



The Volunteer Project

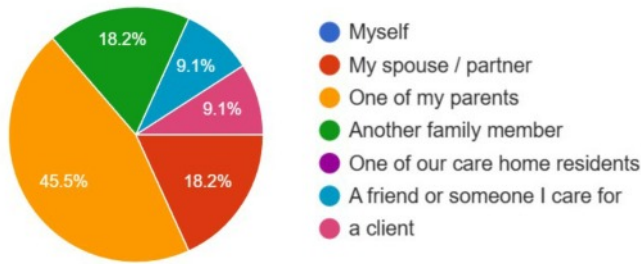
2024 Report

The Forget Me Notes Project offers a volunteer service in the Edinburgh homes of people living with dementia, who are no longer able to access our groups or community events. The fortnightly visits use music, song and reminiscence to increase overall well-being, combat isolation and enhance communication. Sessions are individually tailored; we have fiddle, piano, 'mouthie', guitar and pipe-players, as well as singers and listeners!

The Project was set up in January 2022. At the end of 2024 we surveyed our Families and Volunteers. The return rates were 55% and 91% respectively; return rates above 30% are excellent. We are delighted that volunteers are invested enough, and families/carers willing to use precious time, to tell us about their experience and help refine our service further. We believe time spent building relationships is always worth it. This is what our families and volunteers told us.

Families and Carers

Who receives visits?



How satisfied are you with the visits?

82% scored 5 out of 5
18% scored 4 out of 5

Impact and Benefits

Highest noted benefits of visits by family or carers:

90% 'help with loneliness or isolation'

81% 'its something 'social' rather than care'

63% 'the person has stimulation/company at the time of the visit'

The following survey options all scored **54%** - the visit supports a family member; it's good to be connected to something wider; it helps the person talk about memories from the past; the person is usually more relaxed or brighter afterwards.

Volunteers submit a Log Form after each visit; in the April to June 2024 quarter the top six 'impacts' noted by volunteers were that the person they visited was able to:

Communicate verbally **82%**

Sing, hum or whistle **80%**

Express an emotion **62%**

Share a story or memory **57%**

Make a choice **57%**

Brighten, more alert or energised **55%**

Becoming sleepy or agitated were also noted but far less so at between 2% and 7%

The Forget Me Notes project's overall aims of increasing well-being, combating isolation and enhancing communication in the moment and beyond have been well reached in the volunteer project in 2024.

Comments

"My mother's volunteer has been wonderful - so kind, punctual and thoughtful and always able to be flexible with visit times. She has made such a difference to my mother's life at home, and it's lovely that Mum's still able to enjoy the piano with her support"



"The volunteer is absolutely lovely and so kind. She goes to a lot of effort to visit my Mum and also to keep me in the loop about her visits which I so appreciate"

"Initial visit was warm and thoughtful. It was the beginning of a really important and happy part of my mother's life, at a point when we were all feeling very low about her Alzheimer's diagnosis"

"The music visits worked well for my wife as it was a continuation of the choir sessions we so enjoyed when she was more able"

"Provides a unique and very helpful interlude in a confusing world"

"It has varied over the weeks from being enjoyed to not so much - maybe due to B's mood on the day"

"Having someone to engage with helps engagement continue with the wider world - even if at times it is hard for them. It makes a change, and brings some company, which is really important"

"The sessions have been brilliant for Dad - he loves playing music and thoroughly enjoys having the chance to play with D, he tells us that he's had a great time"



"The coordinator is really able, friendly and enthusiastic. We have appreciated her keeping in contact with the family about how Dad is getting on."

"Both volunteers have been great in their visits. Very understanding of Dads condition and respectful and treat him with dignity"

Would you recommend the volunteer service to others?

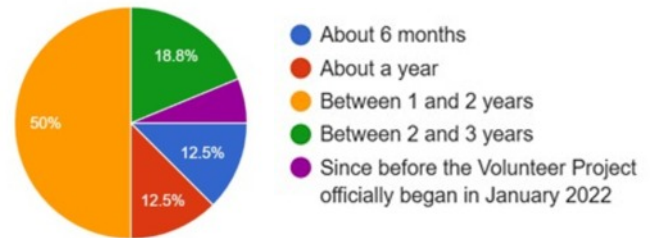


Volunteers

Our Volunteers provided over 250 visits during 2024

Over summer 2024 we recruited, trained and linked 4 new volunteers, taking the number of home visit volunteers this year to 18. Some of these volunteers are linked with two matches, and the total number of individuals who have been linked with a volunteer at some point in the last year is 24. We also have 6 volunteers who are either 'song sheet buddies' at Music Memory sessions in care/community settings, or who offer general help at larger Forget Me Notes events - welcoming people, and handing out vast quantities of tea and hot chocolate! Of the volunteers who completed the survey, 90% rated their enjoyment as high or very high and 79% rated their confidence as high or very high.

How long have you volunteered with Forget Me Notes?



Impact and Benefits

Just as we monitor the benefits to those we visit, we also ask our 1-1 Volunteers how they feel before and after each visit. In the April to June quarter of 2024 the biggest change noted by volunteers was that before visits 20% felt 'tired, weary or anxious'; afterwards 50% had moved to feeling 'energised or uplifted'. One volunteer has commented about the boost to her mood to spend time with her link people when she is otherwise feeling anxious or isolated. The top three benefits that Volunteers identified for themselves were:

- Gives me enjoyment and pleasure 79%
- Sense of purpose or meaning in life 56%
- Learning about people and/or dementia 50%

Of our wider volunteer 83% 'feel valued' and 'It's good to feel part of something bigger' (66%). One volunteer commented that her involvement with Forget Me Notes had helped with her own situation i.e how to respond when a family member was recently diagnosed with dementia.

Training and Support

In 2024 we ran a two part training for new volunteers, two ongoing volunteer training sessions on loss/endings, and another on using percussion (we now have a varied collection of instruments which volunteers borrow). We also held several zoom supervision sessions, a summer picnic, a music and food Halloween event getting to know the wider staff, and a volunteers' Christmas Karaoke. Plus many hours of individual support by phone, email, text, zoom and in-person. In our survey 95% of volunteers said they felt well supported in their role.

Overall, we are especially pleased that our volunteer retention rate is high, with only one volunteer leaving within the last calendar year to return to her Spanish homeland. 87% of our volunteers have been with us for more than 18 months, and several of those since the project began in January 2022.

Comments

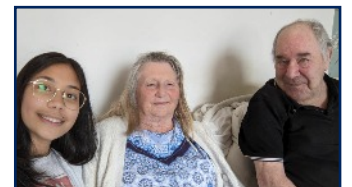
"More confidence now than when I first went to the nursing home. The group setting suits me well, I really enjoy it and love to see their faces, it makes it worthwhile."

"The visit log has been helpful. I am more aware of my feelings."

"I have experienced a lot of openness since I started volunteering and I would like others to experience this openness too (which I think a lot of people already do when coming to events). I also learned a lot about being your unique self and this is very important to me."

"I love being part of the Project!"

"I have just found a real love of different music."



Forget me notes



I know someone who would like a visit

We offer fortnightly home visits to people in Edinburgh, and give priority to those who are most isolated. Referrals can be made by family, carers or professionals; please contact us for a form and we will let you know availability.

I'd like to be a volunteer

If you believe everyone has a story to tell, that the power of music changes lives, and have time to spare each fortnight please read more on our webpage or contact us by email.

www.forgetmenotes.org.uk/volunteering

What else does Forget Me Notes offer?

Our community CHOIRS are dementia-friendly and open to all. Drop in and join us any time!

St. Bride's, every Monday 10.45-11.45am
St. Brides Centre, 10 Orwell Terrace, EH11 2DZ

Zoom Choir (online) - every Monday at 4pm. Email admin@forgetmenotes.org.uk for details

Choir in the Park - 1st & 3rd Thursday of every month at 1.45pm, Saughton Park, EH11 3BQ - Bandstand in summer/Glasshouse in winter

Forget Me Notes Choir - 2nd & 4th Thursday of every month at 4pm, Salvation Army Hall, 431 Gorgie Road, EH11 2RT

Ashbrook - 1st & 3rd Friday of the month 11am - 12noon followed by Dementia-friendly Café, Ashbrook House, 492 Ferry Road, EH5 2DL

Our MUSIC MEMORIES group sessions use music and singing to help people tell their stories and express themselves. We deliver sessions in care homes and other community settings around the city. We also have an 'open' session where anybody is welcome:

Music, Memories & Cake! - 1st & 3rd Monday of the month 2pm - 3pm, St Cuthbert's Episcopal Church, Colinton Road, EH13 0BB

What about the future?

We are delighted with how the volunteer 'arm' of Forget Me Notes has developed in just 3 short years, and especially how much it has become a collaborative part of the overall project. As we move into 2025 we are learning all the time about how to help the volunteer project run even better. Being able to provide more services is dependent on the capacity of staff hours; it's important we never lose the personal touch which can adapt and respond to each individual dementia journey - whilst also seeking to expand our dream to embed music into the day to day care of all those living with dementia.

How can I donate to your work?

You can donate via our website, at any of our events, or by using this QR code



Sign up for our weekly or quarterly news via our website www.forgetmenotes.org.uk

We'd like to thank The RS Macdonald Trust for their generous support of the Volunteer Project in 2024/25



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