

# Playlist for Life:

## Personalised music for people with dementia

**Aim:** Explore the benefits of introducing a Playlist for Life project on dementia assessment and complex care wards in NHS Lothian.

**"It's amazing!"**

### The Evidence:

There is significant evidence that suggests having regular access to music that is personally meaningful for a person with dementia can have positive effects on their wellbeing, (Sherratt et al. 2004), including:

- Improve mood, awareness, and sense of identity
- Reduce agitation and anxiety
- Restore meaningful interactions and relationships with others
- Enhance verbal communication
- Prompt recall of past memories and experiences

The areas of the brain associated in music recognition are said to be spared by neurological effects of dementia (Simmons-Stern et al. 2010).

Therefore using carefully selected music based on the person's preferences as a non-pharmalogical intervention, helps them recognise familiar memories from throughout their lifetime (Gerdner 2012) .

### The Project:

- Playlist for Life is a collaborative project between NHS clinical staff, Playlist for Life charity, The Edinburgh Volunteer Centre, patients and relatives which is set up across 6 dementia assessment and complex care wards in Edinburgh.
- It involves the creation and use of personalised music playlists for people with dementia, to improve their wellbeing and quality of life.
- Staff received training from the Playlist for Life charity (2016), and were then able to work with patients and relatives to identify specifically meaningful music and associated memories and compile this on to a playlist.
- Equipment kits were created including an iPod shuffle, two sets of headphones, splitter cable, portable speaker, power adapter and instructions which are loaned for patient to use regularly with support from staff or family.
- Once the patients move on from the ward their playlists are transferred onto their own iPod or CD so they can continue to use it in their new accommodation.

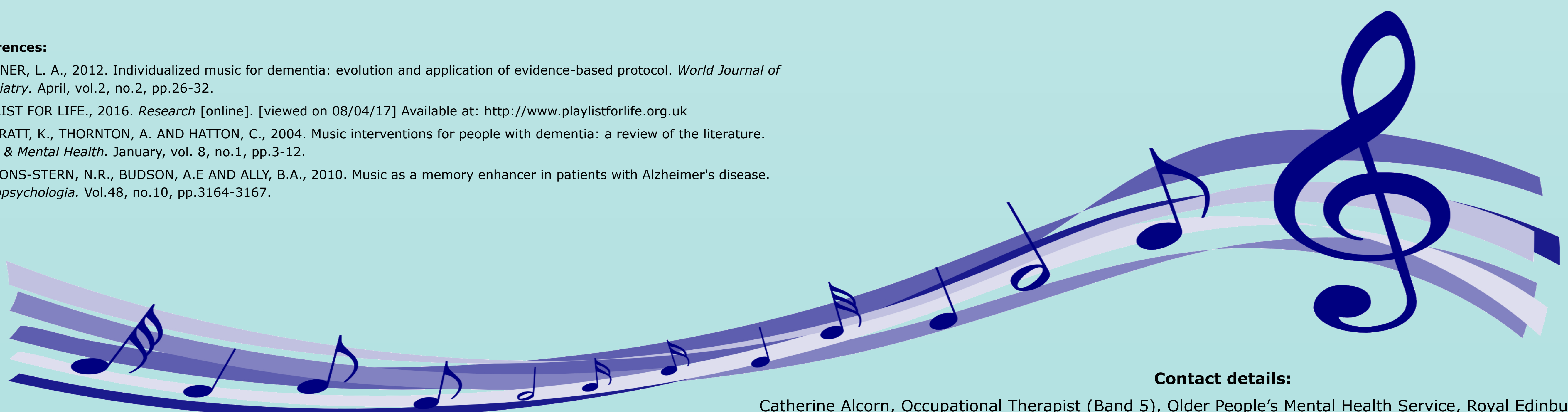


### The Feedback:

Initial evaluation of the project involved observations of listening sessions with patients, discussions with staff and relatives and feedback from a patient using the Emotional Touchpoint tool. People with dementia have shown positive signs of enjoying listening to their own playlists - being brighter in mood, reducing distressed behaviour and being more relaxed during and after sessions. It has helped with meaningful conversations where staff and relatives have been able to make a 'connection' with the person and use a different means of communication that allows opportunities to access past memories. It has given relatives something to do during visiting times and improved the quality of time they spend together. Staff have noted that it has helped them to get to know the person better.

### References:

- GERDNER, L. A., 2012. Individualized music for dementia: evolution and application of evidence-based protocol. *World Journal of Psychiatry*. April, vol.2, no.2, pp.26-32.
- PLAYLIST FOR LIFE., 2016. *Research* [online]. [viewed on 08/04/17] Available at: <http://www.playlistforlife.org.uk>
- SHERRATT, K., THORNTON, A. AND HATTON, C., 2004. Music interventions for people with dementia: a review of the literature. *Aging & Mental Health*. January, vol. 8, no.1, pp.3-12.
- SIMMONS-STERN, N.R., BUDSON, A.E AND ALLY, B.A., 2010. Music as a memory enhancer in patients with Alzheimer's disease. *Neuropsychologia*. Vol.48, no.10, pp.3164-3167.



### Contact details:

Catherine Alcorn, Occupational Therapist (Band 5), Older People's Mental Health Service, Royal Edinburgh Hospital. Email: [Catherine.Alcorn@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:Catherine.Alcorn@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk)

Morna Russell, Lead Occupational Therapist (Band 7), Older People's Mental Health Service, Royal Edinburgh Hospital. Email: [Morna.Russell@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:Morna.Russell@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk)