

working with

*My Life Films*

and



# My Life Films pilot

## Evaluation and conclusions

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## Introduction

On behalf of Hampshire County Council and as part of the Dementia telecare pathway, Argenti commissioned My Life Films (MLF) to work with eight service users who have dementia to produce life story films for use with their families and carers. The project took place over an eight-month period between January and August 2016.

The film makers worked directly with the participants, their families and friends to identify key moments in their lives, locate photographs and footage to depict these, identify a pertinent musical soundtrack and undertake interviews. Once the footage had been edited, two films were produced for each participant – a 30-minute biographical film (for use by the family) and a 3-5 minute portrait of the participant (for use by carers). These were shown to the participant and their families at a 'premiere' in their homes. Initial reactions during the premiere were recorded by the film maker.

Following the premiere, each participant and their primary carer were sent a questionnaire to capture their thoughts about the whole process and the final products. Two participants were also selected for a face-to-face interview in their homes. This feedback has been used to inform this report.

## Aims of the project

The purpose of the life story films produced by My Life Films is to improve the quality of life of and the care received by people living with dementia, as well as providing their loved ones with a lasting memory.

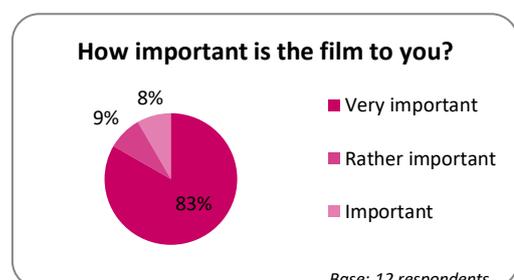
Based on this, the pilot project aimed to:

1. Improve the quality of life of people living with dementia by increasing their wellbeing and self-esteem;
2. Bring families together, providing them with a lasting memory of their loved one and reducing isolation of people living with dementia;
3. Support primary care givers by providing them with a tool to calm their loved one, and to boost their own morale;

## Overview of the feedback

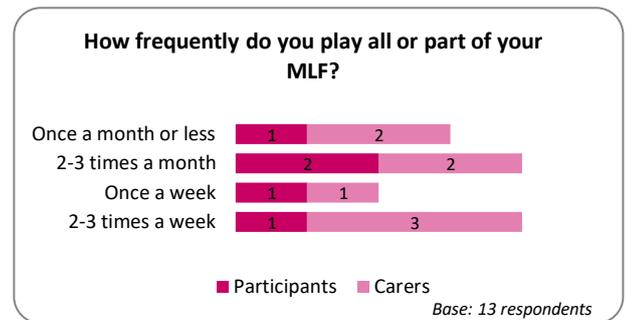
A total of 16 questionnaires were issued – one to each of the eight participants and primary carers who were involved in the project. All of the questionnaires were returned, of which 12 were fully completed and one was partially completed (3 participants were unable to complete any of their questionnaire).

A total of two face-to-face interviews were conducted, where both the participant and carer were present. One of these was more successful than the other, with the participant in the first interview appearing confused and contributing little to the responses, whilst their carer provided much of the input. This led to a lack of solid evidence with regard to the impact of the film on the wellbeing of participants.



Overall, satisfaction with the end product was very high, with all respondents agreeing that the final film is important to them, and 83% saying that it is “very important” to them. All respondents said that they would recommend a My Life Film for other people living with dementia. Positive feedback from carers and participants included comments such as: “a wonderful experience”; “the film has given us a great deal of pleasure”; “[the] final product is a lovely and emotional film which we will treasure forever”; “it is a very worthwhile product for people living with dementia and their carer”; “the DVD is very precious to me”.

Respondents view the film with varying frequency, with ‘2-3 times per month’ and ‘2-3 times per week’ being the most common. The lower frequency viewers stated that there were some technical issues with regard to the film not playing on certain DVD players, and with regard to certain participants not being able to operate a DVD player without assistance, thereby reducing the frequency with which the film was viewed.



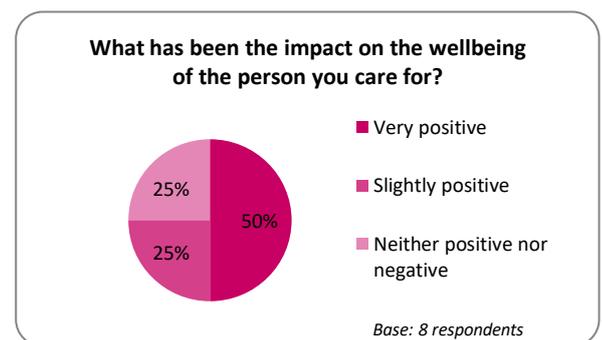
### Case study: Mrs Jones

Mrs Jones and her husband were keen to participate in the My Life Films project, having learned about ‘direct memory recall’ and how people with dementia can be supported to remember things by being provided with visual cues.

Mrs Jones thoroughly enjoyed the filming process, which was a “lovely” and “emotional” experience for her. Both she and her family have enjoyed watching the film, and it has helped her to rekindle relationships with some of the more distant members of her family, who have visited especially to see the film and now understand more about her condition and are willing to offer help and support. She isn’t sure whether the film has had an impact on her general ability to remember, but it certainly brings back memories and makes her and her husband feel very happy when they watch it.

Her daughter says that the film has helped to bring her closer to her mother as she now understands more about her life.

Mrs Jones would recommend a My Life Film to anyone living with dementia.



## Analysis of the evidence

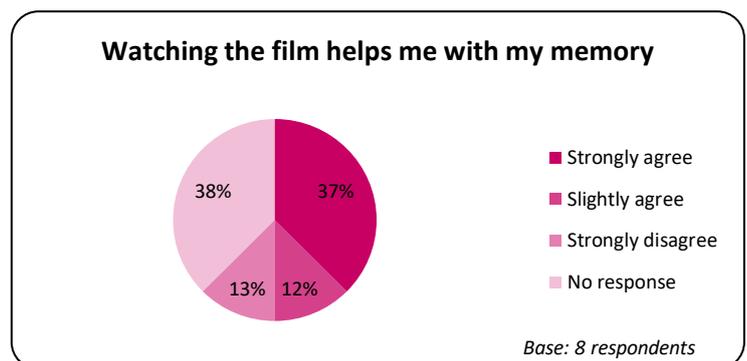
### *Improving the quality of life of people living with dementia by increasing their wellbeing and self-esteem*

In terms of improving the quality of life of the participants, 75% of carers thought that the film had a positive or very positive effect on the wellbeing of the person that they care for. 75% of carers also felt that the film had a very positive or positive effect on the self-esteem of the person they care for.

In terms of the participants themselves, all of those able to complete the questionnaire said that the film made them feel happy.

Feedback from the seven premieres (one participant was too ill to host a premiere) demonstrated that the films make participants happy, with everyone enjoying the screening. There was plenty of laughter, smiling and foot tapping to accompany the soundtracks. A few tears were shed by carers and one family member stated that the film made them sad because they “missed” the person that the participant used to be. One carer stated that prior to the premiere the participant had been confused, but afterwards they were no longer confused, which suggests that the film can help participants to remember and feel calmer.

In terms of the film helping participants with their memory, 37% (3 out of 8) respondents strongly agreed that the film helped them in this way, 12% (1 respondent) felt that it helped them slightly and 13% (1 respondent) felt strongly that it was not helpful in this respect. The remaining 3 participants were unable to answer this question. One participant stated that “it was lovely to reminisce”. This suggests that the film can be helpful in terms of memory recall. This outcome would of course be heavily influenced by how often the film is viewed.



Overall the film does contribute to increased wellbeing and self-esteem of the participants, with none of the participants or their carers stating that it had a negative effect on either of these things, despite some emotion from carers. The films can support memory recall and certainly bring a great deal of happiness and enjoyment to the participants and their success cannot be doubted from the incredibly positive feedback from participants and carers alike.

### ***Bringing families together, providing them with a lasting memory of their loved one and reducing isolation of people living with dementia***

All carers felt that the film had a positive impact on their relationship with the person that they care for, and of the participants, 100% felt that making the film had improved their relationships with their family. One participant said that it had encouraged family who they hadn't heard from in a long time to get in touch more regularly. Another was keen to send a copy of the film to all members of their family, opening up lines of communication with family members with whom they had not been in touch in recent years. In some instances it has also led to an increase in family members who want to help support and care for their loved one.

**What has been the impact on the relationship with the person you care for?**



Base: 8 respondents

62% of caregivers strongly felt that the film facilitates communication with the person they care for. One carer stated that the film is “not only useful for now, but when [the family member] is no longer with us [it will be] very good for the family”, another stated that the film “encapsulates the life [of the participant]”.

One of the staff who was responsible for identifying and referring suitable participants for the project fed back that the MLF process had been “a terrific experience that has left [the participants] with a useful way of engaging with their families”.

It is evident that the films help to bring families closer together, rekindling neglected relationships and offering participants a reason to make contact with more distant relatives.

### ***Supporting primary care givers by providing them with a tool to calm their loved one and to boost their own morale***

87% of carers (7 out of 8) agreed that the film makes the person that they care for feel calmer, thereby supporting them in their efforts to care for their loved one. The same number of carers also felt that watching the film makes them personally feel valued and less stressed, more often. The remaining carer reported feeling that the film had no impact on their loved one's state or their own stress or feeling of value. One carer said that the film helped their loved one to be less confused, thereby supporting them in their caring role.

From the evidence, the film does seem to have a positive impact on carers and their wellbeing, as well as supporting them in their role as a carer.

### **Next steps**

Further work will be undertaken in conjunction with the wider Dementia telecare pathway evaluation to analyse the impact of the films on participants and particularly to determine whether they can support dementia patients to stay living in their homes for longer, thereby reducing the cost to the Council of providing expensive residential care. This work may include a randomised control test.

## Conclusion

The films were very positively received by participants and carers alike, and there is no doubt of their value to people in terms of the joy and happiness that they bring. As mentioned by some carers, they are a useful record of the participant's life and will be a treasured possession when this person is no longer in their lives.

The films contribute to participants' increased wellbeing and self-esteem, and the evidence clearly shows that it helps to bring families closer together, sometimes providing participants with a reason to make contact with more distant relatives. This in turn has led to greater support and a higher level of wellbeing for both participants and carers. The film itself has had a positive impact on carers and their wellbeing and offers them support in their role as a carer as it can calm the person they care for.

The overwhelming opinion from everybody involved in the project was that, in an ideal world, everybody living with dementia should have access to a tool such as this, further underlining its value.

Further work needs to be undertaken to fully understand if the films can support dementia patients to remain in their homes for longer. This research will take place in conjunction the wider telecare dementia pathways evaluation and will probably involve randomised control testing.