



Using Playlist for Life in Group Settings





Introduction

[Playlist for Life](#) advocates creating and using personalised playlists, but we recognise that not all Help Points or care professionals will be able to facilitate one to one activities.

The activity suggestions in this guide are designed to help you to incorporate music and memories into group settings but will also provide you with opportunities to tease out an individual's favourite songs over time. If in three, six or twelve-months' time, you have identified one or two favourite songs for a few of your service users, this will still make a huge difference! We know from experience that the right piece of music at the right time can be all someone needs to transform their mood and help them feel more like themselves again.

You could also consider letting family and friends of your service users know about any music-related activities you are running and use it as an opportunity to tell them about Playlist for Life. You might find that when see the benefits in action, they will want to help their loved one to put together a personalised playlist. For anyone who shows an interest, you can signpost them to our [website](#), point them to our free [webinars](#) and/or share our printed resources to help support them on their Playlist journey.

We want to reassure you that there is no right or wrong way to introduce the concept of music and memories to your participants. We hope the activities in this guide are useful, but please feel free to put your own spin on them and to have as much fun with it as possible!

All of these activities can be used for face-to-face settings or can be adapted for online sessions.





Tips to get started

Working with groups

Think about the size of group you are working with and if you want carers or volunteers to be present to take part or help. If you have a larger group, consider splitting into smaller groups with facilitators, where people can listen and contribute more easily. 45 minutes – 1 hour is usually long enough for a group session.

Keeping it dementia friendly

- Think about environment - run the group in a space where there are limited distractions. It can be hard for people with dementia to distinguish between sounds and having several things going on at the same time can be disorientating.
- Encourage people to share but don't put them on the spot. Some people with dementia may find direct questions relating to memory difficult.
- Consider using name badges and communication support cards

Individual playlists

Even when you are working with a group you can be thinking about the individual playlists of each participant. Take notes of the songs that people share or react positively to in the group activities for their individual personal playlist. You can note these down in our [Soundtrack for your life booklets](#) or find out how to put together a playlist on YouTube for them [here](#).

Internet Access

We recommend using a device that is connected to the internet so that you can play songs that are mentioned to the group in the moment. Even if you do not have an internet connection, you can still get the benefits of musical reminiscence by talking about the music or even starting a singalong! You might also consider staggering the conversations and the listening – gathering the songs one week and playing them the next. That way you will have time to gather the tunes between sessions.

Playing Music

If using a device to play music, make sure it is positioned somewhere everyone can hear it, fully charged, connected to the internet and you are familiar with the application (Spotify, YouTube etc.) you are using to play the music. You may want to use a speaker to amplify the sound. Cheap Bluetooth speakers can be acquired for under £10.

1. Playlist prompts

Conversation prompts can help us to think about our favourite memories and the music we associate with them. This can be a nice opportunity to get to know each other better by talking about and listening to the music that is personal to us.

You can use the [Conversation Starters](#) and [Soundtrack to your Life booklets](#) in your Help Point pack to spark memories and open up discussions with your group.

Here are some ideas for how you can use resources in your Help Point pack:

- Go through the themes and prompts conversation starter or Soundtrack to your Life booklet and encourage people to share songs for each one.
- Pair up group members and get them to work through the booklets together.

For some groups, it may work better to share the resources prior to the session and ask them to fill in some songs and memories beforehand. Others are quite happy to think on their feet! You'll figure out over time, what works best for your participants.

People with dementia may find it difficult to think of their own examples so always make sure to have some back up examples of your own to share to get things going.

Tip - Watch out for red flag songs



Remember that music can be emotional. A song that one person loves may be upsetting for another. If someone reacts negatively to a song suggested by the group then stop the music and if you can, take that person aside to make sure they are ok. Make a note of that song to ensure it isn't played around that person again.



2. Musical memory themes

In addition to using our Playlist for Life prompts you can pick out specific themes to base a whole session on.

- 1 Pick a theme for your session. For example, 'holidays', 'the 60s' or 'concerts we've been to'
- 2 Ask people to think of a song and memory on that theme that they would like to share. Sharing the theme in advance will participants to prepare a songs and memory
- 3 Play the tunes and discuss the memories attached with the group

You could also ask people to bring along props and photos related to the theme. For example, one volunteer themed a session around weddings, so people brought in photographs and spoke about and played the music they had at their wedding. One lady even brought in her dress!



3. 100 Years book

[Playlist for Life's 100 Years book: A Century of Song](#) is a resource that lists the top 100 tunes in the UK from 1915–2015. You can use this to prompt people's memories of the songs they loved earlier in life – you may be surprised how many they might have forgotten about!

- 1 Pick a decade from the 100 Years Book. Try to pick a decade from your groups Memory Bump, or pick a few decades if you have a wide range of ages.
- 2 Print out multiple copies of the booklet for your participants.
- 3 Hand out the booklets to the group. Ask participants to shout out the songs they remember and, if using a device, play it for the group to hear and encourage them to share memories from that time in their life. Participants could also pick songs to play at random and see if they spark a memory for anyone else in the group

If your participants struggle to read the print, you could read the songs out loud for the group and ask them to shout when they remember one or perhaps even ask them to sing it for you before you play the recording!

Every decade from the 100 Years Book has an accompanying pre-made Spotify playlist – if you have access to Spotify you can access these in three main ways:

1. Opening your camera app and letting it focus on the QR code on your booklet – click on the link that pops up and you'll be redirected to the appropriate playlist on Spotify.
2. Type '[playlistdementia](#)' in the search bar, click See All and scroll to the bottom to find the appropriate year.
3. Click through the links below:

[1930s](#) [1940s](#) [1950s](#) [1960s](#) [1970s](#) [1980s](#) [1990s](#) [2000s](#)

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4. Film and TV themes quiz

Theme tunes from favourite films and TV shows throughout our lives are great additions to a personalised playlist. They also make for a fun activity!

We have resources you can use to find tunes to play for your own TV and film quiz.

BBC Music Memories - visit www.bbc.co.uk/musicmemories. Click on 'Theme Tunes' and get access to 30 second clips of famous TV themes.

Spotify Page- visit <https://open.spotify.com/user/playlistdementia>. Click 'see all' to view our list of ready-made playlists. We have a range of film and TV related ones.

Running your quiz:

- 1 Make sure players have something to write their answers on or tell participants they can shout out answers as they go. Whatever works best for your group
- 2 Set up your laptop and visit www.bbc.co.uk/musicmemories. Click on 'Theme Tunes' or visit our Spotify page and find our film and TV playlists
- 3 Play a snippet and ask people to write down the programme
- 4 Give everyone a few minutes then move on to another snippet. 10–15 tunes is a good length for a round

Feel free to use any of the pre-made playlist on our Spotify page that are most appropriate to your group – we have playlists by genre, decade, location, hobbies, places and more.

If you can't play music out loud then try our Guess the missing song lyric quiz. You can find quiz sheet to print at <https://www.playlistforlife.org.uk/guess-the-missing-song-lyrics-activity/>

Further ideas

You can also incorporate musical memories into your existing group activities:

- Add some records or musical sounds to a reminiscence box
- Create a group playlist with a meaningful tune from each participant to play during other activities
- Work on a playlist of tunes relevant to your group. A Help Point based at The Shed in Tameside created a [sport themed playlist](#) for their sessions
- Get involved with our annual Musical Tea campaign
- Run a themed Musical Tea for a birthday, local celebration or other key events at your Help Point

You can find further information on making and using playlists on our resources page - <https://www.playlistforlife.org.uk/resources/>

Share your ideas and activities with other Help Points on our [Facebook Group](#)!



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