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£105,000 funding boost for dementia peer support in Moray

A project which provides peer support for carers of people with learning difficulties and living with dementia has been given the green light thanks to £105,000 funding.

The money has been awarded to ENABLE Scotland to set up a support, friendship and advice service in Moray called The Cuppa Club, based on their already successful Cuppa Club in Glasgow.

There are currently around 526 people with learning disabilities in the Moray area, at least 70 of whom also have dementia or are at high risk of developing it. Many are cared for by family members who are in their 60's, 70's and 80's and it is these people that The Cuppa Club will reach.

Older people who have been carers for many years can become increasingly isolated as their caring role changes or their own health is not what it used to be. Friends and family who previously helped out might have passed away or have caring responsibilities of their own. The stress of caring can affect physical and mental health so it is vitally important that these carers can remain connected to a strong network of support.

There are currently no services in Moray to support carers of people with learning disabilities who also show signs of, or have a diagnosis of, dementia.

The new ENABLE Scotland project will provide one to one peer support to older carers to help them be more connected to their community and decrease their social isolation by providing respite care, friendship and information about other help that is available.

There will be a range of recreational activities available, lunches, discussions and mutual support groups involving others who have walked the same caring path.

Funding has come from the Life Changes Trust, an independent charity set up with a Big Lottery Fund endowment of £50 million to improve the lives of two key groups in Scotland: people affected by dementia and care experienced young people.

The Trust will be investing a total of £1.2 million in both befriending and peer support initiatives over a five-year period.

Befriending and peer support are two of the services which people with dementia and carers say they most value because of the positive impact they can have.

They have been identified through research as key ways in which isolation and loneliness can be reduced, factors which can have a significantly negative impact on a person's sense of well-being and their physical and mental health.

Jan Savage, Executive Director of Campaigns & External Affairs said: 'We are delighted that ENABLE Scotland has been awarded this funding to help support carers of people with learning disabilities who are living with dementia in Moray. We have seen how valuable peer support can be through our Cuppa Club project in Glasgow and we know that this will also be the case for people in Moray. This news comes at a time when the First Minister has announced plans to change the Carers Bill to make things better for carers which is something ENABLE Scotland has long campaigned for. Through projects like the Cuppa Club we can continue to talk to carers about the big issues – like learning disabilities and dementia - and gain an understanding of the support they need to make family life easier.'

Anna Buchanan, Director of the Life Changes Trust dementia programme said: 'Support from someone else who has walked in your shoes can make an enormous difference to carers. This is what peer support does. We know anecdotally that peer support can be a lifeline for families affected by dementia. Using effective evaluation, we will be able to offer further evidence of their significant value to individuals, families and society. We are very pleased to be funding ENABLE Scotland, who have over 60 years' experience of providing vital support to families and carers'.

In Scotland:

- It is estimated that around 90,000 people have dementia
- The number of people with dementia in Scotland is increasing, because the population is getting older. Based on current dementia prevalence rates, the number of people with dementia in Scotland is projected to double by 2038*.
- Much of that financial burden falls on family carers and friends, who may also experience social isolation, exhaustion and health problems associated with the demands of caring.
- Dementia costs the country more than cancer, heart disease and stroke put together.

www.lifechangestrust.org.uk.

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EDITORS NOTES:

The Life Changes Trust was established by the Big Lottery Fund in April 2013 with a ten year endowment of £50 million to support transformational improvements in the quality of life, well-being, empowerment and inclusion of people affected by dementia and young people with experience of being in care.

The Trust will invest £1.2 million in befriending and peer support initiatives over a five-year period. Funded initiatives will be required to find match funding in years 3 to 5.

Befriending: by this, the Trust means a voluntary, beneficial and purposeful relationship in which an individual gives time to support a person with dementia or a carer of a person with dementia.

Peer Support: by this, the Trust means the help and support that people with a lived experience of dementia (including experience of caring for a person with dementia) are able to give to one another.

ENABLE Scotland is a dynamic charity run by its members. Their three main roles are: to ensure that people who have learning disabilities have the same choices and opportunities in life as everyone else; to fight discrimination and inequality and ensure that people who have learning disabilities are regarded as equal members of society; and to offer a wide range of person centred services designed to ensure that people who have learning disabilities can live the life they want and actively participate in their community. In 2015, ENABLE Scotland has more than 5,000 members, 44 local branches and more than 1,700 employees supporting more than 3,000 people in Scotland who have learning disabilities.

*Based on current dementia prevalence rates, the number of people with dementia in Scotland is projected to double by 2038. However, while ageing is a major risk factor for dementia, there is growing evidence that an increase in protective factors such as healthy eating and regular physical exercise and reduction in risk factors such as alcohol and tobacco use, could reduce people's risk of dementia, or delay the age at which they may develop it.