew The Point would be a safe and welcoming place to bring Ernest and from the moment they arrived, the family felt at ease. Maureen came along to that first session too, and spotting familiar faces from her walking group helped to break the ice. The mix of people at Singing for Memory makes the group feel naturally inclusive, and everyone is encouraged to take part in

whatever way suits them. The musicians offer plenty of choice, catering to a wide range of musical tastes.

As well as the music, the sessions give Ernest the chance to chat and connect with others over a cuppa. The musicians and volunteers always make time for conversation and Anna has noticed how the group brings out a different side of him:

“When you see what they're like at home compared to when they start singing it's so different. It's like they're their old self again. It's lovely to see my Dad happy and singing.”

The benefits continue long after the sessions end. Anna has noticed that Ernest seems happier for the rest of the day and music has become part of everyday life at home too. Since joining the group, Maureen has bought a smart speaker. After each session, Anna tells her what songs they sang that day and Maureen asks the speaker to play them, so the good feelings carry on.

At first, Anna attended sessions mainly for her dad's benefit, but over time she has grown to feel part of the Singing for Memory family and has seen how valuable the group is for carers as well:

“Everyone who goes is in the same boat, so I think it does everybody good. I don't know who enjoys it more – the people living with dementia or the carers.”

For Anna and Ernest, Singing for Memory has become a cherished part of their week where they can simply enjoy spending time together somewhere they are welcomed, understood and able to be themselves.

*All names have been changed.