

## **The background evidence that led to the formation of With Music In Mind, and how evidence has enabled the organisation to grow and develop**

### **Introduction**

The UK has an ageing population, and more and more frequently, we are seeing problems associated with this, such as loneliness, dementia and decline in mental wellbeing.

### **Demographics of WMIM's locality**

The population of the Vale of Glamorgan, as per 2015 mid-year estimates based on 2011 Census data, was just under 128,000. It has a similar age profile of population as the Welsh average, with approximately 20.5% of the population aged between 65 and 84, and 2.8% over 85. Parts of the Eastern and Western Vale have a particularly older demographic, for example in Cowbridge, 38% of the population is aged 65+. The older population in the Vale of Glamorgan is predicted to increase significantly over the coming years, with the number of people aged 65+ predicted to increase and be above the Welsh average by 2036 (Vale of Glamorgan Public Services Board Wellbeing Assessment). Furthermore, Daffodil Cymru projections estimate that by 2035, there will be a 130% increase in the number of people in the Vale of Glamorgan aged 85+. The mid-year estimate for the population of Bridgend County Borough in 2019 was 147,049, with 29,880 (20.3%) being over 65 years old, and 3432 (2.33%) over 85. It is recognised that those aged 80+ have the most acute health and social care and support needs, and it is therefore essential that this age group has appropriate service provision. Furthermore, in both the Vale of Glamorgan and Bridgend, the geography and rurality contribute to isolation, and therefore accessible groups are even more pertinent to ensure the wellbeing of this ageing population.

### **Loneliness and isolation**

Loneliness and social isolation affect thousands of people in Wales from all walks of life, and at all times of life, but they are often associated with older people. In the United Kingdom, over one million older people say that they are often or always lonely, representing around 10% of those aged over 65 years. Loneliness has been described as one of the largest health concerns we face and is likely to increase risk of death by as much as 26% (Holt-Lundstadt et al., 2010). In fact, these authors showed that loneliness, living alone and poor social connections can be as harmful to your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, and worse than obesity. Loneliness and social isolation are associated with an increased risk of developing coronary heart disease and increase the risk of high blood pressure. Furthermore, they put individuals at great risk of depression, cognitive decline and dementia. According to Age UK, over 75% of women and 33% of men aged 65+ live alone, and data from the National Survey for Wales found that around 10-12% of adults aged 65 and older reported being lonely. Bridgend County Borough recognise loneliness and isolation as public health and safety issues.

Older people become isolated for a number of reasons, including gaps in services or barriers to accessing services. With an ageing population, it is essential that social care service providers acknowledge and address the issues raised. Social isolation can lead not only to loneliness, but also to loss of confidence, and worsening physical and mental wellbeing in older people. People with a high degree of loneliness are twice as likely to develop Alzheimer's Disease as people with a low degree of loneliness (Wilson et al., 2007). Furthermore, there are barriers to accessing services for older people to engage in to feel part of their social community, feel valued and have a voice. Ryan et al. (2008) suggested that these include unawareness that services exist, people feeling they do not need extra support, fear of a loss of autonomy and independence, and inability to reach the service.

There is growing evidence linking loneliness to poor health and increased use of health and care services. Gerst-Emerson and Jayawardhana (2015) found that chronic loneliness was associated with a larger number of visits to the doctor, but not to hospital as relationships with GPs are built over time so it is almost like visiting a friend. Health and social services, as well as third sector organisations can work together to assess older people's social needs alongside their physical or mental health. For example, Gerst-Emerson and Jayawardhana suggested that GP surgeries should help statutory and voluntary sector service providers to better identify and reach older people experiencing loneliness. They suggest it could involve establishing referral partnerships or passing on information about local services and support to older patients. Once identified, older people at risk of loneliness could easily be referred to third sector services, and in turn their health and quality of life will be improved and their visits to the GP reduced. In its simplest form, social prescribing enables local agencies to refer people to community organisations to improve their wellbeing. For example, rather than a GP prescribing antidepressants, she may prescribe a fitness club or a gardening club. Social prescribing has the ability to transform patients into people by focusing on what matters to them, and their whole needs and strengths.

The association between loneliness and increased GP visits is well documented (Gerst-Emerson & Jayawardhana), and loneliness can be so easily prevented with little cost compared to managing other chronic illnesses. Interventions such as community groups can avoid unnecessary health care utilisation and additional expenditure, and be hugely beneficial to the economy as a whole. For example, according to the Social Value Bank, "relief from anxiety and depression" can be worth over £36,000 per year, while "feeling in control of life" over £12,000. In the UK the cost of one GP visit avoided thanks to improving subjective wellbeing can be valued at approximately £45 (Personal Social Service Research Unit, 2015). Doing regular physical exercise can be valued between £3,500 and £4,200 per year depending on the level of activity.

In today's culture of increasing loneliness and social isolation, With Music In Mind offers a timely intervention given the current pressure on NHS resources, exacerbated by the ageing population, rising care expectations and budget constraints. The evidence demonstrating the benefits and effectiveness of attending With Music In Mind groups needs to be used to move forward with the collaborative working of health and social care providers. With resilience and early intervention / prevention being such key aspects of local authorities' medium-term cost-reduction plans, With Music In Mind reduces unplanned need for LA-funded care and support services through a resilience-building service that supports potentially vulnerable individuals.

A study by Burholt and Scharf (2014) showed that loneliness is influenced by an individual's health status, social resources and the availability of social facilities for older people. Certain life events have an impact on loneliness, including poor health, retirement migration and widowhood (Burholt and Scharf) as they cause changes in social interactions. Other factors associated with loneliness include age, gender, childlessness, poverty, education, income, environment, cognitive function, anxiety and depression (Victor et al., 2005). The research undertaken by Gerst-Emerson & Jayawardhana (2015) suggested that, by improving the identification of, and support available to older people at risk of loneliness, health and social service providers could improve health and quality of life of older people. For example, establishing referral partnerships between GPs and third sector providers improves the pathway of integrated care for older people. With Music In Mind works closely with local GP practices in this manner to improve the identification of, and support available to, older people experiencing loneliness or worsening wellbeing and therefore reducing the burden on social services and health resources and saving valuable NHS funds. With Music In Mind is to improve the social prescribing ethos within the third sector in the Vale of Glamorgan.

## **Dementia**

Dementia is one of the most pressing health issues facing the world, with the World Health Organisation estimating that there are currently 50 million people living with dementia globally. The number of cases of dementia is expected to triple to 152 million by 2050. In the UK alone, it is anticipated that there will be one million people living with dementia by 2025 (ILC-UK, 2018).

The number of people living with dementia is projected to rise significantly in Wales (Population Needs Assessment), with an estimated number of people with dementia in Cardiff and the Vale rising to 6,849 for 65-84 year olds, and 3,355 for 85+ year olds by 2025 (Daffodil Cymru). The population assessment has indicated that there will be an increase in the prevalence of dementia in Bridgend County Borough, with the predicted number of people over 65 in Bridgend living with dementia set to rise from 1822 in 2015 to 2914 by 2030 (Dementia Care and Support in Bridgend). The increase in the population of people living to be 85+ is the main factor in the increase of the prevalence of dementia within the County Borough; similar increases in prevalence of dementia can be seen, probably for the same reasons, in other regions including Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan.

A recent meta-analysis investigating the comparative efficacy of drug and non-drug interventions for reducing symptoms of depression in people with dementia found that non-drug interventions were more efficacious than drug interventions for those without a major depressive disorder (Watt et al., 2021). Interventions included cognitive stimulation, massage and touch therapy, and exercise combined with social interaction.

## **Prevention and early intervention**

Pikhartova, Bowling & Victor (2015) used data from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) to demonstrate that certain expectations and stereotypes about loneliness can predict whether someone actually experiences it in later life. The evidence from their study showed the need for more interventions using a preventative approach in order to have more impact on reducing loneliness, rather than utilising services that try to address it once someone is already experiencing it. In line with the purposes outlined by the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (2014), With Music In Mind “contributes towards preventing or delaying the development of people’s needs for care and support.”

## **Musical activities**

Music is an undeniably significant part of being human. It spans different genres, cultures and eras, and it promotes bonding, communication and wellbeing (ILC-UK, 2018). When times are difficult, music can soothe, comfort and help to rebuild a sense of self. It has been well established that, for older adults, participating in musical activities can be extremely beneficial. These benefits include increased life expectancy, improved quality of life and well-being (Davidson et al., 2014; Harris & Caporella, 2014; Yinger, 2014), as well as social, emotional and physical benefits (Yinger, 2014). Further positive outcomes include better communication and cognition, engagement, connecting and interacting with others in meaningful and positive ways, increased confidence and empowerment as well as stress reduction (Davidson et al., 2014; Montgomery-Smith, 2006; Harris & Caporella, 2014). Davidson & Fidele (2011) believe that finding ways to enhance social opportunity for older people that are appropriate to their stage of life is crucial. They state that international social and political initiatives for wellbeing in later life favour “active ageing” (also Davidson et al., 2014), with social engagement being viewed as a pathway to wellbeing (Cohen, 2005). Structured group singing programmes provide stimulating social engagement for older people.

The International Longevity Centre – UK (ILC-UK) produced a report in 2018 from the commission on dementia and music. In the foreword, Baroness Sally Greengross said “Whilst finding a cure or effective form of prevention is of course a major area of research, we concurrently need to explore opportunities for managing all forms of dementia, and ensuring the highest possible levels of wellbeing for the people affected. When delivered effectively, music gives carers and loved ones an avenue through which to sustain relationships and share experiences and can help to minimise the often-upsetting symptoms of dementia such as agitation, anxiety and depression. Moreover, it can help to improve a person’s wellbeing and quality of life.” The report shows that music can provide a true lifeline for those both with and without dementia by promoting social connection, restoring a sense of self and bringing joy even in the most challenging of times (ICC-UK, 2018). It also states that “the ability to connect to music is an innate aspect of being human; having a diagnosis of dementia need not undermine this.”

## **Exercise**

It is common knowledge that being active is a principal ingredient for health and happiness, helping us to reduce the risk of many diseases such as cancer, stroke, heart disease, depression and dementia. According to BUPA, staying active may be the key to keeping healthy, mobile and independent. It can also stop existing health problems getting worst and reduces your risk of developing new ones. Being active, however, is a struggle for many older people for a number of reasons. Some older people are living with health conditions, including degenerative diseases and mental health problems. No matter what people are living with, there are always ways to get active, no matter how small the first step might be. There are a number of websites that advise older people on how to begin getting active, and how to maintain their health and wellbeing:

[Exercise advice for keeping active as an older adults | Age UK](#)

[Physical activity guidelines for older adults - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Exercise for older people | Health Information | Bupa UK](#)

[The Social Benefits of Exercise - Exercise.co.uk](#)

The NHS advice is to speak to a GP first if you have not exercised for some time, or if you have medical conditions or concerns. They also advise to ensure activity and its intensity are appropriate for individual fitness. They suggest that adults aged 65 and over should:

- aim to be physically active every day, even if it's just light activity
- do activities that improve strength, balance and flexibility on at least 2 days a week
- do at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity a week or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity if you are already active, or a combination of both
- reduce time spent sitting or lying down and break up long periods of not moving with some activity

If you've fallen or are worried about falling, doing exercises to improve your strength, balance and flexibility will help make you stronger and feel more confident on your feet.

So, we know that exercising is one of the most beneficial activities that we can do, both for physical and mental health. But there are also social benefits to exercise that come when we join forces with friends and peers wanting achieve similar goals. These benefits include motivation and encouragement, confidence, fun and can even bring about friendly competition.

## **COVID-19 impact**

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating for individuals and organisations alike. It is now well documented that the impact of COVID-19 and lockdowns has had a huge detrimental effect on mental health in the population. Yeung Shan Wong et al. (2020) concluded that the psychosocial health of older patients with multimorbidity markedly deteriorated after the COVID-19 outbreak. Age UK (2020) published research that demonstrated just how crushingly hard day to day life has been for millions of older people during the pandemic, and that many are enduring increased levels of anxiety to the point that they were too afraid to go out even when restrictions were eased. An article in the Guardian in March 2021 reported that a cross-party all-party parliamentary group has demanded action to tackle a post-COVID loneliness emergency. A government spokesperson said "we recognise that the easing of lockdown restrictions will not mean the end of loneliness for many people, which is why this will remain a priority." There is a huge increased need post-lockdown for groups and activities, due to the significant increase in frailty and isolation in the population as an indirect result of COVID-19. We need to work together – third sector organisations, health and social care providers and older people – to begin to rectify the damage that the pandemic has caused.

### **Policy and Strategy**

The National Service Framework (NSF) for Older People in Wales (2006) was designed to improve health and social care services for older people across Wales. The NSF stipulates that for all, lives should be lived in a healthy, active and meaningful manner in a way that promotes quality of life, independence and individual choice. It set out 10 key standards which provided the national evidence base for the health and social care of older people to ensure that a good level of service is available everywhere in Wales. The priorities of The Older People's Commissioner for Wales Framework for Action 2013-2017 report included 1) embedding the wellbeing of older people at the heart of public services, 2) driving up the quality of – and availability and access to – health and social care and 3) protecting and improving community services, facilities and infrastructure. When With Music In Mind was founded in 2015, it met the ideals and standards of the NSF and these priorities of the Commissioner's report by providing an accessible facility for older people to participate in, develop and enjoy.

The Social Services and Wellbeing Act (2014) promotes the wellbeing of people who need care and support, and carers who need support. It is designed to drive the development of new models of service to maintain and improve the health and wellbeing of people. With Music in Mind provides an innovative model of service that exists to address these exact issues, its mission being "to provide a service for people at risk of social isolation or loneliness, or of worsening physical or mental wellbeing."

The Framework for Delivering Integrated Health and Social Care for Older People with Complex Needs (2014) placed a strong focus on ensuring services, care and support are designed, co-ordinated and delivered effectively and should involve all partners including local authorities, health, housing the third and independent sectors. This includes, as stated in the Act, that a local authority must promote the development in its area of social enterprises to provide care and support and preventative services. Working closely with health and social services, With Music In Mind helps to accomplish the aims of the Framework by providing a preventative service shown to reduce loneliness and improve wellbeing.

The Dementia Action Plan for Wales 2018-2022 (2018) aims to deliver on Wales as a Dementia Friendly Nation. Vaughan Gething, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services said "We have a clear vision for Wales to be a dementia friendly nation that recognises the rights of people with

dementia to value and to live as independently as possible in their communities.” Statements from stakeholders and people living with dementia that have been adopted by Welsh Government as principles to underpin the plan include: “We have the right to be recognised as who we are, to make choices about our lives including taking risks, and to contribute to society. Our diagnosis should not define us, nor should we be ashamed of it,” and “We have the right to continue with day-to-day and family life, without discrimination or unfair cost, to be accepted and included in our communities and not live in isolation or loneliness.” (Dementia Support and Care in Bridgend).

The All Wales Dementia Care Pathway of Standards discusses the importance of accessible services, with the four main themes being Accessible, Responsive, Journey, and Partnerships & Relationships, all which tie into With Music In Mind’s ethos and aims. People reported “not being ready to have a formal conversation with their GP” when they first started to have cognitive difficulties, so there is great value at this stage of the journey for people to be connected to services. At With Music In Mind, we embrace and accept all older people, and provide many benefits not only to our members but also to their carers. For example, spouses inevitably become isolated and at health risk as a result of their caring role, so being able to access a service such as ours together has a benefit of a shared experience as well as individual benefits.

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Daffodil Cymru: [Population Projections Platform \(daffodilcymru.org.uk\)](http://daffodilcymru.org.uk)

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Vale of Glamorgan Public Services Board Wellbeing Assessment: [Well-being Assessment - English \(valeofglamorgan.gov.uk\)](http://valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)

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### **Links for Policy and Strategy Documents**

The National Service Framework for Older People In Wales (2006): [38140 Main Text E Item 3.indd \(housinglin.org.uk\)](http://housinglin.org.uk)

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales Framework for Action 2013-2017: [English-justified.indd \(olderpeoplewales.com\)](http://olderpeoplewales.com)

The Social Services and Wellbeing Act (2014): [social-services-and-well-being-wales-act-2014-the-essentials.pdf \(gov.wales\)](http://gov.wales)

The Framework for Delivering Integrated Health and Social Care for Older People with Complex Needs (2014) [WG Integration \(rctcbc.gov.uk\)](http://rctcbc.gov.uk)

Population Needs Assessment: [Population needs assessment \(valeofglamorgan.gov.uk\)](http://valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)

Dementia Care and Support in Bridgend: [BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL](http://bridgendcountyboroughcouncil.gov.uk)

The Dementia Action Plan for Wales 2018-2022 (2018): [Dementia action plan 2018 to 2022 | GOV.WALES](http://gov.wales)

All Wales Dementia Care Pathway of Standards: <https://phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/improvement-cymru/news-and-blog/publications/dementia-standards/>