



Media Release

5th November 2015

£84,000 windfall for Stirling dementia befriending service

A project which provides befriending support for people with dementia in Stirling has been given a funding boost of £84,000.

The five year funding has been awarded to Town Break, a charity providing services to support people with dementia and their carers within the Stirling District.

The befriending initiative is geared towards people who have early to moderate dementia, with an emphasis on people who may not receive other support or those who have no carers and live alone.

Each session is based on the idea of two friends meeting to chat about the things that they are interested in. Weekly visits provide companionship, mental stimulation and new friendships for the person with dementia, and for the befriender.

Befrienders also provide encouragement to people with dementia, to have more confidence in what they can do, rather than concentrating on what they can't do, using befriending as a means of reducing isolation and helping them stay as mentally and physically active as possible.

Sessions also support people with mild to moderate dementia to continue to live in their own homes for as long as possible, and provide extra respite where there are family carers.

By offering friendship, it is hoped that the person with dementia will feel more confident, will have increased self-esteem, and an improved quality of life.

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.

Gail Barton, Development Manager of Town Break said, "We are delighted to have received this funding from the Life Changes Trust which will help us to reach out to more families in the district who have a diagnosis of dementia. The fact that the award is over a five year period is also very welcome and ensures the long-term support that families need. We look forward to working with the Trust and other funded dementia projects over the course of the next five years in order to share good practice in person-centred dementia services".

Claire Lightowler, Chair of the Life Changes Trust dementia programme committee said: "We are so pleased to award funding for this befriending service. Initiatives like these can provide lifelines to families and to individuals. Befriending can also offer consistent and meaningful relationships for a person with dementia, out-with their immediate circle of care.

“We already know anecdotally about the benefits of initiatives like befriending and by supporting the further evaluation of these services, we will help contribute to a better understanding about the much wider impact that peer support can have.”

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.

ENDS

For further information and for press enquiries contact:

Life Changes Trust:

Deborah Cowan, Communications Manager: 0141 212 9606

Deborah.cowan@lifechangestrust.org.uk

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.

Town Break (originally known as Town Break Stirling Group) began its journey in 1992 providing a service to people with dementia in the absence of any statutory provision. Two years later, Town Break recognised that not everyone wanted to become part of a group setting, some clients wanted to be in a one-to-one situation. A new Befriending Service was born. Town Break provides person-centred services to support people with dementia and their carers using the skills of trained, supportive and committed staff and volunteers. They liaise with other agencies, both statutory and voluntary, to help to support people with dementia to continue to live in their own homes within Stirling District.

*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.