DEMENTIA© DISCO



Impact Report 2026

Contents

3	Foreword	16	Case studies
4	Our strategic foundations	20	Our future plans
6	Our story	22	Partner with us
9	Our impact in numbers	24	Our supporters
11	Our strategic objectives	26	Looking ahead: A note from our Chair



Dementia Disco

A warm welcome from our Director

Welcome to Dementia Disco's very first Impact Report. As Co-Founder and Director of the charity it is an absolute privilege to showcase the difference our pioneering work has been making up and down the country over the last 7 years.

Dementia Disco was born out of our family's experience and that of many others that people living with dementia often face social isolation, a lack of physical movement, and an unfair 'joy gap' in their everyday lives. We wanted to change that. Our belief is simple but radical: we want to give everyone living with dementia the opportunity to improve their mental and physical wellbeing through dance.

Today, Dementia Disco is transforming how people experience dementia. By using music, movement, and community we are creating moments of pure joy, deep connection, and true understanding. We are providing people living with dementia, their carers, family, and friends the opportunity to experience a proper night out in a safe space, to experience normalcy, connection, laughter, and, of course, dance!

In the last year we have grown from a single grassroots idea into a rapidly expanding national movement. We now run twelve weekend discos every month across England stretching from as far north as Northumberland down to London. But we don't want to stop there. To make this sustainable and truly widespread, we want to empower local communities across England and Wales to run their own discos by providing them with a Run Your Own disco toolkit, training, and ongoing support.

Making sure our weekend discos are accessible to everyone is very important to us. They are fully funded and completely free to attend, and we host them in the early evenings, providing a free meal to everyone who comes. We are also bringing this magic increasingly into care homes.

We hope our commitment to making a difference comes through in this report which aims to go beyond just numbers and stats to tell the many stories about how lives are being deeply changed by our work. It is a celebration of our values, our belief in the power of a joyful rebellion, our experience that the community leads the dance, and our commitment to ensuring that the dancefloor belongs to everyone.

Thank you to our incredible volunteers, partners, and, most importantly, our disco-goers, for making this movement possible. Together, we are proving that you can live well, connect deeply, and celebrate life with dementia, one dance at a time.



Kate Darby
Co-Founder & Director of Dementia Disco

Our strategic foundations



Our vision

A world where every person living with dementia can experience the joy of music and dance.



Our mission

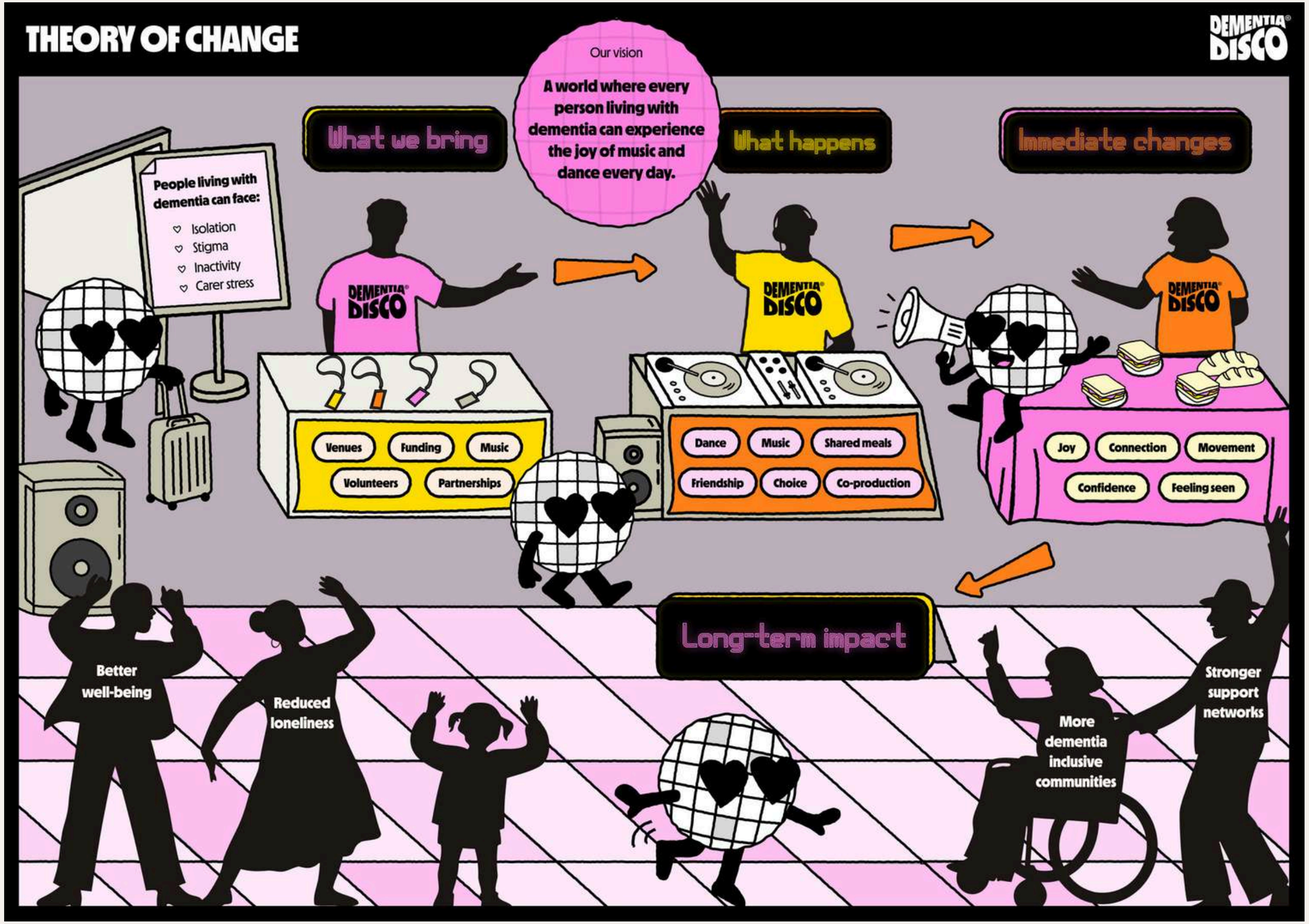
To bring everyone affected by dementia into a joyful rebellion through a national network of inclusive discos where music, dance, and human connection help people live well every day.



Our values

- **Joyful Rebellion:** We believe in joy as an act of resistance, actively challenging the status quo.
- **A Dancefloor for Everyone:** Commitment to total inclusion.
- **The Community Leads the Dance:** We are proudly community-led.
- **Everybody Dance Now:** Fostering deep human connection.
- **Celebrate Good Times:** Passionate about celebrating life.

Our Theory of Change



Our story



Our story

Since our inception in 2019, Dementia Disco has grown from a grassroots, volunteer-led idea into a rapidly expanding movement. The past two years have marked a period of profound transformation, combining our signature community energy with rising national recognition and structured growth.

Financial resilience & growth

From 2019 to 2024, the costs of running the first 2 Dementia Discos were mainly covered by raffles held at each event and small donations, along with funding from local Councils and small grants. The rapid expansion of our operations, since appointing our director, has required a more diverse funding profile. In 2025, our income grew by nearly 300%, rising from £13.8k in 2024 to £55k. This progress was built on a diverse and resilient funding mix:

- **Grants: £20.4k**
- **Donations: £16.1k**
- **Community, Events and annual fundraiser : ~£18.2k** (raffles, merchandise, care home discos)

This diverse mix has substantially boosted our unrestricted reserves, ensuring long-term stability and operational agility. Our team's dedication was also recognised locally when we won the Volunteer Team Award at Stockport Rocks 2024.



THE FORE

A turning point: from volunteer-led to professionally driven

In September 2024, a transformative grant from The Fore enabled us to fund our first paid role. This milestone marked our shift into a sustainable, structured operational model while fully retaining the passion and community spirit at our core.



Expanding our profile on the national stage

Our momentum accelerated dramatically following a feature on BBC Breakfast's Rise and Shine segment in January 2026. The immediate national exposure triggered a step-change in our reach:

- ♡ 20 new disco locations identified and placed in development.
- ♡ 50 new volunteer applications received in just one month.
- ♡ Over 250 new mailing list subscribers.
- ♡ £1,600+ in direct donations. A major new corporate partnership successfully secured.

This national spotlight, alongside being nominated for the prestigious King's Award for Voluntary Service, reflects our evolving role as a vital contributor to public health, inclusion, and community wellbeing.

Our delivery stats (inception to early 2026)



250+

venue-based community discos delivered

42

care home discos hosted reaching isolated residents



12,500

total attendances across all events



12,500

free meals provided to our community

350

attendees across our 5 annual Blackpool Tower Ballroom trips

42

online discos held to maintain connection during lockdowns

104

guests at our largest disco to date - Christmas party 2025

High-profile visits

Welcomed Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham (now Prime Minister) in November 2025

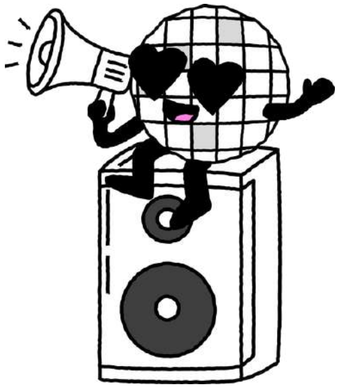


Our digital & social reach

- **100%** recommendation rate on Facebook
- **5,798** followers across digital platforms
- **342k** social media post impressions
- **20k** active web users (with 3,000+ visiting in a single day post-BBC broadcast)
- **9.26%** engagement rate (well above the voluntary sector industry average)

What our disco-goers tell us

- **97%** feel more connected to others
- **93%** experience increased social interaction
- **85%** recall precious memories through the power of music
- **73%** feel more energised after our sessions



Dementia Disco

Our strategic objectives



Dementia Disco

Objective 1

Closing the 'Joy Gap' and ensuring accessibility

We are fully committed to addressing the ‘joy gap’, the inequality in access to inclusive experiences for people living with dementia, which is heavily influenced by income, mobility, and location. Meaningful social activities are not evenly distributed; those in disadvantaged communities face additional barriers to connection.

What we are delivering & the difference it makes

We are laying the foundations for a highly equitable delivery model by removing physical and financial barriers to participation:

- **Zero cost:** All our weekend community discos are fully funded, completely free to attend, and include a complimentary meal.
- **Dismantling travel barriers:** Expanding from a single venue to multiple community spaces brings the joy closer to home.
- **Direct outreach:** By taking our discos directly into care homes, we provide access to less mobile or deeply isolated individuals who cannot travel to traditional provision.



Future Strategic Initiatives

Accessible Transport: We might look to partner with community transport schemes to provide free door-to-door travel for those without private transport.

Sensory-Friendly Design: Incorporating quiet breakout spaces and adapted lighting to support individuals prone to sensory overload.

Dementia Disco

Objective 2

Improving wellbeing and reducing loneliness

Living with dementia often reduces confidence and isolates both the individual and their carers. Our discos provide a safe, judgment-free sanctuary where the heavy fog of dementia lifts, allowing attendees to reclaim independence and happiness through movement and music.

The impact on carers and individuals

Our consistent schedule supports immediate mood improvements and long-term reductions in isolation, providing a vital space for peer support where carers can share experiences and alleviate emotional pressure.

"To see my John at ease and happy listening to the music is the best feeling. It helps with his anxiety and general wellbeing."

"Seeing people's eyes light up with the music… dancing when they wouldn't normally do."

"Makes me realise that I am not alone in my role… there are so many of us."

"Just being around like-minded people having a normal drink and dance."



Impact in care settings & on volunteers

In care homes, staff report **increased movement, physical stimulation, and unexpected moments of recognition** from residents who typically do not participate in group activities.

Simultaneously, **94% of our volunteers describe our events as joyful,** reporting a heightened sense of purpose and a deeper personal understanding of dementia.

Future Strategic Initiatives

Peer Support Networks: post-disco social sessions that allow carers to connect, share resources, and reduce emotional burnout.

Personalised Music Therapy: Integrating tailored playlists to trigger reminiscence, reduce anxiety, and encourage active participation.

Care Staff Empowerment: Providing care teams with music-led activity toolkits to sustain movement and connection between visits.

Dementia Disco

Objective 3

Increasing public awareness and reducing stigma

Rather than relying on passive awareness, we take an experiential approach. We use music and dance to challenge public perceptions of what people living with dementia can achieve, shifting the narrative from limitation to possibility.

Media advocacy & grassroots campaigns

Our digital platforms and national media features (including the BBC Breakfast red sofa) act as powerful tools to convert passive awareness into tangible action.

- **Dance Against Dementia:** This campaign combined storytelling and public participation, logging 5,668 dances to actively protest the removal of the dementia diagnosis target from the NHS Operational Planning Guidance.
- **From Stigma to Acceptance:** Direct interaction at our discos builds widespread community confidence. As one family member noted: "He's finally accepting that Mum has dementia… he's less embarrassed now."



Future Strategic Initiatives

Youth & School Engagement: Delivering workshops in schools to educate young people to break down generational stigma.

Community 'Dementia-Friendly' Training: Educating local businesses to create safe, welcoming environments for attendees.

Lived-Experience Advocacy: Empowering people living with dementia to co-host events and lead public campaigns, shifting focus from limitation to leadership.

Dementia Disco

Objective 4

Growing a sustainable national network

To meet skyrocketing demand, we are transitioning from a single-organisation delivery structure into a scalable, community-led network. By lowering barriers to entry, we empower local volunteers, care providers, and organisations to take ownership of the model.

Empowering local communities

Our rapid expansion, growing to 12 events each month proves that our model is highly replicable.

- **Volunteer pipeline:** We converted a massive influx of public interest into 74 active, approved volunteers equipped to run independent sessions.
- **A proven blueprint:** By providing care homes and local leaders with the training, tools, and infrastructure to run their own discos, we are ensuring that the future of dementia support is built on sustainable, community-led infrastructure across the UK.



Digital Toolkit & Portal: Delivering a self-service 'Disco-in-a-Box' platform to enable new groups to launch events quickly with central quality assurance.

Regional Hub Mentoring: Pairing new local hosts with experienced lead volunteers to ensure smooth setup and long-term retention.
Care Staff Empowerment:

Diversified Funding Streams: Supporting local hubs to secure regional grants and Integrated Care Board (ICB) funding for localised financial self-sufficiency.

Dementia Disco

Case studies



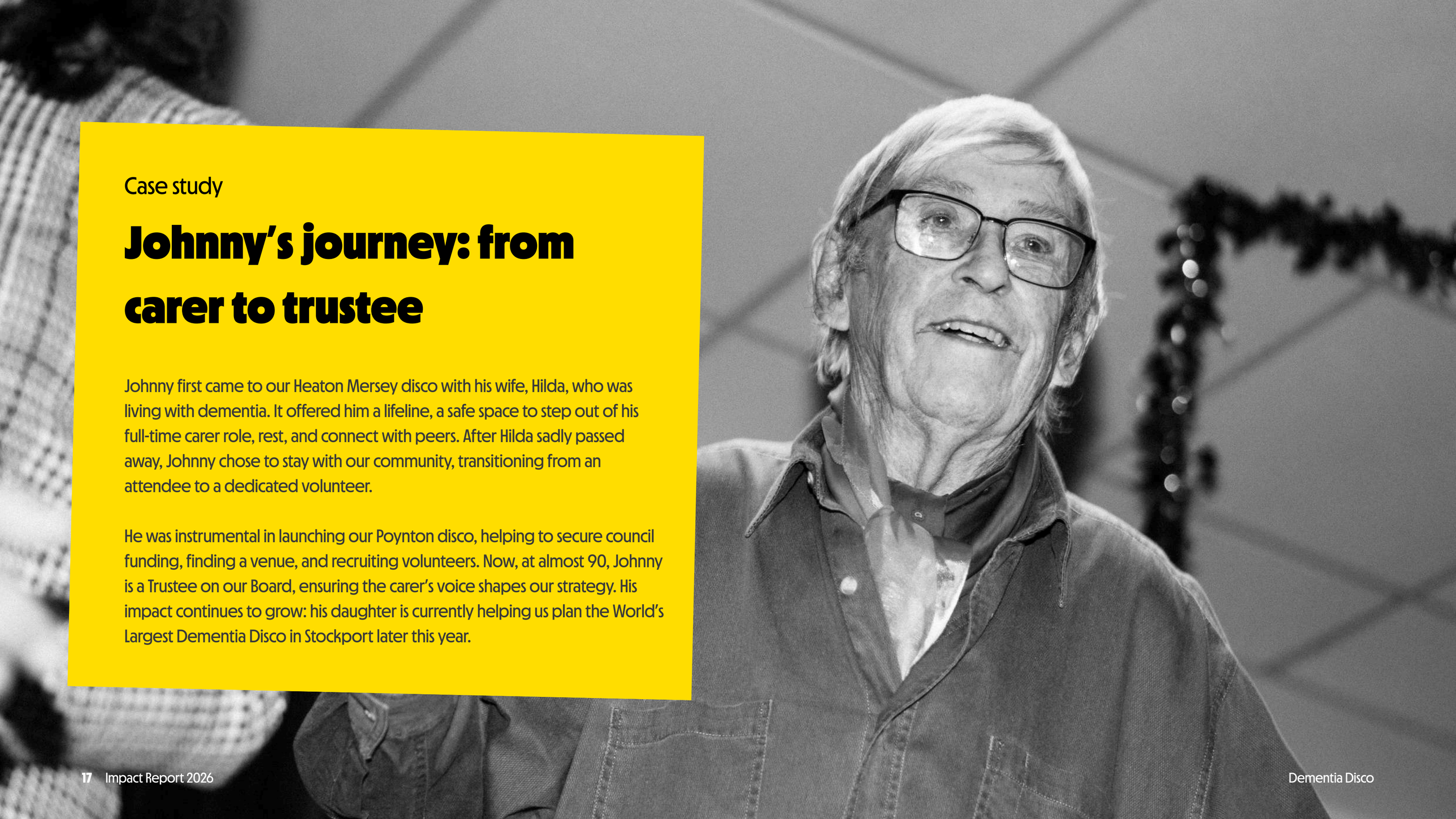
Dementia Disco

Case study

Johnny's journey: from carer to trustee

Johnny first came to our Heaton Mersey disco with his wife, Hilda, who was living with dementia. It offered him a lifeline, a safe space to step out of his full-time carer role, rest, and connect with peers. After Hilda sadly passed away, Johnny chose to stay with our community, transitioning from an attendee to a dedicated volunteer.

He was instrumental in launching our Poynton disco, helping to secure council funding, finding a venue, and recruiting volunteers. Now, at almost 90, Johnny is a Trustee on our Board, ensuring the carer's voice shapes our strategy. His impact continues to grow: his daughter is currently helping us plan the World's Largest Dementia Disco in Stockport later this year.



Dementia Disco



Case study

“The best thing in the world": how Sandra lights up the dancefloor

Cheadle resident Sandra lives with dementia, but at our discos, she is always the first person on the dancefloor. Alongside her husband and carer, Phil, Sandra brings a vibrant energy that recently captured the nation's heart.

In January 2026, Sandra became the star of our BBC Breakfast Rise and Shine feature. When asked about her love for music, her passion cut straight through her cognitive challenges as she beamed: "The best thing in the world, dancing. Don't care about anything else." Phil highlights the vital lifeline these sessions provide: "She can't remember anything more than 24 hours... [but] she still wants to go out and enjoy herself." Our discos offer a safe, judgment-free sanctuary where the heavy fog of dementia lifts, allowing Sandra to reclaim her joy. Her story, celebrated again on the BBC Breakfast red sofa in June with our Director, Kate, is a powerful testament to the impact of The Fore funding, showing how grassroots support keeps local residents active, connected, and truly shining.

Dementia Disco



Case study

Reclaiming joy on the dancefloor: Sally & Chris

For several years, 80-year-old Sally and her daughter Chris have been cherished members of our Dementia Disco community.

As a former line dancer, music holds a special place in Sally's life. Whenever we play her favourite track, "Elvira", Sally steps into her element, remembering every move and teaching her fellow disco-goers. A stand-out moment came in November 2025 when the then Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, visited the disco. Sally not only met her hero, but she also coaxed him onto the dancefloor to teach him her signature "Elvira" line dance!

Witnessing the pure joy and connection the discos bring her mum; Chris is now cycling from London to Brighton to raise vital funds for Dementia Disco.

Sally and Chris embody what our community is all about: preserving identity, celebrating shared memories, and creating unforgettable new ones.

Our future plans



Our future plans

Scaling the joyful rebellion

Dementia Disco is poised for a significant national expansion, driven by a mission to eliminate the 'joy gap' for families affected by dementia across the UK. Over the next three years, we aim to launch **60 new community discos** through a structured roll-out plan: starting with 10 in the next 12 months, 20 the following year, and 30 the year after.

To fuel this sustainable growth, we are developing a robust corporate partnership offering, seeking business sponsorships to fund these vital hubs.

Closer to home, we remain deeply rooted in our local community with three new discos currently in the pipeline for the Stockport area.



Beyond our standard weekend events, our future strategy focuses on deep community empowerment and education:

- **Care home expansion**
  We are scaling our care home presence to 10 discos per month, whilst simultaneously equipping local communities with the tools to run their own care home sessions independently.

- **Dementia awareness training**
  We are in the early stages of developing an innovative training programme. This will incorporate dementia simulation, highlight the therapeutic power of music and dance, and offer practical guidance on how businesses can better support employees who are balancing work with caring for a loved one.

- **Dance Without Barriers: Expanding Reach to Every Home and Bedside**
  Daily Dance; Ailsa McPhee, professional dancer, is creating 240 dance videos with targeted exercises designed to prevent falls. We will also bring remote discos directly into homes and care home settings. Crucially, live-streamed sessions will reach right into bedrooms for residents who are bed bound.

By empowering communities and building strategic corporate alliances, we will ensure that the future of dementia support remains active, connected, and accessible to all.

Partner with us



Partner with us

Join our joyful rebellion

To achieve our ambitious plans, we need strategic partners who share our vision. Every disco we run is fully funded and completely free to attend, closing the 'joy gap' and removing financial barriers for families affected by dementia.



Sponsor a disco: our 12-month corporate pack

We're launching an exciting new Corporate Sponsorship Pack that allows businesses to fully sponsor a local community disco for 12 months and beyond. This model builds on highly successful blueprints that deliver meaningful, tangible impact.

What your business gets: A chance to directly support a local community, employee engagement opportunities, visible brand alignment with a nationally recognised charity, and a tangible way to fulfil Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) goals.

- **The Oxford Model (Dorchester Living)**
  Fully funded by Dorchester Living, this partnership extended far beyond financial support. They hosted a launch party at one of their hotels, actively assisted with local promotion, and are hosting an upcoming fundraising dinner for us.

- **The Care Home Model (Social Ability)**
  In partnership with Social Ability, who provide interactive projectors in care homes, this initiative funds targeted care home discos. Social Ability pays for the sessions, ensuring their clients benefit from a completely free disco.

Our strategic grant funders

We're incredibly grateful to our primary grant funders whose support underpins our operational growth and sustainability:

- ♡ **The Fore (Whose transformative grant funded our first paid role)**
- ♡ **Sport England Movement Fund**
- ♡ **Clothworkers Foundation**
- ♡ **Cheshire East Council**
- ♡ **Benefact Group**
- ♡ **Trafford Council**
- ♡ **School for Social Entrepreneurs**
- ♡ **Forever Manchester**

We would also like to thank our local and community grant makers whose funding under £2,000 provides vital grassroots support, including: Wythenshawe Community Housing Group (Community Development Grants), Wimbledon District Nursing and Midwifery Benevolent Society (WDNMBS), The Joicey Trust, GM Moving Live Well Fund, and the Murray Foundation.



Our corporate partners

Thank you to the forward-thinking businesses that stand shoulder-to-shoulder with us on the dancefloor, helping to shift the narrative around dementia from limitation to possibility:

- ♡ **Dorchester Living**
- ♡ **Social Ability**
- ♡ **Troy Asset Management**
- ♡ **Browne Jacobson**
- ♡ **Mottram Jive Club**
- ♡ **Elder**
- ♡ **Visiting Angels**
- ♡ **AO musicMagpie**
- ♡ **THP Law**
- ♡ **Maverick Finance**
- ♡ **The AA**
- ♡ **Creative Support**
- ♡ **Planisware**



Every day Dementia Disco is proving that joy is not a luxury for people with dementia and their support networks; it is an absolute necessity.

What makes our model so special is its capacity to open up possibilities for people living with dementia who often feel their world is becoming smaller. Our dance floor is a place where they reclaim their identity through the unmatched power of music, and carers can catch their breath and find solidarity. By empowering local communities across England and Wales to take ownership of our model, giving them the toolkits and confidence to lead the dance themselves, we hope Dementia Disco will become a national movement of joyful rebellion.

It has been an honour to work with Kate and the Board to put the necessary structures and plans in place to ensure our long-term sustainability. To our funders, our partners, our dedicated volunteers, and every single person who has ever laced up their dancing shoes to join us on the floor, thank you. You are the heartbeat of this charity. Together, we will keep fighting for inclusion, challenging the status quo, and celebrating life, one dance at a time.



Simon Denegri OBE
Chair

Dementia Disco



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