

# 2020

## Singing for the Brain: An evaluation of the initiative in Cork





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would like to thank  
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# SINGING FOR THE BRAIN

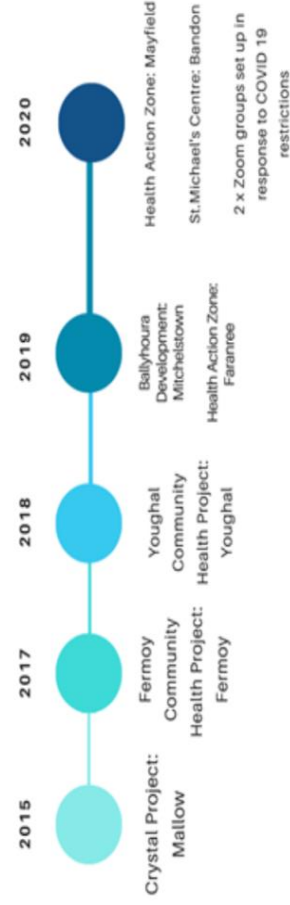
Singing for the Brain (SFTB) is an inclusive, community singing group which is particularly supportive of people with dementia.

Singing for the Brain is a programme which uses singing to bring people together in a friendly and stimulating social environment.

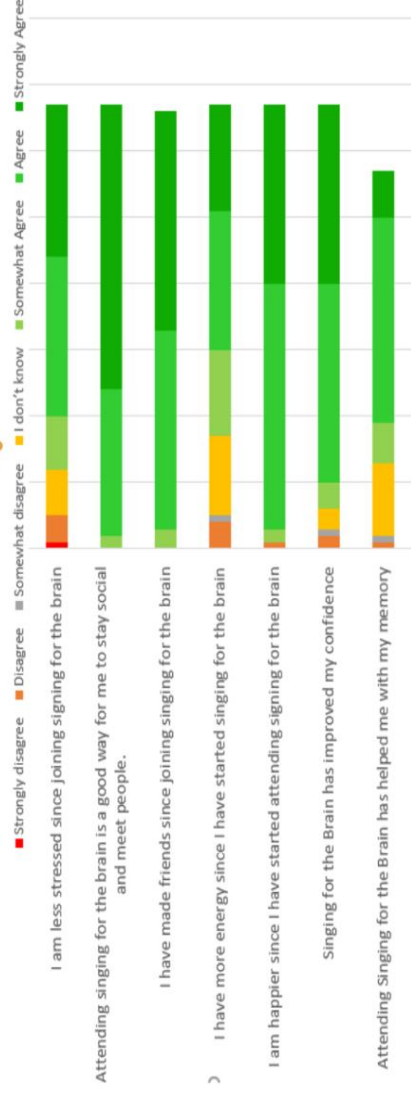
INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	IMPACT
Steering group 1 x Coordinator <b>7 Groups:</b> 7 x Local facilitators 7 x Musical facilitators 2 Volunteers 40 hours per week €575 per week <b>2 x Zoom groups:</b> 2 x Facilitators 2 x Local facilitators 8 hours per week €203 per week	Coordination Training Facilitation Communication Advertising and promotion Administration Finances	7 x Local groups 2 x Zoom groups <b>450 sessions delivered since 2015</b> 400 In person 50 Online Over <b>350</b> people have attended SFTB <b>140</b> people attend weekly (locally) <b>50</b> people attend weekly (Zoom) Aim for <b>243</b> sessions annually <b>Attendees:</b> 25% With memory loss 20% Carers 55% No memory loss	<b>According to participants SFTB:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improves their social lives</li> <li>Makes them happier</li> <li>Increases confidence</li> <li>Reduces stress</li> <li>Helps with memory</li> </ul> Carers strongly felt that SFTB benefited those they cared for. Carers were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less worried about the person they were caring for</li> <li>Were more relaxed</li> <li>Felt less isolated</li> <li>Felt less stressed</li> </ul>	The SFTB programme in Cork meets and exceeds its aims, not just providing an inclusive community group and a friendly space but an integral social outlet for many of the participants  The average cost per session, per person, €4.10.  Considering the substantial benefits for participants, illustrated through the surveys this represents excellent value for money

## SINGING FOR THE BRAIN

Timeline of SFTB group development in Cork



## Participant responses



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## Introduction

This report is an evaluation of the Singing for the Brain programme in Cork, which has been operating since 2015. There are currently seven established groups throughout Cork and two Zoom groups which have been operating throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Singing for the Brain

Singing for the Brain (SFTB) is an inclusive, community singing group which is particularly supportive of people with dementia. Singing for the Brain is a programme which uses singing to bring people together in a friendly and stimulating social environment. Singing is not only an enjoyable activity, it can also provide a way for people with Dementia and Alzheimers, along with their carers, friends and family, to express themselves and socialise with others in a fun and supportive group. Hidden in the fun are activities which build on the well-known preserved memory for song and music in the brain. Even when many memories are hard to retrieve, music is especially easy to recall.

Singing for the Brain sessions have a number of different elements in which the musical facilitator leads the group through various breathing and vocal exercises. Use of rounds, call and response, and other ways of creating simple harmonies helps concentration. Well known songs are used to evoke verbal and emotional memories. New songs are taught to help challenge and extend skills. Participants are invited to share their voices and songs and create space for an open song session where we even welcome stories and poems.

Musical facilitators are skilled in teaching songs from scratch at a pace that includes everyone and accommodates participants at different stages of dementia. A range of different songs are sung from different eras, musical styles and traditions and according to the preferences of the group.

### Music and memory loss

Dementia has detrimental effects on cognitive, psychological and behavioural functioning, as well as significant impact on those who provide care. There is a need to find suitable psychosocial interventions to help manage the condition, enhance well-being, and to provide support for caregivers.<sup>1</sup>

Music therapy has a strong evidence base and is widely accepted as a valid treatment option for those experiencing dementia,<sup>2</sup> it can be used to improve mood, regulate emotion and relieve stress.

<sup>3</sup>Emerging research suggests that music therapy can benefit those with dementia by reducing the

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<sup>1</sup> Osman SE, Tischler V, Schneider J. 'Singing for the Brain': A qualitative study exploring the health and well-being benefits of singing for people with dementia and their carers. *Dementia (London)*. 2016;15(6):1326-1339. doi:10.1177/1471301214556291

<sup>2</sup> Clair A. A., Memmott J. (2008) Therapeutic uses of music with older adults, 2nd ed Maryland, USA: American Music Therapy Association

<sup>3</sup> Aldridge D. (2000) Music therapy in dementia care, London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.  
Götell E, Brown S, Ekman SL, A controlled naturalistic study on a weekly music therapy and activity program on disruptive and depressive behaviors in dementia., *J Psychiatr Ment Health Nurs*. 2000 Apr; 7(2):119-25.

behavioural and psychological symptoms associated with dementia.<sup>4</sup> Music therapy can also benefit carers and has been shown to improve the relationship between the carer and the person with dementia.<sup>5</sup> Group music interventions may help to improve social interaction between people with dementia, promoting relaxation and reducing levels of agitation.<sup>6</sup>

One systematic review found that music therapy was one of just two forms of non-pharmacological interventions for which there is convincing evidence of effectiveness in reducing the behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia.<sup>7</sup>

A UK Commission on dementia and music report collated evidence from numerous research studies outlining the benefits of music therapy and groups for participants with dementia.<sup>8</sup> Which are as follows:

- The area of the brain which 'stores' musical memory is often left quite intact among those with dementia and therefore music is an area that people with dementia can continue to engage with and enjoy despite being affected by dementia.
- Studies are also beginning to show that music may help in the recall of information for people with dementia, in a similar way to mnemonics, and playing a musical instrument may be associated with a lowered likelihood of developing dementia.
- Music-based interventions have the potential to help minimise BPSD (Behavioural and psychological symptoms in dementia, including agitation, abnormal vocalisation and aggression.
- Music-based interventions could help to reduce anxiety and depression amongst people with dementia. Some research has suggested that the impact of music therapy on anxiety and depression could potentially be lasting, but more evidence is required.
- Music-based interventions may have the potential to improve the retention of speech and language for people with dementia.
- Research suggests that music-based interventions can help to facilitate increased social interaction or 'flow', improve well-being, decrease stress hormones and enhance the quality of life of people with dementia.
- Early-stage research indicates that improvements in caregiving after music-related training are reported by care givers, families, service providers and music therapists. Feedback

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<sup>4</sup> Göttell E, Brown S, Ekman SL, A controlled naturalistic study on a weekly music therapy and activity program on disruptive and depressive behaviors in dementia., *J Psychiatr Ment Health Nurs.* 2000 Apr; 7(2):119-25.

<sup>5</sup> Hulme C, Wright J, Crocker T, Oluboyede Y, House. A Non-pharmacological approaches for dementia that informal carers might try or access: a systematic review. *Int J Geriatr Psychiatry.* 2010 Jul; 25(7):756-63.

<sup>6</sup> Lin Y, Chu H, Yang CY, Chen CH, Chen SG, Chang HJ, Hsieh CJ, Chou KR. Effectiveness of group music intervention against agitated behavior in elderly persons with dementia. *Int J Geriatr Psychiatry.* 2011 Jul; 26(7):670-8.

<sup>7</sup> Abrahams I, Rimland JM, Trotta FM, et al, Systematic review of systematic reviews of non-pharmacological interventions to treat behavioural disturbances in older patients with dementia. The SENATOR-OnTop series *BMJ Open* 2017;7:e012759. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2016-01275

suggests that engaging carers in music-based interventions can help them to better understand the people they are caring for.<sup>8</sup>

A qualitative study on Singing for the Brain participants in the UK found that participants highlighted the following benefits from attending SFTB.

1. Social inclusion and support
2. A shared experience
3. Positive impact on relationships
4. Positive impact on memory
5. Lifting the spirits
6. Acceptance of the diagnosis<sup>1</sup>

### How did it start?

The programme in Cork first began in Mallow in 2015 through the HSE funded dementia project known as the Crystal Project, who contracted Fiona Flavin to run an eight week programme on 'Singing' and it took off from there. It was a popular group with an average of 25 participants showing up per session, and so the group was continued beyond the initial 8 week pilot. Since then the programme has subsequently moved to Fermoy, Youghal, Mitchelstown, Bandon, Farranree, Mayfield and on-line. These groups were supported via funding from local groups in each area including The Lions Club and The Rotary Club.

Funding for the initial group came from the Alzheimer Society of Ireland Dementia Friendly Community grant which emphasised the need for people with dementia to be engaged in meaningful, enjoyable activities within their communities (rather than dementia specific activities). Therefore the group was advertised as a community singing group that anyone was welcome to attend and no specific referral was required. Funding was continued through the HSE National Lottery funds and the group introduced voluntary contributions to make it sustainable.

Building on the success of the Crystal Project SFTB group in Mallow, a second group was started in Fermoy supported by the Fermoy Community Health Project. The HSE Community Work Department have been deeply involved in developing the initiative from this point onwards supporting the starting and coordination of groups throughout the city and county and developing a SFTB steering group. The steering group supports and nurtures the existing groups, while also forward planning in order to provide training and to develop new groups and source new facilitators. The steering group also managed to secure funding for the project from the Community and Voluntary Fund in late 2019 helping to ensure the groups future. HSE/ Health Action Zone community health workers are involved in running 4 of the 7 SFTB groups operating in Cork and the online zoom sessions.

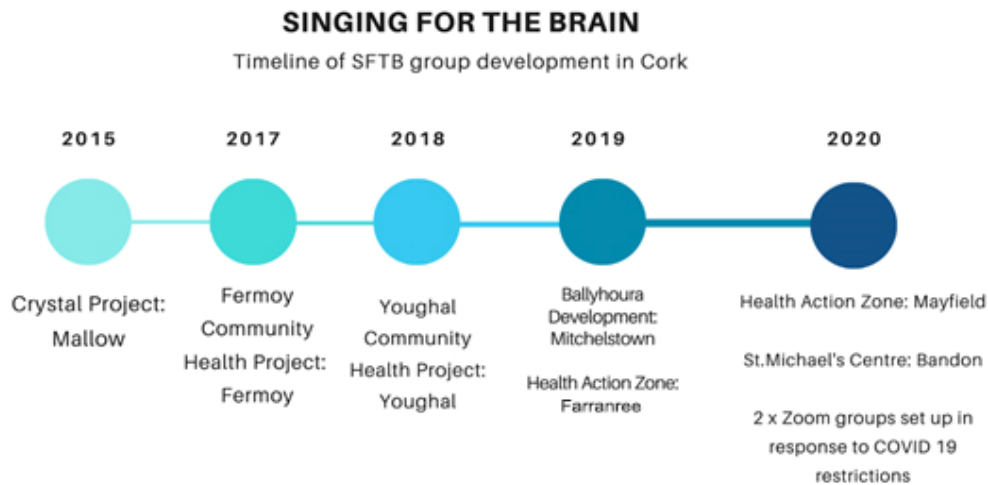
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<sup>8</sup> Bamford S.M and Bowell, S. 'What would life be - without a song or a dance, what are we?' A report from the Commission on Dementia and Music' 2018, Utlei Foundation, ILC-UK, <https://ilcuk.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Commission-on-Dementia-and-Music-report.pdf>



In response to the Covid 19 public health guidelines the steering group had to cease the normal SFTB sessions but quickly went about setting up the project on ZOOM as they were aware the sudden stopping of the sessions could have a negative impact on group members. The first session was held on March 19<sup>th</sup> 2020.

*Figure 1: Timeline of SFTB group development in Cork*



### Participant profile

Singing for the Brain (SFTB) is an inclusive, community singing group which was particularly supportive of people with dementia. Some groups may advertise particularly to people with dementia and Alzheimer's while others advertise more broadly to the general public.

The participant profile of the groups vary. Typically participants can be categorised as follows;

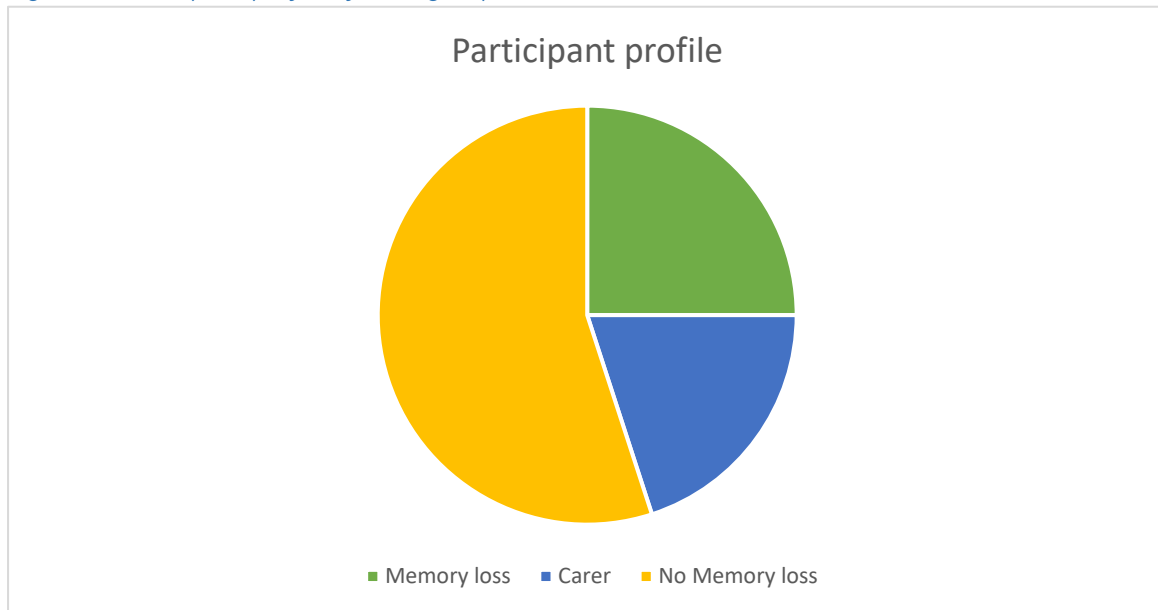
- a) Experiencing memory loss
- b) Carer of a participant
- c) They enjoy social singing

Of the groups that had information available the participant profiles ranged as follows:

- Participants who are experiencing memory loss made up between 11% - 45% of SFTB groups.
- Carer of a participants made up between 5%-45% of SFTB groups.
- Those who enjoy social singing made up between 10%- 84% of SFTB groups.

An overall average of the groups shows that approximately 25% of participants have memory loss, 20% are carers, and 55% enjoy social singing.

Figure 2: Participant profile of SFTB groups in Cork



## Aims of research

SFTB is an inclusive, community singing group which was particularly supportive of people with dementia. The aim of SFTB is to create a space for people with Dementia and Alzheimers, along with their carers, friends and family, to express themselves and socialise with others in a fun and supportive group.

The aim of this report is as follows:

- To evaluate the efficacy of the SFTB programme in Cork.
- To evaluate the value for money of the SFTB programme in Cork.
- To provide recommendations for the future of the SFTB programme in Cork.

This research uses existing data received from the steering group and local facilitators, and data gathered via surveys administered to participants, carers and group facilitators.

By gathering data from a number of different sources and perspectives this report aims to understand the SFTB programme and its impact more fully and to increase the validity and reliability of the findings.

## Evaluate the efficacy of the SFTB programme in Cork

Survey data will be analysed against stated aims of group and determine the efficacy of the SFTB initiative.

The stated aims SFTB are as follows:

- To provide an inclusive, community singing group which was particularly supportive of people with dementia.
- To support participants with dementia and memory loss
- To support carers of those with dementia and memory loss
- To provide and fun and friendly activity
- To provide a valuable social outlet for participants

### Evaluate the value for money of the SFTB programme in Cork

The inputs, outputs and impact of the SFTB programme will be analysed to evaluate the value for money of the SFTB programme in Cork.

### Provide recommendations for the future of the SFTB programme in Cork

Recommendations for the future of the programme will be based on the evaluation of the efficacy of the programme, the value for money and an analysis of feedback from participants, carers and facilitators.

## Methodology

This report uses a logic model structure to evaluate the SFTB programme in Cork, while also providing a useful structure for future planning. This model outlines the inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impact of the SFTB programme. This method allows for an easy understanding of the programme as a whole, at a glance.

Data was gathered from the steering group and local facilitators who provided information on numbers attending, numbers of sessions, costs etc.

A survey was then administered to participants, carers and facilitators via local coordinators. The survey could be completed over the phone, in hardcopy or online. Each participant was given an information sheet and signed a consent form to participate in the study. The survey included statements to which participants could agree or disagree on a scale and open questions about what they did and did not like about the group.

## Logic model

This section of the report uses a logic model structure to determine the efficacy and value for money of the SFTB programme in Cork, while also providing a useful structure for future planning. This model outlines the inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impact of the SFTB programme. This method allows for an easy understanding of the programme as a whole, at a glance.

Throughout this report the data from the 7 SFTB groups that usually meet in person are collated together and the data from the Zoom sessions which started in March 2020 in response to the COVID 19 pandemic are outlined separately.

## Inputs

This sections outlines the resources that go into making the SFTB programme work in Cork.

### Human Resources

SFTB in Cork has a central coordinator (4 hours per week) who, with the steering group, supports groups, organises facilitator training, provides administration support and is a central point of contact for the SFTB programme in Cork.

SFTB groups typically utilise a local facilitator, a musical facilitator and sometimes volunteers

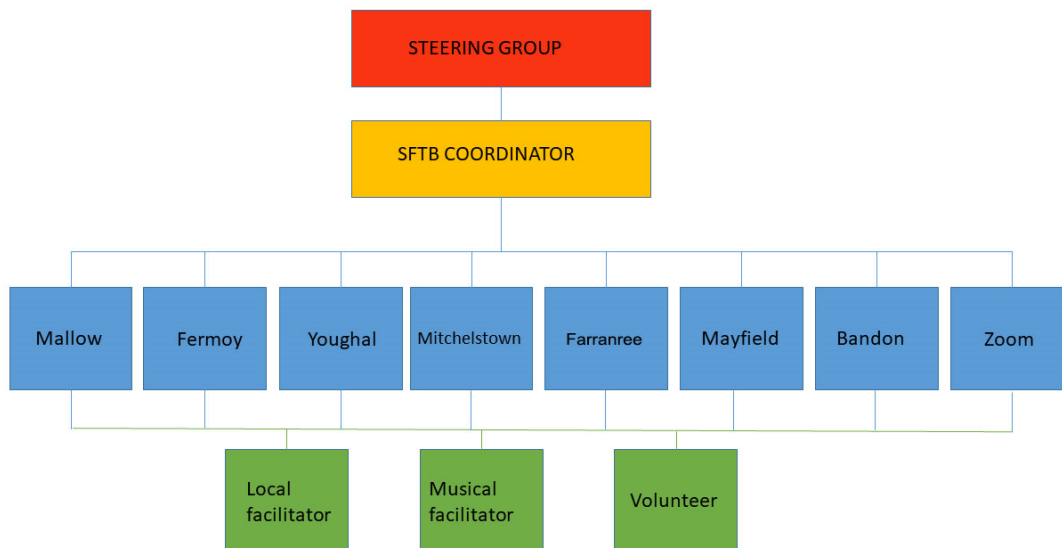
Local facilitators will coordinate the logistical and administrative side of the group, getting rooms ready, collecting money, taking names and numbers of participants, preparing tea and coffee, keeping in contact with the participants, advertising etc. They do this as part of their existing roles as community health workers or workers in local organisations. Local facilitators report spending between 2 to 4 hours per week on SFTB and this includes attending the 1.5 hour SFTB session.

Musical facilitators run the session, leading the group through the various exercises and activities involved and encouraging people to sing etc. These facilitators are specially trained to deliver SFTB sessions and are hired specifically for these sessions for 1.5 to 2 hours per week.

Volunteers roles will vary depending on the group but typically they will involve with room set-up or making tea and coffee etc. and lasts for the duration of the session (1.5 to 2 hours).

SFTB has a steering group made up of 8 members who meet 10 times a year. Calculations for inputs will be based on weekly costs, the steering group input on a weekly basis is negligible and therefore is not included in the following tables or calculations.

*Figure 3: Organisational structure of SFTB in Cork*



*Table 1: Human resource input into SFTB in Cork, including 7 in person groups and 2 online Zoom groups.*

Human resources	No. of staff	Hours	No. of staff	hours
SFTB coordinator	1	4		
Local facilitators	7	20	2	4
Musical facilitators*	7	12	1	4
Volunteers	2	4	0	
Total (7 groups)		40	Zoom (2 sessions)	8

### Financial resources

This section outlines the weekly staff, hours and costs associated with the operating of 7 SFTB groups in Cork and separately the 2 weekly zoom sessions.

Sundries relates to the cost of room rental and refreshments etc. Groups vary in what they pay musical facilitators and the total cost for this is €745 per week.

Some groups do not charge for the session while others request a donation this varies from €2-€5. Most groups are not totally sustainable based on participant contributions. The average weekly intake among the 7 groups is €290 per week.

SFTB groups previously had sourced their own funding locally, recently however funding has been centralised and the SFTB programme in Cork is set to receive €10,000 annually from the HSE Community and Voluntary fund starting in 2019.

The SFTB coordinator post costs €4,000 per year.

*Table 2 outlines the weekly staff, hours and costs associated with the operating of 7 SFTB groups in Cork and separately the 2 weekly zoom sessions*

Human and financial resources	No.	Hours	Cost (€)	Zoom	No.	Hours	Cost (€)
SFTB coordinator	1	4	NA		1		
Local facilitators	7	20	NA		1	4	NA
Musical facilitators	7	12	745		1	4	200
Volunteers	2	4	0		0		
Sundries			120				3
<b>Total cost(7 groups)</b>		<b>40</b>	<b>865</b>	<b>Total cost (2 online sessions)</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>203</b>
Average cost per session			124				101.5
Average weekly intake (7 groups)			290				0
Average weekly intake per session			41				0
<b>Total cost minus contributions</b>			<b>575</b>				<b>203</b>
Average cost per session minus contributions			82				101.5

If the average cost per session is €82 and there are expected to be 243 sessions per year going forward the total cost to run the SFTB groups would be €19, 926 + €4000 for the SFTB coordinator post coming to a total €23,926.

Other costs which should be considered would be to facilitate training days, potential increases in the cost of room rental to accommodate covid-19 related measures and finances to support new groups being set up in Cork.

The estimated total cost to run SFTB in Cork moving forward is €27,000 per year.

SFTB currently receives €10,000 funding from the HSE Community and Voluntary Fund.

## Activities

This section outlines generally the various activities which are undertaken in order to deliver the SFTB throughout cork.

- Coordination
  - Steering group
  - Central coordination
  - Local coordination
  - Supporting groups to set up SFTB
  - Providing start up packs
- Training
  - Organising and delivering training
  - Recruiting potential musical facilitators
- Facilitating/delivery
  - Local facilitators preparing rooms/ refreshments / notes / welcoming and supporting participants
  - Musical facilitators planning and delivering sessions
- Communication
  - Contacting participants about group meeting times and outings/events
  - Organising steering group meetings
  - Liaising with local coordinators
- Advertising and promoting locally
  - Radio, local newspapers, via community groups
- Administration and finances
  - Collecting donations
  - Paying facilitators
  - Managing costs

## Outputs

This section outlines the outputs that are the direct result of the inputs and activities described previously.

SFTB in Cork has 7 groups who meet weekly throughout the Year. This groups often meet for 8 week blocks and then take a break. Groups generally run between 28 and 40 sessions per year.

On average between the 7 groups there would be 243 sessions per year going forward. Covid-19 guidelines permitting.

Since the first group was started in 2015 there has been 450 SFTB sessions. 400 of these have been in person sessions.

Since March 2020 there has been 2 online Zoom sessions of SFTB per week. As of writing this report (October 2020) there have been over 50 online sessions.

Over 350 people have attended at least one SFTB session since 2015 and there are 140 participants who regularly attend each week. There are currently approximately 50 people attending the 2 weekly Zoom sessions.

Participant profiles vary among the groups (see page xx) but on average approximately 25% of participants are experiencing memory loss.

*Table 3: shows the number of groups in operation and the average numbers attending regularly*

In person Groups	Attending weekly	Zoom Groups	Attending weekly
7	140	2	50

## Outcomes

After considering the inputs, activities and outputs of the SFTB programme, this section now brings focus to the outcomes. What does the SFTB programme mean for the participants and carers involved?

Participants and carers from the 7 in person groups were contacted to take part in a survey for this report. The survey could be completed over the phone, in hardcopy or online. Each participant was given an information sheet and signed a consent form to participate in the study. The survey included statements to which participants could agree or disagree on a scale and open questions about what they did and did not like about the group.

80 Surveys were returned by participants (67) and carers (13) out of the 140 regular attendees, resulting in a response rate of 57%.

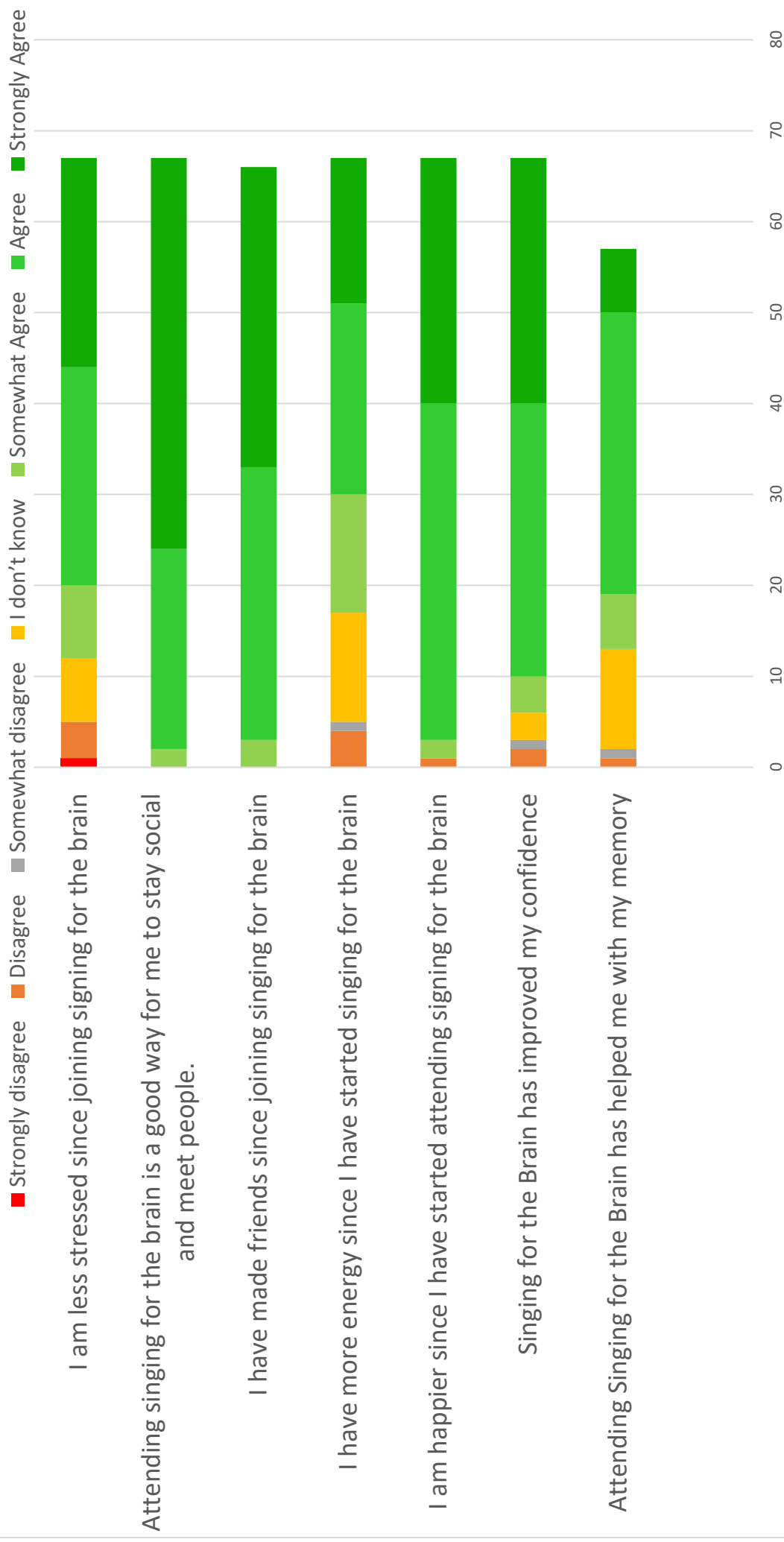
The results and significance of these responses are outlined below.

## Participant responses

The participants in the majority agreed with the 7 statements listed in the survey. Participants felt most strongly about how SFTB had improved their social lives, attending made them feel happier and improved their confidence.

Figure 4 : Participant repsonses to how they feel attending SFTB impacts them

## Participant responses





According to participants SFTB:

- Improves their social lives
- Makes them happier
- Increases confidence
- Reduces stress
- Helps with memory

Quotes from participants:

*"I love listening to wonderful singers, old and new songs, meeting friends old and new"*

*"I love all of it-exercises, singing, tea and the chat"*

*"Seeing my friends in the room each week and listening to them sing their song or read their poem"*

*"Getting out of the house, meeting people, having the chats"*

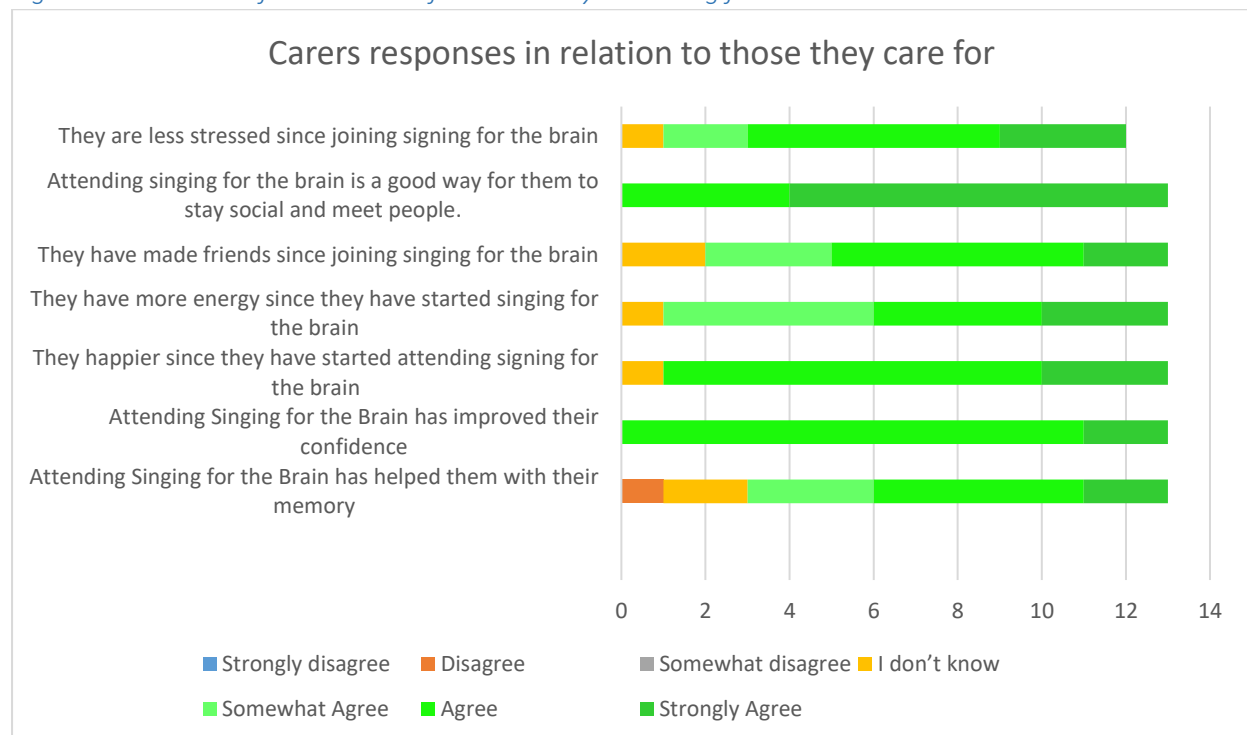
*"I love meeting everyone, preparing an individual song during the week, and coming home relaxed and happy"*

*"Going to SFTB brings back old memories, singing the old songs"*

### Carer's responses

Carer's strongly felt that SFTB benefited those they cared for, with the majority of carers agreeing with all of the statements listed below.

Figure 5: How carers feel SFTB benefits those they are caring for



## Quotes from Carers:

*“Positive energy as soon as you walk in the space, mum really enjoys it”*

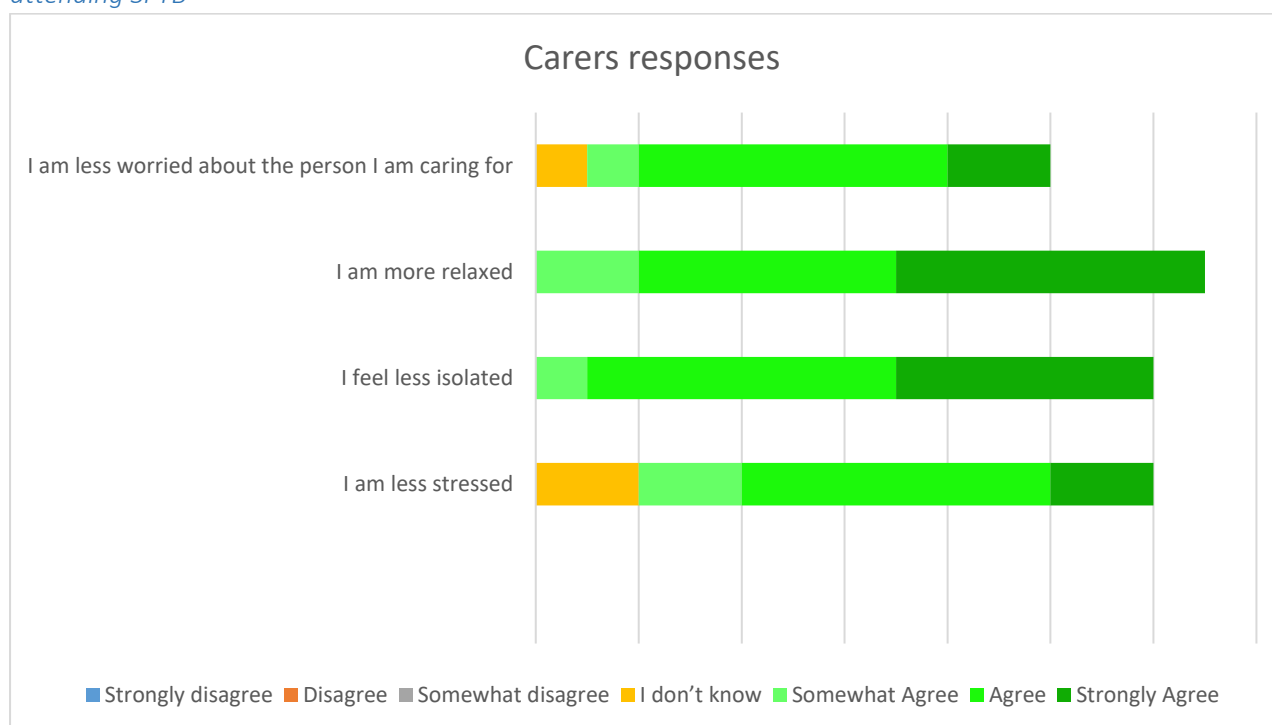
*“She loves the music and the singing especially, she loves singing with all the other participants and is delighted to be able to join in. Certainly boosts her confidence...”*

*“She loves meeting people”*

*“Makes you happy, seeing people, lovely format, gentle and friendly, nice to be part of something, lots of great days”*

Carers were also asked if by having the person they cared for attend SFTB this had benefited them as carers in any way? Carers agreed that since engaging with SFTB they were less worried about the person they were caring for, were more relaxed, felt less isolated, and were less stressed.

*Figure 6: Carers responses in relation to how they feel since the person they are caring for has started attending SFTB*



## Quotes from Carers:

*“I knew he was safe and engaging, groups interaction, being around others with memory issues, normalised it for him”*

*“We now sing sometimes when out walking. It raises her energy and it's great to be doing something together”*

*“We both enjoyed meeting the group and it was very much talked about in the days before it”*

## Impact

In this section the impact of the SFTB programme in Cork will be considered by assessing the efficacy of the SFTB initiative by analysing survey data against the stated aims of the group.

This section will also quantify the value for money of this group.

### Evaluating the efficacy of the SFTB programme in Cork

The stated aims for SFTB are as follows:

- To provide an inclusive, community singing group which was particularly supportive of people with dementia.
- To support participants with dementia and memory loss
- To support carers of those with dementia and memory loss
- To provide a fun and friendly activity
- To provide a valuable social outlet for participants

### Does SFTB achieve its stated aims?

The SFTB groups in Cork have 140 participants weekly on average, of these 25% have memory loss, 20% are carers and 55% have no memory loss. The profile of these groups clearly illustrates that the groups are an effective way to create a dementia friendly yet inclusive community singing group.

Statements related to the social aspect and friendships had the strongest positive responses in the surveys. The survey responses clearly reflect that SFTB is a valuable social outlet, giving participants a fun space where they make new friendships and connections.

The SFTB programme in Cork meets and exceeds its aims, not just providing an inclusive community group and a friendly space but an integral social outlet for many of the participants.

### Quantifying value for money

The average cost per session is €82, the average attendance at a session is 20 people, making the average cost per session, per person, €4.10. Considering the substantial benefits for participants, illustrated through the surveys this represents excellent value for money.

SFTB in Cork offers people an excellent inclusive social resource that offers great value for money

## Key findings

The key findings are illustrated using the logic model below.

Figure 7: Logic Model of SFTB programme in Cork

INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	IMPACT
<p>Steering group</p> <p>1 x Coordinator</p> <p><b>7 Groups:</b> 7 x Local facilitators 7 x Musical facilitators 2 Volunteers 40 hours per week €575 per week</p> <p><b>2 x Zoom groups:</b> 2 x Facilitators 2 x Local facilitators 8 hours per week €203 per week</p>	<p>Coordination</p> <p>Training</p> <p>Facilitation</p> <p>Communication</p> <p>Advertising and promotion</p> <p>Administration</p> <p>Finances</p>	<p>7 x Local groups 2 x Zoom groups</p> <p><b>450 sessions delivered since 2015</b> 400 In person 50 Online</p> <p>Over <b>350</b> people have attended SFTB <b>140</b> people attend weekly (locally) <b>50</b> people attend weekly (Zoom) Aim for <b>243</b> sessions annually</p> <p><b>Attendees:</b> 25% With memory loss 20% Carers 55% No memory loss</p>	<p><b>According to participants SFTB:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improves their social lives</li> <li>Makes them happier</li> <li>Increases confidence</li> <li>Reduces stress</li> <li>Helps with memory</li> </ul> <p>Carers strongly felt that SFTB benefited those they cared for.</p> <p>Carers were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less worried about the person they were caring for</li> <li>Were more relaxed</li> <li>Felt less isolated</li> <li>Felt less stressed</li> </ul>	<p>The SFTB programme in Cork meets and exceeds it aims, not just providing an inclusive community group and a friendly space but an integral social outlet for many of the participants</p> <p>The average cost per session, per person, €4.10.</p> <p>Considering the substantial benefits for participants, illustrated through the surveys this represents excellent value for money</p>

## Recommendations for the future from those involved

Participants, carers and facilitators were asked questions about the favourite and least favourite elements of the sessions and were asked for suggestions on how the sessions could be improved. Using a thematic analysis of this feedback the most prevalent themes have been outlined below with each group's recommendations listed.

### Participant's perspectives

Participants highlighted most strongly that they favoured the social element of the group. The second most common theme was enjoying the music and singing, with some emphasis on individual singing which may speak to the confidence participants feel singing in the groups. Participants also frequently mentioned the sessions improving their mood, being fun and enjoying singing old songs they thought they had forgotten.

When asked about their least favourite part of SFTB the majority of respondents said that they enjoyed all elements of the group. Beyond this participants also said their least favourite part was when the session was over and that they missed in person sessions that have been halted due to COVID-19 regulations.

When participants were asked how the group could be improved the majority of participants said they thought the group was perfect as it was, but the recommendations that were made are as follows:

- Return to in person sessions as soon as possible
- Have longer sessions
- More opportunity for social interaction
- Introducing musical instruments to some sessions
- Going out and singing for the community
- Themed sessions; songs from decades, musicals
- Getting more people involved in the groups
- Have sessions in a room with space and light

### Carer's perspectives

From a carer's perspective the key benefits of attending was that they were happy for the person they were caring for and how the group benefitted their mood, their acceptance of memory loss and their relationship with the carer.

Similarly the social aspect was highlighted as being very important, as was how attending the group improved the carer's mood.

Carers also for the most part said they felt the sessions were great as is and they did not have a least favourite part. Comments included wanting to have more choice of songs and the desire to return to the usual 'in person' format.

For recommendations for the future the following was highlighted by carers:

- Having song sheets to follow
- Returning to in person groups
- More interaction and mixing among participants in groups
- Limiting numbers so group does not become overwhelming for participants with dementia
- Having a space that is comfortable and accessible for those with dementia

### Facilitator's perspectives

The majority of facilitators highlighted primarily the importance of the social element of the SFTB groups, the interaction and camaraderie that develops between participants. Also highlighted as a positive was giving participants choice over what songs they do, shared reminiscence and being valued and listened to.

Recommendations from facilitators include:

- Encouraging more mixing among participants
- Encourage participants to choose songs
- Limit group numbers to keep it manageable
- Move back to in person groups as soon as possible
- Make up large print song books
- Make sessions longer
- Have events for groups to attend during the year

The SFTB steering groups expressed concerns about an over dependence on key facilitators and had recommendations to rectify this dependence before it became an issue. These recommendations include;

- Alternating SFTB facilitators to ensure facilitators are suitably experienced.
- Organising a training plan for new SFTB facilitators.
- Up-skilling of existing SFTB facilitators.
- Engaging tutors to participate in SFTB Zoom Session Facilitation training.

## Conclusion

The SFTB programme in Cork meets and exceeds its aims, not just providing an inclusive community group and a friendly space but an integral social outlet for many of the participants. Given the substantial benefits for participants the SFTB programme represents excellent value for money. SFTB in Cork currently receives €10,000 per year in funding, an additional €17,000 funding per year would allow SFTB in Cork to run sustainably offering 243 SFTB sessions per year.

*Singing for the Brain, Mallow, 2015*

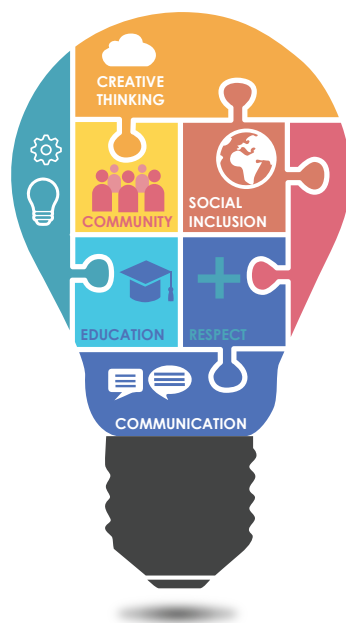


*Singing for the Brain Zoom session April 2020*



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