



Media Release

2nd October 2015

Dementia befriending service in Lanarkshire awarded £93,000 funding boost

A new project which provides befriending support for people affected by dementia in Lanarkshire has been given the go-ahead thanks to a £93,000 funding boost.

The five year funding has been awarded to The Haven Centre, a Scottish charity which provides a range of supportive services for people with life limiting illnesses and their carers.

Their 'Haven@Home Volunteer Befriending' initiative transforms the way support is delivered to families affected by dementia through an alternative volunteer befriending service.

Unlike traditional befriending services, this initiative aims to be as flexible to the person with dementia or their carer as possible by delivering the service at home.

This alternative way of delivering support aims to augment the role of the volunteer befriender. Not only will families feel less overwhelmed and isolated by having someone to talk to and confide in, they will also receive the benefit of short respite breaks at home through planned complementary therapy sessions.

The therapy sessions aim to improve emotional health and well-being and reduce stress so that people with dementia and their carers are more able to cope with illness and caring.

The project will utilise volunteer befrienders who also have therapy skills to support people affected by dementia across Lanarkshire.

Lanarkshire has 9747 people diagnosed with dementia, with South Lanarkshire having one of the highest numbers of people affected by the condition in any council area in Scotland.

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 have on the person with dementia and/or their carer.

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.

Janice Williams, Manager of the Haven Centre said: 'I am delighted that the Life Changes Trust has chosen to support The Haven with vital funding for this exciting new project. We have recently expanded our services and now provide support from 3 drop in centres in North and South Lanarkshire. The Life Changes Trust funds will allow The Haven to further develop support services for dementia clients and enable us to reach out to even more families across Lanarkshire.'

Anna Buchanan, Director of the Life Changes Trust dementia programme said: 'This is a very distinctive befriending service which not only provides social interaction to reduce isolation and loneliness, it also provides complementary therapies for families affected by dementia to boost mental and physical well-being. We know anecdotally about the power and benefits of initiatives like befriending.'

'Using effective evaluation, we will be able to offer further evidence of their significant value to individuals and to society. The Haven Centre has been providing care, therapies and companionship to people affected by life limiting illnesses for many years, and we are honoured to be supporting their work'.

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.

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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.

The Haven Centre was opened in May 2002 to provide care, complementary therapies, information and a range of supportive services to people affected by life limiting illness such as cancer, multiple sclerosis, motor neurone disease, dementia and Parkinson's disease, and also to their carers and family members. They strive to give the highest standard of care to everyone affected by life-limiting illness and work closely with other organisations to achieve this.

*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.