

## **Contact Us**

Dementia Inclusive Singing Network

Email: [singing@luminatescotland.org](mailto:singing@luminatescotland.org)

Phone: 0131 668 8066



**Dementia Inclusive  
Singing Network**

# **Making online singing activities more dementia inclusive**

**Created by the Dementia Inclusive Singing Network  
with the Age Scotland Dementia Training Team**

**Published October 2020**

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## Making online singing activities dementia inclusive

There are many things that can make an online singing activity more accessible for people with dementia. It is really important to recognise that everyone with dementia is different and therefore it is important to spend time before undertaking the activity to establish what the needs of each individual are.

### Technology

The technology itself can be a barrier for some people so more preparation may be needed to enable people to participate.

### Funding

Do people have access to the necessary technology? There may be funding available. Different types of funding opportunities for hardware and software are periodically available from:

- **Connecting Scotland** who aim to get 30,000 digitally excluded households online in 2020: <https://connecting.scot/>
- **FutureDotNow** who provide devices, connectivity and support across the UK through the **DevicesDotNow** campaign: <https://futuredotnow.uk/devicesdotnow/>

### Feeling confident with the technology

- ✓ **Invite people along to the session before** to go over the **technical side** of things and **gain confidence** with the platform.
- ✓ **Get to know individuals offline** as much as you can (on the phone if social distancing is in place).
- ✓ **Explain the process** for joining and taking part in the online activity: write it down / use visuals and pictures.
- ✓ **Discuss concerns.**
- ✓ **Practise** joining the online platform one-to-one until **comfortable and confident.**



- ✓ There may also be **organisations** that can help locally and give people some **technical support** in advance of going online.
- ✓ Create **'how to' guides** about getting online using different platforms which are personalised, printed out and sent to participants well in advance of online sessions. These can then be run through during a phone call and ahead of a one-to-one practice.
- ✓ **Making Music** have produced a guide to **using the online meeting platform Zoom for online choir rehearsals**:  
<https://www.makingmusic.org.uk/resource/zoom-online-rehearsals-vocal>
- ✓ **Community Makers** is a network of community groups that support people affected by dementia. There are **guides** about technical solutions and **case studies** of singing groups that have moved online:  
<https://communitymakers.co/home/>

## Online activity options

### Recorded "live" event ideas


Record a session, edit it and upload to YouTube, or send to people on a DVD. This way people can join in in their own time. You can include warm-ups as well as songs, and could add subtitles to increase accessibility. This method also allows people to replay and revisit sessions.

### Living singing event ideas

- Offer a **'cabaret style'** session allowing people to **sing solo or in duet with their partner / family member / carer**.
- Build in opportunities for **people to share songs** with and for each other, giving people a chance to provide **a musical offering for the group**.
- Give people a chance to hear each other through arranging a **ceilidh-style session** where everyone who wants to can **contribute a solo item** – a song, a poem, or a story.
- Have **themes** each time and encourage people to **dress up**, have **appropriate Zoom backgrounds** and suggest **songs and music related to the theme**. Employing themed sessions and allowing for preparation by participants in advance can build anticipation.



## During the activity

- Ensure there is time for '**digital hellos**' to establish personal connections.
  - Build in plenty of **social time** to sessions, for people to remain feeling connected to each other.
  - **Support carers** ahead of online activities too, especially if they are going to be supporting the person with dementia side by side during the activity.
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- **Sending song sheets, recordings / videos of songs and accompaniments** can help (both in advance and between sessions) to enable people to participate.
  - It can be helpful to think about **clear visual cues**, for example clear hand signals. Using physical objects and visual cues will ease communication.
  - Ensure that participants are **muted** and **understand why** this is necessary. This could be talked about prior to going online.
  - If using the platform Zoom, **Speaker View** can be helpful **when giving instructions** as it means people can see the person who is speaking. **When singing** people may prefer the **Gallery View** so they can see other people in the group.
  - The use of the **chat box** for questions and comments during the session may be helpful for some people so it is worth checking that people know how to use this if appropriate.
  - It is useful to have someone to provide **technical support** on a Video Conference call. They can help **monitor the chat box** and **check in with people** regularly.

## After the activity

Regularly and actively seek feedback from the group about how they are enjoying the sessions. Ask for suggestions for ways to improve them and ensure that you put those suggestions into practice.