

Music Helps (UK): Pilot Impact Summary

Background

Inspired by the successful Swedish training course 'Mötas i musik' and our subsequent adaptation 'Music Helps (India)', 'Music Helps (UK)' was developed as a new approach to providing training for caregivers of people living with dementia in the UK, after the COVID pandemic challenged the viability of *Music as Therapy International's* traditional in-person training model.

The interactive online course draws on music therapy techniques to inspire and equip caregivers to use music to facilitate interaction and support the care of someone living with dementia.

Created with the help of 32 contributors (representing a range of care roles, ages, and varying heritage and lived experiences), the resultant course incorporated illustrations, care experiences, interactive games, and musical examples reflecting a rich variety of perspectives.

Free to access and a total of 3 hours in length, Music Helps (UK) was launched for pilot in March 2024.

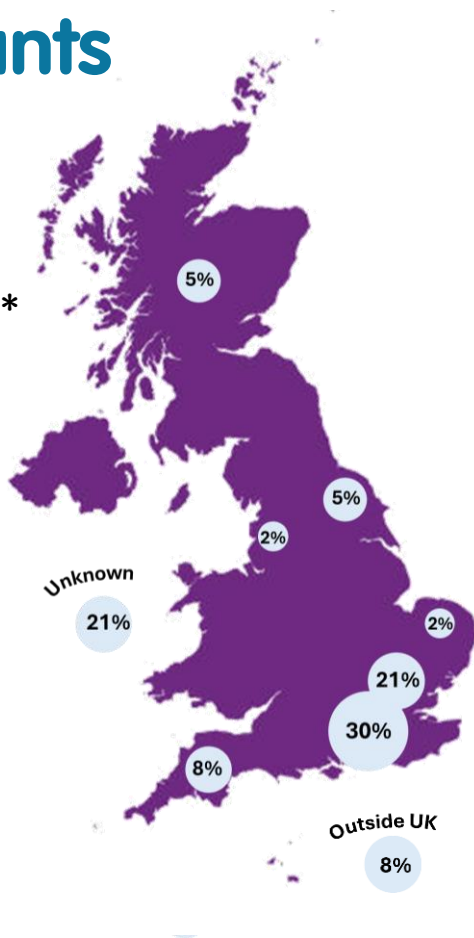


Pilot participants

55 participants

19 course graduates*

- 40% professional caregiver
- 16% role unknown
- 12% family caregiver
- 9% musician
- 7% other practitioner
- 7% support worker
- 2% volunteer
- 2% local authority employee



Participants came from across the UK, with the majority located in London and the South East and an unexpected subset participating from countries overseas.

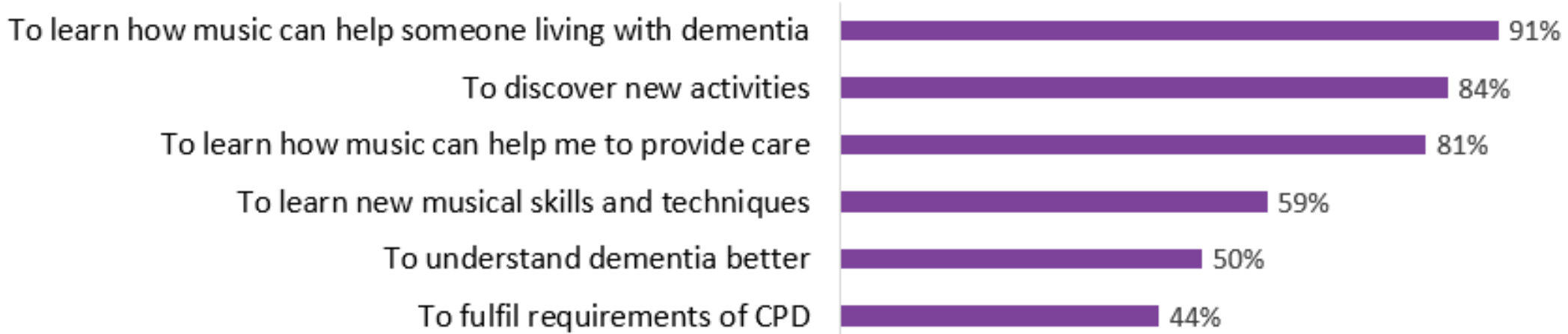
Within the group of course participants, professional caregiver was the most strongly represented role (including employees from more than 27 different organisations or care providers). 12% of participants told us they were family caregivers but a larger subset did not identify their role, amongst whom there might be further family members who do not identify as caregivers.

Word of mouth within the workplace was the primary way people discovered the course, and management support proved particularly important (54% discovered the course via their employer).

Motivation and learning aspirations

Pilot participants reported different and multiple motivations for undertaking Music Helps (UK): 87% were currently caring for, working with, or supporting someone living with dementia, whether in an employed capacity or as a family caregiver; some were motivated by their responsibilities for leading activities in their setting (12%) or their work as musicians (10%); a small group were undertaking the course in relation to their management responsibilities.

Participants' learning aspirations:



Participants' Experience of Music Helps (UK)

92% of participants said the content was relevant to their learning needs.

Practical/useful	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	(4.8)
Informative	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	(4.7)
Relevant	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	(4.6)
Enjoyable	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	(4.5)

“ It's been a fantastic course, easy to follow, and I have enjoyed completing the tasks.”



100%

of course graduates enjoyed participating in Music Helps (UK)

100%

of course graduates would recommend Music Helps (UK) to others

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

course graduates gave Music Helps (UK) an overall rating of 4.6/5

Course Impact

The positive impact of Music Helps (UK) on participants' knowledge, skills, personal wellbeing, and the wellbeing of those living with dementia in their care was strongly evidenced:

100%

of graduates said the course helped them to learn how music can help them to provide care

94%

of participants said the course helped them understand dementia better

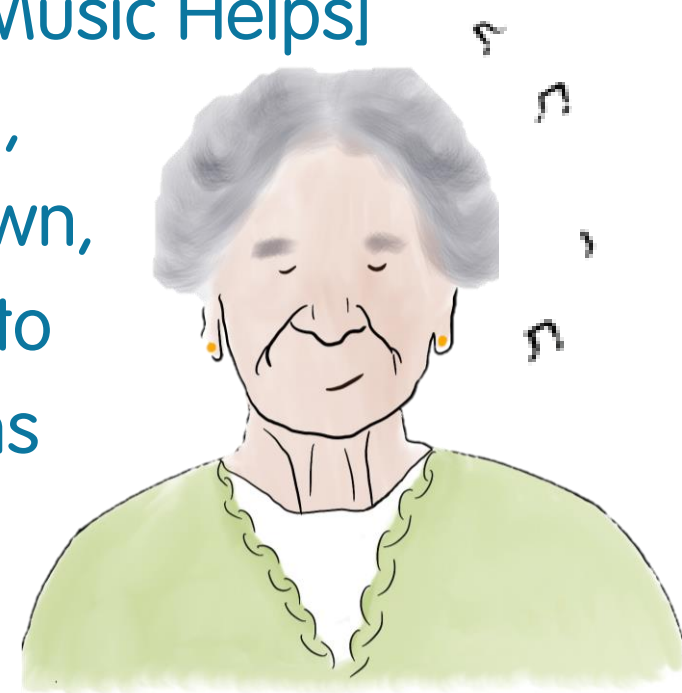
80%

of graduates said the course benefitted their wellbeing

91%

of participants said they learnt how music can help someone living with dementia

“ A lady I've been caring for for about 6 months has dementia and is bed-ridden and hardly speaks. Since I've watched the [Music Helps] videos, I started singing to her and now she sings along, and hums along to every song. Her confidence has grown, she speaks a few words, and yesterday she was trying to feed herself crumpets, which she's never done in months apparently. Thank you, it's really made a difference, not only for her but for her daughter as well.



Whilst 75% of participants were already using music in their care practice and 80% told us they were 'very confident' or 'quite confident' in their knowledge of dementia before starting the course, graduates reported a strong increase in their confidence in both areas after completing it:

67%



of graduates reported increased confidence in their **knowledge of how music** can support someone living with dementia.*

56%



of graduates reported increased confidence in their **knowledge of dementia***

*These figures are based on a small subset of graduates who provided feedback both before and after the course pilot (n=9)

100% of course graduates said they were confident to incorporate music into their care practice

“ Lots of good, practical examples that will be useful in different scenarios and with different people.

Reviewing their musical toolkit at the end of the course, enabled graduates to tell us exactly how they anticipated putting their learning into practice:

Singing together with someone living with dementia **100%**



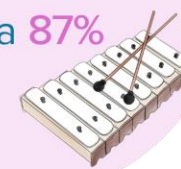
Using music as a diversion **93%**



Using music to start a conversation **93%**



Using instruments together with the person living with dementia **87%**



Using mirroring to connect with the person living with dementia **87%**



Adapting song lyrics to suit daily tasks **87%**



Creating a personalised playlist **87%**



Using music to care for yourself and de-stress **80%**



Using music to support someone at the end of their life **80%**



Using music to support movement **80%**



Using matching to connect with the person living with dementia **80%**



Using music to carry out a non-verbal conversation **80%**



“ The client I have enjoys me singing to him and listening to songs on my phone. That has made him more calm and a bit more talkative.

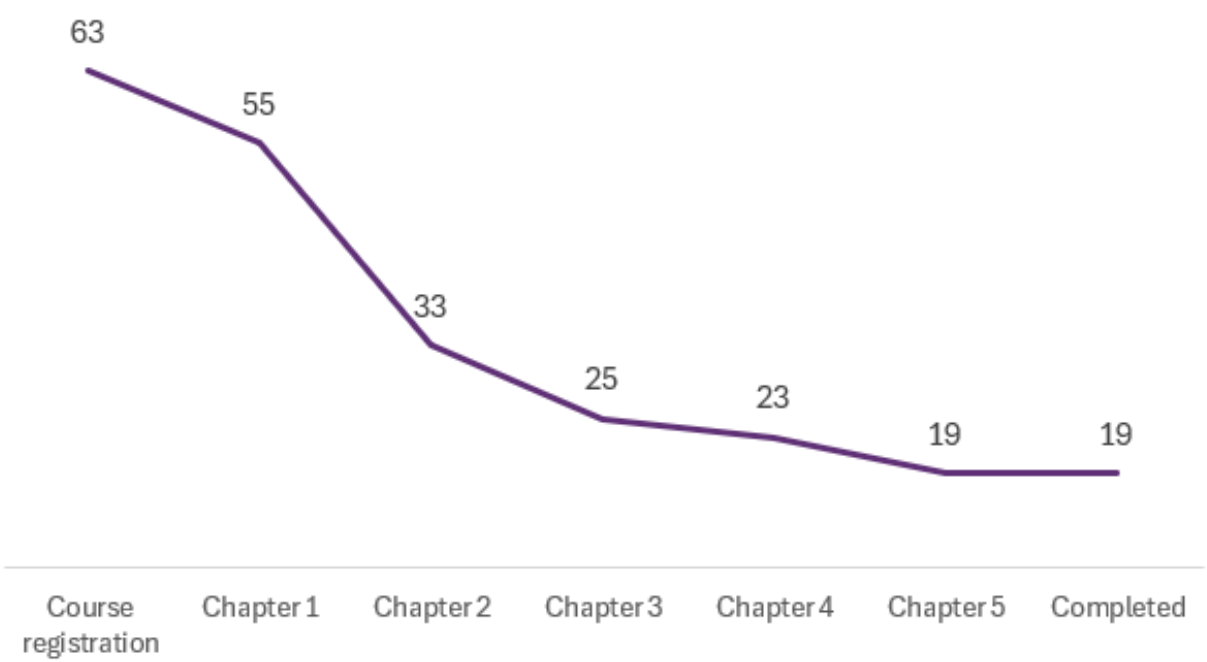
93% of graduates said they would use their learning from the course when caring for someone living with dementia (7% said they would like to but may not be able to due to external factors)

Course Attrition

Course attrition was highest very early on in enrollees' engagement with the course: of 63 people who enrolled, 12% did not go on to start the course and 34% completed the full course.

Feedback was only successfully elicited from 5 people who dropped out from the course: 3 people told us they hoped to resume the course and 2 told us the course content was not relevant to what they wanted to learn.

Our participants' ability to progress through the course is likely to be challenged by the wider demands of caregiving and attrition may be inevitable. However, a number of recommendations included at the end of this report show initial thoughts to mitigate this risk, including how we set participants' expectations and steward them through the course.



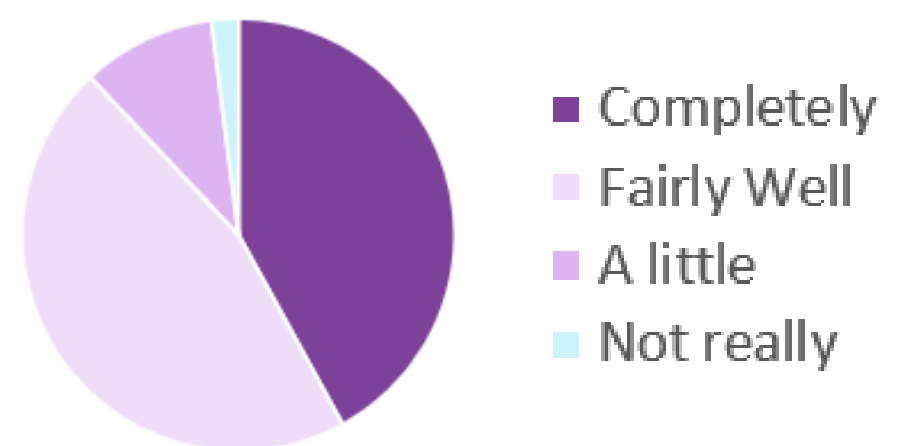
Course Relevance

“ I think the course is designed well for people from all backgrounds.

The pie chart here illustrates the extent to which respondents felt the course content was reflective of the wide range of people from different backgrounds/walks of life here in the UK.

It was of note that a small number of people chose not to answer this question, which may suggest some uncertainty or discomfort about articulating views on representation.

Unfortunately, a subsequently identified limitation within our survey design meant that the 5% of participants who told us they did not feel represented could not tell us if this was due to a specific aspect of their personal experience (e.g. gender, heritage, race, age, role, musical preferences etc.)



95% of participants said the course was representative of their personal experience

“ I found the course really useful on many levels. As a music in healthcare practitioner, I use a lot of the techniques used in the training. However, it has been informative as to why they are useful for people living with dementia and to understand dementia better.



Key Learnings

- Wide take up of the pilot of Music Helps (UK) evidenced demand for training about music in dementia care
- Music Helps (UK) is widely relevant and highly relatable
- We retained Music Helps' wide accessibility when tailoring the course for a UK audience
- Music Helps (UK) equips caregivers with skills and learning which can be immediately applied in practice
- Music Helps (UK) can afford immediate benefits to people living with dementia
- Music Helps (UK) can deepen caregivers' understanding and build their confidence
- Music Helps (UK) is enjoyable to complete and benefits caregivers' wellbeing
- Improving the enrolment process and strengthening stewardship could improve participant retention

Conclusions and Recommendations

Music Helps (UK) can effectively equip caregivers with a musical toolkit and skills to apply learning in practice, bolstering confidence in their knowledge of dementia and affording immediate benefits to those in their care, while also supporting caregivers' own wellbeing. As such, it will remain available in its current form.

However, there is scope to strengthen the course and, informed by our key learning, we will be undertaking the following recommendations in 2025:

- 1 To address one of the contributing factors to course attrition, we will explore embedding Music Helps (UK) onto the charity's own website, strengthen its visibility and seek to improve the user journey.
- 2 Having identified the importance of management support to recruit participants, working with care providers will be critical to increasing the reach of Music Helps (UK) across the dementia care workforce, including those who have no prior experience of using music within their care practice. We will explore the potential to secure CPD credits for the course, which may prove further incentive for care providers to promote Music Helps (UK) to their staff.
- 3 In the knowledge of its relevance to family caregivers, we will explore new avenues to extend its reach to this group.
- 4 With the pilot complete, we will reduce the burden of feedback questionnaires for participants. We will retain the use of questionnaires for participants to reflect on their learning and share their experiences but reduce data collection to the minimum required for monitoring and evaluation purposes.
- 5 We will undertake some course improvements where pilot participants have identified vulnerabilities. These include improving the audio quality in some places, guiding caregivers' choice to enrol with additional information relating to the level of training, undertaking wider consultation on LGBTQ+ representation, and exploring scope to build closed captions into the course to increase accessibility.
- 6 With graduates demonstrating a continued commitment to using music after completing the course and a desire to receive support in doing so, we will devise a programme of motivational email bulletins which will be sent regularly to graduates who sign up for them.
- 7 Prior to starting, 22% of course graduates said music did not feature very much in their care practice, whereas 100% of course graduates told us on course completion that music will feature in their future care provision. We will try to re-engage with course graduates after 6-12 months to understand the true lasting impact of this training.
- 8 The success of Music Helps (UK) and Music Helps (India) has demonstrated that it is possible to tailor the content of this online training to different cultural contexts. We will invite expressions of interest from people involved in music therapy and dementia care in other countries with a view to developing further country-specific adaptations of the course.

Thank you

We are grateful to Katarina Lindblad and Demenscentrum for their generosity in allowing us to build on their fantastic 'Mötas i music' course, and to our 32 project contributors, particularly Nina Cherla and Jane Robbie. We would like to thank everyone who helped us to extend the pilot's reach, in particular Music for Dementia and Karina Brown at Home Instead Bromley. We are incredibly grateful for the generosity of our donors who made this project possible, specifically The Utley Foundation, David Mayhew, and Jonathan Quin. Finally, we would like to thank the pilot participants for taking part in Music Helps (UK), providing their feedback and their commitment to using music!

Sign up for Music Helps (UK)!

If you are caring for, supporting or working with someone living with dementia and would like to learn more about how music can enhance the care you provide, scan the QR code or [sign up here](#) to enrol on Music Helps (UK).



For more information, take a look at our [course overview](#) or contact:

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