

DECEMBER 2022 NEWSLETTER



FAITH IN OLDER PEOPLE

is a small voluntary organisation which aims to enhance the quality of life and well-being of older people by working with those providing practical, pastoral or spiritual care

THE BOARD AND STAFF OF FAITH IN OLDER PEOPLE
thank you for your continued support and
SEND THEIR BEST WISHES FOR CHRISTMAS AND THE NEW YEAR



OUR LATEST BLOG

The Power of Singing Groups in the Lives of People Living with Dementia

Two years ago, in an article I wrote for FIOp, I wrote *“Thank you for the music: The songs I’m singing’* The sentiment and gratitude expressed in this song by ABBA have been, over the last 10 years, expressed and felt by hundreds of people with dementia, their carers and volunteers throughout Scotland.

They have all been part of singing groups developed and run by trained volunteers. All were based on a model which provided companionship, support and the joy of singing for people with dementia and their carers in an undemanding, warm, dementia friendly environment.

Many of these groups were set up as a result of workshops hosted by FIOp and run by Diana Kerr.

Sadly, and inevitably these groups had to shut down with the onset of the pandemic. At that point most of us did not realise how long the shutdown would last and hoped that perhaps within the year we could get groups going again. This was clearly not going to be the case. It is important to hang onto the experiences and knowledge gained through the groups and for this to be constantly reiterated until the groups can start again.”

Throughout the previous two years I and others have been approached by carers and people living with dementia to say how much they missed the groups, what they had added to their lives and expressing a wish that as soon as possible the groups would be reinstated. Well, some of the groups are now starting again. There is, however, a need to get more groups going and to expand the groups that have restarted. An issue for some of the groups that were running before the pandemic is that two years on their volunteers are older, some are less able and some now have other commitments. The need for new and perhaps some younger volunteers is clear. It is important, however, to emphasise the amazing commitment and achievements of the volunteers who were keeping 20 or more groups going throughout Scotland and who are determined to get going again when possible.

Why are singing groups for people living with dementia so important?

People with dementia and their carers often become isolated and alone. Coming together with others in a group that is about having a good time is a rare opportunity. It is also important to emphasise here that this is not about choirs, it is not about performance or being right or having expectations it is about having a jolly good sing song where not knowing the words is irrelevant, la di da is just as good, or whistling or just swaying.

It is with this in mind that, at risk of repeating previous blogs, I want to outline the benefits of singing groups for people living with dementia and their carers and to suggest that if you are reading this you think about setting up a group or getting involved in one.

So, what is so good about singing for people with dementia?

Well, it is no surprise that singing is good for people living with dementia as singing is good for all of us and that does not go away, in fact in some ways, the benefits increase when someone develops dementia.

As words fail and communication and the ability to connect to others diminishes, singing in a group helps people living with dementia to be with others and to also do something with others, it becomes an opportunity to communicate, forget worries, get air into the lungs and make their presence felt and heard.

One of the important aspects of supporting people with dementia is to minimise the impact of their losses and to play to their strengths. Music and the memory for songs stays long after other skills and memories have disappeared or diminished. If people can sing songs, then we should be encouraging this, helping them maintain the skill and the sense of achievement and joy that goes with that. We know that singing makes people happy. Even if the person with dementia forgets that they were singing soon after the event this does not negate its worth. They will still feel good even if they cannot remember why. People with

dementia live much in the moment so we should be trying to make as many moments, as possible, good ones and singing undoubtedly achieves this. The singing can also transport people back and can energise and enliven people. The following is a good example of this.

Kate

As a young woman, Kate sang in various bands and continued to sing throughout her life. Her dementia was at a stage that conversation was limited and she did not sing at all, even with the encouragement of her family.

Her husband brought Kate to the Singing Group in the hope that she might enjoy the singing. The Singing Leader that day had brought hats which resembled the hats worn by the Andrews Sisters which would have been the era when Kate was singing in the band. She offered the hats out to anyone who might want to wear them whilst we sang the Andrews sisters famous song "*Don't sit under the Apple tree*".

With encouragement, Kate took a hat and stood up, she started to sing and slowly parade around the hall singing to what she saw as the audience. It seemed that the setup had triggered memories for Kate and it became obvious that she had moved into "performance mode". Not only did she sing but she took a bow at the end of her "performance".

Another wonderful example of how the music and singing can stimulate activity is shown by Julie.

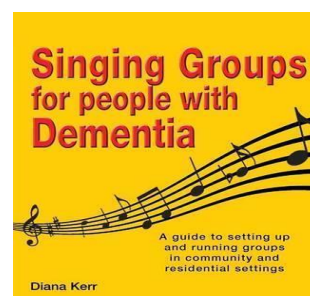
Julie

Julie attends our singing group with her son. Julie rarely speaks and equally rarely sings the songs but the moment the first note is played she is up and dancing with her son. She is transformed from a fragile elderly woman into a lithe, energetic and smiling woman. She is capable of dancing for the best part of an hour with short breaks.

These are examples of how the music and in particular the singing triggers communication, activity and happy memories.

It can feel quite daunting to set up and run a group, but FIOP is going to re-run workshops to help people do this. I have also written a book that has been used extensively to help and guide people to set up a group.

The book *Singing Groups for People with Dementia* is available online and at FIOP events.



Diana Kerr

Practitioner, Researcher, Educator and Trainer; Associate, Faith in Older People

FAITH IN OLDER PEOPLE – OUR RECENT EVENT

FAITH IN OLDER PEOPLE CONFERENCE 2022 THE GIFT OF AGE



The contribution of older people to the life of our faith communities

The final report of this project will be published soon. We are developing a dissemination strategy as we feel it is vital that this unique exercise in Scotland should be widely discussed and ideas shared.

FAITH IN OLDER PEOPLE – FORTHCOMING EVENTS FOR 2023 SAVE THE DATES

THURSDAY 26 JANUARY 2023

LINKING LIVES WEBINAR – 4.30PM –6.00PM

With Jeremy Sharpe

A view of loneliness and isolation and its impact on mental wellbeing

Jeremy Sharpe is the National Director of Linking Lives UK and is based in Reading, Berkshire

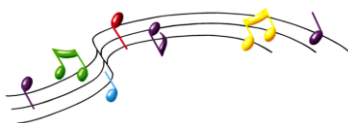
Effective Responses to Loneliness & Mental Health

Loneliness and mental health have always been intertwined issues and this will continue to be the case in the future. Whilst loneliness is not a mental health condition in and of itself, it can (and does) often lead to mental health problems. These can include various types of social phobia, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, sleep problems and increased stress. ('About Loneliness'- Mind website). Equally, mental health problems of varying types and levels can often lead to significant experiences of loneliness and so the two issues can exacerbate each other. In July 2020, the Campaign to End Loneliness published a report called 'The Psychology of Loneliness' and this explored the relationship between mental health and loneliness and made a number of recommendations as to how individuals and agencies could address this growing problem.

TO BOOK YOUR FREE PLACE NOW – click [HERE](#)

THURSDAY 2 FEBRUARY 2023

reviving our popular event THE POWER OF MUSIC - SINGING FOR HEALTH



**A WORKSHOP LED BY DIANA KERR, DEMENTIA CONSULTANT,
AUTHOR AND SINGING GROUP LEADER**
THE POWER OF MUSIC for people with dementia and their carers
CREATING SINGING GROUPS FOR PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA

Who should attend?

- Do you like a good sing song?
- Have you had your spirits lifted by music?
- Are you looking for an opportunity to be involved in bringing fun, joy, and a sense of wellbeing to others?
- Would you like to be involved with the support of people with dementia and their carers?
If so then come to this workshop and be inspired to have a go.

What will you get from the workshop?

- You will hear about why music, and especially singing together, is so important to people with dementia and their carers
- You will learn about what songs to use
- You will learn about different ways of using songs to increase the fun and sense of achievement
- You will experience the joy of a sing song
- You will learn what you need to do to set up a group in either a community or residential setting
- You will be offered follow up advice and support after the event

Venue to be confirmed. FURTHER DETAILS TO FOLLOW SOON

THURSDAY 9 MARCH 2023, 4.30pm – 6.00pm

EXPLORING CARING – INCLUDING EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL SUPPORT (

Richard Meade, Director, Carers Scotland and Northern Ireland will present this seminar and discuss the impact of the caring responsibilities of unpaid carers and their wellbeing; in particular, in relation to spiritual, emotional and physical wellbeing including financial consequences and social isolation.

TO BOOK YOUR FREE PLACE CLICK [here](#)

**Faith in Older People's ANNUAL REPORT 2021/2022
is now available on our website.
Please click [HERE](#) to read it**

SCOTTISH CARE

Scottish Care Blogs

[The giftedness of humanity: a seasonal reflection - Scottish Care](#)



Get in Touch.
Scottish Care Ltd.
Bld 372, Ground Floor Offices,
22-27 Alpha Freight, Glasgow
Prestwick Airport, KA9 2QA.
01292 270 240
scottishcare.org

[Re-imagining care homes - time to explore. - Scottish Care](#)



scottishcare.org

Get in Touch.
Scottish Care Ltd.
Bld 372, Ground Floor Offices,
22-27 Alpha Freight, Glasgow
Prestwick Airport, KA9 2QA.
01292 270 240

GENERAL INFORMATION



[Click here](#) to read our **November e-bulletin: sharing news and views affecting the voluntary health sector**



VHS has published its latest research.
Summary/recommendations here: [Broader Reach and Stronger Voice: Reflecting on the](#)

[inclusivity of the COVID-19 vaccine programme and collaboration with the third sector.](#)

Whilst the focus of the report is on the Third Sector this often includes faith communities. You will see that NHS led interventions included outreach to places of worship.

BECOME A FRIEND OF FIOP

IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY - we'd like to ask you to become a FRIEND OF FIOP
An annual contribution of, say £25, would make an enormous difference to our
small organisation. As a Friend you will receive our regular eNewsletter and
invitations to our regular events.

PLEASE CONTACT US FOR AN APPLICATION FORM – info@fiop.org.uk
You can find out more about our work on www.faithinolderpeople.org.uk

OUR GRATEFUL THANKS TO THOSE WHO HAVE ALREADY SIGNED UP

IF YOU WISH TO UNSUBSCRIBE FROM OUR NEWSLETTER,
PLEASE EMAIL info@fiop.org.uk



Faith in Older People
Registered Company SC322915 Registered Charity SC038225
21a Grosvenor Crescent, EDINBURGH EH12 5EL
Email: info@fiop.org.uk Website: www.faithinolderpeople.org.uk