

Tech to Connect

Tackling isolation
through innovation

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The **Tech to Connect Challenge** ran from April 2019 to March 2020 and aimed to help civil society develop their early stage ideas for tech to enable more or better interactions between people. Technology can be alienating or divisive for those that are isolated, but it doesn't need to be that way. Tech to Connect was all about supporting civil society to translate their knowledge into good ideas for new ways to connect people.

The challenge prize helped ten finalists develop their ideas into working prototypes and plan for their implementation. The £1 million prize was split into £500,000 of business support with the other £500,000 being awarded as financial support – £25,000 grants for each finalist, plus a winning prize of £100,000 and two runner-up prizes of £75,000.

**Finalist of the Tech To Connect Challenge and
Winner of the Pargiter Trust Award, £25,000**



Music Memory Box by Studio Meineck



Location

Bristol, with reach across the country

Our idea

Music Memory Box contributes to the reduction of social isolation by enabling quality connections between people living with dementia and those around them. Co-designed with people living with dementia, it's a physical and digital tool that improves wellbeing and social connection for those living with dementia and their loved ones. It uses multi-sensory visual, physical and audio triggers unique to the individual to reminisce about people, places and things that matter.

Who do we want to reach?

The intended beneficiaries for Music Memory Box include individuals living with dementia, their families, carers, and professional care providers. 850,000 people are currently living with dementia in the UK. Our product supports people right from diagnosis who are still living independently, to the 1/3 of people resident in care homes needing more support. In particular, we want groups that are overlooked currently in service provision to be at the heart of how Music Memory Box develops. During our pilot we worked with care homes in Bristol and the carer group Bristol Black Carers, who found Music Memory Box improved communication, reduced confusion and supported new positive experiences for people living with dementia and their community. We want to expand on this relationship and emphasise the customisation of Music Memory Box for marginalised groups through organisations like Opening Doors (LGBT+ friendly memory cafe) and DACE (The Dementia Alliance for Culture and Ethnicity).

The story so far

Over the last six months, we have been working with a local manufacturing partner to develop our prototype into a market-ready product. We've expanded on our successful Kickstarter campaign to focus our marketing strategy on families and individual carers. We have also built relationships with CQC Outstanding Rated care homes, who are already using some aspects of reminisce or music therapy in their care provision. With the affect of music for people living with dementia becoming more well known, we've concentrated on an accessible tool that supports wellbeing, social connection and technology, rather than introducing more screen-based interaction.

What's next?

Much of our time as a Tech To Connect Challenge finalist has been spent testing various models of scaling across the UK. We are now looking to invest in marketing to individual independent customers, as well as scaling through national partnerships with charities such as Alive and retailers like Live Better With. The dementia 'market' is relatively new, so by working alongside charities such as Studio Meineck, we can directly engage this group of independent users.

The potential of impact from scaling is huge, with the right marketing approach and an evidence

base of the positive, transformative effect the box can have. Studio Meineck has already sold pre-orders of the Music Memory Box through a kickstarter in the Netherlands, USA and Germany, which indicates future beneficiaries in different countries after scaling has taken place in the UK. As quality care for someone with a dementia is a global issue, the team has created an easily customisable tool that works across different cultures and backgrounds.

"We have been mindful of how technology has been adapted into our product to enhance rather than detract from the 'human' element of regular care. Whilst screen-based technologies are often criticized for supporting activities that replace the need for others, Music Memory Box multiplies the opportunities for personal contact and creative activities with important wellbeing outcomes that can be done together, such as singing, dancing and holding hands."



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