

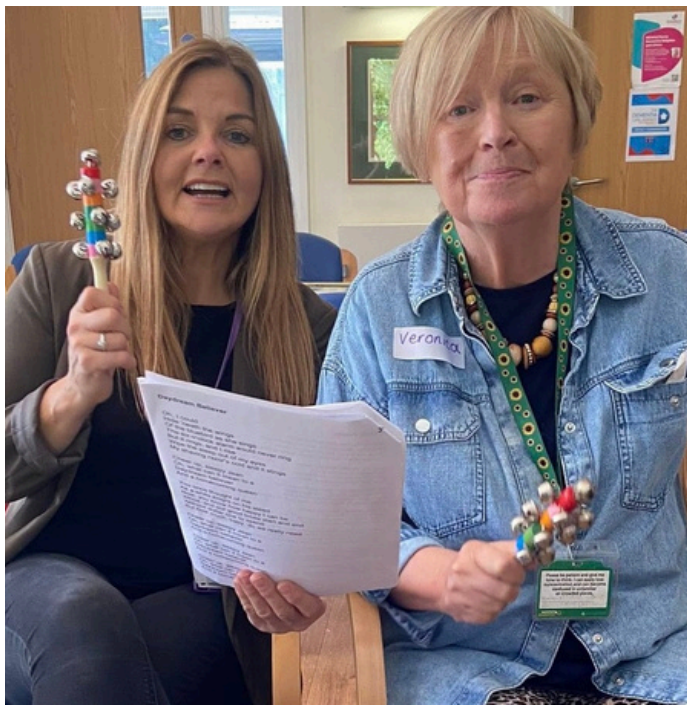
# The Power of Music

Annual report 2025-2026



**ST. MARY'S  
HOSPICE  
DEMENTIA  
SERVICE**

# What is the Power of Music?



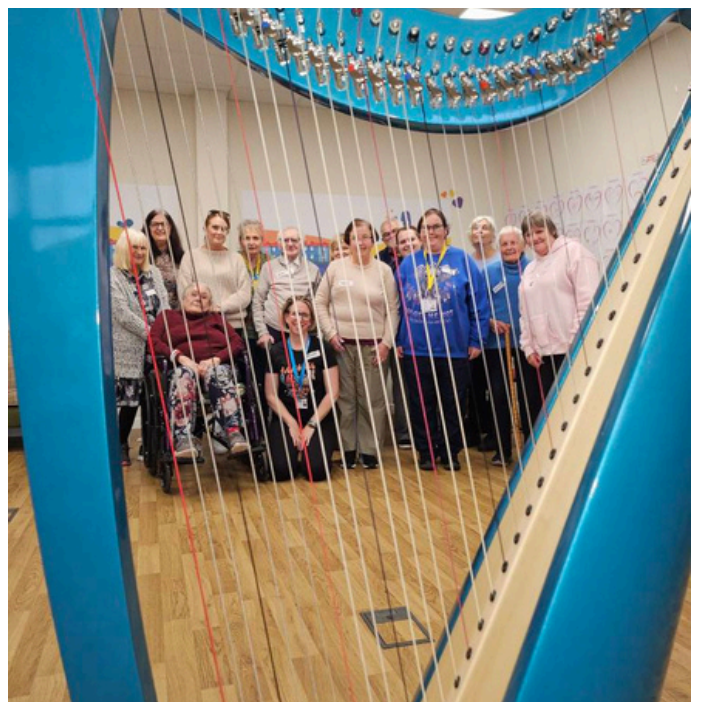
Music has a profound impact on people living with dementia, offering a way to connect, communicate, and engage when words may be lost. Unlike language, which is processed in specific areas of the brain, music activates multiple regions, including those linked to memory, emotions, and movement. This explains why familiar songs can evoke deep emotional responses and bring back long-forgotten memories, even in the later stages of dementia.

Research shows that music stimulates the limbic system, responsible for regulating emotions, behaviour and motivation,

and the motor cortex, which is associated with rhythm and movement. This makes music a valuable tool for improving mood, reducing anxiety, and encouraging physical activity. Group singing and listening sessions also foster social connections, which has been found to reduce feelings of social isolation.

The Power of Music is a UK-wide initiative expanding access to music in health and social care. Backed by the National Academy for Social Prescribing (NASP), Music for Dementia, and UK Music, it aims to embed music into dementia care through staff training, research, and awareness, making it a core part of support nationwide.

Thanks to generous funding from NASP, our own Power of Music program has been able to bring the joy and benefits of music to people living with dementia, enhancing their wellbeing and quality of life through song, rhythm, and shared musical experiences.





# Delivering The Power of Music at St. Mary's This year

The Power of Music has remained firmly embedded across our dementia programme, offering inclusive, sensory-rich musical experiences throughout.

We strengthened our practice by welcoming Karen Baxter to teach us how to sign and sing, improving accessibility for those experiencing verbal or communication challenges and supporting non-verbal expression and confidence.

Across our sessions, we explored a variety of instruments, encouraging rhythm, movement and emotional expression in a safe and supportive environment. Community partnership remained central: a volunteer shared traditional ceildh music and later collaborated with one of our carers who plays the accordion, creating a joyful shared performance that celebrated the talents within our own dementia community.

Mary's harp sessions provided a calming, grounding contrast, supporting relaxation and emotional regulation. We also embraced movement and fun, dancing with balloons to favourite songs, promoting gentle physical activity and social connection.

The Power of Music extended beyond hospice walls when we joined our local Pride event in the summer alongside the St. Mary's Hospice Choir, celebrating inclusion and community belonging. The winter months brought festive events filled with singing and dancing, culminating in our Dementia Christmas Party, where the String Chickens ukulele band brought warmth and energy to close the season.

Throughout, The Power of Music has offered far more than entertainment. It has strengthened relationships, preserved identity and created meaningful moments of connection, demonstrating the vital role music plays in living well with dementia.

# Attendances, Satisfaction Surveys and Feedback

## Our reach

**25**

people living with dementia who have attended...

**164** times collectively

## Attendance



## Satisfaction survey results

Your views values and beliefs were respected	<b>5 stars</b> <b>4.9%</b>
You or your loved one were made to feel welcome	<b>5 stars</b> <b>4.9%</b>
You felt comfortable asking questions	<b>5 stars</b> <b>4.9%</b>
You found the session fun, relaxing and therapeutic	<b>5 stars</b> <b>4.9%</b>
Rate the facilities	<b>5 stars</b> <b>4.86%</b>

## AND PEOPLE SAY...

**“Love live music”**

“All activities excellent”

**“[More] drumming”**

“She likes to sing”

**“Although my husband cant do a lot of the challenges, he still enjoys watching and, me as his carer I enjoy coming”**

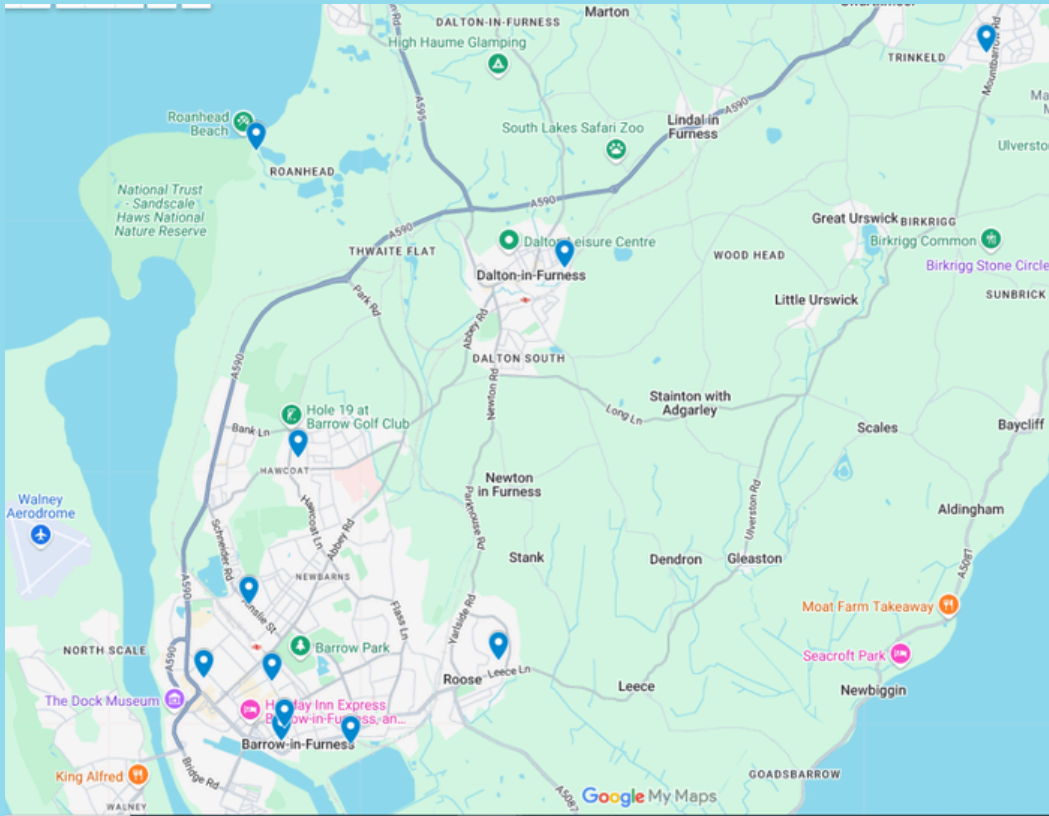
“Enjoyed the singing”

**“Excellent energy and enthusiasm. Lovely topic relating to nature and outdoor life. Took you back to your youth & camp fires”.**

“Everything was good, well presented, food excellent, singing a joy and dancing so good. Good atmosphere. More please”



# Data & Demographics

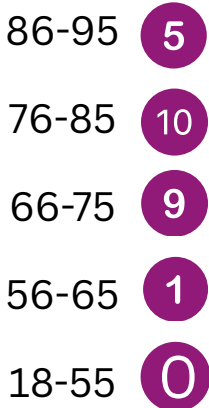


2025-2026 POM cohort  
Total = 25

## MALE & FEMALE



## AGE GROUPS

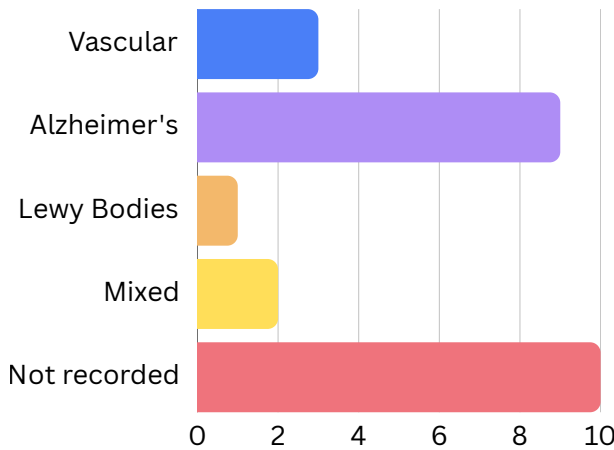


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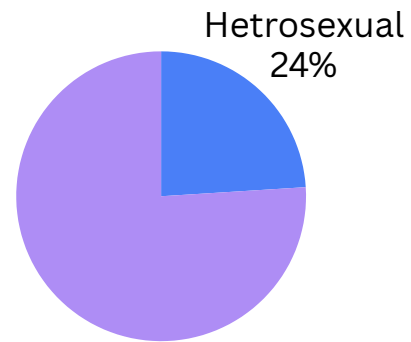
of service users are people living with dementia

1 Carer

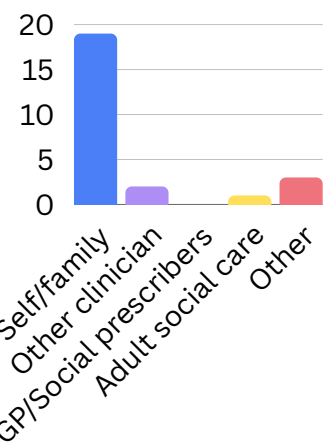
## DEMENTIA DIAGNOSIS



## SEXUAL ORIENTATION



## REFERRAL SOURCE



# POM for carers

“ What a brilliant party, so enjoyable with the activities and atmosphere with everyone X ”

*member of the public*



Barbara & Michael  
Christmas 2025

Barbara and Michael attend our sessions regularly. They both have a love of music and dancing. We asked Barbara some questions about her experience of our Power of Music sessions.

***How do the music sessions make you feel, both during and after?***

Relaxed, I am sharing something with Mike because as his dementia is advanced there is not a lot we can share any more.

***Does music help you connect with each other in ways that feel different from everyday life?***

Music is something that I as a carer to

my husband can share. We have always both enjoyed music. Over the years and although we cannot share much now, music is something that brings us closer.

***If you were describing these sessions to another carer, what would you say?***

It's something that everybody who attends can join in, whatever the position of their dementia.

***What is your favourite song?***

I don't have a favourite but I like Neil Diamond, Tina Turner and The Stones.

***What genre or era is your favourite?***

Mowtown music, Rock n Roll & Reggae





# A message from Mary

In our Healthcare-Musician led sessions we have engaged in creating joy through music making. Often focusing on topics, we have engaged with familiar and also new songs, as well as writing our own. Vocalising through warmups and in song, whole-body moving through actions and dance, and interactive music making through use of instruments.

A particular pleasure has been had with playing with musical elements, with beautiful and deep engagement on dynamics (volumes), speed, energy, style and emotional range. We have made use of the Soundtrack to my Life books to capture personal musical highlights from participant's lives that can feed into the individual's Advance Care Plan, recognising and acknowledging the whole person.



# What's Next?



The only way was up for Power of Music at St. Mary's Hospice.

Following an overwhelming response to our co-production survey, and a clear call from people living with dementia and their carers for more music, we were delighted to deliver another Dementia Unmuted Festival. This year's theme of inclusion, equality and diversity reflected our commitment to ensuring everyone felt seen, valued and represented.

Music continued to be a powerful way to create connection and joy during the festival. At Wild in Windermere, Mary co-created an original campfire song with our service users, which was shared as we gathered outdoors together. Inclusion Fest celebrated music and dance from cultures around the world, alongside a joyful drag performance promoting belonging and representation. St. Mary's Got Talent provided a platform for people living with dementia to showcase their talents, culminating in a full-room Time Warp.

We also once again attended the dementia-friendly concert Sunlight to Starry Skies, performed by the Liverpool Philharmonic, ensuring access to high-quality cultural experiences.

This work was about far more than entertainment. It preserved identity, strengthened relationships, created shared memories and supported carer wellbeing. It showed that a dementia diagnosis did not mark the end of creativity or contribution. Through music, we continued to reduce isolation, promote equality and build dementia-ready communities where people were celebrated for who they are.

We extended our sincere thanks to our funders and to Mary Dunsford for making this meaningful and transformative programme possible. Without this programme, people may be at greater risk of social isolation, reduced wellbeing, and have fewer opportunities for meaningful connection.

