



Media Release

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£205,000 funding boost for two Edinburgh dementia services

Two projects providing peer support for people affected by dementia in Edinburgh have been given the green light thanks to funding of £205,000.

The first is a peer support service for carers of people with dementia, run by the North West Carers Centre. The aim of the project is to support carers to gain confidence in their own skills and abilities, by sharing their experiences with someone who understands the difficulties and challenges they face.

Peer support can give carers a chance to socialise with someone who understands the impact of their caring responsibilities and the emotional journey involved in looking after someone who has dementia.

The service will also provide social meetings for small groups of people who have dementia with their carers, to relieve carers of some of their direct responsibilities so they can enjoy the company of supportive peers. The project is based on previous, successful pilot schemes.

The second project is called 'A Sense of Me' and is run by Edinburgh charity Health in Mind. The scheme will support both people who have dementia and their carers using peer support groups.

These groups give people with dementia and their carers an opportunity to talk about how to 'live well' with dementia, and explore ways in which they can improve their well-being.

They allow people to support each other to feel more confident, to make decisions about how they can improve their lives and to communicate their needs more clearly. The meetings give people with dementia and carers 'wellness tools', so that they know what to do when things become difficult.

Being among peers is also vital to break down barriers and feelings of being alone with dementia, and to build lasting support networks.

The North West Carers Centre was awarded £105,000 and Health in Mind was awarded £100,000, both over five years.

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.

Wendy Bates, Service Manager with Health in Mind, said 'We are delighted to be working with the Life Changes Trust whose support is enabling our team to deliver this new service, 'A Sense of Me'. This is a Peer Support Initiative which will support people with dementia and their carers to self-manage their wellness.

'Working in carefully facilitated peer support groups, people will reflect upon and explore how they can live well with dementia and identify things they can do to feel better. These personal resources are known as wellness tools and can be put into action to enable people with dementia and their carers to feel better every day and to stay well.'

Linda Paterson, Chair of North West Carers Centre said, 'We nearly fell off our chairs when we heard the good news as we had not expected to get this award. To say that staff and Board members are delighted to be receiving this money is an understatement and a great boost to everyone here. This helps confirm that what we are doing to support carers who are caring for loved ones with dementia, is not just welcomed by them as individuals but is recognised externally. Far too many carers are still 'hidden' and either don't recognise that they are carers or are reluctant to seek help from Public Services. This peer support service for carers of people with dementia will offer an alternative. We are looking forward to working with the Life Changes Trust and meeting other organisations who have been lucky enough to receive an award.'

Anna Buchanan, Director of the Life Changes Trust dementia programme said: 'Having someone to talk to who has shared experiences can make an enormous difference to carers and to people who have dementia. 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 the North West Carers Centre and Health in Mind, who provide vital support to families affected by dementia'.

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.

Health in Mind promotes positive mental health and wellbeing in Scotland. They are a people-centred organisation. This means that helping people reach their potential is at the heart of what they do. With the introduction of Self-Directed Support (SDS), they support individuals to be in control of their own support. They have a dedicated team of professional support staff and committed volunteers who work together to produce a broad and unique mix of individual and group support, across Edinburgh and the Lothians and in the Borders.

The North West Carers Centre offer information advice and support for carers in North West Edinburgh. They run a group for carers (CATs), a group for those caring for someone with dementia (Forget Me Nots), and groups for young carers after school. They deliver a free of charge respite service, and offer support through home visits and by telephone.

*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.