

Meeting	Community Development Committee
Date	3 rd December 2024
Report Title	Memory Café & Companion Café Update
Agenda Reference	6
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Memory Café Co Ordinator's Recommendations.

1. To note report.

October

In October, the Memory Café was delighted to host two engaging musical and literary events.

The month began with a performance by Ukebox Jury, a local ukulele trio whose uplifting music highlighted the profound neurological benefits of musical experiences. Research demonstrates that music stimulates multiple brain regions simultaneously, particularly those connected to memory, emotion, and motor skills. The musicians generously donated their performance fees to the Alzheimer's Society.

Later in the month, on October 23rd, Matt from the Wiltshire Literacy Society brought joy and mental stimulation to the gathering. He shared an entertaining mix of poems, stories, and interactive riddles that captivated attendees and filled the room with laughter and enthusiasm.

Additionally, volunteer Keren hosted a singing for brain training session, organised by the Memory Café Co-ordinator through the Swindon Alzheimer's Society. This was Keren's first group performance, which was warmly received by participants. The session generated valuable feedback and ideas for future collaborative musical activities.

November

The Memory Café warmly welcomed November with a delightful handbell performance that beautifully combined professional musicianship and interactive participation. After an initial demonstration of handbell music, the session invited residents to join in, playing familiar songs together. This approach not only provided musical entertainment but also encouraged active engagement, allowing participants to create music collectively and enjoy the shared experience of recognisable melodies.

The Memory Café concluded the session with an introductory Tai Chi workshop. This gentle, mindful movement practice offered participants a chance to explore a holistic form of exercise known for its benefits in balance, coordination, and mental well-being, particularly valuable for individuals living with dementia.

The Memory Café coordinator also hosted the first Barn Dance, details of this event are covered in the post-event audit.

Companion Café

The Companion Café hosted Dee, an Admiral Nurse from Great Western Hospital, whose expertise in dementia care proved invaluable. Admiral Nurses specialise in providing nuanced support that goes beyond medical care. Their unique skill of validating caregivers' experiences is particularly powerful, as caregiving can be an overwhelming journey filled with emotional and practical challenges. By acknowledging and normalising caregivers' concerns, these professionals offer critical emotional support and reassurance.

Right at Home, a professional care service, also visited to discuss their home care options. Such professional support services are crucial for both individuals living with dementia and their caregivers. These services enable people with dementia to remain in their comfortable, familiar environments while simultaneously providing essential respite for caregivers who often experience significant stress and exhaustion.

The café's volunteers enriched the gathering with a range of engaging activities, including word searches, crafting, and group singing. This variety of stimulating interactions is beneficial for individuals living with dementia. Each activity serves a distinct cognitive and emotional purpose, helping to maintain mental engagement, fine motor skills, social connection, and overall well-being.

Sensory Community Garden

In preparation for winter, the Memory Café Coordinator and the Parks & Open Spaces Team collaborated to tidy up the sensory garden. Their joint effort ensured the garden was properly maintained and ready to withstand the colder months, preserving the space for future enjoyment and therapeutic use by Memory Café participants.

Working Towards

- Ideas on creating a promotional package to attract potential funding and sponsorship for Memory Café and Companion Café activities, working with the Marketing & Events Co Ordinator.
- Initiating work on community noticeboards to increase local awareness of both café programs.
- Finalising the Community Garden project in collaboration with the Parks & Open Spaces Team over the coming months.
- Recruiting volunteers for the Companions Café, Memory Café and Sensory Garden.
- Working with the Deputy Clerk & Services Manager on the future provision and expansion of the Memory Café, by exploring alternative venue options.
- Planning the first six months of the upcoming year.
- Strengthening the Companion Café's structure and focusing on meeting companions' specific needs.
- Networking with other carer facilities to enhance support and resources.
- Finalised planning for the Christmas Café and Christmas meal, with all bookings confirmed.

Memories from the Memory Café



Sensory Garden Winter Tidy Up



Companion Café Pictures

