

darts



Case Study

Singing for Memory

Finding Connection and Confidence: Thelma's Journey with Singing for Memory

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.

After her husband died, Thelma* was determined not to become isolated. Despite her memory challenges, she began attending Singing for Memory on her own. Every Monday she would catch the bus into the city centre, have a wander around the shops, then make her way to The Point for the session. Singing for Memory was the first singing group she had ever joined, yet the experience of singing with others instantly appealed to her. Her confidence quickly grew and the weekly routine became something she looked forward to.

One Monday, Thelma's usual journey into town took an unexpected and frightening turn. After getting off the bus, she suddenly didn't know who or where she was. Determined not to lose the joy the group brought her, her daughter Catherine stepped in, and now they attend Singing for Memory together. Catherine says:

"Mum was very independent before her diagnosis, but she is very dependent on me now. [Singing for Memory] has been a lifeline really."

Now Thelma and Catherine attend together every week, and the group has become important to them both. They love the live music – whether it's Janet on guitar, Beth on piano or Luke with his accordion. Thelma especially enjoys the moments when participants are invited to sing solo and is often first to volunteer. Catherine notes:

"Mum wouldn't have done that at one time, but she's really come out of her shell, mixing with all these people."

The social time is just as significant as the singing. A self-confessed “tea belly”, Thelma always enjoys her second cup of tea (and custard cream), brought to her by volunteers who know her well. She often wanders over to chat to others across the room, while Catherine connects with fellow carers. Catherine describes it as feeling like a “close-knit club” and says:

“We notice it if we don’t go. If we didn’t go, life would be a lot harder.”

Although Thelma lives alone, the group provides structure, stimulation and companionship at a time when her eyesight and hearing are also declining, and many other activities are becoming difficult. Singing for Memory continues to lift her spirits and strengthen her connection with her daughter and others. As Catherine puts it:

“Mixing with people, keeping social and singing together is what keeps you going.”

*All names have been changed.