

MY  **STORY**

The work of The Arsenal Foundation and the partners and initiatives it supports have touched the lives of a great number of people in a variety of ways

The Arsenal Foundation has helped fund The Spitz, a charity that uses the power of live music to increase wellbeing while reducing isolation and loneliness. Bridgeside Lodge care home resident Olive and her daughter Vanessa tell us how it has helped

Olive: I think I shocked The Spitz musicians on my last birthday in January – I was 94, but they thought I was in my seventies. The secret for me was happiness and the Northumberland air!

I moved to London in the late 1940s and worked as a midwife. I met my husband Eddie at a Saturday evening dance at Hornsey Town Hall in Crouch End. This was during the Big Band scene, and we did lots of dancing!

Eddie moved to Australia so I followed him and we got married in Sydney, had four children and lived in New South Wales for nearly 14 years.

Then in 1964 we moved back to London – to Highbury. Eddie was born around the corner from Arsenal Stadium and was an ardent Arsenal supporter.

These lockdowns have been hard for everyone, and especially people who have been unable to see family.

My newest great-grandchild Roman arrived on New Year's Eve and was born healthy, which is all you can ask for. I have always loved the music we get here from The Spitz, and it was wonderful that they were able to bring us some happiness last summer.

I spent the first lockdown in my room so it was great to get out and enjoy some fresh air, too.



Olive and Vanessa – together again

Olive enjoys The Spitz al fresco!



Vanessa: It has been very difficult not being able to see my mum face to face. She loves to see her family so every week during the first lockdown we went to the canal to clap for the NHS and the staff at Bridgeside Lodge on a Thursday evening. I would wave to mum and shout up at her window, but she couldn't hear very well so I got her a mobile phone.

I can now go in once a week and see her in the living room, which is brilliant. Mum has found it very hard too and she didn't understand why we couldn't see her. I feel we've lost a whole year and she isn't getting any younger. I do think her mental health has deteriorated, but I was happy to know she was safe and well looked after by all the staff.

Mum loves playing bingo, which they couldn't do, but she did have the music. She would tell me what songs they'd been singing and we talked about her favourites, although I had to Google one because she couldn't remember the name. It was one she liked when she first met my dad – Some Enchanted Evening from South Pacific. My mum has greatly benefited from having The Spitz at the care home and they are so lovely to her. Music is information for the elderly because it brings back memories of the good times when they were young.

For info or to make a donation visit www.spitz.org.uk